

LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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Artists are Citizens

IT is probably good that Furtwangler has been permitted to conduct again in Berlin, and probably bad that Kirsten Flagstad has been booted off a concert platform in the United States. But it is good too when artists are reminded of their obligations as citizens, and bad when they are allowed to believe that for them such responsibilities don't exist. Furtwangler seems to have made some attempt at least to resist and repudiate Hitlerism. Flagstad's offence was perhaps only loyalty to a collaborationist husband. In both cases the charge of personal collaboration was successfully resisted, and there is no justification for repeating it. But there was justification for inquiring into it in the first place if the only reason for not inquiring was that one of the suspects was Germany's greatest conductor and the other the world's greatest Wagnerian soprano. Although art can be super-national, or become so with time, artists are usually men and women like the rest of us, demanding protection from their country as well as bread, and the privileges of citizenship as well as the rewards of their labour. It is very rarely indeed that they live and work so far above the battle as to have no hand in it, and when they do they are creators and not just performers. So far as the performers are concerned, the singers, players, conductors, and transmitters generally, there are precisely the same obligations on them as on every other man or woman who shelters in the country and accepts its citizenship. Even if the privileges they enjoy are few, and the advantages are bought at a great price (as they were in Nazi Germany), it is impossible to claim them in peace and repudiate responsibility for them when war comes. Internationalism has not yet come, however desirable it may be. Until it does come, we must all accept the rough justice of the group that breeds, feeds, and protects us.

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

CHRISTIANITY IN NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—“Nabal” writes according to his experience, and I must answer him according to my own. His letter sounds as I imagine the wisdom of the Greeks sounded to St. Paul. Though sufficient to himself and those of a like mind it is certainly not sufficient for me.

In isolating the moral element from the full Christian story “Nabal” does an injustice to Christianity. He cracks the nut but leaves the kernel untouched. Christianity is a continual drama in which individuals are led or bludgeoned from blindness and self-sufficiency to sight of and dependence on God. A heightened moral sensitivity is bound to discover the moral law which in its impracticability “Nabal” rejects. And, as St. Paul has written, this law becomes so intolerable and exacting in its demands that we are eager to find its mitigation. Deliverance is unexpected because it comes through One who while commanding us to do more than the bare law, frees us from its paralysing burdens.

Yet should I turn away from this answer I can find nothing stable or guaranteed. I cannot turn my back on the noblest aspirations of mankind, which as “Nabal” indicates, exist not only in the Christian faith: that would surely be moral suicide. The principles of science and education upon which “Nabal” stands so firmly appear to me as hollow in themselves, for science and education are amoral. I can give no unqualified trust to a temporal leader, and I would be foolish to assume that within myself I could find the perfect integrity morality exacts.

Therefore I must turn to reach beyond morality and must use that ladder between time and eternity, earth and heaven which was prefigured in the Old Testament. That ladder is Christ. I can give nothing to “Nabal” except, perhaps, food for thought in pointing to what for me is a personal experience.

E. JONES (Spreydon).

(Abridged.—Ed.)

Sir,—Your contributor “Nabal” says that the average New Zealander has found a satisfactory substitute for Christianity “in a firm belief in ourselves as men and women capable of much or little . . . and capable in the light of increasing scientific knowledge of evolving a social system which will make life more enjoyable,” etc. He has given the average New Zealander credit for too much intelligence. The common fact is that the great majority are indifferent to Christianity and science alike and are rapidly becoming our “bread and circus” group. It can hardly be claimed that these are capable of evolving a satisfactory social system or that they are exhibiting any desire for greater education in the realm of science. “Nabal” in elevating the advantages of scientific knowledge, has overlooked the problem as to whether the scientists have yet been able to define their “progressive steps” and whether science itself (especially since Hiroshima and Bikini) is a blessing or a curse. “Nabal” is getting perilously close to the class of scientific intelligentsia, who, in ignoring moral teaching, whether of Plato, Epictetus, Seneca, Christ, or others, are getting themselves into a sea of confused modern thinking which they will not get out of until they have studied and appreciated the value of precepts and morals for

man's conduct set down by the prophets and philosophers of recorded history, and realised the definite part they have in human progress.

R. B. BOYCE (Cambridge.)

Sir,—Religion as preached and practised to-day is nothing more than a rank digression, both depressive and oppressive in its nature. It is at best not even a flimsy shadow of what it could be, if its fundamental truths were not constantly hidden “under a bushel.” But here and there are seekers, unfettered by creeds, cultivating the spirit within, and finding. In short, Christianity has not failed, the spirit is at work and is working in other channels than orthodoxy. G. H. FIRTH (Wellington).

(We have received several other letters on this topic, nearly all too long for use, and some too personal. The discussion is now closed.—Ed.)

JOHN HILTON'S TECHNIQUE

Sir,—It was my good fortune to know John Hilton when he took up his professorship at Cambridge. The galaxy of academics, Keynes, Pigou, D. H. Robertson, and half-a-dozen others who had climbed the heavens by the intellectual ladder did not then accept this new planet, former government servant, worker, and human being set up in their midst by the endowment from the profits from cheap mass-tailoring. Hilton lectured, or rather talked, about Industrial Relations, and what rang through his broadcasts permeated his lectures—sincerity. As a theoretical economist he was too modest and undogmatic to be convincing; but as a man who, through his own experience as a worker and as an official had learnt well, he was able to describe the relations between employer, worker, and machine in terms which were alive, real, and humble.

Hilton seemed to enjoy talking with us students at his home over a cup of tea, as much as he should have enjoyed sipping priceless port with his elders and betters in the Senior Common Room. His interests were catholic. He talked of Japanese Noh plays or his own private theory of framing modern French paintings (with engraved lines on the frame tending to a focus at the centre of interest of the picture), just as excitedly as he gave us impressions of the shattering clangour he had known when knocking scale off the inside of a boiler.

Some years later I asked him about his technique of broadcasting, for besides the knowledge and conviction stressed in your leading article (*Listener*, May 2), he had a conscious technique and one which others might well use. Hilton, whether in private life or public utterance, had what amounted to an impediment with certain consonant combinations and also a hesitation. His broadcasts were not smooth or fluent. He seemed to grope for words, to pause before choosing an adjective, to add as an afterthought an unpremeditated adverb or clause. There were also certain inarticulate sounds—not the irritating “Errr” of the nervous and unpractised speaker, but more the cogitatorial noises of one who wants to choose exactly the right word or phrase, of a man who gears the pace of his thoughts to engage with the speech-speed which is most acceptable to the common ear. Radio scripts have to be censored, and speaking from notes will not do. How

did Hilton keep his scripts so natural and alive? He told me he used a dictaphone and that his secretary in typing back the script put in all the pauses, sounds, and interjections by an understood system of dashes and letter combinations. Thus his script came as from the pliable tip of a tongue rather than from the rigidity of the pen. So much for his technique before broadcasting—one which might help all radio talkers, whether they have access to dictaphones or not. When he came to the microphone, another acquired technique came into play—that of the experienced amateur actor and reader of plays—for in Beaconsfield with G. K. Chesterton and others he had had much experience in theatre work. He did not necessarily follow his script exactly. His ever-alert mind would find a happier paraphrase of what was before him and this increased the impression of freshness and the absence of slickness and pontification.

Too many radio talks are infallible in syntax, too fluent in sentence structure, altogether too accurate and impersonal, and delivered too smoothly (or else with the obvious end-of-line pauses of the unpractised reader) to hold the attention and convince father with his pipe and

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mother with her knitting, in their own home. Hilton concocted his scripts in the spoken idiom of the kitchen and workshop, not the oratory of the public hall or the prose of the newspaper article. In delivering them he consciously used a fine acting technique by which he talked as naturally as if he were at a meal. Just as it is easier to write a letter to a known person than to write an essay for the world at large, so a broadcaster should think of simple people whom he knows and the rooms in which they will be listening, instead of trying to envisage the millions in all manner of circumstances who may be listening. Hilton had technique and he knew the way simple minds worked. He was unauthoritarian—a virtue in all who are in a position to use the power that science has given to the spoken word. It is good to know that a picture of him has been preserved in print.

PHILIP A. SMITHELLS
(Wellington).

THE CORRUPTION OF TASTE

Sir,—Mr. Fairburn appears to have hitched his wagon to the wrong star—or is it barge-board? Certainly there are the ostentatiously vulgar among us. But are there as many as there were in the late 'twenties? Nowadays there seems to be a revolting swing towards houses which look like packing cases, objects which many of us prefer to leave behind at the end of the day. Let Mr. Fairburn keep his fowl-house and his brass. Give me something which looks like a place where people live, and a goodly supply of chromium to save my wife from unnecessary drudgery.

BANANA BENDER (Nelson).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Langdon Prime (Napier): Efforts are continuously being made to extend the scope of local production, but there are world standards to be maintained, and the technique of radio drama is very different from stage technique.

J.D.P. (Khandallah): Too personal.
M.C.W. (Auckland): Two sessions were inadvertently telescoped in typing.