

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### War and Religion

SINCE the World War came to an end I have been asked if I would place on record the same kind of book I issued when the 1918 war ceased. The book referred to is one that bore the title of "War, Civilisation, and the Churches." That has been out of print for many years. The book had a good sale in the U.S.A., and also in India. I hope I may be excused if I note that one well-known American newspaper said that "The Freethinker" was probably the only English paper that would care to reprint its war-time leaders. The book was a reprint of the articles written in war days. It may be noted that the use of religion in the first war was much greater than it was in the second. The greatest user of all on religion has been Montgomery; but while he made good use of God he was said to never attack unless he had his men and his munitions just as he wished. That showed good judgment, if it did not redound to his religious faith.

In the second war religion has not been nearly so much to the front. The religious Press was very careful, and there was little that would redound to the credit of the Churches. The angels that appeared at the birth of Jesus were slow in their actions, and the talk of good will to all men did not seem to run well with bombs and rockets and broken churches, to say nothing of the careless way in which God and his angels just stood enjoying the circus. Perhaps the heavenly army noted that the mortals were paying too much attention to munitions and too little to heavenly things. Perhaps we ought to thank God for giving us the atomic bomb because that did shorten the war with Japan, while their god was simply kicked out. Or it may have been that the angels took pleasure in watching the fireworks. Heaven must be a very dull place—judging from accounts given by the Churches of heavenly entertainments. Trumpets are rather old-fashioned, and singing psalms must grow very dull. But I will take the hint given me by a very old and careful reader and repeat a few lines of comment that belongs to the book named. It was written as a kind of comment to the First World War.

"We are fighting—for what? For victory evidently. That is involved in every conflict. But it is evidently too subtle for our political leaders to realise that the present Germany has grown out of existing situations. Are we never to get rid of the foolish conclusion that Germans are not as we are; that Germans are made of other material; that German human nature differs from other forms of human nature. Surely the extent to which Germans differ from other people—Russian, British, Italian—must be explainable in terms of human nature in a lump. Of course all

groups differ from one another, but an explanation of this cannot be due to that fetish of the ignorant, "race." Surely, if the Germans love to obey an order (all Germans do not so feel), if, as Meredith said, 'an Englishman has a constitutional crick in the neck at the sight of a Lord' (all Englishmen do not so bow), these differences are obviously due to the character of the social environment: a quality which lies at the base of human development whether the people be black, white or yellow. One needs to go no further than our own country, and that of the U.S.A., to establish the truth of what we have said. The fact is that the human animal is the most elastic of all animals. All human progress is dependent upon this. The animal begins at the same point as did his progenitor. The human commences where his parents left off. Therein lies the key.

"Let us, then, discriminate between peace terms and peace aims. . . . One of the first aims should be that of national disarmament. I press that, leaving an international police force with the wish and the power to secure a real peace. 'I am the guardian of my own honour' was once the cry of the individual. To act on it to-day would often land a man in prison. If we are really aiming at world peace, we must give in order to get. I know of nothing more stupid, whether we take the ethical or the national side, than the idea that peace can be permanently gained merely by stronger and larger armies. There can be no world peace while different nations are left to judge the validity and value of their own claims. If we are to have peace, real peace, we must establish a perpetual 'League of Peoples.' There must be equality of peoples, and the equality must be of the quality of the judgments that is found in an upright court, and also powerful enough to see that its own decisions are carried out. Without this state of things every defeat in war lays the desire for another adventure.

"The issue before the world is law or war. We must settle that or we must go on building up for war after war. We must kill national war as we have in so many cases killed personal war. 'I alone am a judge of my own honour' is one of the most absurd and the most lying maxims that have ever existed."

I have taken this brief summary of my own writing during the 1918 war because it covers all in essence that can be said in the war that we claim to have just finished. At the time of writing, we can only say with truth that we have stopped war in certain directions. The truth is that you may win a war at the cost of your own dislocation, and also at the price of lowering the ethical level of your own society; but you cannot win peace and justice by military victories however much you strive for it.



Indeed, the game is getting too deadly for any intelligent person not to see the truth of what has been said. You cannot prove that a country is in the wrong because it has lost a battle; although it is a debatable question whether it is not often the greater of the two "losers." Society is beginning to see it. The man in the street is beginning to see it.

I have often thought that if it were possible to send to war men of not less than fifty years of age, and leave the younger people to carry on, there would be few wars. The good sign we have before us now is the growing recognition that no one can "win" a war. One can only say that the other fellow has been disqualified. We cannot say that the other fellow has won, for no one can say which is the "other fellow," and which has won anything. There is victory—but of what?

### A Shadow of the Past

It is not foreign to what I have been saying to give a glance to the speech delivered in Holland by Mr. Churchill. There are two points only with which I am concerned in this journal. One is a matter of fact; the other is an invitation to national armies that are very likely to promote war at some future date. If we are to put an end to war we must work to put an end to the possibility of it occurring.

Mr. Churchill commenced his speech by paying a rather extravagant compliment to Holland—excusable but not accurate. When we are told that the Continent of Europe—and particularly Holland—laid the foundation of the Christian religion he is talking rhetoric, not history. And when he proceeds to say that the European Continent was "the origin of the culture, arts, philosophy and science both of ancient and modern times," including "the foundation of Christian faith and Christian ethics," his rhetoric is so obvious that it carries with it its own condemnation.

Holland has played a part, a very great part in the history of Europe. She gave freedom of opinion to a degree that no other country gave, and she gave much to Europe in many directions, much more than our teachers usually give us. But when we are told bluntly Holland was the foundation of Christianity, of the Christian faith, it can fit only the fact that no creed or system has ever so distorted history to fit its own aims as has Christianity. Even keeping to the Christian scheme, the God sacrificed by his worshippers, or, to put it more accurately, the selected man who becomes a god by and through becoming ceremonially sacrificed, is a practice that was in being long, long before the Christian religion was in existence. Rhetoric is often an interesting exercise but it should be reserved for the proper occasion.

Mr. Churchill was on a different ground, one on which he was more familiar than in the matter of origins, when he turned to a matter of immediate interest; and granted that what he said had not a concealed meaning, his counsel was good. It was with a daring air that Mr. Churchill, rather apologetically, turned to his audience and said, "I am now going to say something that will astonish you." The road for something daring had been broken, and there is something to be really astonishing. So the daring step was taken, and Mr. Churchill let loose his conviction that there must be created a "United States of Europe." Good,

splendid—but only on the assumption that this "United States of Europe" is not to be used as a threat to Russia. If that should be the case then war is inevitable just so soon as that very elastic thing "National honour" finds itself threatened. Armed forces facing each other are a standing invitation to war. If it were otherwise we might reduce our "forces" to a mere police guard at once.

But that phrase, "The United States of Europe," it sounded familiar. It is familiar. Mr. Churchill must know where it came from, and also that it was first used by a man who spent his life in the interests of humanity, a man who 150 years ago drew out plans for the bettering of the life of the poor, who fought for freedom in England, in France, in America—he, in fact, created the wording "The United States of America"—and who saved the revolting Americans when they stood facing defeat from the British soldiers. The same man helped to frame the Declaration of Freedom set up by the French, who, together with Russia, gave us the two greatest and deepest revolts that ever appeared in the history of mankind.

But this Englishman did more than plan for wars and revolutions of dynasties. Almost alone he stood for a great revolution of the life of mankind. His aim was best expressed when a great American said, "Where liberty is, there is my country"; to which the greater Englishman said, "Where liberty is not, there is my country." The working classes in England were in sad need, and it was this man who drew out plans that we are enjoying to-day. He planned, as the Rights of Man, a pension scheme for old age, education for all, an allowance for children until they reached a given age, education was to be for all and the costs were to come partly from the more wealthy. He planned a gift for a couple who need help for marriage, balanced by an allowance for old age, with many more rules for all men that we are just beginning to adopt. In France he played his part in the great revolution with his "Kill the King but spare the man." And in America he provided the title of "The United States of America." He was also among the first of those who claimed the abolition of slavery and the equal rights of women. Beyond doubt he was one of the greatest of England's sons, and never has England treated one of her sons more meanly. The world has yet to pay him the homage that should be his.

I had almost forgotten to give his name. It was Thomas Paine. Churchill might with fitness have introduced the name of this great humanitarian, even at some little risk for his own popularity. How Paine would have smiled to hear one of his many suggestions used by an ex-Prime Minister of England repeating his suggestion for the creation of a United States of Europe as a step towards peace.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Pamphlets for the People

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## THE PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM OF SERVETUS

KEEN controversy has arisen concerning Servetus' priority in the discovery of the pulmonary circulation. Whether Colombo or Servetus made the discovery independently remains an open question, but Servetus was undoubtedly the first to announce the minor circulation of the blood through the lungs, by means of the pulmonary arteries and veins, in print. Moreover, Servetus' pronouncement prepared the way for the achievement of Harvey, who, 75 years later, in 1628, amplified the earlier discovery by this proof of the general circulation of the blood in animal organisms.

After the appearance of his *Christianity Restored*, Servetus resided in France in seeming security amid a cultured circle of friends, little suspecting that he was in danger of betrayal to Catholic Inquisitors by Protestant enemies. For de Trie, an intimate of Calvin's, complained that heresies and blasphemies were tolerated in France that were pitilessly punished in Protestant Geneva and that the worst sinner was a physician named Michael Servetus, who in Vienne passed under the alias of Villeneuve.

Consequently, Servetus was closely interrogated, his lodgings searched for incriminating documents, and his printers and assistants examined, all, however, without success. So de Trie obtained from Calvin written evidence of Servetus' heresies which he sent to the Inquisitors. Then Servetus was arrested, tried and convicted, but modern Catholic and Protestant commentators admit that the intervention of de Trie was that of a malicious and fanatical bigot.

Calvin's complicity in this shameful proceeding has been variously estimated. But as Dr. Wilbur dispassionately notes: "From the first there were those who discerned behind the hands of Esau the voice of Jacob, believing or suspecting that the letters signed by de Trie had been dictated or at least suggested by Calvin. This view was apparently held by the judges who condemned Servetus at Vienne, who in their sentence recited as ground for their action the letters and other writings addressed by him to Calvin."

In his fatal trial at Geneva, Servetus stressed his conviction that Calvin had malevolently dictated the letters produced at Vienne, and there is no doubt that Calvin supplied the documents that led to Servetus' trial and sentence. But with the probable connivance of friends, Servetus escaped from custody. So in default of burning him alive, the authorities burned him in effigy with five bales of his books.

After his escape from Vienne, Servetus vanished for a time. As no place seemed secure, he wandered from pillar to post. In safe in France, he ventured to Geneva hoping to depart to Zurich. Unfortunately, he was in Calvin's city on Sunday, when everyone was compelled to attend Church. While there he was recognised and his presence reported to Calvin, who immediately denounced him to the magistrate as a pestilent heretic. Servetus was arrested in church and conveyed to the city prison and although Calvin never admitted his responsibility for Servetus' arrest in Vienne, he openly avowed his actions in Geneva and declared that he was thus rendering service to his deity.

Calvin's dictatorship in Geneva had many opponents, and at one time he was driven into exile. But during the turmoil that assailed the Protestant pastors, fearing that the Romanists would regain control, implored Calvin to return. But even then it seemed doubtful whether the autocratic Calvin could recover authority, so numerous were his bitter enemies.

It was in the midst of this uproar that Servetus appeared on the scene. His arrest and examination proved the occasion of a marked display of party spirit which exhibited determined opposition to the theocratic system of Calvin. So he openly came forward as Servetus' accuser, but he later retired from active

participation in the trial as the Attorney-General now conducted the case on behalf of the State.

Servetus seemed satisfied that he had influential supporters among those at variance with Calvin and made no concessions. But his appeal for legal assistance was curtly refused, and his prospects darkened. Also, Calvin prejudiced the trial by his written statement that: "Anyone that really and seriously reflects upon the matter will acknowledge that it was his [Servetus'] purpose to extinguish the light of sound doctrine and overthrow religion." On this assertion Dr. Wilbur comments: "A more utter distortion of Servetus' purpose than these last three words it would be impossible to make."

When the Churches were petitioned they expressed little sympathy with Servetus, and the verdict in his case seemed a foregone conclusion. The pastors deplored Servetus' "wicked and horrible blasphemies against the Trinity and the Son of God and his insulting impudence to Calvin." A few suggested a less terrible punishment than burning alive for his heretical teachings which imperilled the souls of the faithful.

All endeavours to make Servetus recant proving abortive, Calvin visited him in prison and admonished him concerning his alleged enormities but, finding his victim adamant, abandoned him to his doom, although Farel and other ministers remained with him to the last.

When Servetus was taken to the Hotel de Ville to receive his sentence he asked for death by decapitation, "Lest the great suffering of death by fire should lead him in despair to retract what he believed to be true and so to lose his soul." Farel interceded for him but the magistrate was inexorable.

Servetus then faced the flames and he asked the multitude to pray for him. To cite Dr. Wilbur's narrative: "Led to a pile of wood made up of small sticks and bundles of green oak with leaves still on, he was seated on a log with his feet touching the ground, his body chained to a stake, and his neck bound to it by a coarse rope; his head covered with straw or leaves sprinkled with sulphur, and his book tied to his thigh. He besought his executioner not to prolong his torture; and when the torch met his sight he uttered a terrible shriek, while the horrified people threw on more wood. After about half an hour life was extinct. He had died and made no sign."

The judicial murder of Servetus did not kill his doctrines, while all true Humanists deplored the tragedy. The ministers, however, were practically unanimous in applauding it. The "gentle" Melancthon approved the crime, while Bullinger not only commended it but asserted that, "if Satan were to return from hell to preach to the world as he pleased he would employ many of Servetus' expressions."

Peter Martyr rejoiced at the burning of a pestilent blasphemer. Gallicius approved it; Walther saw God's hand in it, while Musculus commemorated the crime in verse. It is indeed one of the great ironies of history that these truculent "reformers" have been acclaimed as the apostles of religious liberty. A few of the less orthodox doubted the justice of the sentence, while the rigid believers wrote to Calvin deprecating all signs of sympathy.

Still a few watchful observers, seeing the folly of Protestants burning one another, suggested a more mild punishment for dissenters. Others went so far as to accuse Calvin of spiteful intolerance. And, as Dr. Wilbur pertinently notes: "For at this very period Protestants were being burned by scores in France, and the Catholic reaction under 'bloody Mary' was beginning in England. The statement of the Catholic Varillas that Calvin's defence of exterminating heretics was not well received by the Calvinists in France, is credible enough."

All of this testifies to the truth that the contending creeds of Christendom did their utmost to make impossible the appearance of such intellectual liberty as that which we have so far gained and hope to preserve.



## ACID DROPS

We wonder whether some of our religious would-be leaders are on the verge of insanity or just rogues? Here, for example, is Archbishop Campbell (R.C.), who says that "the storm of rapine and pillage and murder that is shaking our civilisation is the denial of God." Well, who is it that denies God? We are sorry to say that this description does not cover even half the people, and also that he might give some attention to his fantasies if Archdeacon Campbell had the slightest glimmer of sense. Real, genuine Atheists do not cover more than a quarter of the population, although there might be more who would call themselves Atheists. A *real* Atheist, one who thinks and acts in terms of Atheism, dealing with life wisely and justly, is not common. No one is too great a fool to believe in ghosts and gods. But it does take both courage and intelligence properly to cleanse the mind of the poison of religion.

The fact is that every war, no matter its quality, leaves society lower than it was before the war broke out. And if our *leaders* were courageous and honest they would be the first to proclaim the fact. War does not create wisdom, it merely sharpens cunning. It does not make men more humane, it merely sanctifies a degree of brutality and cruelty that comes with every war. And after the war is over the country or the world has to pay the price for our actions. To reply to this by saying that the good suffer with the bad does no more than confirm all we have already said.

Mr. Richard Stokes, Labour Member for Ipswich, addressing an all-Catholic Brains Trust in Glasgow, said, "I put my Faith first"; and to make that clear added, "I surrender on matters of faith and morals as Catholic teaching. But that does not mean I accept the dictate of any bishop, priest or rich member of the Catholic community." This is a delightful exhibition of a man who is trying to bring two essentially different things into one. Consider. Mr. Stokes hands the question of morals to the priest, and accepts without question what the priest gives him. Next, he comes to "faith," and the priest tells him just what he has to believe. It does not matter in the least whether Mr. Stokes understands this religion or not. He is just told he must believe it. Really, when a man throws overboard his own independence concerning morality and religion, he has covered a rather large field. What is left is Mr. Stokes telling the world, "I have no independence of mind on morals or religion, I believe what I am told to believe, and that is an end of it." Poor thing!

Miss Barbara Ward, at the same Brains Trust, said that people do not read the Bible enough. That, too, is a very foolish thing to say. She should bethink herself that people did once upon a time read the Bible more than they do now—and it led to disbelief of the Christian religion. It was not less reading of the Bible that led to the admitted decay of religion, but understanding. Miss Ward should really be more careful how she throws things about—even in a religious broadcast. Listeners may think, and that is dangerous—for religion.

Another genius—of a certain order—was present at the same gathering. Fr. Agnellus said that the (R.C.) Church did not despise the Bible, but people do not always do what is taught. We sympathise with Fr. Agnellus in his difficulty. The Bible tells us that the world was made in a few days, and the people will not believe it. The Bible also said that they who worshipped false gods should be stoned to death. But people nowadays, except those of the Nazi type, will not have it. It is true that the Church itself did not stone to death God-offenders, but it burned them, and as God loved "a sweet savour" he may have been more pleased than seeing unbelievers stoned to death. We wonder whether Miss Ward and this priest will have the courage, the honesty and decency—either one will be operative—to insist that when the values of religion are under discussion there shall be present some people who represent Atheists. At present these discussions on religion are nothing more nor less than the Nazi method of education in a milder form than the one practised by Hitler.

According to the "British Weekly," the decks are at last being cleared for action and a resolute campaign to "evangelise" London through a determined "Christian Commando" is being planned "on a scale never hitherto attempted." Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Church Armyites, and brave warriors from the Salvation Army are all going to be in it, and at least 6,000,000 people are going to be dealt with—though it is only fair to point out that the organisers have not yet gone into details how all this would be done. However, they are going to plead for at least a quarter of an hour of pure Gospel preaching wherever they can get a hearing—in clubs, pubs, canteens, etc.

The commandos would, as far as possible, be "professionals" who would do their "stuff" (we are humorously told) in a "professional" manner. "Christ" would thus be offered to the workers in a thoroughly businesslike way; and it was hoped to employ at least 3,000 commandos, ready to brave every hardship to get through the enemy lines and conquer souls for God Almighty—or Jesus Christ, if that sounds more thrilling. The horrid business of cash was naturally introduced, and £30,000 was asked for as a first instalment.

There has been a teachers' strike in Dublin for about six months. And now the Catholic Church is getting uneasy, for the schools were well saturated with religion, and the teaching of religion to children is being neglected. This we can understand and appreciate for the Church, while not being interested in *education*, has always been very much interested in *instruction*. And none better than the Churches know that once the grip on the child is lost Christianity in a modern world is doomed—in fact, it is doomed anyway, but there is always "hope," even though that hope gets weaker and weaker. Meanwhile, the strike goes on and the prospect of children being educated instead of instructed.

The Rev. D. Whitely says that Church-going is now looked upon as eccentric. Now we would not say that. There never was anything eccentric in a man or woman going to Church. The Church was a place where God was "at home" to anyone who wished to talk to him, or sing for him, or politely to tell him that there was too much rain, or too little rain, and so forth. But there was nothing eccentric about it.

How the new Education Act is working can be seen in the way the local authorities are being deluged with forms. First, the Ministry has prepared a booklet which lists these forms. It appears that there are 171 administrative memoranda, 18 circulars, ten provisional rules and orders, 26 draft rules and orders, 27 statutory rules and orders, four official pamphlets, and other subsidiary documents. As a lot of this is now out of date there will be still more rules and orders, official and otherwise, and the journal "Education" makes many drastic comments and criticisms on them. In fact "to some local education authorities obscurity is most profound." All the same we doubt whether any of this official obscurity is as profound as the "religious education" insisted upon by the new Education Act.

There is no doubt that for some years the more wide-awake leaders of Christianity have been awake to the fact that historical Christianity is wearing very thin. Attempts to cope with this fact have been made in various ways. One who feels the matter rather acutely is Prebendary Herbert Harris, of Alexandra Park, London. He says:—

"Those Christians who frown upon the secularising of Sunday are but weakening the power of the Church to stem the drift towards Godlessness."

The Prebendary goes further, and would like to see Church services in the morning and leave the rest of the day, until the evening came when the churches would open again. He must be sanguine if he believes that people, after having a half-day in the country, or healthily tired from games, etc., will turn up for an evening service.



# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**SAMUEL WARD.**—Thanks for cuttings; also for appreciation of work done. The first were useful; the second was interesting and cheerful.

**T. W. WARREN.**—You will probably find what you want in "A Short History of Science to the Nineteenth Century," by Charles Singer, a reliable writer. It was published in 1941; price 7s. 6d. Another good book, "A History of Medicine," by Douglas Guthrie; published 1945; 420 pages; price 30s. The book is illustrated and deals with Ancient and Mohammedan science.

**R. MONTAGUE.**—Thanks for notes; may find room for them soon. We are pleased to welcome a comparatively new reader, and that he finds "The Freethinker" "great stuff." We can only say we have always given of our best.

**Benevolent Fund N.S.S.**—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 10s. from Mr. J. F. Shine, and 5s. from the Blackburn Branch N.S.S. to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.*

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*Lecture notices must reach 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.*

## SUGAR PLUMS

Making God a Mathematical Deity was the feat which gave the late Sir James Jeans a certain notoriety in Theistical circles—it was better to have a Great Mathematician as a God than not to have a God at all. Unfortunately, Sir James, in a moment of absent-mindedness, wrote "creator" instead of "Creator," which prompted the Roman Catholic Fr. Degan to write to Jeans and ask him why he used a small "c"? This is Sir James's reply:—

"I think you are reading too much in my use of capitals or the reverse. I should probably write a creator but the Creator, just as I should say a god (meaning Zeus or Marduk, etc) but God, meaning the God (whether Plato's or Jehovah)."

Commenting on this "The Universe" claims it is what amounts to a profession of faith in the existence of God. The fact is that all Sir James Jeans has brought forth has been an unknown quantity of which he knows nothing at all. Certainly the Roman Church would never admit that kind of thing as "God," but as Sir James is a well-known scientific authority—within limits—the "Universe," in a go-as-you-please country, uses him to make their own worn-out deity look up to date. The world has changed greatly when a Roman Catholic paper calls in a scientist to provide God, who can only be put as a mere "X," with a recommendation from science.

We may be permitted to remind readers that a scathing criticism of Professor Jeans' position will be found in Chapman Cohen's "God and the Universe," a new edition of which has just been issued. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 2d.

The Leicester Secular Society opens its indoor lecture season today. Mr. R. H. Rosetti is the speaker on "Do we live when we Die?" An attractive syllabus has been arranged with a lecture every Sunday evening commencing at 6-30 with free admission. The many Freethinkers in Leicester should ensure another successful season for the local Secular Society.

## SPECIAL

At the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. at Bradford there was a lengthy discussion on a motion standing in the name of the Manchester Branch. There was no prospect of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, and as the President was not in favour of the motion it was resolved that the matter be dealt with at a Special Meeting called for further discussion at a later date.

This has now been arranged for Sunday, October 27, in the Holborn Hall, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1., the discussion to be taken at 3 o'clock. Branches of the N.S.S. may appoint delegates, and all members may attend on showing their membership card. Those who are without cards will be given one from the General Secretary at or before the meeting, and all members will have an equal right to speak and vote. It is hoped that all who can attend will do so.

(Signed) CHAPMAN COHEN,  
President.

A number of N.S.S. Branches announce lectures for today. Mr. J. T. Brighton speaks for the Bradford Branch in the Mechanics Institute, Town Hall Square, Bradford, at 6-30 p.m. on "Eve or Evolution." Mr. G. Thompson, of Liverpool, lectures for the Manchester Branch in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, on "Religious Influence Today," at 3 p.m. Belfast Branch has a lecture in Old Museum Buildings, 7, College Square North, at 7-30 p.m.; and the West London Branch opens a course of lectures at the National Trade Union Club, 12, Great Newport Street, opposite Leicester Square Tube Station, W.C. 1, with a lecture by Mr. F. A. Hornbrook on "The Church in Politics," commencing at 6-30 p.m. In all cases members and sympathisers can help by attending with friends and making the lectures known.

We wonder what must have enticed the B.B.C. to permit the following to be printed in "The Listener":—

I still remember with unholy glee my first experience of a wireless set. It was a Sunday morning; my host turned a couple of knobs and miraculously a sermon filled the drawing-room—not an ordinary sermon, but a bishop's sermon. I listened spellbound, but not for long. Soon I was aware of an only too familiar feeling: I was bored. As on so many previous occasions, I bowed my head and resigned myself.

And then I had an inspiration. "Couldn't we," I said to my host, "couldn't we turn this off?" He nodded, again turned a knob and the bishop was abolished. It had been amazing to be able to turn on a bishop, but nothing like so amazing as to be able to turn him off, and I realized at once that a new era had begun.

There must be multitudes who would like to turn off the preachers from the lower to the highest. But, of course, the B.B.C. has said openly that it has to tone down its religious lessons to the most ignorant section of our people, lest their faith be weakened.

Mr. F. A. Hornbrook, who is constantly breaking out—where Freethought is concerned—has now produced an interesting and instructive booklet bearing the title "The Vatican Menace." That the Vatican is a menace to freedom of speech and thought no one who is familiar with Roman Catholic actions will deny. The booklet covers ten countries in which the Papacy operates, and the marshalling of these will be certain to inspire others to join in the hunt and so help in the fight for intellectual freedom. The essay can be obtained from the headquarters of "The Freethinker," The Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London. The price is 1s. post free. It was a saying of Charles Bradlaugh that the ultimate struggle will lie between Atheism and Roman Catholicism. Things are moving that way.



## BIGOTRY, BIGOTRY

It would be a fine point to decide whether the traditional policy in the posts of this country to give refuge to persecuted aliens, has gained more from their knowledge and industrial skill than from the contributions they have made to thought and culture. In any such attempted estimate Prof. Hayek would materially help to tip the scale in favour of the latter. An Austrian, as a result of Fascism he left his "native" country and came to England and became naturalised. The University of London very soon gave him an appointment as Tooke Professor of Economics, Science and Statistics. As one who holds doctorates in three subjects by merits and F.B.A., he would be a great acquisition to the University. He was invited and delivered on December 17, 1945, the twelfth Finley lecture at University College, Dublin. What he saw occur in his native Austria, and the horrors of Fascism on the continent, compel him to confirm A. de Tocqueville's words: "I should have loved freedom, believed at all times, but in the time in which we live I am ready to worship it." The title took for the lecture was "Individualism True and False." He contrasted the French school of social and economic thinkers of the 18th century the encyclopaedists, Rousseau and the Physiocrats with the British, Ferguson, Tucker, Adam Smith, Burke. The French School, to Prof. Hayek, is the source of false individualism which he distinguishes as rational. Which has and must always develop into the opposite of *genuine individualism* into socialism and collectivism. "What then are the essential characteristics of true individualism," asks Hayek, and answers, "the first that should be said is that it is primarily a theory of society, an attempt to understand the forces which determine the social life of man, and only in the second instance a set of political maxims derived from this view of society. This fact by itself should be sufficient to refute the silliest of common misunderstandings. The belief that individualism loses its argument in the assumption of the existence of isolated self-contained individuals, instead of starting from men whose whole nature and character are determined by their existence in society. But its basic contention is quite a different one; it is that there is no other way towards understanding of social phenomena but through our understanding of individual actions directed towards other people and guided by their expected behaviour." As opposed to abstract theories of the state as possessing authority distinct from the individuals composing it.

This attitude to the state is essentially commonsense and practically based not on metaphysical verbiage but tangible subject matter. It is the antithesis, the negation of all theories that assume the existence of the state as a whole which necessarily results in communism, fascism, socialism, collectivism, generally. Systems which by their essential nature are destructive of individual freedom. All social institutions, all economic and cultural concerns are centralised in the state, under the absolute authority of and directed by autocratic officials, who issue dictates commands to which the individual must submit and obey. Socialism and collectivism generally are, as Herbert Spencer said, militaristic. With the corollary of regimentation and disciplinist, the reduction of individuals and all things to a decadent mediocre uniformity. The final end of all activity is the good of, the exaltation of, the state. And that in the last analysis is a group of omnipotent officials. As in the Soviet Union at the present time, the lives, the actions, the very thoughts of 170 million people are all absolutely under the determination, the despotic control of a small group of men of which Stalin is supreme. Where there is no free press, no security of the person, no freedom of opinion, where men may and do disappear without any possibility of their relatives ever hearing of them again. No liberty to leave the country, where individuals and communities who incur the suspicion of high officials are deported. A vast and growing population kept in complete ignorance of the outside world. Where anybody

may be a spy, one of the secret police. The people had said, "Being afraid to speak we shall lose the use of speech and become dumb animals." It is interesting though most alarming to observe day by day all the evils, the shocking shrinking of our liberties precisely as predicted by our great political thinkers, under a Socialist Government. The distressing realisation of Socialism we practise, as Herbert Spencer foresaw it as the "coming slavery." What distinguishes Hayek as a social and political thinker of a very high order is the appreciation of Adam Smith as a really profound and philosophic thinker. The truth that he and other Scotch thinkers saw. That contrary to the contemporary French school of St. Simons, etc, which Hayek calls the "rationalists"; thought and taught, that society could not cohere nor service without the deliberate directions of all its activities by an absolute state directing all actions to the end it desired. Whereas Adam Smith points out that the total actions of men quite unintentionally in society produce beneficial results they do not or will not force. That there are impersonal social forces non-conscious that work for the health and prosperity of society. Just as all the most important functions of the body are carried on regardless of the will. That these forces had evolved natural agencies far superior to any that men lead Socialism can devise. What so diverse and beneficial in its action properly understood as competition, "supply and demand," "division of labour," complete freedom of international exchange?

Recent contributions to "The Freethinker" are confirmatory of a regrettable fact, that to have outworn and discarded religious superstitions may make an anti-religious Freethinker, but not a philosophic one, which is incomparably more desirable. The detached habits of mind that approaches all questions with the unbiased mind of a High Court Judge or the lucky possessor of a genuinely scientific mind. No one capable of judging and appreciating the "Road to Serfdom" of Hayek, not afflicted with a religious socialist collectivist bigotry could assuredly desire this epoch-making work with "bogy, bogy," nor with an open mind and industry collect all the facts about Russia since 1917 to 1946, judging them by natural human rights say that the record of capitalism and its potentialities and its services to humanity were not incomparably superior to the results of the Russian experiment. A sad falling off in the devotions to liberty of the Freethinking giants of the past—anti-Socialists' Bradlaugh, Foote, and those of these degenerate times.

M. BARNARD.

## AWAY WITH WAR MEMORIALS!

THERE has been some discussion in Parliament as to whether we should or should not, destroy German War Memorials. I say we should. We should destroy them all. They are a symbol of an old and dying order. They are a symbol of brutality and imperialism, war-mongering and blood-letting. They must go.

When I speak of War Memorials I mean everything. The Hag Fund and similar funds should be replaced with a Government grant. The Cenotaph in Whitehall and the cross in the road in the middle of the village must go. The "Two Minutes Silence" must go. Why? Lend me your ears . . .

The "Silence" is a hypocrisy. How many of us are really thinking about the 1914-18 War when we stand still for those minutes? Are we not irritated by it all? Do we not regard it as a fiddling nuisance? I am not judging my fellows by myself. I am judging them in the light of commonsense and a changing order.

Most of the people who stand still on November 11 are of a generation which knows nothing of the war which it commemorates bar what can be learned from badly faked history books.



All the pomp and circumstance and ceremony will get us nowhere. It is time we came to our senses.

The best memorial we can raise to the dead of all the wars of history will be to build a new world on new foundations, and keep it cleared of all the suspicions and propaganda which have made such a world necessary.

FRANCIS I. GOULD.

CORRESPONDENCE

CLERICAL INFLUENCE.

Sir,—Somewhere in the West Riding, in a spot very well known to me, there is still dwelling there amongst us, I am happy and proud to say, a real Grand Old Man—one who has striven since the days of his youth with, at all times, fanatical zeal, loyalty and devotion, to advance and promote the best interests of our common cause in various practical ways.

Possessed of an extraordinary, keen-eyed, penetrating intellect of vision, infallible judgment and a highly developed native wit, he obtains endless fun and abstracts still more pleasure in pursuit of a hobby out of which he "conjures up and concocts" a fund of rich, pungent and artful gems of illuminating phrases or thoughts, often witty and provoking, which he perpetrates upon postcards. These completed, he proceeds to "decant" (like manna from heaven!) upon various priests and members of the Church whom he has previously singled out as being worthy of his peculiar discrimination.

I quote one or two examples of his sagacious style, which will suffice to demonstrate his skill and success in pursuing a skilful method of attack right into the "haunted parlours of the priest-ridden dominions":—

"Without worship the gods perish. No slave, no God!"  
 "If Fascism goes under, God's cause goes under too!"  
 (Hinsley.)

"If the principle of dictatorship is good enough for heaven, it should be good enough for our earth. Heaven is no democracy!"  
 "All belligerents have appealed to God, and none in vain! Impartial not neutral has been his attitude and motto!"

Much judicious propaganda could be well and truly prosecuted if all of us "got together" and copied the idea on a truly concerted plan of perpetual antagonism, about which, however, I will enlarge upon in another direction.

I have been engaged in reading through "The Open Window" in the October issue of "The Literary Guide," and the very interesting comments by "Protonius" upon further aspects of religious education in State schools provided absorbing interest.

He actually quotes a passage extracted from a recent issue of "A.M.A." (Journal of the Assistant Masters' Association in Secondary Schools) contained in a letter from an "Unknown Teacher" discussing the subject of religious education in the light of the scholars' reactions. Many school chaplains and religious instructors live, he says, in a world of spiritual make-believe, quite erroneously supposing that the life of the school centres in the chapel:—

"Those of us to whom a boy can say anything without causing a shock sometimes hear a very different side to the problem. The chapel is a deadly bore, sermons crammed with illogicalities. . . . The schoolboy stands up and glibly lies by stating a creed, 90 per cent. of which he frankly disbelieves, he sings hymns and psalms which are to him untrue. . . ."

This account, says "Protonius," is all the more impressive inasmuch as it does from a teacher who is keen on religious instruction, and who has no use, however, for compulsory services, than can be conceive of anything so damaging to the Church as by forcing youths to attend services, which most of them regard as "a mumbo-jumbo."

"Protonius" proceeds to say that: ". . . it would be very interesting to get at the real opinion of teachers about religious instruction and education in State schools. . . . The only point on which teachers are openly and boldly united is in resistance to clerical interference, but that is not very enlightening since it leaves us ignorant of what sort of religious instruction teachers are willing to provide and of why they are ready to include this highly subjective and argumentative subject in the school curriculum."

He then goes on to say: "Of course we shall never discover this real opinion. Teachers, like others equally subject to and dependent upon the goodwill of committees and councils must necessarily be circumspect. Only anonymously do they unburden their souls by saying things—with which their colleagues agree—in secret."

I think, therefore, that the time has come when all "Free-thinking Fathers and Mothers" should launch out in a concerted campaign upon all the principal schoolmasters and associated teachers by preparing postcards or letters commenting or enlarging on the statements quoted and revealed in "The Unknown Teacher's" letter which, collectively, would prove powerful enough to demonstrate to the teachers concerned how much we deprecate and condemn the encroachment of clerical doctrines into the sphere of State-controlled education. A similar bombardment of letters direct to M.P.s and Ellen Wilkinson at Westminster would materially assist to widen the field of such necessary reform that we hold to be both essential and desirable for our children's future welfare.

By way of "comic relief," when will our enterprising editor arrange to get printed quantities of round, gummed, sticker labels, printed with "Read the 'Freethinker,' by Chapman Cohen—3d., every Sunday," which we could artfully distribute in various and sundry places by affixing them on the windcreens of priests' motor-cars, church doors, wayside pulpits, railway boardings, etc. (With what unholy joy would we prosecute such subversive activities, and what scope for originality lies in such a field of adventure!!).—Yours, etc.,

(Sgd.) J. KEDGY BELLEW.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 4 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY. Highbury Corner, 7 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, October 15, 7 p.m.: "The Impact of Rationalism on Politics," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Passing of Freedom," Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A. LL.D.

West London Branch N.S.S. (The National Trade Union Club, 12, Great Newport Street, W.C. 1, opposite Leicester Square Station).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Church in Politics," Mr. F. A. HORNIBROOK.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m., a lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Belfast Branch N.S.S. (Old Museum Buildings, 7, College Square North).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m., a lecture.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Eve or Evolution," Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON (Co. Durham).

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Do We Live When We Die?" Mr. R. H. ROSETTI.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: "Religious Influence Today," Mr. GEOFFREY THOMPSON (Liverpool).

**GOD AND ME** (revised edition of "Letters to the Lord") by Chapman Cohen. Paper Cover 1s. 4d.; cloth 2s. 8d. post free.

**THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH?** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

**THE MOTHER OF GOD**, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.



## TWO GLORIOUS FAILURES

PRESIDENT TRUMAN has recently announced that the Giant French Liner "Normandie" is to be broken up. Thus ends a chapter of pathetic disasters to what might have been one of the greatest engineering achievements of the century. The great liner "Normandie" on which I sailed on her maiden voyage from Havre in 1937 was dogged by ill luck from the moment she slid from the fine modern quay on her way to Southampton—an hour late. She had a bad press in this country, and from the moment she first achieved full speed it was clear to all that some inherent fault underlay the fantastic luxury of her accommodation and equipment. During dinner the huge statue of France which dominated the great dining hall vibrated and rattled as though shaken by a giant hand, whilst down aft the unbalanced propellers made it difficult to talk without stuttering. Everyone knows her subsequent brief history up to the time when she was consumed by fire in New York harbour—later refloated, and now, alas, condemned. Like the "Great Eastern," the "Normandie" was just a little before her time. Like the "Great Eastern" I shall always regard her as a pathetic but very gallant failure, and as such not without a place in the honour and memory of every true Englishman.

The "Normandie" cannot be rightly associated with the name of any one man. Whereas at this distance of time there are few who would recall the identity of any even remotely responsible for the "Great Eastern" other than Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Most men, having achieved no less than the building of the entire Great Western Railway, two of the world's largest steamships, and innumerable less spectacular engineering works, would have been content to rest on their laurels.

Nearing the age of fifty, it must have occurred to Brunel not only that there was yet much time, but time enough for the most ambitious project of his ever fertile brain. Having after endless difficulty enlisted the support of a sufficient number of rather hesitant backers, he embarked with all the verve and enthusiasm which had already carried him so far, on the last tremendous undertaking which was destined to destroy him. Brunel set himself the task of building a ship so large and powerful that it would not only revolutionise ocean travel, but change completely the whole technique and scope of sea communications throughout the world.

The ship he pictured in his fertile mind was to be six times larger than anything which had ever before been launched since the dawn of history. She was to be driven by sail, paddle and screws, and be capable of making the passage to Australia without refuelling. She was to be fitted with every conceivable luxury and improvement—including the new gas lighting—which in the middle of last century, engineering skill and invention offered. He would design her, build her, and launch her himself, and sail with her in triumph on her maiden voyage before the eyes of an astonished world. So unorthodox and imaginative was her mechanical equipment with her two sets of engines and her special sail gear that Brunel himself referred to her not as a ship but as a "machine." He planned to launch her athwartships, as he believed her too large to handle on ordinary fore and aft slips. From the first attempt to do this everything went wrong. The massive hull could not be moved, and the expense of finally getting her into the water almost ruined her anxious owners. Brunel's great undertaking then proved to be a tragic race with death—which it lost by one day. He was stricken down with paralysis alongside one of the "Great Eastern's" massive funnels the day before she sailed. He was taken home, lingered a few days while she rounded the Kent Coast without him, on her first voyage down channel, and died brokenhearted on being told by some misguided busy-body that when lying off the South Coast on an official inspection she had been partly wrecked by an explosion in which several of her crew perished.

With her creator no longer living, the subsequent career of the "Great Eastern" was one long chapter of disasters. People said she was cursed. Superstitious sailors shook their heads and asked what could be expected of a vessel which had been launched *sideways*. Her captain was drowned when coming ashore in a dinghy on the South Coast. Off the coast of Ireland she ran aground. She made several Atlantic crossings, during which the very waters seemed to resent the intrusion of such a monster, tearing and buffeting her until most of her upper works and her paddle-boxes were torn from her like matchwood. Disaster after disaster overtook the "Great Eastern," until her owners, finding it impossible to induce anyone to sail in her, finally cut their losses and laid her up.

She ended up at Liverpool, lying alongside the quay, plastered with crude advertisements, where streams of people paid sixpence each to walk through her tremendous saloons and over her unridy decks for an evening's amusement. When she was finally broken up there were found between her double-plated sides the skeletons of two workmen who years earlier had been missed during her construction on the Lower Thames.

The "Great Eastern" was a "glorious failure." A failure because, with the exception of one useful voyage to America (when she laid the Atlantic cable), she never succeeded in justifying her existence or her enormous cost. Glorious because her creator, working if not actually in the dark at least in the twilight of the unknown, had (we now see) anticipated almost every innovation and improvement subsequently to be incorporated in her most successful and even larger descendants.

Eighty years later the history of the "Great Eastern" was destined to repeat itself when, in 1937, the "Normandie" shook herself free from the dockside at Havre and headed for the Channel. She is to be spared the unthinkable indignity of her great Victorian ancestor, though after only nine years of indifferent and erratic service she is now condemned to the breaker's yard.

J. STURGE-WHITING.

## THE INVISIBLE INFLUENCE

Gods, goblins, ghosts and devils  
Descending from the blue;  
Surrounding us and hounding us  
From here to Timbuctu.

All formless, heartless, senseless—  
Invisible to view;  
Yet chiding us and riding us—  
A shady, shadow crew.

They fill the parson's belly  
And keep him busy, too,  
Approving them and shoving them  
In front of me and you.

Of Man they've made a weakling,  
Drinking the witches' brew;  
Abetting them and letting them  
Put *him* into a stew!

He's curbed in thought and action  
And scared he'll go askew;  
Afraid of hell—(they've played him well!)  
What is the saving cue?

Just *cast* them on the scrap-heap,  
And trust in Reason true;  
Don't grieve or care—but leave them there;  
The rest—the *flies* will do!

W. H. WOOD.