

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

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Vol. LXVIII.—No. 30

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER.]

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Forlorn Hope

ONCE again the annual gathering of the leading Christian bodies has been counting its chances of regaining some lost ground. The result is to bring about a desire to get more church-goers, and increase the number of the servants of God. We have had the same cry year after year with the same result—another hopeless outlook. Some young men are ready to fight for God, but their intellectual calibre is of a very poor quality. The leaders have to face the fact that when church-goers leave, they seldom come back, and on that head the present leaders know that better than we do. Those who are brought up without religion are not very likely to turn to the religious beliefs of their parents, and two-thirds of the people think about a new social world, a better world—on earth.

All this we are sure the clergy know as well as we do. They must also be quite aware that their first task is to make men and women feel that personal religious belief is necessary to secure a better world. But that is a glaring falsity. People are wishing for a better world and life. But both must be here, not somewhere without place or purpose. Three or four centuries ago the priesthood were looked upon by the people with some degree of respect. To-day, the larger part of this has died out and there is little chance of it returning. Change of conditions has brought about a new world. And as new avenues of employment expressed themselves, Churches began to be drained of recruits. The development of social life opened a new possibility for ambition and improvement. And to cap all, churchmen have sunk lower intellectually year by year. I feel that in this, ex-Dean Inge will agree with me.

I have no wish to raise a cheap sneer at the expense of the clergy, many of whom are perfectly amiable men in many relations of life, but, all the same, I think that many qualified persons would agree with what I have said. As a mere matter of historical fact, each fresh development on the secular side of life has taken something from the Churches. This process has been going on until as Lecky says, "the clergy stands as a baffled and despairing minority, whose most cherished political principles have been almost universally abandoned, who are struggling faintly and ineffectually against the ever-increasing spirit of the age." Political circumstances have thrown the dissenting clergy for support on the masses, but when allowance is made for this, there is little to choose between them.

There is, as a matter of fact, but one function that is legitimately connected with the character of a priest, which is as a mediator between man and his gods; and when that decays then the justification for the existence of a priest has disappeared. The origin and essential function of a priest, whether he belongs to a savage

tribe or a civilised one, is as a mediator between man and some supposed supernatural powers and is a function that is obviously dependent upon the prevailing environment. Where a knowledge of nature is either absent or present in only a small degree, the functions of the priesthood will be active; but with the growth of knowledge its legitimate function sinks into disuse. In civilised countries the belief that a priest has any control over natural processes is rapidly dying out. In the region of the physical sciences it is quite extinct, and even in other matters it exists in only a perfunctory manner. It still exists, perhaps, in the theological fiction that a man who enters the ministry has a social "call," and that reflects little credit on the intelligence of those who believe it. Yet it is certain that a priesthood would never have existed but for this belief, which sprang into being as the result of the ignorance of our remote ancestors.

I am not now concerned with what particular clergy-men may do in their character as citizens; but even as teachers of morals the clergy have not shone. They have lagged far behind laymen in contributing to the growth of a scientific ethic. That is almost entirely due to men and women who were not concerned with religious systems. What I have considered, mainly, is the character of the priesthood as such, and their influence as such, and here their influence has been almost entirely evil. That aspect was well described by one of the best philosophers in the U.S.A.—Lester F. Ward. I am quoting from his "Dynamic Sociology." He says:—

"If all the religious training the world has ever received should be concentrated upon one community and thoroughly indoctrinated into the mind of every member of it, it would be utterly useless as a means of carrying it through an ordeal which threatened it with famine or destruction from climatic influences. . . . Not one of all the wonderful contrivances invented by man for extorting subsistence from nature, for destroying the enemies to man's triumphant progress . . . has ever been attributable to the labours of the priesthood as such, and none of these blessings can ever come directly or indirectly from that source. Yet from the infancy of the race this class of persons has enjoyed a far greater share of the fruits of industry than the producers of wealth themselves. Sacerdotal duties are, and always have been, a special and exceedingly lucrative means of obtaining a livelihood. It required only a little more than ordinary sagacity to perceive that appeals to the sentiment of fear respecting the unknown . . . would exert a powerful influence, and a little calculation was sufficient to determine the best means of making this influence operate in the direction of conveying pecuniary value. The result has been that long before history began the earth was decked with costly temples, and within them a well-fed and

comfortably-clothed priesthood sat enjoying, all unearned, the luxuries vouchsafed by toil and credulity. The reign of this parasitic hierarchy still continues all over the world; and still, to-day, the hard labour of the masses is paying its tithes in support of this non-industrial class, and for the erection of costly edifices which the State exempts from taxation, and which serve no other purpose than to be opened once in each week that honours may be paid and anthems sung to imaginary deities. When we consider the universality of this hierarchic system, it presents one of the most extensive drains which are made upon the productive industry of the world."

From the two distinct points of view the unmistakable decline of religion is seen as a natural result of Man's mental development, and religionists can no longer appeal to the supernatural with the same success as of old. From these two points of view, it is inevitable that the intellectual status of priests should sink lower and lower, perhaps one day to rank upon the same level as the peripatetic fortune-teller or palmist, who would under similar conditions have taken their place as priests. But to-day the priesthood is with us as a strong organisation and it would be very foolish to assume that they will give way without a very long and bitter struggle. But all religions were born, and many of them have died. Rome, Egypt and Greek, while not free from religion, were in such a state that it was a common saying that two priests could not meet each other without a wink. However, the Christian faith gained strength, and the result was the Christian "Dark Ages," and the stamp of that period is still with us. Whether we are safe from another "Dark Age" is more than we can say. But we can, all of us, do something to check the enemy. We might take the counsel of Kingdom Clifford:—

"When men respect human life for the sake of Man, tranquillity, order, and progress go hand in hand; but those who only respected human life because God had forbidden murder, have set their mark upon Europe in fifteen centuries of blood and fire."

We should like that counsel to be repeated every day.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

HELL'S BLAZES!

READERS of, and listeners to, Christian propaganda nowadays will have noted the reluctance to mention an essential dogma of the faith: eternal punishment; a logical outcome of original sin and the atonement. Even the Roman Church, while it preaches hell-fire as of old the world over, dilutes its B.B.C. pronouncements and its journalism in deference to modern humane opinions prevailing in this country.

Dean Inge, who is known for being usually in advance of his fellow-churchmen, often embarrassingly so, wrote recently, "I think, in the past, we have insisted too much on rewards and punishments." The truth is, as the sly old scholar has often indicated, it is the development of rationalist opinion and modern education that has compelled the Church to tone down the crudities of what is rightly called fundamentalism; yet, to all Christians, man's eternal destiny is surely fundamental, and however neglected or obscured by the metaphysical jargon of theologians here, heaven and hell is ever kept in the forefront of Catholic preaching the world over.

Recently in *Tribune* Miss Dorothy L. Sayers gibes at a reviewer of one of her books for a "childish" conception of eternal punishment, declaring that, in the

true Catholic view, hell's flames are "figurative." This interpretation of their faith will be a surprise to the Irish, the Latins and other good Catholics as every Roman pulpit proclaims the opposite view. But Miss Sayers' opinion is that of modern "humanitarianism"; a word which scholarly Catholics seldom use without a sneer.

As if in anticipation of Miss Sayers' statement, the Archbishop of Armagh, in his Lenten sermon for 1947, as reported in the *Irish Times*, was specially concerned to condemn this comforting modern attitude, and reasserted the traditional dogma of the horrific Jehovah hereafter. The fires of hell, he insisted, are real and there is no escape for the unrepentant. The Church's doctrine does not change. From the fall of man, mankind was condemned to eternal punishment until Jesus took upon himself that punishment in atonement; to a Catholic anything less than that would make the crucifixion meaningless.

Such is the belief impressed upon the hundreds of millions of the faithful which the Church claims in Europe, the Americas and elsewhere; and the Archbishop wasn't preaching to children.

English readers of James Joyce sometimes express disgust and often incredulity at the Hell sermon in his "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," but not those of us who know Ireland and its religion.

"Oh how terrible the lot of those wretched beings! The blood seethes and boils in the veins, the brains are boiling in the skull, the heart in the breast glowing and bursting, the bowels a red-hot mass of burning pulp, the tender eyes flaming like molten balls. A fire that proceeds directly from the ire of God—an instrument of Divine vengeance."

And so on; terrifying young Dedalus.

There, Miss Sayers, is the true Catholic doctrine of the judgment of your merciful God.

Bernard Shaw, in a note at the end of his "Black girl in her search for God," writes thus of the atonement:—

"The tradition of blood sacrifice whereby the vengeance of a terribly angry god can be bought off by a vicarious and hideously cruel blood sacrifice persists even through the New Testament, where it attaches itself to the torture and execution of Jesus by the Roman governor of Jerusalem, idolising that horror as a means by which we can all cheat our consciences, evade our moral responsibilities and turn our shame into self-congratulation by loading all our infamies on to the scourged shoulders of Christ. It would be hard to imagine a more demoralising doctrine."

In England, apart from the Catholics, your sandwich-board evangelists tramp the streets and wherever crowd-fogather, to keep the old faith alive by such slogans as—

Beware of the wrath to come!

Where will you spend your eternity?

How shall ye escape damnation?

Your cultured churchman may scorn these eccentric or despise the hot-gospellers at the street corners, but were not the apostles just such loud-mouthed vulgarians? How else could they appeal to the illiterate Judeans?

It is the age-long practice of priesthoods to dominate believers by fear. "Nothing is more profitable to the Church than the fear of Hell," was the opinion of St. Chrysostom in the fifth century.

"The fear of Hell's the hangman's whip
That hands the wretch in order,"

wrote Robert Burns. It filled the Scottish English kirks in his time; it keeps the papist churches

going to-day, aided by such compulsive and inquisitorial practices as confession and the mass. The English Church in its hey-day exercised equal power by political, economic and social pressures. It has been said that nineteenth century rationalism and scientific education knocked hell out of Christianity in England; but undoubtedly, with collateral practical measures such as the abolition of religious tests in the universities, the power of the Church declined and with the extension of elementary education freedom of thought became general.

The modern drift from religion has brought non-conformity and Church together for mutual protection in a struggle which they declare is for their very existence; but for the reasons given it is obvious that their main power to bring people back to the faith is gone. Hell is no joke to Catholics as yet but it is to most Englishmen.

J. McILWAIN.

HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

"A CRITIQUE OF HINDUISM" by Laxman Shastri ("Modern Age Publications," Bombay—price 4 rupees) presents in an attractive form a rational criticism of the Hindu religion in its various phases and manifold transformations it has undergone from the time of the Vedas right down to our day. The author is inclined to be realistic, he has no use for the Salvation of Soul, or its annihilation, or its escape from the cycle of births and deaths, or the attainment by it of any heaven. He is interested in the welfare of his people in this world, and would like them to cease looking forward to the other world after death, for the very material comforts that their religion teaches them to hope for, beyond the cremation pyre, and in the meanwhile, to hold them in contempt and to abandon them in this life.

Racially speaking the Hindu society is a coarse and loose conglomeration, with hardly any matrix, of numerous races and tribes. And all these races, primitive, savage, nomad and civilised, have left their traces in Hindu culture and religion. "Hinduism," says Shastriji, "is a curious mixture of numerous religious forms, and conflicting and contradictory tendencies; a jumble of various inconsistent or even conflicting spiritual sects, and of peculiar social customs and laws of social life."

He also takes some trouble to explain that it was not due to absence of fanaticism, or through a sense of tolerance or generosity that the Vedic cult was not imposed upon the conquered aboriginal races. The apparent toleration was owing entirely to a selfish motive, and to the peculiar situation the Aryas were in. The fact was that their Vedic cult was not a proselytizing religion like Buddhism of the later days. It was the "Arya-varna" dharma, the white man's cult, his close preserve, his cherished possession. It was through this cult through the Yajnas or sacrifices to their tribal gods, the sole content of their cult, that the Aryas had conquered and subjugated the "Shudra-varna," or the dark people. How could they place these powerful weapons, the instruments of their domineering and the source of their strength and superiority, in the hands of their enemies? The Vedic cult was held so sacred that the Shudras (from "Kshudra" meaning small people or Kameens as they are now called in Northern India) were not allowed to come anywhere near the place where a yajna was being celebrated, nor permitted to hear the sacred mantras which the priests were chanting. Even milk brought by a Shudra was not considered fit for

use in a yajna, and the fire-sticks touched by him had to be washed to remove pollution. No, the Aryas could not commit suicide. And so let the Shudras have their own worthless gods, their ineffective rites, and their ridiculous customs.

But the established prestige of the "Arya-varna," the white colour, had to be maintained, and the domineering position gained held intact. How to accommodate the subject people in a mixed society that had now sprung up, was the immediate political problem that awaited solution. The line of least resistance was naturally taken. The sharp dividing line between the Arya and the Shudra had suggested a classification of the society; the word "varna" (meaning colour) was given an extended and secondary meaning. Using it in the sense of class, a fourfold division of the whole society into the so-called "four-Varnas" was given effect to, and differential legalisation enacted. Hardest punishment for the most trivial faults, even killing, were appointed for the Shudras, while the law or dharma was extremely lenient towards the upper classes, which were made of the Aryas. Ruling, legalising and all "clean-clothes" jobs were apportioned to the Aryas, and all manual work and dirty jobs to the Shudras. The outcasts or untouchables were not the creation of the Aryas, they already existed in the native society, the Aryas only made the restrictions against them stricter.

Birth was the determining factor in deciding the Varna of a person, and thus in course of centuries the classes hardened into "castes." This "caste system" received the religious and legal sanction from the Brahmin legislators; and now forms the most glaring and tenacious characteristic of Hinduism, and the greatest common factor of the Hindu society. Classification into Varnas gave birth to the idea of social status, as indeed it was, and to a sense of superiority or inferiority among the numerous groups, trade guilds, and industrial communities, leading to rival claims to superiority as against others, within each Varna, and in the case of the two uppermost Varnas among themselves. It is this superiority complex which is at the bottom of the present-day rigid caste system, and which gives it such a tight hold on the Hindu society, and on all those who had once come, and on those outsiders who now come under its influence.

Peace and leisure, and easy, comfortable, simple living afforded opportunities for indulgence in deep thought, giving rise to philosophy. Among the Aryas, thought culminated in the conception of Brahma, the only being, on one side, and on the other in the extreme elaboration of the sacrificial system. There were Yajnas which extended over several years, an army of priests was required to perform them, and several hundred of animals were killed. This created repugnance against the sacrificial system, or cult, and as a result two powerful movements (Buddhism and Jainism) took rise among the non-Aryan people, who made this cult the main target of their vehement attacks, and laid great stress on "Ahimsa" or non-killing. This caught the fancy of the masses, and even the compilers of the Upanishads were compelled to take up this attitude and tried to moralise the Yajna. Thus entered this doctrine of "ahimsa" into Hinduism, in which it now occupies the central place, and "ahimsa is the highest religion" has become the most popular maxim. The miserable plight to which the Shudras had been reduced, could lead them only to pessimism. They could see a ray of hope only in the next world after death. The non-Aryan thinkers brought into existence the pessimistic philosophy of Karma, reincarnation, salvation or annihilation of the soul, and heaven. Side

by side with this philosophic thought other movements were afoot among them. Their original religions developed; the sex-worship of the Indus-valley people of Mahen-jo-daro and Harappa flowered into monotheism with Shiva as the personal god; and the serpent and sun worship of the Nagas, or Takkas, following on the same lines, changed into the worship of Vasu-deva, or Vasuki the great Naga god. The Aryas at first held these non-Vedic creeds in contempt, but later on yielded. Various indirect influences were working quietly among them. One of these influences was that by now, hardly any pure Aryan blood was left coursing in the veins of the people who prided themselves on this distinction. The nomad Aryas had brought very few women with them, and had therefore freely taken wives from among the natives, the Naga Kanyas or the Naga girls. The mass of the people had thus lost the old distinctions and had ceased to be Aryas and Nagas, and had practically become one people, the Hindus. The Aryas took from the non-Aryas, along with their pessimistic philosophy, the worship of Shiva and Vasu-deva, modified them, added to them, and by rationalising them tried to fit them in with their pantheistic conception of Brahm, and their sacrificial cult (the Karma-kanda), as best they could. The Vedic religion was swamped and its place taken by Shaivism (inclusive of Saktism) and Vaishnavism.

These are the main ingredients in the hotch-potch of Hinduism. Out of this witches' cauldron was laded a hot steaming philosophy of life. The society had already been divided into four varnas, to this was now added the division of an individual's life into four Ashramas or stages: the student, the householder, the forest dweller and the ascetic. The Shudras can aspire to only the second stage of householder, while the remaining three are meant only for the dvijas or the twice-born Aryas, second birth being the initiation into the Arya community with the ceremony of sacred thread girdle. This is the "Varna-Ashrama-Dharma" which along with an exaggerated respect for the cow, makes a Hindu a Hindu.

The ideal life is that of an ascetic, who has given up the world, and lives as a parasite on the householders; the object in view is the salvation of his own soul. The philosophy underlying this viewpoint is that life is transitory and full of misery, which it is desirable to remove, and the means to do it is to kill *trishna* or craving for life and its pleasures, by abandoning the world and living a hermit's life. These are the four noble truths of Buddhism, the quintessence of the Buddha's teaching. These ideas form an equally important part of Hinduism. To many, life lived in accordance with these principles, would appear thoroughly selfish and immoral. Buddhism and Hinduism have been recommended for their high morality. By morality we understand principles of good conduct, which are beneficial to society, which have the well-being of a community in view, and through the community of its individual members. Altruistic motives and unselfishness are the necessary elements of morality. Teaching, then, which recommends the giving up of the world, and cutting off connection with society with a selfish motive cannot be called moral. On the other hand it is immoral. Buddhism by organising monasteries and nunneries on a large scale drained away the manpower of India, and produced a general deleterious effect on the whole society. It weakened the nation and made it an easy prey to determined invaders from outside. Asceticism has never done any good to the society, in which it prevails to any considerable extent.

There is much more in the book under review, which cannot be commented upon, as I have already exceeded my limit. Before I close, however, I would suggest that a translation of the book in easy Hindi be brought out and sold at cost price.

G. B. SINGH.

HALLO. COUSIN TARSIER!

"Three tarsiers—remote relatives of Man—have arrived at the London Zoo."—(News Item.)

"HOW is that? Do you really imply that I am akin to that goggle-eyed, dwarfish creature, just as large as a good-sized rat?"

Now, now. Take it with a pinch of salt, brother. It is common knowledge that each child not only unites in itself the experiences of all its human predecessors, but the embryo goes through all animal stages in quick succession, thus proving to the unity of animal life. It is hard to distinguish between a human embryo and that of an ape; but earlier still it even resembles the embryo of much lower beings such as tadpole, chicken, rabbit. In the third week four gill slits appear, between the fourth and sixth months a hairy coat develops with the arms exceeding the length of the legs, etc.

From the main trunk of our genealogical tree, in Eocene, the monkeys and the Great Orthograde Primates branched off. The term Primates comprises an order of mammals of primarily arboreal habits, including lemurs, tarsiers, monkeys; Ape and Man represent two different and later branches of development.

The lower primates—such as lemur—are practically quadrupeds that run and leap in the trees. Anatomically and in their habits, the monkeys of the New World resemble the lemurs; in the more advanced monkeys (and apes), however, there is an increasing tendency to climb with the arms extended above the head and the weight of the body suspended beneath the branches. In Lemur the sense of smell prevails, therefore its snout protrudes like that of canines.

In tarsier, on the other hand, vision is dominant over smell, hence the occipital poles of the brain, which are connected with vision, are much enlarged. The creature, consequently, has not a snout; its head sits on a turnable neck, its eyes possess the "Yellow Spot" and allow a stereoscopic vision. With eyes working in the way of the human eye, apparitions cannot only be perceived but also remembered.

In the primates, the fingers and toes—adapted for climbing—are fitted with nails. Early Man was educated in a Public School up the trees. When in the course of a terrestrial revolution trees mostly disappeared and icy winds swept the tundras, pre-man was forced down to adapt himself for a life on the firm ground. It took long periods for his adaptation and development—about 500,000 years—but he developed in an all-round way, and unilaterally specialised. As a result, he had to accept certain deficiencies. His senses, for instance, are not so keen as they are in the animal. Such natural tools as he possessed, degenerated through the use of artificial ones. Yet it was exactly this which made him the master of the animal kingdom, whilst animal competition is being restricted through natural specialisation.

Although the Gorilla has become terrestrial, too, the apes in general have retained their primary arboreal habits and have even developed further adaptations for tree life in varying degrees.

Apparently, the oldest forerunners of the true primates belong to the tarsoid and lemuroid division of the order sprung from Insectivora (Tree-Shrews). The species

tarsier (*Tarsus spectrum*), a lemur-like animal, survives to-day in the forests of the larger Malay islands and appears to be the rather specialised survivor of a very old primate stock structurally intermediate between the tree-shrews and lemurs below, the monkeys, apes and man above. Its name refers to the great elongation of two of the bones of the tarsus, or ankle, and the huge goggle-like eyes.

Tarsier has a long thin tail, tufted at the end, and disc-like adhesive surfaces on the fingers which assist the animal in maintaining its position on the boughs. The huge eyes are brought forward so that their inner borders almost meet across the nose which is small and resembles the platyrrhine (flat-nosed) type. It is nocturnal in habit, hunting for the insects and lizards which are its chief food, and sleeping by day in a tree-hole shared by its mate. It is rare, not more than two being found together, and only brings forth one young at a time.

Up to the time when the forests thinned out, vision was of not much use; in typically arboreal animals, therefore, the olfactory abilities together with the sensations of touch and hearing prevail. As a consequence, the snout recedes thus flattening the facial appearance. The lateral eyes move to the front side and visual sensations can be perceived stereoscopically. Factual relief-images in the brain are bound to increase curiosity; everything must be touched, and this improves the sense of feeling together with the range of experiences. The front legs are increasingly used for more skilful actions than climbing. The mainly erect position of the body not only affects the brain but is a pre-requisite for the setting free of the hands. The tail, no longer of any use, degenerates, the head diminishes in size, sets more to the back, but as a kind of counter-balance the chin starts protruding.

Arboreal life, thus, has been of decisive importance in man. As a ground-dweller, pre-man was definitely at a great disadvantage in comparison to better specialised land animals. Struggling hard under the conditions so entirely alien to him, he found solutions different to those of earlier ground-dwellers. He could not wait for his gradual adaptation, that would have meant his extinction. What he lacked in natural tools and weapons he reproduced artificially. And this bold innovation made him the master of the Earth.

PERCY G. ROY.

GOOD GOD

GOD and good are so alike in sound and spelling as often to be transposed in usage, and frequently are accepted as interchangeable in meaning. Both words suffer from lack of precise definition. Volumes have been written by adherents of many religions and shades of belief within each religion to explain the full content of the abstract term God, whilst nearly every person has an individual conception of his own to embody it; but final or unanimous agreement is never reached.

God likewise suffers in practice from the width and vagueness of its broad defining. Almost any form of excellence or superiority may be connoted by the adjective good and its grammatical or verbal variants made into noun or adverb, or as affix to other syllables and words. All are abstract and generalised, so much so as to be nearly limitless of bounds, implying largely what is in the speaker's or writer's mind rather than conveying an exact message to hearers or readers.

Good and god may be examined by grouping the pairs of words derived from them as the result of appending prefixes and suffixes. In some cases they have similarity of meaning, in others less so, or only a fortuitous parallelism, alike in appearance, but by no means equivalent or identical, resembling but not synonymous.

Thus: good, god; goodly, godly; goodness, godliness; goodly, godlily; goodless, godless; goodlessly, godlessly; goodlessness, godlessness; ungodly, ungodly.

Goodness and godliness cannot be precisely equated to godliness or godlike.

Goodbye has presumably descended to us from God be with you or ye, as gossip degenerates from godsib, one who speaks of or for God; and gospel from God's spell, that is God's word. In connection with goodbye for farewell may be considered adieu, to God, more literally into God's keeping; and godspeed, for God speed you.

Linked by corresponding transition of sound and spelling and in some cases meaning come a number of proper names. Commonest are: Goodson, Godson, Goodison, Godison; Goodhead, Godhead, Goodridge, Godridge; Goodrich, Godrich; Goodwin, Godwin; and a mixed group: Goode, Gooding, Gooden, Goodingham; Godding, Goddin, Godden. Goodby may doubtfully be connected with Goby, Gadby and Gadsby. Further names are Goodman, Goodenough, Goodway, Goodlad, Goodyear, Goodall, Goodfellow, Toogood, Thorogood, and Goodrest as a popular dwellinghouse appellation. Some of the God forms are Goddard, Godsall, Godsell, Godfrey, Godwald, Godsmen, Godiva, Godolphin.

Good alone without a god equivalent gives us goodman, goodwill, good morning, good afternoon, good eve and goodden or goodeen from good evening and good even, and goodday.

From the frequent pious use of god derive goddess, god-daughter, godson, godchild, godfather, godmother, godparents, godsend, godsent, godfearing and godforsaken. God's acre is a cemetery or burial ground or churchyard or graveyard.

Inevitably following religion and piety there must be cursing and swearing, so Swounds and Zounds were abbreviations of God's Wounds, sometimes transliterated God's Bones. By Gad was an evasion for By God, as the cockney Gorbliney may or may not be nautically God Blow Me Down, but is more likely God Blast Me than God Bless Me. Goddam is obviously God damn or God damn me, while Struth invokes God's Truth. Good God! is perhaps the strongest expletive of surprise or shock permitted to the supposedly phlegmatic English.

In the 1914-18 European War among Christian governments sensation was caused by appearance of the lines:—

“ God heard the embattled nations sing and shout,
‘ God Strafe England ’ and ‘ God Save the King ’;
God this, God that and God the other thing.
‘ Good God! ’ said God. ‘ I've got my work cut out! ’ ”

Among place names appear Goodwood, Godalming, Godmanchester, Godstone, Goding, Gad's Hill, Godesberg and Godaveri; while godwit is a longbilled long-legged marsh bird, and godetia a garden annual flowering plant.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

“ We call men dangerous whose minds are made different from our own, and immoral those who profess another standard of ethics. We condemn as sceptics all who do not share our illusions, without ever troubling our heads to enquire if they have heads of their own.”
—ANATOLE FRANCE.

ACID DROPS

Whilst Dean Inge has, in his old age and through wide experience, come to believe in marriages in a register office, the Bishop of Oxford still talks as if the only possible marriage sacred in the eyes of the law—and of God—must take place in Church. We think, however, that the Bishop knows quite well that it is the "civil" ceremony before a properly appointed registrar which makes the marriage legal; but in his latest book, "Marriage and Divorce," he still tries to keep up the delusion that a priest is necessary, and he severely criticises "those clergy who hold religious services for people with previous partners living who have already been married in a register office." He would prefer "that clergy should boldly use the Prayer Book rather than evolve such sham marriage services out of their own imaginations." Well, such a "religious" marriage might well be a sham but it is a perfectly legal one, if properly attested in the eyes of the law, and that is all that matters.

Puzzled Catholics still "quiz" the reverent know-alls in their religious journals. For instance, one asks of the "Universe," "Why pray for the dead?" Because the dead (comes the reply) "may receive refreshment, light and peace while the soul is in purgatory." If, however, "the soul is in Hell these blessings cannot reach it; if in Heaven, it won't want them." But as no one knows for certain where the soul is, it is necessary to pray—and for that matter also to "pay" the priest, although this side of the contract is not insisted upon in the reply. But what a holy game it all is, and what bunk!

According to the "Church Times" the B.B.C.'s choice of a speaker recently on the "Anglican Church and the World" was an unfortunate one. He was not an Anglican, and "the very title chosen betrays his unfamiliarity with the subject." But is not this often the B.B.C.'s little game? On the one or two occasions when we were given to understand that Freethought would be discussed, a Christian clergyman was actually allowed to write the speeches of the "Freethinker" and allowed—quite possibly implored—to answer his own arguments. Moreover, the clergyman in question, Canon Cockin, was so proud of his wonderful achievement, that he was allowed also to tell us about it. When the B.B.C., comments the "Church Times," "touches religious affairs, it is singularly irresponsible." We are in entire agreement.

We are amused at the naïvete of the Rector of Beckenham, Kent, who refuses to baptise the child of one of his "parishioners." He even says that it would be a "good thing if every clergyman refused to baptise the child of parents who did not have a proper knowledge of the responsibilities involved." We doubt whether the Church would ever make a ruling on this, for it is well known that if the Church does not start on the child when it is young, the chances are that it will no longer attract the grown-up, and that means suicide, as far as the Church is concerned.

When a procession of clergymen carrying candles filed out of St. Alban's Church, Holborn, after High Mass in connection with the Anglo-Catholic Conference, some of the National Union of Protestants shouted "Don't wear women's clothes." We are certain that the clergy will

not take heed of their Christian brothers. They know too well the psychological effect of dressing and behaving differently from the ordinary man. Throughout the history of priesthood, the practice is always of considering the religious as a class apart. If priests dressed as the ordinary man, if their fetish—the Bible—were written in contemporary idiomatic English, if prayers were said in, say, a rich cockney accent, with an occasional effort at "rhyming slang," religion would lose half its mystery, and clergymen would have to "sign on" at the labour exchange.

At the Spiritualists' National Union Conference at Harrogate the President, Mr. H. Vigurs, appealed to the Conference to "allow God a sense of humour." We have heard of a "Jealous God," "a Vengeful God" and a "Militaristic God" among others, but ye gods: a "humorous God" This reminds us of a debate with a Christian who was told that he "was never so funny as when he was trying to be serious." There is no doubt Mr. Vigurs was trying to be serious, for the whole tenor of the Conference was gloomy, with the various delegates commiserating with each other that Spiritualism is not what it was. In fact, the "very life-blood and basis—mediumship—is gradually disappearing." Many reasons, or excuses, were put forward except the true reason, and that is that spiritualist hocus-pocus can no longer delude. In other words, it has been found out.

The "Tablet" announces that there is to be another inquest into the growth of unbelief. But the question should not require much time or intelligence to answer. It is just that people are putting Christianity aside and steadily turning their backs on the magics of Christianity as well as on those of all religions. That is the plain fact. But if the "Tablet" wishes to discover why Christianity is getting less and less support, it should invite a number of non-believers to give their opinion as to the cause of all this decay. The "Tablet" writes as if the decrease of religionists is a new thing. It is, in fact, a very old one. We may safely say that religions are born only to die.

From "Time and Tide" we learn that 300 Bishops are attending the Lambeth Conference. The main subject to be discussed is "God in His World and in His Church." This gallant 300 will, we expect, tell God that the number of people who visit his churches is steadily getting fewer and fewer. According to "Time and Tide," "These bishops have appeared on every conceivable platform, Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, and schools of every kind," but we still think the recording angels will be compelled to report to God that the number of His people is shrinking rapidly.

The degrading influence of religion is vividly revealed on the front page of the "News Chronicle" recently. The picture shows the arrival at Euston Station of the spiritual head of five million Yoruba people in Nigeria. Prostrate and grovelling on the ground before the station porters look on curious and interested. One lies a member of the Nigerian colony in London. They might similarly have had to prostrate themselves and grovel before the Christian prototype of the Nigerian spiritual head.

"THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C. 1.

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mrs. E. PAYNE.—We agree, but one cannot always do what one would like. See last week's correspondence.

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 should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

Cardinal Griffin told the British Medical Association Conference delegates to "uphold the fine tradition of Medical practice by proficiency in medicine, and a firm belief in God." We would agree with the first suggestion, but what a belief in God has to do with modern medicine, the Cardinal alone may know, but we can imagine the suggestion being met with amused smiles by doctors who know the attitude of the Church to medicine. It is true, that in the Oath of Hippocrates a doctor swears by Apollo, Aesculapius, and all the gods and goddesses, but we doubt if these are quite the same sort of god that the Cardinal means. Modern medicine has reached the position it has in spite of God and the Church. The Cardinal had better try another tack.

Another reprint of N.S.S. propagandist leaflets has just been delivered and we can now despatch packets of 100 assorted for one shilling. The judicious distribution of the leaflets is a very useful form of propaganda; it is not expensive, and gives one an interest in the movement. Orders should be sent to: The National Secular Society, at 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.

In the special Olympic Games Number of the "American and Commonwealth Visitor" (6d.), an interesting journal produced for overseas visitors to Britain, we were glad to see an excellent article by Mr. W. Kent, so well known to our own readers, on Thomas Paine, embellished with a fine reproduction of Romney's famous portrait and a photograph of the house in which Paine lived at Lewes, Sussex. Needless to say, Mr. Kent does not hide the fact that Paine wrote the "Age of Reason" as well as the "Rights of Man"; and he points out that the "Age of Reason" is still "one of the world's best sellers" and "only a narrow stream divides Paine's theology from that of Bishop Barnes." Mr. Kent's article is full of literary allusions and topographical facts, and should prove of the greatest interest not only to lovers of the "great commoner" but to those overseas visitors who have heard of Paine—if at all—from Christian sources.

NO, HENRY, NO!

IN his story, "The Turn of the Screw," which Penguin Books styles his most popular work, that subtle delineator of character compounded with changing social environment, Henry James, for once degraded his art by fostering the vulgar notion of the dead harbouring ill will, or disastrous goodwill, towards the living.

In the case under review two allegedly debased beings, presumably having gone to perdition, return at intervals to the realms of light, seeking to lead to death two children, with whom they had formerly much associated, or spiritually to possess them; some vagueness being preserved as to what the demon souls actually intended.

The author suggests transcendent wickedness in the spirits, but the poor lost souls seem to have done nothing worse than what forms substance of the usual pleadings in divorce proceedings.

The theme of demoniac possession is a proper one for literature, but it should be treated without pandering to ignoramuses. A modern writer is permitted to show his characters labouring under delusion, but he should, so far as he can, reserve his readers from contamination.

To those who disbelieve in the supernatural, no terror as to demons can attach, but to the averagely orthodox Christian it might, as he cannot logically deny their existence, for his Lord spent a large part of his preaching career casting them out of certain of his fellow countrymen.

We are, however, reminded by Garçon and Vinchon, in their work, "The Devil" (Victor Gollancz, 1929), that the early Christian ages were not the most credulous in this respect, and that the writer of the Fourth Gospel himself almost neglects the matter of demons, his Devil seeming to be but the obstinate urge of evil within the heart.

The diabolic tradition, copiously exemplified in the Synoptics and the Acts of the Apostles, although then in Christianity from the beginning, meets with early incredulity, and is to assume changing significance in the course of time.

A document, Canon Episcopi, of uncertain age, but partly reproduced in the 9th century, reflected the sceptical spirit as to the reality of many things afterwards strongly affirmed. This Canon, referring to sorcery and magic, states that certain women professed that during the night they crossed vast spaces of the earth, with Diana, the pagan goddess, and a numerous crowd of women riding upon beasts, obeying the orders of the Devil. It observes that the great multitude who professed this were grossly deceived, and fallen into heathen error, for no divine power or will could exist outside that of God. The Canon further remarks that men are deceived by dreams, and that one must be mad to believe that the body can undergo the effect of what takes place only in the mind.

John of Salisbury, in the 12th century, wrote that the Evil Spirit, with the permission of God, so far extended its malice that some falsely believed that what they suffered in imagination, and because of their own fault was real and external, and that we must not forget that those to whom this happened were poor women or simple and credulous people.

In 1310, the Synod of Trèves marks a late stage of the attitude of unbelief, stating that no woman should allege that she rode during the night with Diana or Herodias, for such was an illusion of the Demon.

But the Holy Office had long been ambitious to bring affairs of witchcraft within its scope, and had requested Alexander IV to permit it to occupy itself with divination

and magic. The Pope told the Inquisitors not to allow themselves to be distracted from their function of seeking out heretics, and that magic was not of their competence unless involved with heresy.

The idea then gradually grew that invocation of the Devil was heretical, and that he who invoked a Demon, under the belief that such was not sinful, was an avowed heretic, and that he who did so, believing it to be sinful, was as bad. This idea gathered momentum, and Pope John XXII, who flourished about 1325, sank into the most dreadful credulity, stating:—

“There are people who, being Christians in name only, have abandoned the light of truth to ally themselves with death and make compact with hell. They sacrifice to, and adore, demons. They make or procure images, rings, phials, mirrors, and other things to which they attach the demons by their magic art, drawing answers from them, asking of them help to carry out their evil designs, engaging themselves in the most shameful servitude for the most shameful things.”

It is appropriate to mention that John suffered from persecution mania.

Innocent VIII., published on the 5th December, 1484, a Bull, in which he stated that the earth was full of sorcerers. He therein established the powers of the Inquisitors in the matter, and excited the zeal of the judges.

Popular superstition had finally become a dogma.

A few critical writers soon, however, arose, expressing again doubts as to the reality of what was attributed to the demon. A work published in Cologne, in 1489, although with the object of furthering the work of prosecution, contained a dialogue between a sceptic and a theologian, thus showing that serious criticism was already about, but it remained timid until the 18th century. We find Luther on the side of the demons, for he describes, in his graceful way, certain doctors as ignorant blockheads for claiming that possession should be treated as a disease.

The calm Montaigne complained, however, that although he wished to see some witches, all those he met with in the prisons appeared demented, and Bayle stated that if the people could be persuaded that magic could achieve nothing, 20 years would suffice to divest the witches of all credit, and that, since punishment was proved not to diminish their number, the Parlement of Paris had decided to discharge all not convicted of poisoning.

In the 18th century Voltaire was able to assert that in every country where exorcism had ceased, very few cases of sorcery were found, and that they ceased entirely among the peoples separated from the Catholic Church.

These beliefs in demoniac possession, witchcraft and magic are not now shared by the majority, but there remain many believing, or exploiting the belief, that the dead can appear to the living, or, through mediums, give the latter counsel.

The ground of our civilisation is therefore, as Fraser stated, honeycombed with superstition, and authors should be on guard against their natural avidity for the unusual, lest it weaken what solidity of the surface yet remains.

J. G. LUPTON.

There can be no doubt that had the objections of Porphyry, Hierocles, Celsus and other enemies of the Christian faith been permitted to come down to us, the plagiarism of the Christian Scriptures, from previously existing Pagan documents, is the specific charge that would have been brought against them.—*Robert Taylor.*

EARLY ENGLISH FREETHOUGHT

I

THE insular position which our country enjoys, and the mixed races of which our people are composed, have doubtless contributed to form that spirit of independence in which English Freethought has found its basis, and which, through the long course of its history, has given it a stamp whereby one can recognise our Freethought no less than our philosophy and our literature to be the genuine outcome of English character, and to evince the native qualities of the English mind. None the less, the development of Freethought in this country, as well as on the Continent, owes something to contact with the Jews, and still more with the Mohammedans. Under William the Conqueror the Jews took up important positions in England. Although, as Mr. Freeman observes, it may be doubted whether his son William Rufus was in any strict sense an intellectual sceptic, his conduct was well calculated to promote scepticism. He bade the Jewish rabbis and the bishops of England to dispute before him on the tenets of their several creeds, vowing by St. Luke's face that he would embrace the side which had the better argument. Of course, each party claimed the victory. The incident is as significant of the rise of a spirit of Freethought as the fact of St. Anselm writing a treatise to prove the existence of God. But whatever doubts might assail the solitary thinker, the Church was too strong to make it safe to publicly express them. We read that in 1160, when St. Thomas Becket was Lord High Chancellor, a party of 30 heretics, who came over from Germany to propagate their opinions, were branded in the forehead, publicly whipped and left naked in the streets in mid-winter, when, none daring to relieve them, they died of cold and hunger. The monkish chronicler makes the following comment: “This pious severity not only purified the kingdom of the plague which had already crept into it, but, by striking terror into the heretics, guarded against any future irruption of the evil.”

Can we wonder that Aethelhard or Adelard of Bath, the first English Freethinker, was fain to put forth his views under the guise of being those of the Arabians? Adelard had travelled to Spain, Morocco, Greece, and Asia Minor. He translated Euclid's *Elements* from the Arabic into Latin before any Greek copies were discovered. His philosophy was an attempt to reconcile Platonic idealism with Aristotelian empiricism, but he writes with the air of a man who has burst the swathing bands of authority, speaking boldly of the privileges and utility of reason, and contemptuously of those who submit to slumber in a bestial credulity. Such at least, he says, are the opinions of the Arabians.

The universities of the Moors in Spain, and the works of such men as Avicenna, Almanzor, and Averroes, attracted the attention of those few whose native bent constrained them to the pursuit of knowledge. A Latin translation from Arabic of the Book of Ptolemy on the Astrolabe was made at Oxford in 1185, and about 1190 Daniel Morley went to Spain and studied at Toledo. The first translation of the Koran was made early in the thirteenth century by an Englishman, Robert Ketener, who went to Spain for that purpose. While the Crusades exasperated Christendom against the infidels, and enhanced the hatred of heretics as also enemies of God, deserving to be remorselessly slain wherever met, they nevertheless brought Christians into contact with a heathen civilisation, and their failure forced Christians to see that their divine religion did not always ensure secular superiority. As Voltaire wittily remarks of this

period, "The king's fool was always a native, but his physician was either an Arabian or a Jew."

Roger Bacon, as is well known, was greatly indebted to the Arabians, both for his philosophy, well termed by Whewell the Encyclopaedia and Novum Organum of the thirteenth century, and for those inventions which for so long gave him the renown of being a magician—"Old Hodge Bacon," as he was long known to British story—who acquired his skill by promising himself to the Devil, whether he died in the Church or out of it, and at last cheated Satan by dying in a hole in the church wall. Spectacles, gunpowder, and burning glasses, with the invention of which he has been credited, were known to the Arabians before his time. It was only the common people who suspected Bacon. Bonaventura, the general of the Franciscans, interdicted his lectures at Oxford, and commanded him to leave that city and place himself under the surveillance of the orders at Paris. Here, for ten years, he remained under constant supervision, denied all opportunities of writing, and the most jealous care being taken that he had no communication with the secular world. But after he had regained his liberty through the intervention of Clement IV, he was again condemned by Jerome di Ascoli, general of the Franciscans. He was then thrown into prison, where he remained 14 years. Such were the penalties of pursuing science and philosophy when Christianity was powerful. In no point does the service of "the wonderful doctor" to Freethought stand out more clearly than in his famous anticipation of the enumeration of *Idola* by his great namesake, Francis of Verulam. Roger Bacon distinguished four chief causes of error: dependence upon authority, yielding to custom, giving way to the opinions of the unskilled, and the pretence of knowledge by the ignorant.

His grand nephew, John Baconthorpe, the diminutive "resolute doctor" who sought to reconcile Averroism with orthodoxy, is notable for his influence on Vanini, who claimed to be his pupil.

Bacon's friend and patron, Robert Grosseteste, or Great-head, the vainly excommunicated Bishop of Lincoln, was the clerical representative of many English thought, and in repelling the papal encroachments rendered a service to his countrymen, which long enshrined him in their hearts. From the day when coward John surrendered his crown to Pandolf, and agreed to pay a thousand marks as tribute to the Pope, all that was patriotic in England strove for release from a bondage which enthralled both mind and estate.

Draper, in the twenty-first chapter of his *Intellectual Development of Europe*, has depicted the degradation and misery of England caused by the drain of its money into Italy. Nor was this all. Foreign—mostly Italian—ecclesiastics were appointed to English livings, and privileges were claimed by the clericals that threatened to override all civil government. A priest might not be apprehended for murder. If a jury found a true bill against a priest, he must not be brought before the secular courts, but handed over to his diocesan. All Church patronage must rest with the Church. It is true the State never surrendered all that was asked, but as C. H. Pearson, in his able *History of England during the Early and Middle Ages*, remarks:—

"Generally, it may be said that the Church always retrieved under a bad king, an Edward II or Richard II, the ground which it lost under just and competent sovereigns. Thus, the worthless son of Edward I repealed a great part of his father's salutary legislation, renounced the right of distraint

upon old church lands, restrained the Judges from forcing clerks who had confessed a felony to abjure the realm, and forbade them to take the confessions of clerks who were willing to turn king's evidence and renounce their benefit of clergy (vol. ii, p. 489)."

J. M. WHEELER.

THE BUCHMANITES

Sin and Tell

["By an overwhelming majority, 170,000 members of the Birmingham T.G.W.U. condemned 'Moral Rearmament' activities in the Union. Mr. J. Leach, the Union organiser, had just returned from Los Angeles on an all-expenses paid trip to the Buchman Moral Rearmament Conference."—"Daily Mirror, July 5.]

THE Oxford Group Movement, or Buchmanism, has been dubbed "The Sin and Tell Movement." The name is apt enough. It refers to one of the main practices of the Buchmanites known as "sharing." It is not his goods, but his sins that a Group shares. "Sharing" embodies two activities, "confession" and "witness," both of which have an exhibitionistic character.

Confession may be an individual or a group matter. Any sin should be confessed either to another Group or to an assembled Group. The nature of Group meetings, when a collection of adolescents meet to "share" their sins with "absolute honesty" in a struggle for "absolute purity," can be well imagined.

Dr. Henson, Bishop of Durham, in his book "The Oxford Groups," gives it as his opinion that there is "an undue and unwholesome prominence given to sex in its meetings." He records that "nervous and mental collapse has followed in the wake of the vehement excitements of Groupism."

Physical nudism when wisely carried out is a healthful practice, but this spiritual or mental nudism of the Groupers is morbid and unhealthy.

"Witness," the other activity in "sharing," is a revival of the personal testimonies that once were featured in evangelical meetings.

We have referred to two of the "Absolutes" by which Buchmanites claim to test their lives. Altogether there are four. These are Absolute Honesty, Absolute Purity, Absolute Unselfishness and Absolute Love. A critical observer might be pardoned for thinking that all that is achieved in many cases is Absolute Hypocrisy. It will hardly be believed that some members unblushingly claim to have achieved all these Absolutes.

But there is one ancient Christian virtue that is sadly lacking in the Oxford Groupers or Buchmanites—humility. English critics, such as Bishop Henson and Dr. Chavasse, have commented on the arrogance of the Groupers, and Australian observers will support this. To some extent this arrogance, this fat complacency, arises from another Group practice known as "Guidance."

We are told by the Buchmanites that God has a plan for the world and every individual in it. "If man listens, God speaks." And so on. No doubt most Christians would give nominal assent to such propositions, but in view of the catastrophes that befall individuals and nations they shrink from any particular direct, detailed or personal application of these ideas. Not so the Buchmanite, with his robust faith.

In the "Quiet Time" he listens to God and really believes, or professes to believe, that the ideas or promptings that come to him then come from God as a truly personal message. This gives him an extraordinary assurance when he interferes in the lives of others or goes about the most humdrum of daily duties. Dr. Buchman (pronounced Bookman), the founder and head of the Buchmanites, is a bachelor and simply says in explanation: "I have never been guided to marry." There is no detail of life that cannot be the subject of "guidance." No wonder Bishop Henson says of this practice: "We have an uncomfortable suspicion that we are being carried outside the limits of reasonable faith."

Since everyday actions are "guided," Groupers can only make tentative arrangements, for no one knows when guidance will be given that upsets the plans made. In a book called "Oxford and the Groups," to which a number of Oxford University Dons contribute, it is said that the Grouper "glories in his unreliability and inconsideration," and justifies himself by the plea that he is "a whole-time worker for God."

And now something of the founder of this movement, Dr. Frank Buchman. He was born at Femsburg, in Pennsylvania, in 1878, of Swiss-Dutch stock. His father was a local hotel owner.

Buchman trained for the Lutheran ministry at Mount Airy Theological Seminary. He was ordained in 1902, but his rise in the ministry was slow. In 1909 he became Y.M.C.A. Secretary at Pennsylvania College, and here he began to develop his "life-changing religion." He founded a group called "A First Century Christian Fellowship," and it is recorded that he "perfected himself in the great art of extracting confessions from adolescents."

In 1915 he became a peripatetic missionary for the Y.M.C.A., visiting Japan, India and Korea, and in 1918 he held his first "House Party" at Kuling, the summer resort of a wealthy Chinese supporter.

"Current Biography" (October, 1940) tells us that "from the first he developed his ability to extract money from converts painlessly." We are told that "money rolls in with a freedom and timeliness that are considered truly providential."

Later we find Dr. Buchman pursuing the college boys of Yale, Harvard and Princeton. He found much sin on the campus, and developed the practice of sin-sharing to such a pitch that when the President of Princeton learned of it he banished Dr. Buchman from the grounds.

In England, too, this practice of sin-sharing brought down such criticism and contempt upon the Group Movement that the extraction of sex confessions from callow students has been dropped.

The Movement has been called the Oxford Group Movement because one Group on tour in South Africa contained some Oxford students, and through this the particular party was called the Oxford Group. Buchman, a shrewd business man, saw the propaganda value of the name, and took it up.

When a request to his Movement failed for want of certainty, Dr. Buchman registered the name "Oxford Group Movement," against the strong opposition of Oxford University authorities and others, such as A. P. Herbert, one of the M.P.s for Oxford.

Dr. C. E. M. Joad has pointed out that Buchmanites derive their converts chiefly from the middle and upper classes. So much is this the case that Buchman has been called "soul surgeon to the British aristocracy." In "Oxford and the Groups" W. H. Auden says that "Its success with the working class has been negligible."

One enthusiastic eye-witness of the mission in Montreal wrote: "Religion in the ballroom of a fashionable hotel, clothed in tuxedo coats and evening gowns, accompanied by bursts of laughter. . . . The Oxford Group Movement has brought religion out of the cloister into the drawing room and social areas of life."

Another Grouper, both candid and naive, writes: "I always wanted this kind of life: big hotels, comfortable cars and the best people—and as soon as I get changed God gives them all to me." So you can understand the limerick which runs:—

"There was a young man of Peoria,
Whose sinning grew gorier and gorier.
By confession and prayer,
And some savoir-faire,
He now lives at the Walworth-Astoria."

A conservative estimate of the cost of one American tour of the Group put it at "certainly more than £25,000." When asked once why he and his followers always stayed at expensive hotels in luxury suites, Dr. Buchman replied: "Why not? My God is a millionaire."

Many wealthy business men join the aristocracy in support of Dr. Buchman, among those who have been mentioned being Louis B. Mayer, the movie magnate, and George Eastman, of the Kodak concern.

I wonder why William Rowell, a Grouper who was once an executive of the British Trades Union Congress, once wrote: "Labour and Capital should lie down together in one of Dr. Buchman's quiet times." Which is the lion and which the lamb? Dr. Buchman is not a champion of the common people.

Mr. Morris, an Oxford University Don, of Balliol College, writes, "It is difficult to believe that the Oxford Group is making energy available for any thoughtful, progressive attack on social and political problems" ("Oxford and the Groups"). In the same book, others make a similar criticism. W. H. Auden says: "Mr. Morris and Mr. Maude both agree that the Group have not only neglected social problems, but have actually given their members a bias against taking an interest in them."

W. H. Auden has quoted a Grouper who preferred fascism to communism because, in his view, fascism appeals to ideals, to self-sacrifice, rather than self-interest.

German Christians, members of the Church set up by Hitler, joined the Oxford Groups and took an active part in Conferences.

Lord Raglan, British anthropologist, reported that Himmler, who was the dreaded Chief of the Nazi Secret Police, was a Grouper. So was Quisling, betrayer of Norway. A conservative English theological journal, "The Expository Times," reported some few years ago that both General Chiang-Kai-Shek and Prince Konoye, of Japan, had given their blessing to the Moral Re-arming Campaign of the Buchmanites.

The writer in "Current Biography" argues that this Campaign, which was vigorously waged in 1939 in Europe, with Buchman active among European diplomats and politicians, had much to do with the persistence of the appeasement policy that brought such tragic results. In 1939 a leaflet supported by some British politicians sold 500,000 copies; 5,000,000 milk bottles were stamped M.R.A., 10,000 bill-boards were used, and half a million letters were stamped M.R.A.

Dr. Buchman, not long before the outbreak of war, said: "Thank God for Hitler!" because he believed Hitler had saved Europe from communism.

Now Buchman is back at work in Europe again. No sooner was the war over than he, and 105 of his shock troops, crossed the Atlantic and took up headquarters in a great mansion in Berkeley Square. On the shores of a Swiss lake a veritable palace is used for "moral rearmament conferences."

If I say that in my opinion, an opinion supported by many leading Church authorities, the Oxford Group Movement is irrational, anti-intellectual, fundamentalist, sensational and politically reactionary, you will infer that I would deplore its growth in Australia.

W. G. COOK

(Reprinted from "Focus.")

Past, Present and Future

Religion breeds hypocrisy,
 There's not the slightest doubt;
 It does not suit Democracy,
 They've thought the matter out.
 The Priests still tell the mournful tale
 But in a different way;
 The same old yarns are getting stale
 And gently fade away.
 The evidence of bygone days
 Is surely food for thought;
 What is there left for us to praise,
 Experience dearly bought.
 In India and Palestine
 Religions lead the way;
 To stir up strife, with loss of life,
 Which goes on day by day.
 Our history repeats itself,
 Which millions fail to see;
 Yet books contain the evidence
 In any Library.
 You can't prevent us reading,
 And that you've tried to do;
 Religions are receding
 Because they are untrue.
 We'll have the truth at any price,
 And don't intend to shirk;
 The future should be very nice
 *When Non-Producers work.

E. W. JAMES.

*Priests and Parsons.

Think Only of the Lord

"How greatly do the masses fail. If you visit them, how readily do they enlarge upon their troubles. In five minutes they have told you about their ills, their aching bones and their low wages until you know their dirt off by heart.
 We must teach them to speak of something better than bones and crusts of bread. We must teach them of the loving kindness of God. Is it not a great mercy for them to be alive and not in hell? To be in their senses and not in a lunatic asylum? To be in their

own room and not in the workhouse? Why do they always talk about their poverty? Why always talk about their pains? Why always their starving children? Why always their husbands' small wages? Why don't they speak of the mercies of the Lord? And give Him that praise that should be the every-day garment and the livery of every servant of Christ."—Rev. C. H. SPURGEON.

It is hardly credible, but the above quotation is from a book called "The Mourners' Comforter," written by the late Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, recognised by the Churches to be one of the greatest preachers of his age. The grumbling of the working classes evidently got on the nerves of this merchant of Christ. Labour leaders should quote the above at their meetings.

W. H. P.

CORRESPONDENCE

SECULAR CONCERTS AND HYMNS

SIR.—As a music enthusiast, I attend, where possible, concerts given by famous bands. I have noticed recently an increase of the habit of including hymns in these programmes. In the last fortnight two famous bands have foisted this upon patrons of concerts I have attended. On one occasion these hymn tunes were played in a Saturday evening programme, whilst a cornet soloist rendered a sacred song as an encore. Have any musical readers noticed this creeping in of religion anywhere else in the country recently?—Yours, etc.,

G. L. COLEBROOKE.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Messrs. E. C. SAPHIN, JAMES HART, G. WOOD, E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Uncensored News from Czecho-Slovakia," Dr. C. A. SMITH, B.Sc., Ph.D.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.

Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. S. BRYDEN, E. LAWASZ and J. HUMPHREY.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (on Blitzed Site, Ranelagh Street, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. G. THOMPSON, W. PARRY, W. C. PARRY.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers' Pool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. A. SAMMS, G. L. GREAVES.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Room 13, 39, John Bright Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Some Social Origins." Mr. A. THORNEWELL.

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