

# THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### God and Us

I HAVE had lying on my table for several weeks copies of two papers. One is the "Church of England Newspaper," the other the "Dumfries and Galloway Standard." The first is full of religion, the other is a newspaper offering items of interest to its readers. We will take the religious journal first, and, as it happens, one fits well into the other, although for truth and common sense the religious paper should go last. Still, they fit into each other, the better because of their contradictory qualities.

For example, the "Church of England Newspaper" commences with a cloud of miracles, which are things at which sensible people smile, fools are elated and knaves count their profits. The miracles are connected with the war, not in preventing it, but in saving something from the wreck. It commences with what it calls "the miracle of Dunkirk," which is just a foolish lie told by those who know better. Dunkirk was not a victory, it was a defeat, saved from being a great disaster by the dauntless courage of the fighting forces and the bravery and devotion of those who came to the rescue. But we lost thousands of men and masses of munitions which we could not spare. There was nothing for which we had to thank God; but much to thank humans. Soldiers and civilians deserve all the praise received, but God—well, the less said the better for God. God had "missed the bus"; perhaps he was listening to the thanks given him by the Christian Germans. To thank God for Dunkirk is to indulge in unrestricted sarcasm. Praise is the food of the gods.

But ordinary foolishness drops into insignificance when the writer of the article—the Rev. Leslie Badham—brings in Russia as being moved by God to join the Allies—a little late. But official Russia was not, and is not theistic. It has never offered a single prayer for victory, it has never praised God when it won victories, or fell on its knees when in trouble. It never whined about its unworthiness. Atheist Russia took its trial standing and openly attributed its successes to the strength and courage of its people. If God helped, he acted unmasked and received no prayerful thanks.

When the Rev. Mr. Badham cites Churchill as saying that Dunkirk proved that "some strange pattern was being worked below," the Prime Minister must have been speaking with his tongue in his cheek. From the moment he adapted the famous appeal made by Garibaldi to the Italian rebels, Churchill stressed that it was men and women, tireless and unflinching, that would bring victory over Germany. It was men and women who halted the German millions and finally brought them to the ground. God had nothing to do with it.

Mind, I do not say that Churchill did not say something akin to the parson's report. He is, after all, a politician, and he would bethink himself that he was an English leader and a certain amount of religious nonsense goes with the job. But, in sober truth, God has played a very poor part in this war. Even the Days of Prayer had to be abandoned. The products were so poor they merely advertised their worthlessness. The "common" people began to see through the farce of the King leading his people to prayer when nothing happened. They preferred a cinema.

As though in a court marshalling witnesses, the parson calls for, first, the Chief of Fighter Command. He dutifully affirmed that "There was evidence of Divine intervention which those in the Command recognised." No cross-examination. But the evidence meant only that some of the members of the Command believed in God, but of real evidence not the shadow of a shade. Mr. Churchill is next cited, but all he says is "I have a feeling that some hand has intervened." But Mr. Churchill's feelings amount to exactly nothing at all. Besides, Mr. Churchill is, as we have said, the head of the Conservative Party, and the support of the Church is part of its policy. It is also noticeable that his feelings did not stop him yelling for more weapons and more men. Presumably, the Divine hand was getting tired. Another witness is Sir William Dobbie of Malta fame. He says: "I am convinced that God still answers prayers . . . the recognition of this fact was the secret of the endurance shown by the people of Malta." A final witness is Marshal Montgomery, who says that "In the hour of danger we commit our cause into the hands of God." All these are interesting as examples of mental attitudes, but in any court of law they would not be worth sixpence a thousand. What they do demonstrate is that while a man may be clever enough and wise enough in one direction, he may be a perfect fool in another. If Montgomery had inquired he would have found that quite a number of his men were carrying a rabbit's foot as a guard from danger, and as certain as can be that they owe their life to the charm. It may be noted that with all his faith in God, Montgomery took care never to advance until he had adequate arms and men. He trusted God, but he was taking no chances. Finally, we are quite certain that the Roman Catholic Church, having circulated some millions of "sacred" medallions, would put in a strong claim that the men owed their safety, and therefore their victory, to these blessed and holy-watered talismans that they carried.

### From Another Viewpoint

The Rev. Mr. Badham wrote as he did to prove two things—first, that God really does something, and that people who before the war were doubtful about God doing anything were by results led to believe in God. Perhaps an examination of what appeared in the other paper

mentioned, the "Dumfries and Galloway Standard," will throw light on the situation. The news published was a report—in four large-sized columns—of an assembly of clergymen. The speakers appear, from the report, to be all ministers of religion, and while Scottish preachers are apt to be more witty than our English ones, they are not less fervid than their English brethren. Indeed, they take their religion so seriously that they can afford to joke about it, while the English preacher is so uncertain where he is that he is afraid to be humorous for fear the congregation should drown the prayers in laughter.

I could cite a large number of letters from the different seats of war, from all ranks, and from educated men, that would give a very different tale from that the reader has had before him. The report from Scotland covered three closely printed columns, and the speakers are all servants of the Lord. Here is the result:—

The Rev. Mr. Thom said: "There could be no doubt that the return of the men from the Forces would present the Church with a supreme challenge." Please note the word "challenge." That obviously refers to their attitude towards religion, and when a Scot makes up his mind he will not be affected by being told that a General, or even a Prime Minister, uses religious phrases. Mr. Thom says bluntly that the men who will provide the religious trouble amount to 80 per cent., and he assured his brother parsons that the twenty months he spent with the Forces, mixing with all classes, he "got the fright of his life." The men were simply not interested in Christianity, and the business of the preachers was how to get these men back. Well, all we need say is that you can't *unpull* a man's nose. One may never reach an understanding of Christianity, but when one does, not all the priests in existence can undo the knowledge and understanding gained. The second speaker, the Rev. Mr. Buchanan, said that religion was neglected and that there was a "serious lack of interest in it." That, we may reckon, meant that the men do not quickly retort to the preacher; he is an officer, and can make things rather unpleasant. He thought that an attempt should be made to make the Bible intelligible to the men. That doesn't say much for God's efforts in book production. Perhaps, if this speaker knew how men enjoy reading our "Bible Handbook," he might understand a little of what is afoot. There were other items, but all could be summed-up by saying that the men were not interested in the Bible.

Another speaker, Rev. Mr. Simmons, said he could vouch that there was an "appalling ignorance of the most elementary truths of the Christian faith. That obviously means that the men do not agree with the religion the padres give them. Their favourite sport is to get the padre in a corner and drown him with questions, an ordeal that no parson likes, whether at home or abroad.

But a real crusher came from the Rev. J. A. Crabb. He told his brother preachers that they had not the right view of the men about whom they had been talking. He insisted that to take the men and women in the Armed Forces as something that belonged to the war only was quite wrong. What they witnessed in the Armies was just a cross-section of the ordinary population. "The problems found in the Services were the same as those found in the parishes before the war, and the same as would be found after the war, . . . The problem was the old one of the

Churches." And another speaker, Mr. Duncan, also said:—

"The men and women in the Forces were a cross-section of the same young people who had been drifting from the Church before the war, and there could be no doubt that the drift was just as bad before the war as it was now."

Now, these speeches hit the nail on the head, and the speakers stand out in honesty and courage against the snivelling, dishonest members of the English champions of Christianity. Consider the testimonies of the value of godism given by those quoted in "The Church of England Newspaper." Mr. Churchill, the Chief of Fighter Command, Montgomery, etc., on politics, on fighting, etc., one would listen to them with respect, but on the origin of religion, on the value of Christian doctrines, etc., their opinion does not equal the value of a bundle of diseased cat's meat. Sir William Dobbie believes God answers prayers. Mr. Churchill has "a feeling that some guiding hand has intervened." That is not reasoning, it is not evidence, it is just the age-long repetition of religious nonsense and is of no greater value than the conviction of a man carrying an onion in his pocket—that it will cure him of toothache. In their own sphere they may deserve applause and thanks, but outside that they may provoke nothing more noticeable than derision.

The Scottish preachers were right. The disbelief of religion did not begin with the war. Wars, as a matter of fact, because they are a step lower in the social scale, tend to help religion rather than injure it. Intense physical pressure is not helpful to clear thinking. It dulls the finer aspects of the intellect. Our generals, our flying men, with their minds at full strain, may well have all sorts of feelings, but one does not get men in that state for lessons on science or philosophy. And when we come to the politician—well, he plays with gods as he plays with men, using them and discarding them as they serve his purpose.

For a full century religion has been losing its hold on men and women of all classes. The war has but intensified the process. With Heine we are all witnesses to the funeral of a dead God.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### "THE SAME YESTERDAY, THE SAME TO-DAY—" AND THE SAME THE WORLD OVER!

REFERENCE at the recent annual conference of the N.S.S. to the revival of the International Freethought movement, together with the receipt of some Press cuttings from a Canadian Freethinking friend, and a perusal of the literature of our movement in the United States and Australasia, have jointly served to bring home to me rather vividly of late the international character of our work as Freethinkers—an aspect that has tended to be obscured during the six years blight from which we may at last feel we are emerging.

Bad communications, and pre-occupation with war-time problems, may have tended to give Freethinkers in various parts of the world a sense of isolation, or a feeling that somehow the problems which beset us as heretics were peculiar to our own country. With the end of the European war, however, we may once again begin to broaden our horizon, and to recognise, with a certain amount of consolation, that our problems are not peculiar to us alone, but that gallant bands of heretics have struggled in other parts of the globe to keep the lamp of Free-

thought burning during the war years, so that we may say with truth that the forces of darkness did not succeed in achieving a world intellectual black-out, but only a dim-out.

Even a dim-out, however, was sufficient to enable those who thrive on intellectual darkness to intensify their work, while ours had to be retarded. A survey of other countries shows that the Christian Church, able to operate almost unhampered by direct contact with actual warfare, has prowled around in this intellectual twilight, like some predatory animal that fears the light of day, attempting to secure its prey without detection. It seems, too, to have had a particularly keen appetite for the younger members of the human species—which has always been a characteristic of the Beast of Pray at any time.

Piecing up the war-time story as well as may be from the scanty information yet available, it would seem that Christianity, per its more orthodox institutions, has demonstrated its own international character by repetitions of the British situation, which emphasises the great need for the international aspects of our own movement.

Phases of war-time Christian activity in Britain seem to have their counterparts elsewhere, and it would not be unfair to suggest that the Old Original "Universal Church" has Pretender rivals to the same title.

Starting from the Old Country, where the Mother of Parliaments set up a precedent by its war-time capitulation to the parsons on the question of more religion in schools, we find a wave of similar reaction has extended from places as far apart as New Zealand and Canada, where desperate efforts have been made to cash in on the schools for Christianity under the same deceitful pretences as were used here. Even in the United States, where it might be considered that the position was protected by the Constitution, the same type of efforts have been made to put the parsons back into the educational saddle, and to increase the dope dose to the youngsters. In some parts of the United States impudent religious defiance of the law has taken place by the actual adoption of illegal schemes, even in face of Freethought opposition.

In France the churches grabbed the schools when it was impossible to do anything about it—but it is one of the bright spots in the coming dawn that, with the restoration of France from Nazi domination, the Catholic Church has been put back into that position in which wise Frenchmen know she can do least harm, that is, outside the orbit of public education.

The seizing of greater educational power by the churches in Spain goes even further back than this war, but it was nevertheless an action that must take its place in the chronology of the same dark days, and it is probably a feature that will tend to disappear in the growing light.

That other great stunt of the churches, aimed at securing more control over the lives of the people, and especially the young—

"The Moral Landslide"—has also had its counterpart, again as far away as New Zealand and Australia, and round the globe to Canada and the United States. According to recent information from Canada there is at the present moment going on a vigorous campaign similar to the one we have experienced here.

Indeed, the technique seems to be thoroughly understood in various parts of the world. First, charge the people with growing immorality, offer as an explanation the lack of religion, then campaign for more religion, especially in the schools, and blackmail the timid politicians (which means most of them) by using the dreaded words, "The Vote." Plaster the Press with exaggerated scandal, and see to it that any editor who allows even an abridged reply to appear in print from any un-Christian source is made aware of the displeasure of the churches, though why on earth such displeasure should count as "pressure" in these days I cannot understand, for there are not enough interested Christians to boycott anything outside of a parish magazine. But there it is—and it works, up to a point, a matter to which I shall later refer.

In addition to the major efforts of the churches there have also been in the Christian world abroad the same avalanches of asininity and torrents of tripe about soldiers whose lives were saved by bibles; men thanking God for saving their lives in 'plane crashes, tank explosions, and so on, while their bosom pals were blown to smithereens at the same time; men who found God when facing terrible dangers; the alleged absence of Atheists in fox-holes (U.S. version), or in aeroplanes (Canadian version), or in tanks while in action (New Zealand version); and that most colossal piece of ignorant impudence by a Canadian Catholic (Archbishop Sinnott of Winnipeg) who offered to mothers of serving boys, "A guarantee, should he be killed, that he will go at once to his Maker, to be with him for all eternity. A guarantee, should it be God's will, that he will return to his dear mother." The price? Oh yes, there's always a price—forty dollars, mother dear. And any nit-wit that fell for it could even have the salvation on the instalment system, at five dollars a month.

Ever since I sang "The Maple Leaf" at a school concert many years ago I have had a warm spot for Canada; but I am bound to propose that, out of all the nations which have perpetrated stupidities in this war, Canada should have the gold medal for gullibility. In England we sent a woman Spiritualist to prison for much less than that, though I agree that we have not touched our orthodox fakirs up to now.

But I must sum up. I said above that this sort of thing works, up to a point. The great feature of it all is, so far as I can gather, that the point is a gradually receding one, not only in our country, but apparently elsewhere. For running through all the reams of rubbish published abroad on behalf of Christianity, and manifest in the scores of speeches reported from platform and radio, there may be detected a note of alarm such as we detected in Britain when the war-time wailings first began. It is the same note of alarm, exhibiting the same fear, based on the same conditions—a recognition that beneath the Holy House the foundations are crumbling; a sense of hysteria aroused by apprehension. The more the hysteria develops the greater becomes the shrieking. But it avails little, for people generally, in the world-wide sense, seem to have become indifferent to the shrieking owing to its very persistence, and, rather than pay attention to the noise of the churches, they are seeking around for its explanation.

That is our task. For centuries the dope of religion has worked, but now it has almost lost its potency. It has, however, left its victims mentally indifferent, and insusceptible to much reasoning. We must work to restore those victims to a condition of intellectual health in which they can find their true destiny in this life and upon this earth, not in the promises of Archbishops at forty dollars a time, with fulfilment of contract post-dated to the hereafter.

That can be done if they will learn, not to believe in the gods, but to understand them. We are the teachers in this school, and our task is as international as our enemy, religious ignorance, seems to be.

F. J. CORINA.

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So we are not surprised to find the Rev. A. J. Campbell, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, trying to identify all attacks on Christianity with German Nazism—which happens to be the most definitely religious movement we have had for a long, long time. Essentially Nazism, or Fascism in its more liquid form, is part of a religious system. The rule of the Papacy and the philosophy of German Nazism are identical. It is true that the Papacy is more accommodating than is the Nazi rule, but that is a mere accident. Every system is severe in its early years, and then becomes more accommodating in its operations as conditions assert their power. The Papacy was as brutal and as relentless as its twin—Nazism—in the full flush of its influence, and short of complete world conquest Hitlerism would have become more accommodating with the passing of the Suns.

By the way, when we were in Germany we visited the fine old city of Nuremberg. One of the show items in the castle was the "Maiden." This was a life-size picture of the Virgin which formed the door of a structure tall enough for a man to stand upright inside. But inside there were also rows of large nails, pointing outwards. The Heretic was then placed inside the case, the doors were shut, and the nails driven into the living body to such a length as to guarantee a very slow death. The victim died in the arms of the "Virgin." We have had a vision of the meeting of Hitler and some of the Popes in the other world, and one day we may make it public.

It really is dangerous to thank God for winning the war. In the first place it weakens or discredits the human factor, and if that is weak God can do little worth bothering about. Consider what a flop there would be in the religious market if man took the attitude "Well, He says he can do everything, let us leave it to him and then see what happens." It should never be forgotten that if God does much for us we do much for him. If man without a God makes for discomfort, a God without worshippers makes for his complete annihilation. If anyone wishes to see how many gods have died because they lacked followers we advise him to pay a visit to the British Museum. He will find dozens and dozens of worn-out gods.

Moreover, our God is not without celestial Allies, and it is now agreed by most of the B.B.C. preachers that all gods, black, white or yellow, are the same god appearing in different colours and forms. Further, we are all God's children. This holds even of the Germans—that is if Lord Vansittart will permit us to say so. But here we find Mr. Churchill urging that we are special favourites, which we recognise by thanking God for helping us to "wallop" some of his other children who have displeased him. But that gives rise to other reflections, and we think of the number of dead children scattered over the world, to do a job that God might have taken in hand himself. Or it may mean that Mr. Churchill is just a political religionist, and professions of religion may bring votes where confessions of being without a God might lose votes. It was Henry IV. of France who said that Paris was worth a Mass. He has left many descendants.

There is always something interesting in a rabidly religious journal. But a heading in the "Catholic World" deserves special notice. This journal is always ready to puff Catholic novelists, good or bad. But it outstepped itself when it gave its readers a heading to new novels, "Godless Man is Isolated

and Afraid." What does that mean? Surely the godless man cannot be at all afraid of what may reach him after death. Obviously it is the Christian who is always in doubt of what will happen. But as he will indulge in a stupid superstition he ought to have enough manhood left to take what is coming to him.

But the "Godless." What has he to fear? We can understand he may fear being "Isolated," for few people care for a boycott, and even a very, very Roman Catholic would be welcome in certain conditions. But what has he to be afraid of? If death annihilates him he is as well off after death as he was before he lived. The explanation of the heading is that the "Herald" just lost its mental balance. But that will not be counted by the writer's Church as against him. Still, he need not write such obvious rubbish. Others beside good Catholics may read the journal in question, for example, we do.

Lord Eustace Percy, who once was a Minister of Education, is still, we note, almost a complete Fundamentalist. In a recent lecture at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, he claimed that the Christian Church was not just mere humanistic ethics but a combination of the full gospel of Old Testament historical theology and New Testament evangelical faith. He was against a "credulous Christianity," and he wanted the full force of Christian endeavour to be thrown into the work of construction. But is not this "full force" suspiciously like Secularism? Or in other words does the noble Lord know what he is talking about?

The "Manchester Guardian" for May 31 contains an interesting letter from one who signs himself "A Refugee," warning the Allies against the "Confessional Church" which is being accepted at its own valuation. He suggests that the Church in no wise opposed Hitler, and that Niemoller did not oppose the Nazi movement as such. The Church also adopted the Swastika flag, and a goodly number of the Ministers were supporters of Nazis. We are not surprised. We have pointed out many times that if Hitler had not interfered the Church would never have interfered with Nazis. How could it? Roman Catholicism is essentially a Fascist system—one of the most unscrupulous we have.

According to the "Daily Express" quoting Portuguese statistics, half the population in Portugal are illiterate, Portugal is a more or less Fascist country under a Roman Catholic dictatorship, and it has the distinction of being one of the principal countries in Europe where miracles constantly occur. It is curious, however, that our English Catholics rarely point to Portugal as a shining example of Catholic culture, and a model for non-Catholic States. Or is it?

It is good to find from the "Universe" that at last, in both Bulgaria and Finland, some strong opposition is taking place to what Catholics are pleased to call "Christian" education. Freethinkers in Finland are active, and it appears that some Helsinki citizens who do not belong to the State Church or the Free Church, are making a strong stand for Secular education in the schools. The Minister of Education, M. Helo, "is said to have expressed sympathy with their proposal promising to put it before the Cabinet." That is very good news and it is a pity that our own Education Minister is still in the Middle Ages as far as education is concerned.

In Bulgaria "civil marriage by mayors is now permitted. Religious institutions of any sort are no longer allowed to examine such marriage proceedings." This must be a big step in such a religion-ridden country as Bulgaria, for it is not only a step towards secularising the State, but also a nasty blow in the eye for the Church. On the other hand Rumania and Hungary seem to be more and more under the dominion of the priest. The Magyar People's Union is using its power to enable the Church "to fulfil its true function in the name of love and friendship," and Rumania is granting more and more subsidies to the churches in Transylvania. But one must not expect too drastic changes to take place in countries which have been dominated for many centuries by the Christian Churches.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**THE BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.**—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 10s. from Mr. J. G. Lupton to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

**C. WATERS.**—Thanks for good wishes. We are well, but could do with a little more leisure. But we do not know what we should do with it if we had it. It would be a case of getting more leisure in order to do more work.

**(Mrs.) H. CONNELL.**—It is not easy to give a definition of "Civiliisation." It really covers all forms of communal life that indulge in culture in some form. It begins with the developed conduct of the human herd, and absorbs all the advances—in the shape of tools, forms of speech, and behaviour—that occur.

**C. S. COMPTON.**—It would be very unwise to take books written during the stress of a world war as though they were quite reliable documents. Truth is usually set on one side when passion rages.

For "The Freethinker."—E. C. Rickard, 10s.

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## SUGAR PLUMS

We suppose that some people still read Emerson. If they do not, we suggest that they take the first opportunity and spend half-an-hour with him. In our early years we read him and now find that to dip into his books always repays. We do not give this advice because he was a great preacher, but because he was a good talker, and his talk was always better than yards of sermonising, whether the preacher was in the pulpit or out of it. Somehow or the other we are all more inclined to preach instead of talk, and preachers whether laymen or parsons offer a large percentage of humbug.

But here is one of his soliloquies:—  
"If I know your sect I anticipate your argument. I hear a preacher announce for his text and topic the expediency of one of the institutions of his Church. Do I not know beforehand that not possibly can he say a new and spontaneous word? Do I not know that with all this ostentation of examining the grounds of the institution he will do no such thing. Do I not know that he is pledged himself not to look, but at one side, not as a man but as a parish minister? He is a retained attorney and these airs of the bench are the emptiest affectations."

But that as a picture of any parson on any topic, and we are not sure that you might not say it with equal truth of most politicians.

We owed so much in our early years to Herbert Spencer that we looked forward to the B.B.C. statement that a lecture was to be given with Spencer as the subject. But, alas, when it came! It was little but gossip and no one could possibly form a reasonable conception of the great position he held in his time and the impetus given to his generation. We read all that he published, and we still have about twenty volumes of his works on our shelves. Someone should have been selected who really understood Spencer and could have placed him in his proper place. It is the lot of a great thinker to find himself behind those who followed him, but it is only a great man who can inspire others to jump forward and in so doing place himself in the background. But one cannot expect the B.B.C. philosophers to appreciate a man such as Spencer.

His recorder tries to put Spencer as a one time leader by saying that he "explained the universe," which is precisely what Spencer would have declined. Another absurdity was that Spencer placed the "Unknowable" as a "Fundamental." There was no "fundamental" about it. He meant by the "Unknowable" an "Unknowable" and that was all. Naturally much of Spencer's speculations and generalisations was modified, sometimes thrown aside by later and more accurate knowledge. But that is the fate of all pioneers. Spencer was right as an early champion of evolution, his "Ethics" is still a valuable piece of work, his "Education" is still in use in schools, and he very early sketched a theory of the origin of religion that paved the way for more accurate understanding.

Great men usually do these things and they are, in fact, the mark by which we know original thinkers and genuinely great men. When it comes to a stage talk on great philosophers particularly, the B.B.C. should stick to Joad. The scientific men of merit they get for the Brains Trust know better, but are not inclined to let themselves loose. After all the B.B.C. platform is a good one—for advertising, and many look for that.

Whatever we might think of Japan and the Japs, particularly their cruelties to prisoners of war, the "Church Times" proudly points out that the Japanese Christians are preparing a new translation of the Old Testament. This is a very important undertaking as we are told "Without the Old Testament in the doctrine of which our Lord was reared . . . the teaching of the Catholic Church would be largely meaningless." That is so, for nothing indeed is more important than the Fall of Man, so clearly declared in Genesis, and to save mankind from which Jesus Christ had to be crucified. The two stories hang together and cannot be understood apart. What a pity it is, however, that so few modern theologians these days take the Fall and its Garden of Eden literally. Does even the "Church Times"?

In the current number of the "Hibbert Journal" there is an excellent article on Nietzsche, but for some reason difficult to follow, the writer compares him with Christ. "Nietzsche," he says, "was a religious thinker no less than Christ . . . the fact that he was ostensibly an Atheist does not detract from this one whit." Or in other words, Nietzsche actually was nearly as good as Christ because they were both trying to found a "new religion." Jesus Christ believed in a Fiery Hell, in a Heaven habited by God the Father, in Devils and Angels and, praise the Lord, Nietzsche came very nearly up to him as a "religious thinker." How very consoling.

Out of the mouths, etc., etc. A great many of our Christian leaders feel that the growth of "Secularism" is fatal to the Churches and their religious teaching, but only one here and there has the courage to tell the truth of the matter. The Rev. Welbourne is an exception. He told a gathering of the Federal Council of Free Churches that "what persecution could not do, Secularism was in danger of achieving." The only fault we find in his remark is that Secularism is "in danger of achieving." He should read "Secularism is achieving."

That curious paper—supported by people who should remind us that all the Nazis were not in Germany—"The Patriot," warns its subscribers that the danger before us is "Satanism, Unbelief, Atheism and Secularism." But, of course, we have with us "The Patriot"—until it is found out.

Another bit of interesting information comes from a report in the "Stockport Express." Father Fallon, who is the chaplain to the Salford Province of the Knights of St. Columbia, is reported as making a strong attack—at least it was a blackguardly one—on Russia and Communists. Poland, that is, Roman Catholic plundered Poland is pictured as harmless doves. The Labour Party are also in for it. They are not merely "Socialists," they are definitely "Communists." What with the Commercial interests, the high old Tory Party, and the activities of prominent English people who backed Nazism and have hitherto been silent, but perhaps not inactive, the future looks quite interesting.

## MARTIN LUTHER

### I.

LIKE a good many other schoolboys, my ideas on Martin Luther were formed when we were studying the causes of the Reformation in our history lessons. Luther was the great German scholar who, with invincible courage, defied the Catholic Church at a time when it was extremely dangerous to do so, and who thus gave the world the blessings of Protestantism and was, if only indirectly, the cause of England's greatness. I also learnt that Luther made a truly wonderful translation of the Bible in German, which was bitterly attacked by the Roman Church as it enabled the man in the street to learn what really was God's Precious Word—apart from the fact that this translation was used in the making of our own versions of the Bible, like Coverdale's. On the whole, we were taught that Martin Luther was one of the greatest of all Germans, and one of the great heroes of the world, and that was the impression which remained with me for many years.

Unfortunately, I came across in the course of a deal of desultory reading quite a lot of various views on Luther, which seemed, much to my astonishment, to controvert my schooldays' history. Not for worlds was I prepared to give up this great lion-hearted man, this wonderful Reformer, this heroic figure, almost alone attacking the mighty Church of Rome. And yet . . . doubts kept pressing me. For example, there was the forthright attack made in an essay in Prof. Karl Pearson's "Ethic of Freethought." I have not this book by me, and cannot remember the exact details, but Pearson's was a sledge-hammer blow on Luther and his reputation which, not coming from a Catholic, was all the more to be solidly faced. Pearson claimed that if Martin Luther had not stepped in with his Infallible Book, the Bible, there really had been a chance of Christianity going the way of all religions in the past. Already the myth of an Infallible Church was beginning to crumble under such disintegrating forces as the Renaissance and the work of great Humanists like Erasmus. It was Martin Luther who substituted an Infallible Book for an Infallible Church, thus perpetuating a Christianity which still depends on infantile and credulous superstitions.

Luther seems, in Protestant England at least, to have always enjoyed a great Press—even though reservations are beginning to creep in in many of the notices he now receives in our authoritative reference books. It is now admitted that side by side with his great championship of the Bible, and only the Bible, as the Great Rule of Faith, he seems to have written many brutal things which are not quite as easily dismissed as they were at one time. And the reader can see for himself exactly what kind of a man the great German Reformer really was in Mr. Peter F. Wiener's "Martin Luther, Hitler's Spiritual Ancestor" (Hutchinson, 2s. 6d.), a little work for which I have to thank one of our readers.

Mr. Wiener, a German himself, and a teacher of languages in a big public school, seems to be particularly well qualified to deal with Luther, a good deal of whose enormous literary output he appears to have read. I can hardly imagine a more terrific indictment. Mr. Wiener gives chapter and verse (or is ready to do so) for every quotation he culls from Luther. I mention this because I have always tried to discuss in these columns only books I have actually read myself, and I have read very little of Luther. No comprehensive translation has been made as far as I have been able to find out in this country, and I expect the volume of his "Table Talk" in Bohn's series has been well edited—in his own interests.

Mr. Wiener's object in writing his book was "to show only that side of Luther and his influence which is usually ignored in England and which is entirely the reverse of the traditional view." That Luther had made a tremendous impression on

German thought is obvious, and a number of German professors frankly admit that "Lutheranism played an important part in the political and military development of German Prussia," and that "all the pet doctrines of Prussianism are found in the writings of the founder, Martin Luther." Even a Frenchman like Professor Vermeil has recently stated that "Hitler has taken up Luther's ideas." Perhaps, however, it would be better to quote only those professors who are not Roman Catholics, for naturally Luther has always been a sort of Devil incarnate to Catholics.

As an example, Mr. Wiener quotes H. S. Denifle's "Luther and Lutheranism" published in 1904—when the Luther legend began to wear more than a little thin—in which book "a terrifying, dirty, dishonest Luther appeared, a Luther much blacker and more hideous by far than all his former opponents taken altogether had depicted him." But Denifle was a sub-archivist of the Holy See and one could hardly expect anything else from him so long as he had facts to support him. All the same, the Protestant theologian, Professor E. Troeltsch, in a later book described by Mr. Wiener as "one still unsurpassed to-day" expressed "views which resembled and sometimes rather strangely corroborated certain of Denifle's views." These views are almost unknown in England for "the Luther legend had found a firmer holding in England than in any other country; and since the Reformer has been glorified by people such as Matthew Arnold and Carlyle, it seems nothing will ever destroy the accepted belief."

Mr. Wiener complains that while German is taught in England, it is the German of Goethe or Beethoven, and very little of anything more modern is even hinted at. "The Oxford of 1945," he says, "is still, so far as the teaching of German is concerned, the Oxford of 1832. Hitler's Germany might as well not exist, since only the Germany of Goethe is taught." I think this should never be forgotten, for it accounts a lot for our attitude towards Germany.

Nor should we forget that Protestantism and Lutheranism are not synonymous—nor for that matter are Lutheranism and Calvinism. It was once the fashion to couple the Reformation with the Renaissance as the two great movements which brought culture and freedom to an ignorant and slave-ridden Europe. But nowadays the Reformation has been quietly brushed aside—it was not a reforming movement at all, but a reactionary one. And for that point of view perhaps no one deserves more credit than Nietzsche. "The Renaissance," he wrote, "had positive forces which have, as yet, never become so mighty again in our modern culture. It was the golden age of the best thousand years, in spite of all its blemishes and vices. On the other hand, the German reformation stands out as an energetic protest of antiquated spirits . . . with their northern strength and stiff-neckedness they threw mankind back again. . ." Mr. Wiener, who quotes this and other extracts from Professor Bury, Dr. Oscar Levy, and others, finally gives us, from the Cambridge Modern History, this summing-up in its chapter on the Reformation, "Intellectually, morally, and politically, Germany was a desert, and it was called religious peace."

So that, far from ushering in the true light with his stand for the Bible, Luther's "Reformation" was actually a throw-back to more primitive conditions, and was a disaster for humanity. If I remember Professor Pearson aright, that was his position in 1901, but it appears to have had little influence. Perhaps Mr. Wiener's book will turn the tide finally against Luther.

H. CUTNER.

## Speaking for Myself

By Lady (ROBERT) SIMON

Price, post free, 2s. 8d.

NO MORE CALVARY

(In Spite of Dorothy L. Sayers)

THE New Year Festival is the great age-old Festival of the Sun—the Sun's Birthday. It is some 6,000 years old, in a more or less organised style; but it had its sporadic (in time and place), crude, confused, beginnings—here a bit and there a bit—long before that, in Primitive conditions of Social Existence. Some 4,000 years before the reputed birth of Jesus Christ, a development began of organised Ritual, Sacrifice, &c., which constituted "Sacred Mysteries." It is correct to say that all the Essentials of Christism can be traced back to that beginning; out of which arose the means whereby Minorities of Privilege and Power have been able to use "Sacred Mysteries" to exploit the Common People in Mind and Body. "Calvary" has taken many a form in many a place; but it's aye the "Common Folk" who suffer on the Cross; while the tools of Privilege stand by to protect that Calvary from the anger of the People.

Some 16 months ago, I celebrated the Sun's Birthday by hailing the first Moscow Conference as the greatest event, the greatest victory, in History—"with no apologies to the Mythical Resurrection." I used that phrase deliberately; because, to me, it linked the Past to the Present and the Future, in the Present Tense. Although my Father was a Presbyterian Christian Godist, I never suffered, as a boy, from the mental atrocities of any Dogmatic or Creedal Godism. Being what I am, had any such been inflicted on me, I should probably have arrived at a Scientific Atheist Philosophy much more quickly than I did. Being an intelligent man, and much better than his Creed, Dad had come near to the nebulous, but mischievous, Christism of Tennyson's "In Memoriam," coupled with a poetically "cheaper" version in the Poetical Works of the Rev. Dr. W. C. Smith, who had baptised me in the name or names of the "Three Incomprehensibles." In later life, these Three always reminded me of the Three Card Trick, with the "Parson" holding the other two cards, "Our Lady" and "The Devil," up his sleeve. I began from that "In Memoriam" Christ, that never was, is not, and never shall be, Worlds without end, Amen; but it never satisfied me. Then I sought The "True Religion" in Creeds, Doctrines, History and Metaphysics, till, in the end, I found the Truth about Religion—in plain, simple, Basic Pidgin English—"Godism." Had my path been the other way round, I might—"God Forbid!"—have become stuck in the miasmic swamps of "In Memoriam" Christism, like so many half-baked Atheists!

But, "to our tale." The one Belief which my Dad did try to impress upon me was that the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ was "the Greatest Event in History." He could never satisfy me about it, but, from that, I started. So I understood the "Greatest Victory" when it had been won. The U.S.S.Rian leaders, who won that Victory, made many a mistake on the way. But, by the guidance of an Evolutionary Sociology, based upon Evolutionary Economics, as devoid of any Godism as in any other Science, they were able to correct their mistakes in time. Let English-speaking Godists thank their Gods that that was so!

For my part, I was thrilled to-day when I read "the epic story of Frank Thompson: all the more, perhaps, because I have been a bit of a physical coward, all my life. In the seven years fight against Fascism and War, the Bond of Unity has not been in any form of Godism or anti-Godism. It has been, and is, in the Common Needs of Humankind, "irrespective of Nationality, Colour, Creed or Sex." But it is also the Greatest Victory in History, bar none, because it is the Sign of the end of the Cross of Calvary for the Common People of the World: a Victory for Scientific Understanding and Humanism over Spiritual Beliefs and Godism.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

WORD - MICROCOSM OF RELIGION

A SORT of word square might be made with the word "religion" and some of its associations, thus:—

RELIGION REACTION
ENYNRNRE ENMITY
AMITASGP LYING
CINOSAIO INTOLERANCE
TTGLPNAT GRASPING
IYEIISI INSANITY
ORNTTS ORGIASTIC
NAGYIM NEPOTISM
N C
C
E

Religion may change its FORM but remains the SHAME! Its antidote (read downwards) is:—

ATHEISM
LOANDEO
TLPTECR
BEPHAULA
URIULLA
IANSLAI
STEISRT
MISAMIY
OSSS
NMM

And I could describe myself in the same way:—

AHANSON
TAGAOPETC
HPITCTC
EPTUIIE
IYARAMS
STALISI
TOLISTT
RISTT
STARA
IAN

A. H.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (Whito Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EUBRY. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30 p.m., Mr. L. EUBRY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hydo Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m., various speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square).—Sunday, 11 a.m., Conway Memorial Lecture, KINGSLEY MARTIN, M.A.: "Truth and the Public."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., Mrs. M. WHITEFIELD.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. W. BARKER will lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Mr. J. V. SHORTT (Preston), 3 p.m.

MATERIALISM RESTATED, by Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

## THE PRESIDENT AND THE POPE

THE recent death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt came as a shock to the freedom-loving people of the world, for he was the most eminent democratic statesman of his time. For the most part, it may be said that he acted in the genuine interest of humanity, but I cannot help looking with dismay upon his fraternal relations with the Vatican, whose pro-Fascist tendencies should be known by all.

It was at Christmas, 1939, that Roosevelt addressed a message to Pope Pius XII,<sup>1</sup> offering to send a personal representative to Rome "in order that our parallel endeavours for peace and the alleviation of suffering may be assisted." Now the President may actually have believed that the Papacy was really interested in the peace of the world and human brotherhood; he may still have believed it when Catholicism formed the backbone of Isolationism in the U.S.A.; he apparently even believed it when he allowed the Archbishop of New York to float around the globe, visiting the fighting fronts and then the Vatican; but if so, he had a very inaccurate knowledge of the machinations of the Catholic hierarchy.

President Roosevelt was also inaccurate in the historical references which he made in his Christmas epistle. He was, however, determined to show that Christianity offered the solution to a world "in sorrow." "I take heart," he said, "in remembering that in a similar time, Isaiah first prophesied the birth of Christ." (Oh that Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason" might be better known in the republic which he did so much to create!) "Then, several centuries before His coming, the condition of the world was not unlike that which we see to-day. Then, as now, a conflagration had been set; and nations walked dangerously in the light of the fires they had themselves kindled. But in that very moment a spiritual rebirth was foreseen—a new day which was to loose the captives and to consume the conquerors in the fire of their own kindling; and those who had taken the sword were to perish by the sword. There was promised a new age wherein through renewed faith the upward progress of the human race would become more secure."

This is hopelessly vague sermonising. No particular nations are mentioned, no details of the "conflagration" are given, the "captives" and the "conquerors" remain anonymous! One thing, however, must be emphasised. Christianity did not help "the upward progress of the human race": it became the greatest obstacle to that progress.

Nevertheless, the President was unperturbed, and continued with a typically Christian attempt to place the responsibility for the Dark Ages elsewhere than on the shoulders of the Church by referring to "the flame and sword of barbarians," which "swept over Western civilisation" until "through a rekindling of the inherent spiritual spark in mankind, another rebirth brought back order and culture and religion." I agree that it is extremely ticklish to deal with the matter adequately and truthfully when writing to the head of that Church, but the remedy is patent: it should never have been attempted!

Yet Mr. Roosevelt believed that "the travail of to-day" was "a new form of these old conflicts," and he thought it "well that we encourage a closer association between those in every part of the world—those in religion and those in government—who have a common purpose." But, assuming that President Roosevelt did desire world peace and true friendship between the nations of the earth (and I think that he did) we have still to consider the recipient of the letter.

Does the Roman Catholic Church desire world peace? If so, why did it support Hitler, Mussolini and Franco? The Church was not interested in peace during the Spanish Civil War—it was only interested in the defeat of the republican government and

the substitution of a pro-Catholic dictatorship. What the Church does want is to regain its former power, and ultimately to achieve world domination. England is one of the main obstacles in the way, and Catholic organisations strive to bring this country back to "that happy state" when she was the "Dowry of Mary."<sup>2</sup> And in this connection—as in others—it is the end only which concerns the Church, not the means.

"The Catholic Herald" openly admitted, on November 26, 1932, that:—

"The Catholic Church is always prepared to come to terms with any Government in the world. Pagan, tyrannical, dictatorial, republican, imperial, monarchical, the Church makes no distinction. She is concerned solely for the souls of her children."<sup>3</sup>

The President should have known this, just as he should have known that the Church has always kept its flock in a state of appalling superstition and ignorance. He could have discovered that, in Ireland, the Catholic Truth Society offers in return for an annual subscription of one guinea—apart from copies of certain publications—"this unusual privilege: All Masses offered for the repose of the soul of a deceased member of the Society bear, in addition to the ordinary fruits of the Holy Sacrifice, a plenary indulgence applicable only to the soul of the deceased member whether or not the Masses are said at a Privileged Altar or by a Privileged Priest."<sup>4</sup>

It was with the supreme pontiff of this Church that President Roosevelt desired to align himself in the hopes of improving the world! Moreover, the President expressed hopes "that all of the churches of the world which believe in a common God will throw the great weight of their influence into this great cause." But what a vain hope!

Patrick Murphy, the Catholic, and John Smith, the Protestant (of some kind) can't even agree in their small sphere, and certainly wouldn't let their respective son and daughter marry each other, if they could prevent it. Men in the armed forces can't even pray together although they believe in the same demiurge. In Belfast and Glasgow they have stressed their differences violently. All of which hardly suggests much chance of world co-operation. Furthermore, I suspect that the Protestant churches would fear union more than the Catholic, for it would probably bring about their absorption in the larger organisation which they would hardly relish.

President Roosevelt was nearer to the solution of the present tragical world situation when he said that: "While statesmen are considering a new order of things, the new order may well be at hand. I believe that it is even now being built, silently but inevitably, in the hearts of masses whose voices are not heard, but whose common faith will write the final history of our time." He ruined the statement by insisting upon the importance of "some trust in a divine plan," without which "peoples perish," but he had recognised the main essential, which the peoples themselves must grasp if there is to be a new world. This is that nobody can lead them there. They will have to achieve it collectively, and much hard work and hard thinking will be required in the process. And President Roosevelt's "good friend" the Pope epitomises the impediments in the way—impediments which must be surmounted.

C. McCALL.

<sup>1</sup> Letters of Pope Pius XII and President Roosevelt in "Foundations for Peace." (Catholic Truth Society.)

<sup>2</sup> See advertisement on cover of C.T.S. publication, "Heaven."

<sup>3</sup> "No Friend of Democracy," by Edith Moore. (International Publishing Company.) Page 48.

<sup>4</sup> See advertisement on cover of C.T.S. of Ireland publication, "The Atheist." (Available in this country.)