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EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN

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Views and Opinions

The Church and the People

By hook or by crook, and there will be nothing revolutionary in Church practice if it is mostly by crook, the churches seem to be determined to make the most they can out of the war. The intellectually insulting and generally childish farce of a Day of National Prayer has produced but little benefit to the churches, in spite of the King being forced to take a public part in the performance. So the great endeavour of the moment appears to be that of following the original Church plan which has been adopted by both Italian and German Fascists, and which, so far as education is concerned is the avowed method of the Churches in this country. If the Churches have their way, the schools of the near future will be under the domination of a re-dressed superstition, and we shall see a generation leaving the schools that will take Christianity as a matter of course. In that case we shall be able to re-read the famous saying of Hobbes that the Christian Church is "The ghost of the deceased Roman Empire sitting crowned upon the grave thereof" as "Post-war Christianity is the ghost of Italian and German Fascism, which was in turn derived from earlier generations of Christian teaching and practice." In this Christian Fascist campaign in favour of the Churches the *Times* (and the gang behind it), which has so often played the part of kiteflyer for unavowed interests, as witnessed during the Spanish War, and later by the giving to Germany of Czechoslovakia, is again active, working by "selected" letters, and leading and special articles. Here are a few sentences from a recent leading article:—

Unpreparedness for peace may be nearly as dangerous as unpreparedness for war.

This, in itself, is one of those sonorous sentences that is about equal in value to "If a man would live he must eat." No one will contradict it, and few will take the trouble to say it. The real issue is what kind of peace is it that we have in mind. The *Times* in its faithful support of the Churches, does not, however, leave us in doubt as to one thing it has in view. It says:—

Because Christianity is a creed based upon a knowledge of historic facts, its future mainly depends, not on an amiable state of mind, but upon an educational system in which these facts are given the foremost place; [and] Christian teaching shall be made available in all places of education supported by the State.

This plain statement is supported by leading ecclesiastics who find the columns of the *Times* widely open to them. There also followed the leading article from which we have quoted, a special article pointing out

that while Council Schools have increased, since 1902, by 5,000, Church Schools have decreased by 3,000. Finally we have the Bishop of Salisbury, among many other prominent preachers, stating that the schools of the future must make the Christian religion "fundamental in national education." Alter the term "Christian" to "Fascism" and "Nazism," and we have homegrown advocates of the Fascist policy and principles against which we believe we are fighting. That the one is avowedly Christian, and the other is not, makes no difference to the fact.

* * *

Suffer Little Children

One would much like to be able to force the *Times* to give a plain statement as to what are these historic facts upon which Christianity depends. It is useless replying, as is so often done, that Christianity is an historic fact, and it is impossible to understand European history without it. We know that, and assert it quite as strongly as any Christian Bishop could. It is only when one considers the existence of the Christian Church as an historic fact that one can understand how the freedom of thought of Greece and Rome and the science and philosophy of Greece were replaced by organized intolerance and the influence of sheer superstition. It is only when we count the influence of the Church that we can realize how the defranchizing and desocializing of women occurred, the ease with which modern slavery was established, the existence of such things as the witch epidemic, and the opposition to modern science in the name of "God's" revelation. To leave the historic Christian Church out of one's consideration is a fatal mistake that is made by too many of our contemporary writers on economics. The existence of the Christian Church as an historic fact is something that cannot profitably be ignored.

But I hardly think that this is what the *Times* has in view when it says Christianity rests upon "historic facts." And if it does not mean that, what does it mean? The only other "facts" are such as the virgin birth of Jesus, the miracles he is said to have worked, the belief that he was an incarnation of a God; his prearranged crucifixion for the sins of men and his resurrection from the dead, to say nothing of such things as the miracles of the Church. One would like the *Times* to summon up sufficient honesty and courage to say with a plain yes or no whether it is these things that are to be taught to the children as "historic facts"? In all honesty that is the only interpretation that can be put on the language of the *Times* and others who are carrying on the present agitation under cover of the war. Profiteering has been loudly denounced, and we have a *government* promise that it shall be prevented. But this profiteering of the Churches is of a different and a viler character. The business world can at most indulge in financial profiteering, and although that has its reaction in other directions than an economic one, yet it is a trifling matter compared with this trafficking in the minds and characters of children. For however disguised, we must not allow the chief significance of this trading in the "souls" of the rising generation. It is a struggle for clients, or to use commercial terms, it is a struggle for customers in which the Churches are engaged. The Churches know it, they confess it as the chief reason for their plots and their cunning that if they once lose

their hold on the child it is hopeless for them to expect to gain the adult. It is the child or nothing. Literally this fight of the churches is for the cradle so as to prevent religion falling into the grave of neglect.

It will be remembered that until recent years all that the Churches were asking for was larger grants for the purpose of maintaining their own schools; and in order to make that task easier every move on the part of the Government and local bodies to raise the standard of education or to improve the Government schools was met with opposition. But of late years continuous intriguing with government after government has given the religious schools advantage after advantage, until there is to-day actually more public money spent on sectarian schools than has ever before been the case. There is, it must be remembered, no claim that the church schools are on the same high level as Government schools, with regard to either equipment or quality of education. Their aim is religious training and religious training only. They are not aiming at developing the more helpful kind of citizen. Their sole aim is to turn out good Roman Catholics, good Methodists, good Episcopalians, or some other variety of Christian. In their eyes the chief good, if it is not the only good served in the schools is that of turning out sturdy sectarians. One of the statements from the articles and speeches that I have before me proves this in the lament, from a Protestant source, that Roman Catholic schools "have more than held their own because the senior scholars have been retained," which means that the Roman Catholic training does more to crush mental independence than does the Protestant method. No comparison is made as to the relative value of the type of individuals that leave the schools, the complaint is that the Roman Catholic schools turn out fewer pupils capable of independent thinking than do the Protestant ones. The social and intellectual quality of the output of the different order of schools is not even considered. The question is not "Are we making good citizens?" or are we turning out pupils that have been trained to do their own thinking and reach their own conclusions. The sole concern is whether the boys and girls who leave school have a rooted incapacity for individual thinking and independent action. No wonder that a favourite text with preachers with regard to their congregations is "Ye are my sheep," and that the symbol of our leading archbishop is a "crook."

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Old Wine and New Bottles

Forestalling the policy of Hitler before that notorious scoundrel appeared upon the scene, the Church declared—until recent years—that all they wished for was the privilege of the perpetuation of their own schools, thus giving the Christian equivalent of the "I have no further territorial demands," with which Hitler fooled so many of our ready-to-be fooled statesmen. Now the demand—following the Hitlerian policy of demanding control of Europe—is for the domination of *all* schools. The parson is, in every school, to be above all. The mask is being thrown off, and the churches with their call to prayer are determined to help themselves in a very substantial way, whether God helps them or not. Whether their God works through the Government or the Government works through God does not matter. They are determined to have taught to the young as "historic facts" such things as the incarnation of God in the womb of a Jewish maiden, his sacramental sacrifice for the sins of men and his resurrection from the dead three days after his execution. These and their kindred teachings are to be taught as actually happening about nineteen centuries ago, even though the world of scholarship knows that there is not an item of this mythology that was not hoary with age at the date given in Christian history for their occurrence. They are to be taught,

says *The English Churchman*, to every child in our homeland "with all the simplicity with which it is set forth in the New Testament," and, says the *Times*, the teaching shall be given "by duly qualified and believing teachers." This mass of fable is to be taught as actual history by teachers who believe it. Non-believers need not apply—at least not unless they are hypocrites living a daily lie and pretending to believe a mass of stories that have the same right to be called history as is possessed by Grimm's Fairy Tales.

I do not deny that this cannot be done. In some respects we have retrograded in spite of our advanced science and the existence of a sane philosophy. My readers will remember that at the time of the Coronation of the present King, I pointed out that the Archbishop of Canterbury had in a manner more open than had been the case for generations, performed the magical ceremony of transforming a very ordinary man into a semi-God. Germany has shown that given the ruthlessness and the power, the possibility of bringing up a generation that lives on a fantastic mythology and an absurd history of a whole people, may be accomplished, and that the most criminal of teachings may be rationalized and justified if, to use the language of the Bishop of Salisbury, they are made "fundamental to national education." What Hitler has done with Nazism a Church controlled education may do with the Christian mythology. More, we should never forget that the Church did, long before Hitler, with Christianity what had been done in Germany—and maintained the system for centuries. If I do not believe that the Church can succeed in this country as Hitler has done in Germany, it is because I do not believe that the Church will acquire enough strength to do so. But the will to do so is there, and history is one great falsity if we do not recognize the fact that the Church which destroyed two civilizations is quite capable of sacrificing another to its bigotry and self-interest. The Churches will act to the limits of their opportunity in the direction of their own aggrandisement.

The manner in which, by large sections of our ruling class, the idea of Nazism was welcomed, alone proves this. What has happened in Germany is due to the spirit of religion applied to social life, and on some scale it may happen here unless we block the plan of those who hope to reap from the blood and suffering of to-day a fresh measure of strength in the revival of a great superstition.

CHAPMAN COHEN

The Beauty of Bridges

That same gentle spirit from whose pen
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow.

Spenser

In the very chequered history of the Poet-Laureates the name of Robert Bridges will be one of its titles to regard. His succession to that Banjo Byron, Alfred Austin, restored distinction to the post, and when the little band of Georgian poets dedicated an anthology from their work to Bridges, they but acclaimed him as a singer who worthily carried on the splendid tradition of English poetry which had endured for half a millennium.

Every genuine poet must wait for his audience, because he sees the world freshly for himself, and has to represent to others the vision that he sees. At first his method seems strange, his epithets are unusual, the things he sings of may not be the things that readers think of, or are accustomed to. Or, maybe, the public does not understand his drift, as in the case of Browning or Whitman.

Undoubtedly, Bridges was individual. His lyrics do

not suggest those of any other poet. His blank verse is not Tennysonian, his sonnets do not recall Rossetti; his lyrics are totally unlike those of Swinburne. The fresh voice has to make its own impression.

The prime quality in Bridges' work is the purely English character of the poems. He has held the mirror up to nature. He is, perhaps, better at the small and quiet than at the broad and moving, for in the pictorial vein his scenery has none of the glorious movement of Meredith's and Swinburne's muse. Few poets, however, surpass Bridges at the purely native quality of his art. Shelley's verse bears a wild orchid fragrance; Keats the perfume of a musk-rose; Wordsworth reflects mountain loneliness, but Bridges' verse is fresh with the blossoms of our countryside. Here, for example, is a description of the north wind in October:—

In the golden glade the chestnuts are fallen all;
From the sacred boughs of the oak the acorns fall;
The beech scatters her ruddy fire;
The lime has stripped to the cold,
And standeth naked above her yellow attire
The larch thinneth her spire
To lay the ways of the wood with cloth of gold.

The nightingale has been hymned by countless poets through the centuries, but Bridges conveys an original note:—

Alone, aloud in the raptured ears of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet swinging meads and bursting boughs of may,
Dream while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

For a contrast compare the fine poem, "A Passer By":—

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,
Thou fearest not sea rising nor sky clouding,
Whither away, fair river, and what thy quest?
Ah! soon, when winter has all our vales oppress,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,
Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or rest
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furling.

Although "caviare to the general," Bridges wrote some very appealing verse, which haunts the memory and pierces the reader with their earnestness and exactness. Listen to the stanzas. "On a Dead Child," written in unusual, but singularly effective rhythm:—

Perfect little body, without fault or stain on thee,
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!
Though cold and stark and bare,
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain on thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou; alas! no longer
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be
Thy father's pride; ah, he
Must gather his faith together, and his strength make stronger.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing,
Go lie thee there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!
Propping thy wise, sad head,
Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet! Doth the change content thee? Death, whither has
he taken thee?

To a world, do I think, that rights the disasters of this?
The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body and wish but to warm thee and awaken
thee.

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us
To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,
Unwilling, alone we embark,
And the things we have seen and have known and have heard
of, fail us.

There is quality, too, in the ode on "A Lady Whom Grief for her Beloved Killed":—

Assemble all ye maidens, at the door,
And all ye lovers, assemble; far and wide
Proclaim the bridal, that proclaimed before
Has been deferred to this late eventide;

For on this night the bride,
The days of her betrothal over,
Leaves the parental hearth for evermore;
To-night the bride goes forth to meet her lover.

Born in Kent, Bridges was a man of many parts and of varied experiences. At Oxford University he distinguished himself as a poet, cricketer, oarsman, and scholar. Then he travelled on the Continent, and in the East, and on returning home studied medicine at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, took up practice, and filled several hospital appointments. After 1882 he devoted himself entirely to literature. His output was not large, and few poets challenged the critical public with so small a nosegay of verse. His literary career covered half a century. Careless of applause, he had his reward. He became the vogue both at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and the best critics always hailed him as a singer of real merit. His anthology, "The Spirit of Man," was notable, and his masterpiece, "The Testament of Beauty," revealed the purity of his thought and style. Lord Oxford (H. H. Asquith), when Prime Minister, honoured himself no less than Robert Bridges when he conferred the Laureateship on so distinguished a son of his old University.

Although Bridges held the official position of Poet Laureate, he never, for a moment, regarded himself as "a linnet on the wrist of a King." Neither does Mr. John Masefield, the present Laureate. Both these renowned poets have eschewed political poetry, and Masefield has actually averted his eyes from the present world-war, and used his talents to indite a character study of the Empress Theodora, who lived so many centuries before our own time.

Few real poets could write about politics and political happenings, and remain poets. Even Swinburne and Tennyson did not do this thing with impunity, and their poetic frenzies got them into trouble. Tennyson allowed himself to write of "the fool-frenzy of the Seine," and invited criticism, whilst Swinburne's passionate invective directed against the then Russian Czar. "Night hath but one red star!" led to a question being asked in Parliament as to whether Swinburne had not overstepped the lines of decorum. Swinburne was always audacious. When it was suggested that the Prince Imperial of France, killed in the Zulu War, should be buried in Westminster Abbey, the fiery Republican wrote a sonnet describing how the great dead in the Abbey, hearing of it, rose from their tombs and walked out, saying "Let the dog lie."

The trouble is that it is well nigh impossible in our time for a man to write exactly what he thinks, as a man, about men in authority, and yet print what he writes. This makes political poetry possible, but improbable, and gives point to the gibe that there is less freedom in twentieth-century Britain than in Ancient Rome under the Caesars.

MIMNERMUS

The Wife of Jesus

LATELY I have been reading with no small pleasure and profit a book written by Jesus. But when I told a friend of this fact he contradicted what I said by remarking drily, that it was generally accepted by all, except myself, that Jesus was no author, and never committed any remarks to paper. To which I answered that this might be correct about his Jesus; but my Jesus was a notable author—whom his Jesus almost certainly read and plagiarized from, in his speeches.

The habit of thinking in terms of one Jesus is a common habit in England. But if you lived in other countries, notably some of the South American Republics, you would quickly lose this insular prejudice, for your landlady's son or the boy next door might be afflicted with this Holy Name. When I was in Greece I had a servant-interpreter called Jesus Christodophus and a notable villain he was, except in roasting a sucking-pig and such like matters. We called him "Chris" for short and for propriety's sake. As one fastidious English parson said, it sounded revolting in Christian-bred ears to exclaim: "Jesus! you haven't cleaned my boots properly. Please do them again, Jesus, and do them better." Even in French that sounded a trifle displeasing in one's own Christian-educated ear.

But to return to Jesus the Author. "This Jesus" (to quote a prologue to the book) "was the son of Sirach and grandchild of Jesus of the same name with him." He wrote that book of the Apocrypha called "Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus," not to be confused either with the book of Ecclesiastes or Solomon's book of Wisdom, though no whit inferior to either. I possess Arnold Bennett's copy of the Apocrypha with his book-plate in it, upon which he worked when writing his play *Judith*. Bound in red leather it contains many interesting notes pencilled in by him. Judging by his marks upon Jesus' book, Arnold Bennett found many good things therein.

Let me suggest a few—and I do not suggest that these few are the best or that there are not other excellent aphorisms equally well-expressed:—

- (1) Woe be to fearful hearts and faint hands and the sinner that goeth two ways!
- (2) Give me any plague but the plague of the heart and any wickedness but the wickedness of a woman.
- (3) Set not thy heart upon thy goods and say not I have enough for my life.
- (4) Winnow not with every wind.
- (5) A faithful friend is the medicine of life.
- (6) If thou seest a man of understanding get thee betimes unto him and let thy foot wear the steps of his door.
- (7) Whatsoever thou takest in hand remember the end and thou shall never do amiss.
- (8) My son, meddle not with many matters.
- (9) The heart of fools is in their mouth, but the mouth of the wise is in their hearts.

My Jesus was, of course, a passionate believer in Religion and Wisdom, but unlike King Solomon he was no fool for all that. I believe that Jesus Christ got much of his teaching from this book. For instance the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is there in the swift admonition "Justify not thyself before the Lord . . . say not, God will look upon the multitude of my oblations." Here too is the Parable of the Rich Man; and here the petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive," in these words of Jesus the First: "Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest." Nor are these the only parables. Christians are fond of suggesting that Jesus Christ's teaching was original, and a great advance on the Old Testament. But a perusal of this book might alter such opinions.

Upon the subject of women my Jesus is absolutely inimitable—as good as the best French Authors. It is fascinating to speculate upon Mrs. Jesus and to draw her from Jesus's books as Frank Harris drew Shakespeare's mistress Mary Fitton from the plays and poems in his book, *The Man Shakespeare*.

Jesus began with high hopes of Woman—like all of us. The beauty of a good wife in the ordering of her house is as the sun when it riseth in the high heaven; a silent and loving woman is, a gift of the Lord. He that getteth a wife beginneth a possession, a help and a pillar of rest. But he that hath no wife will wander

up and down mourning. The beauty of a woman cheereth the countenance, and a man loveth nothing better. Well is him that dwelleth with a wife of understanding: Blessed is the man that hath a virtuous wife for a good wife is a good portion and a virtuous woman rejoiceth her husband.

Such no doubt were the fond illusions inspired by Mrs. Jesus before marriage.

Without doubt it was marriage—experienced with Mrs. Jesus—that caused a change in the music. Jesus was forced to remind himself that "of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die." Soon, poor Jesus was exclaiming: "I had rather dwell with a lion and a dragon than keep house with a wicked woman." He observed how "the wickedness of a woman changeth her face" (like cosmetics) "and darkeneth her countenance like sackcloth."

Mrs. Jesus was a gadder abroad "full of words"; "a woman jealous over another woman," "with an impudent eye" that requireth watching and "haughty looks and eyelids"—in short the sort of woman all of us (except her husband) like to know and find very entertaining.

Mrs. Jesus apparently had been a singer and Jesus betrays his fondness for "wine and music" over and over again. He did his best to keep his wife straight by telling her that a woman that honoureth her husband shall be counted wise of all, but that a shameless woman shall be counted as a dog and a harlot, as spittle. He told her that a shamefaced and faithful wife is a double grace and urged her improve her mind. Alas! it was useless. Soon he was suspecting Mrs. Jesus in no uncertain terms:—

She will open her mouth as a thirsty traveller when he hath found a fountain and drink of every-water near her; by every hedge will she sit down and open her quiver against every arrow.

And he came to the perfectly correct conclusion that he that hath hold of an evil wife is "as though he held a scorpion," (that is when it is one's own wife). The position of Mr. and Mrs. Jesus was complicated perhaps by the fact that Jesus was "a quiet man," and Mrs. Jesus had the money and Jesus noticed bitterly: "A wife if she maintain her husband is full of anger, impudence and much reproach." He denounced the one "who trespassed against her own husband," as well as her paramour, "the man that breaketh wedlock." He tried to admonish himself: "Be not jealous over the wife of thy bosom and teach her not an evil lesson against thyself."

Then no doubt Jesus himself fell into temptation. Over and over again he very properly advised himself: "Gaze not on a maid," and "Turn away thine eyes from a beautiful woman for many have been deceived by the beauty of a woman," "Meet not with a harlot," and so on. Finally he had seriously to take himself to task as follows:—

Sit not at all with another man's wife nor sit down with her in thine arms and spend not thy money with her at the wine; lest thine heart incline into her, and so through thy desire thou fall into destruction.

Alas! wine, woman and song—all three were the weakness of Jesus. He told himself "Use not the company of a woman that is a singer lest thou be taken without her attempts" and advised all who could read him not to forsake a wife and give themselves over to a light woman.

But Mrs. Jesus became "a loud crying woman and a scold," and her husband when he "sat among his neighbours heard it and sighed bitterly." At last he could endure it no more. He made up his mind to divorce her and advised all the other foxes to lose their tails in these apt and pregnant words:—

If she go not as thou wouldst have her, cut her

off from thy flesh and give her a bill of divorce and let her go.

Many English husbands would be glad to take the advice of Jesus, but unfortunately the English law of divorce is not so complaisant as that. Anyhow the idyll of Jesus ended. Jesus, I imagine, gave up wedlock for literature, and what became of Mrs. Jesus I have not the faintest idea. Certainly she remains a reality, like a fly in amber, with her husband again in this immortal work.

Jesus must have been a father, too, for his wisdom upon children is that of practical experience. If King Lear had read his book Shakespeare's play would have been different. How apt and pithy is this saying: "Cocker not thy child lest he make thee afraid of him." Or this: "As long as thou livest and hast breath in thee—give not thyself over to any."

It is almost unbelievable that in that compilation "The Bible Designed to be read as Literature," only about three chapters (and these the least admirable as literature) are given of this great book. Yet the compiler's preface admits that this work of Jesus is the best of Hebrew "wisdom" literature; implies that it ought to be in the Bible; and says that it was only rejected because no great name like Solomon's was erroneously thought to be the author. Considering some of the wicked rubbish left in the Bible it is indeed disgusting that the good sense and high poetry of my Jesus was left out. Yet it is safe to say that Jesus Christ, judging by Gospel accounts of him, appreciated this former Jesus if his later followers do not.

C. G. L. DU CANN

Acid Drops

The *Birmingham Gazette* deserves mention—honourable or dishonourable—for heading a paragraph, "Nazis out to Destroy Religion." The Nazis are out for nothing of the kind. On any scientific reading of the word "religion," the Nazi movement is an essentially religious one. In its superstitions it falls into line with religion in general. And in its control of education, in the forbidding of any teaching to children, any reading by adults, and the formation of any society that runs counter to Nazism it is in line with the policy of the Christian Church wherever and whenever that Church has had opportunity of controlling life. A little more or less ruthlessness in the administration of these principles makes no difference to the cardinal fact. If ever there was in the history of the world a religious movement it is Nazism.

According to the *Universe* the German Government, acting through the Petain puppets, has repealed the law of 1904, which prohibited the teaching of religion in State schools. This may, of course, be no more than a friendly gesture towards the Vatican, and we have no doubt that, if the Roman Church found it to its sectarian interests to make friends with Germany, it would do so without delay. And in that case one wonders what would be the attitude of Cardinal Hinsley and his followers.

Two things must never be forgotten when we are dealing with the Roman Church. First, it has no politics. It may ally itself with any form of government that promises to work with the Church, and to submit to the general programme of the Church. It claims to-day, as it always has claimed, control over morals, education, the family and marriage. It will work with any Government that either does not attempt to undermine these claims, or is likely to promote them. In other words, it is always in the political market. So far it has run true to type.

To talk of the Roman Church as standing up for democracy is ridiculous. Such a pretence would deceive no one who knows the Church. It gave every encouragement to Mussolini when he was butchering the Abyssinians, and its blessing to both Mussolini and the Goering gang when they joined hands to murder Republican Spain. Roman Catholics did what they could to discourage the sending of the children of the

Spanish Republicans to this country to save them from being butchered. And we have on record the utterances of Roman Catholic leaders in this country, that it would be better for the children of Roman Catholics to be bombed in Liverpool, if sending them to safety in North Wales involved too close contact with Protestants. The first interest is that of the Church, and the Church means an institution that stood without a rival in the art of wrecking human freedom and outraging human decency until the present German Government came into being.

Again running true to type, the Archbishop of Canterbury has asked Christians to pray "for our enemies." What form is the prayer to take? Does it mean we are to pray for their conversion to "our" point of view? That stands as much chance of being realized in fact as praying for the German gang to become real gentlemen. Does praying for our enemies mean that we are to gain a complete victory over them? In that case the Archbishop's appeal for prayer is a piece of sheer hypocrisy so patent that it ought not to deceive anyone. But the Archbishop, who, in conjunction with Baldwin, worked the dethronement of Edward the Eighth is not likely to be found wanting in craftiness in any direction.

A representative of the *Stoke Newington Observer* has been interviewing a number of people on the value of a day of prayer. As the result there seems not a great deal of faith in the district in the power of prayer. Sixty per cent definitely did not want it, and that says more than appears on the surface of things. For conditions do not yet make for complete frankness on such matters, and the Churches having roped in the King to "appoint" a day of prayer is bound to tell with some people, just as when Edward the Eighth changed the shape of his hat it meant a boom to hatters in that style of head-gear. The common sense of the situation was well expressed by one young lady interviewed—"Prayers didn't prevent the war. Prayers won't end it." That is "horse-sense," but it will not prevent another National Day of Prayer being "appointed." Altogether thousands of people have been imprisoned for practising the confidence trick, but it is still largely and widely practised.

The *Church Times* has naturally been attacked by the Roman Catholic press for having the courage to say what it thinks right about the attitude of the Vatican to the war. Its reply is worth quoting—if only to show how once again these Christians love one another:—

We are well aware that, at this time, quarrels between Christians are more than deplorable. But we are even more acutely alive to the tragic fact that, if a Christian order of society is to evolve after the war, it must be clearly understood that, while countless Roman Catholics, like Jacques Maritain, Christopher Dawson and the Dominicans are on the side of the angels, official Rome has become, doubtless to the bitter grief of many of its leaders, the active ally of the people who send their emissaries to murder little children, for Mussolini must now take his share of responsibility for Nazi inhumanity.

"Watcher," writing in the *South London Press*, (September 27), says that for many years he has been preaching as a layman, at Methodist meetings, but he had never seen a sight such as faced him on a recent Sunday. He was conducting a service to about forty persons. He concluded the service alone. There had been an air-raid warning, and the congregation that had been protesting their faith in God, in his watchful care over his followers, etc., decided that they would not trespass on God's patience, or call upon his power; a good air-raid shelter was good enough to go on with. We should not be altogether surprised to find that the writer of the article followed the example of his congregation. Like the preacher in the San Francisco earthquake who advised the congregation that one could die in no better place than the house of God, he ended his exordium with "But outside is good enough for me"—and bolted for the door.

This preacher thought when writing his article he was inflicting a rebuke on his congregation. In any case his having had to, as he says, "change his mind," reflects upon his own understanding. Churches are sand-bagged as well as dance halls. Ministers of religion carry a gas-mask as well as laymen or unbelievers. There is as great a proportion of people killed among believers as among unbelievers. The whole nation relies more upon material than upon "spiritual" arms. Does anyone know of any body of Christians who does actually trust in

God—and proves it to the extent of rejecting all other means of protection? No Christian has ever yet agreed to try a test experiment of the value of the faith in God. All they say is that their faith in God gives them strength to face danger and disaster. And the answer to that, in all seriousness, is the scientific answer—so does whisky, or opium, or strong tea, or carrying a mascot, or any other kind of damn foolishness.

But instead of coming to a sensible conclusion the writer of the article falls back upon the fact that soon after he met some young ladies who went through with their job in the face of danger, etc., etc. So the *South London Press*'s special article writer had his faith renewed and his religious fervour restored—and his incapacity for the simplest of straight thinking demonstrated. And there are myriads of his kind in the land. For the average mental age of the population is 14 years, and although there are many above it there is a great number below it, and while this continues the majority is certain to be on the Lord's side.

Among other industries that have been badly injured by the war is the Lourdes miracle stunt. The nationals of some countries will not be allowed to visit Lourdes; French and German peoples will not have the money to spend on the journey. There seems one way out of the difficulty, and we may yet see it adopted. Hitherto the angels that operate at Lourdes have not manifested their power elsewhere. They have not gone to the sick, they have insisted on the sick going to them. But the resources of God are infinite, and we shall not be at all surprised to find that a vision has occurred to some pious folk, and they have been told that during the war—but during the war only, some Roman Catholic Church in a remote locality, or some spot on which a saint died, will serve as a deputy miracle station. After all we have substitutes for many things and the Lord must not show himself behind in Ersatz industry.

The Crown of Olives or some similar decoration should be given to the Bishop of Galway for saying that "Science has been telling men that they are monkeys, and has succeeded in persuading them to act like gorillas." On behalf of both the monkeys and the gorillas we protest against the assumption that the conduct of men such as the Bishop of Galway is an example of monkey or gorilla ethics. But we admit that in his way the Bishop of Galway has gone some distance towards proving the affinity of the human race to the simian race. He has shown beyond dispute that evolution means movement in any direction, up or down, backward or forward. And we thank the Bishop of Galway for showing that, granted man's descent from some "ape like" creature, he has not yet made the gap between man and ape so great as to prevent the possibility of a return. So may one extract wisdom even from fools.

The *Times* is still hammering away at its policy of Christianizing the State schools. It takes for granted the fact that this is a Christian country, in the sense that only those who are Christians are to be considered, and second that their organization of our social life as a consequence of the war involves a definite sectarian religion being taught in all State educational institutions, which will be manned by believing Christians. Added to these things the Churches aim at being relieved of the part expense of running their own schools which are maintained for no other reason than to breed believers.

We have written often of late on this church campaign, and we again wish to make a special appeal to teachers. Teachers have often complained, rightly complained, at their being made the catspaws of the clergy. But they are the ones who, more than any other class in the community, can do much to spoil this clerical plot. None knows better than teachers that if the Churches get their way it will mean a premium on hypocrisy and inefficiency. Teachers will be appointed for their religious, not for their educational value. The great thing that will determine their appointment, and certainly their promotion, will be their being sound believers. Those with adequate self-respect, and the best qualities as teachers, will be driven to some other walk in life. If the teachers would collectively cry "hands off" to the clergy the battle would be half won. If they remain silent while the children of the nation are being sacrificed to the clerical manœuvres now going on they will prove themselves traitors to the best traditions of sound educationalists and to the children whose interests ought to be their first consideration.

We are all familiar with the religious arguments to justify the existence of pain in the world. One is that it is a warning of trouble. The answer to this is (1) that when we get pain from any disease the danger is already in action, and a warning should prevent, not signal that something is actually wrong. (2) Some of the deadliest diseases have already a fatal hold before they give any pain at all. (3) In some cases there is no pain, but rather its opposite. Thus men who have run the risk of being frozen to death know that intense cold induces a tendency to sleep at the very time one should be most active. But, of course, one must not expect the average religious apologist to be affected by these simple considerations; and the absurdities to which we have referred still have a very wide vogue.

There are, however, some exceptions. One of these was, apparently, the Rev. L. B. Ashby who writes the Saturday religious article for the *Daily Telegraph*. He says he cannot accept the usual religious theory, for the reasons that, "pain in and by itself, so far from purifying and ennobling us leaves us actually weakened, bewildered and resentful. Its natural effect is to embitter, and even to degrade." Good, but what is the justification for pain in a world made and controlled by a good God? The answer is that it trains character. "The willing and brave acceptance of our share of the world's pain has a positive and a constructive value. . . . Few things do more to inspire and influence others than the spectacle of pain or crushing misfortune cheerfully and heroically borne."

But this is only the old plea over again; and it is not true in either theory or fact. What is "our" share of pain? "How does one share pain?" At the present moment we happen to have a rather irritating cold. We can call it our share of the colds in the world? Does anyone have less of a cold because I have one? Are either of us better because the other one has it? And how am I made better because I suffer the cold without grumbling (which is not the case)? I may neglect it altogether, and so run some risk of a worse complaint. But if my character is "ennobled" to meet this annoyance calmly, should I not be better off, or at least as well off if I were minus the cold, and so should not require this specific ennoblement. Mr. Ashby is reviving the theory he discards, and expressing it in a slightly different way. And the conclusion is that one cannot by any change of terms convert a ridiculous proposition into a sensible one.

In the United States census of religious sects—taken every ten years—the following sects are scheduled:—

Among the sects listed in the census are such organizations as: Baha'is, Duck River and Kindred Associations of Baptists, Two-Seed-in-the Spirit, Predestinarian Baptists, Church of Daniel's Band, Fire Baptized Holiness Church of the Americas, a group which bears the attenuated title "House of God, Holy Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth, House of Prayer for all people," the Church of Illumination, Defenceless Memnonites of North America, Primitive Methodist Church in the United States of America, National David Spiritual Temple of Christ Church Union, and the Schwenkenfelders.

It sounds like the pet-names of a travelling menagerie.

The Bishop of Liverpool accepts the ruling of "both Convocations," that the marriage of divorced persons must no longer be allowed in his churches. He advises that they should get married in a Registrar's Office, and this should be followed, he lays down, "by a short service of blessing upon a marriage already contracted." This really would be funny if it were not so thoroughly stupid. The marriage of divorced persons is quite wrong, says the Bishop, but the Church can bless the, to the Church, quite illegal union! We expect Dr. David could defend his suggestion, but sometimes we give up trying to understand the pious little ways of our top-notch theologians.

Roman Catholic Bishop Poskit, of Leeds, says that unless a country makes its laws according to God's will (that is the Roman Catholic God) it is not a Christian country. We agree. But the only record we have of God's will is the Bible, and any one who proposed framing our laws on the Bible would be considered a madman. And if he tried to carry such laws into practice, he would stand a good chance of being sentenced as a criminal or confined as a lunatic. We suggest a reading of our *Bible Handbook* by anyone who wishes fully to realize what living by the Bible would mean in practice.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

To Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—J. Duker, 5s.

JACK BENJAMIN (New York).—Thanks for copy of article. We congratulate you on its force and much needed common sense. You have our sympathy with regard to the vagaries of your typewriter. We are a much tried sufferer in that direction. There is a fortune awaiting the man who can invent a typewriter that will spell properly.

W. M. KILPATRICK.—Pleased to add your name to our register of regular readers. The list is far from complete, and we hope those who have not yet sent their names and addresses will do so. This is a precautionary measure to ensure continuity of supply and may never be needed. But one never knows, and we wish to be in as close touch as possible with all our readers.

J. SNAITH.—Sorry to hear that your copy of the *Freethinker* was delayed in transit. But all kinds of things—including bombs—delay receipt of anything. If after a reasonable period your copy does not come to hand, we shall be pleased to send another copy free.

T. A. ELLINGHAM.—We have given your letter to the General Secretary, who will write you.

H. V. CREECH.—Thanks for sending page of *Freethinker*. A blurred page often occurs in printing in the ordinary way. Usually such sheets are detected and thrown on one side.

H. IRVING.—We have not forgotten your letter, but with so much on hand we have had no time to deal with the question at the length it deserves. But all in good time, and a question that has been on the carpet for so many centuries can afford to wait awhile.

E. SIMMONS.—Certainly some of the conclusions of Tylor have been questioned, and even rejected. But the fundamental value of Tylor's general conclusions remain, and no genuine student can afford to neglect "Primitive Culture."

J. S. MACKAY.—Thanks for seeing that the newsagent supplied the copies of this paper that were ordered. There is no need for any newsagent not getting what is ordered. Shall hope to see you on our next visit to Glasgow. By the way, the quotation you give is from Walter Savage Landor, not from Robert Browning.

JAS. BARR.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

*The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.*

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums

Last week's issue was got out amid much confusion and there were several faults that will not, we hope, recur. One or two would not have appeared, but Mr. Cohen left before he had time to attend to certain matters of detail. Our aim is to give substantially as much in the twelve pages as was formerly given in 16. It should be said that there is no financial gain in printing 12 pages instead of 16. Technicalities of printing make it at least as expensive to print the smaller issue as the larger one.

We have been obliged to hold over several letters until next week. We are compelled to go to press earlier than usual until such time as our machinery is again in working order.

Spare our blushes, but we think some of our readers will be interested. It is taken from our lively contemporary, *The New Zealand Rationalist*:—

There is little doubt that Mr. Chapman Cohen, the President of the National Secular Society of England, and Editor of the *Freethinker*, can be classed as the foremost Freethinker in the world to-day. In making this statement one is mindful of the many able men in the Rationalist movement, but the record possessed by Mr. Cohen is quite unique. In length of service and in his writings and lecturing Mr. Cohen has set a record that will probably never be equalled in the history of Freethought. Thus an autobiography of his fifty years as a Freethought propagandist could reasonably be expected to be something out of the usual. Mr. Cohen has not disappointed us, for his latest production, *Almost an Autobiography*, is as fascinating and entertaining as any Freethought reader could desire. His reminiscences of incidents in his platform work and of the varied experiences which have filled his long career are set out in typical style. Altogether this is a book which will delight the many admirers of Mr. Cohen.

We will only add, for those who are interested, that, in spite of the war, *Almost an Autobiography* has up to date sold better than any of Mr. Cohen's books.

We have received a very unusual rebuke concerning our *Almost an Autobiography*. Dr. D. Villiers, of Natal, writes complaining of the price—6s. He thinks it ought to be a much higher figure, and as evidence of the genuineness of his opinion sends 30s. for another copy, with a request that the author will spend the difference in buying a few "smokes for himself." It is not for us to deny that the book is very cheap—even from the commercial point of view—at 6s., all we can do to placate the anger of Dr. Villiers is to send the balance of his cheque up in smoke.

We are getting a little more ship-shape at the office than we were when last writing, but being without gas, water (except for what "providence" sends at the wrong moment and in the wrong place) and electricity, "getting on" is not quite so pleasant as it might be. But we write this note to remind readers that if there is any delay in their receiving the *Freethinker* or other books and pamphlets, the fault is not ours. We can exert no power over parcels once they leave this office.

Mr. G. R. Woodward, evidently a regular reader of these columns, is sufficiently disgusted by the efforts of professional religionists to use the war as a means of pushing their creed to express his feelings by writing for a membership form of the N.S.S. be sent to him. His letter has been handed over to the General Secretary. In the course of his letter Mr. Woodward says:—

Thank goodness we have the *Freethinker* to lead the fight against religious bigotry. Your journal was never more necessary than it is at present. I am proud to be one of its readers.

We trust to have Mr. Woodward as an appreciative reader for many years.

We have no desire to cause trouble which it is possible to avoid, but we must advise those who are engaged in giving Freethought lectures out of doors not to be deterred from doing so by the fussy and quite unwarranted interference of the police. Recently we had to tell the story of such an interference with Mr. Brighton, wholly upon the ground that he was talking on Atheism in a prohibited area. Mr. Brighton was summoned, and the magistrate promptly and properly dismissed the case.

Now we have another instance from Mr. J. Clayton, one of our speakers in Lancashire. Mr. Clayton is in the army service and was lecturing on Freethought in uniform. A police officer informed him that he had no right to speak on that subject in uniform. Mr. Clayton declined to be interfered with and went on with the meeting. The subject on which he was speaking was not a political one, and no one had any right to interfere with him. The matter was, however, reported to Mr. Clayton's superior officer, who behaved in quite a gentlemanly manner, and laughed at the whole business. As is not unusual, good humour and common sense won the day. We congratulate Mr. Clayton on the way he dealt with the matter. He might so easily have taken a wrong step.

The Historicity of Paul

PROGRESS in scientific investigations depends upon improvement in technique; giving greater precision in observation and calculation. It is the merit of L. Gordon Rylands that he has developed an improved technique in Biblical Criticism. That technique was indicated in the *Evolution of Christianity*, in which he gave the outline of an evolutionary theory to account for the origin of Christianity; in *A Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles* (Watts) theory and technique are put to effective use.

There is evidence in the first century B.C. of a number of sects differing in their dogma; including "a body of doctrine" which was distinguished by certain conceptions and modes of thought—comprised under the general term Gnosis, recognisable by certain characteristic expressions and phrases which are described as Gnostic.

"Difference of theological doctrine is more easy to demonstrate than difference of style" (though this is useful and can be recognized even in the English translation). Theologians have recognized such differences and have been sorely puzzled by them: two different conceptions of "the flesh," and two, corresponding systems of redemption. The two doctrines are mutually exclusive, and are found alternating in the same Epistle. "Critics have recognized Gnostic and Hellenistic forms of thought, and their incompatibility with the Jewish eschatology." No problem of the same kind confronts us in the case of Seneca or Cicero. The Epistles are stratified.

"Tertullian accused Marcion of having mutilated the Epistles—and Irenaeus also says he curtailed them." Marcion has been slighted by theologians, "but his evidence deserves credit." No competent critic now doubts that the Gospels were growing by accretion. "What guardian Angel protected the Epistles from a like interpolation?" Not only is there evidence of shorter Epistles, but, "all the most reliable evidence—points to the fact that Pauline Christianity was Gnostic, Paul was the only Apostle recognized by the Gnostics, and was for long viewed with suspicion by the leaders of the Catholic Church."

Commencing with Romans: there is nothing in the Epistle directed to any one church, we cannot doubt that the original was addressed in general—"to Gnostic Christians, as it is among Gnostics that we first hear of it." Proceeding section by section we find sections which differ so much in style and doctrine that it is impossible that they are the work of the same writer." One writer is evidently "a Hellenistic Jew who has ceased to believe the legends of the Old Testament." He is a Gnostic for his view is that knowledge of God is the prerequisite." The second is "the one who would be recognized—mistakenly I think—as the authentic Paul." It is the difference between faith and works, only "the works are the sign of the inward regeneration. Regeneration not faith is the watchword of this writer," whose doctrine is mystic and subjective—no merely external event will avail—the death of the god is not sufficient. The sinner cannot so easily divest himself of his guilt." To the other "the benefit offered is to be secured not by a spiritual union mystically conceived, but through the belief that the shed blood—was efficacious as a vicarious sacrifice." There is incompatibility not only of doctrine, but also "in the character of the reasoning—a difference of mentality." On the one hand the Gnostic view that matter is naturally corruptible in contrast to the idea that death and corruption came into the world by the sin of Adam; characterized by such expressions as *in or with Christ Jesus* and *through Jesus Christ*.

The existence of pre-Christian Gnosticism may indicate which is the earlier, but more direct and conclu-

sive evidence is that the one was interpolated by the other. Interpolations which break into "a continuous argument—carried forward in an orderly manner, were introduced with a dogmatic motive." The earlier Epistle "has been very carefully worked over by a Catholic editor so as to transform and obscure the marks of its Gnostic origin."

Proceeding further, a third writer is discovered, and analysis shows that another Epistle or part of one has been incorporated, and this also has been interpolated. The style of this writer is distinguished from that of the other two, as also is doctrine. "Believing with the heart" is the counterpart of the "union with Christ," and he contrasts righteousness which is of the law, with that which is of faith: the name Christ is connected with the divinity and Jesus with the humanity of the Saviour. Christ is not coupled with Jesus but kept separate.

After an exhaustive analysis, our author separates the early epistle from the text, and also the fragment, which are both appended for the readers perusal. He concludes that the earliest Epistle is of a distinctly Gnostic character, is claimed to have been written by Paul, and the date is certainly earlier than 70 A.D. The composite Epistle went through at least three editions, the later of which cannot be dated earlier than 120 A.D. The later edition "wished to neutralize the Gnostic doctrine—and to annex the authority of Paul for his own doctrines of predestination, grace and justification by faith. In this endeavour he has been only too successful, seeing that the doctrine which is now almost universally considered to be distinctly Pauline—is not that of the original writer."

"It is really amazing that it has not been generally recognized long ago what a patchwork 1 Corinthians really is. The explanation, no doubt, is the extreme reverence of the great name of Paul." Analysis of this Epistle is more difficult, nevertheless we have the advantage of our experience with Romans and we have "become familiar with the style and doctrine of three writers of the period," and so the procedure adopted is to search out the early Gnostic epistle first.

Exhaustive analysis brings the conclusion that the oldest stratum is a Gnostic Epistle addressed and sent to the church at Corinth, "we may reasonably believe that Paul was the writer." This Epistle was united somewhere about the year 70 A.D., by the editor (who was the writer of the fragment of Romans) with another Epistle which had been written a very few years previously. A few years later a second editor inserted another section and there is a later interpolation. Another Gnostic section was probably next to be added, appended to what was previously the conclusion. Into this chapter, a good many years later more verses were inserted. These were made probably not earlier than 130 A.D. About 120 A.D. the Catholic editor (the same one as in Romans) inserted two chapters and some other passages. Finally, later in the second century a sixth editor added a chapter, some verses having been appended earlier. The early Gnostic Epistle and the two added ones have been separated from the text and included for the readers perusal.

"How anyone—can imagine that 2 Corinthians was written" by the same man as "the two previous Epistles, is a mystery. It is written, for the most part, in a verbose rambling style, which has no resemblance except in—superficial aspects." But the style is not the same throughout, there is a "Gnostic section and its style is clearly recognisable." Analysis shows that the earliest stratum of 2 Corinthians is a Gnostic Epistle, which may possibly have been written as early as 60 A.D., probably between that and 70 A.D., was combined with another about 80 A.D. Subsequently, three separate sections were successively added, the first probably between 80 and 100 A.D., the others later. All sections exhibit Gnostic affinities, but the later sections show that the original doctrine was being

modified. In the first edition "the original Gnostic doctrine is only diluted; no endeavour was made to supply an antidote." Our author has separated the two early epistles.

The voice of Paul is *not* to be found in Galatians except possibly in a quotation. The Epistle was an "open letter" intended for "a wider circle—than the Galatians." After analysis we are told that the original Epistle was written by a Pauline Gnostic (quite possibly one of the editors of 2 Corinthians) a short time before 100 A.D.

The doctrine is based upon the Gnostic sections of Romans. It was considerably interpolated (by the Catholic editor of Romans) about 120 A.D. Other interpolations by some one else later. The early Epistle is separated from the text as before.

Our author also has chapters on the evidence to be drawn from Tertullian, Irenæus, Ignatius, and Epiphanius. The chronological analysis is interesting, as it gives an indication of the evolutionary trend. The recognition of a variety of forms of early Gnosticism shows that the early Pauline communities were in contact, not only with Pagan, but also other Gnostic communities. The Epistles are not letters in the usual sense, but pamphlets or tracts: indications of considerable controversy. "But Christianity in the Catholic sense did not exist, there was no canonical doctrine, consequently, no heresy." A growing modification of the original has been traced, at first only slight, later much more drastic. In the earliest strata there is no evidence of parties, but afterwards we hear of parties of Paul and Apollos, and a little later still, a party of Cephas. That party was for some time not aggressive. By this time controversy becomes open hostility; we hear of "many deceivers" and "false Apostles." It is only in the latest strata that animosity against the Jews becomes apparent. We can see the early development of an ecclesiastical organization, and the Catholicizing policy which completely transformed the original Gnostic communities.

"It has been said that Paul was the real founder of Christianity. Without serious qualification this cannot be true." "Doctrines which must be repulsive to every wholesome mind are shown not to have originated from, nor even to have been taught by him." "The stripping off of fictitious characteristics and legendary accretions leaves us—with very little knowledge of Paul as an historical personage." "If Paul is anywhere represented, it is as one of the sitters of a composite portrait."

And so the historical Paul goes the same way as the historical Jesus!

H. PREECE

And "Christ" Said . . .

Those very enthusiastic admirers of the *true* Christ, the reverent Agnostic or Rationalist—by the true Christ I mean, of course, what they mean, the historic one the Man who went about doing good, healing the sick, and who was a Great Reformer—seem to me to be very chary of quoting his words other than a few stock *cliches* like "Love ye one another," "Feed my sheep," or "Love your enemies." I have never been able to understand this chariness. "Christ" filled almost the whole of the Gospel of St. John with his talks—most of them, to such an irreverent critic like myself, horribly boring and utterly inconsequential—but few of these speeches seem to me to be ever quoted by the aforesaid admirers. Why? Why are we always told about his "doing good and healing the sick?" Why are we not told exactly which or what are the wonderful Reforms which put "Christ" on a par with Bradlaugh or Paine?

Like most Freethinkers (I hope) I like to jog my

memory a little with more than a cursory reading of the Bible, and, in particular, the speeches of Jesus. And I find when I quote him accurately from the Authorized Version that somehow he never means what he says. Why do people who have given up Christianity rush at once to the rescue of "Our Lord" when he is not their "Lord" and immediately claim that I ought to know better, and that it was impossible for Jesus ever to have said such a thing—or anyway to have meant what he said?

You remember that particularly brilliant saying of his that you cannot be his disciple unless you *hate* your parents. I have never quoted it without bringing a hornet's nest upon my devoted shoulders. Jesus telling you to *hate*? Utter and absolute nonsense! Why, the whole essence of his teaching, so very different from everybody else's, is that he taught Love—and Love always with a capital L. Still, did he not say "If any *man* come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children . . . ?" Of course, hate never means hate when used by Jesus. It always means the purest Love. Besides no Great Reformer could have attracted the love of millions as Jesus has done unless he taught love. No exaggeration, I assure you—this is the kind of argument I have had to meet dozens of times even from Agnostics.

Jesus also said that "All who came before me are thieves and robbers." The answer to this has never been met quite so glibly by my reverent Rationalist friends—or even by Christians. In fact, I have never had any explanation from anybody as to why a Great Reformer who never taught anything but the purest Love could have allowed himself to utter such pregnant words. Of course, they must have had some meaning, the very fact that they came from Jesus is enough to show that they must belong to the Higher Order of things; but what that meaning is the Supreme Powers have hidden from us. It is all a Dark Mystery. One thing is certain, however, and that is, we must not suppose that we can understand everything that came from the mouth of such a Great Man as "Christ."

But it is in war time that we get the Prince of Peace appealed to most. Jesus was, of course, the greatest Prince of Peace who ever lived—perhaps the only one. He was bitterly opposed to all war, and from this fact he has become the Great Mentor of our religious Conchies and Pacifists. He is invariably brought forward by all the able-bodied pious young men who hate the idea of fighting for their country, though many of them do not in the least mind other people doing so, or even partaking of food coming from the efforts of our military, naval, and air forces.

The awkward part about their case is that "our Lord" himself never said he was a peace lover in anything like the emphatic way in which he said that he had *not* come to bring peace but a sword. These particular verses give a sad blow to the pacifist aspirations of both Christians and reverent Agnostics who have to fall back upon the "spiritual" explanation. Did Christ mean a real sword in this connexion? Perish the thought! He simply *could* not, for he was a pacifist through and through. But he undoubtedly told his disciples to buy a sword—was that a "spiritual" one also? He certainly did not use a sword when he chased the money-changers out of the Temple courtyard, but he did use a whip—and therefore violence. Was that pacifism? Of course it was. If Jesus had to use such measures it proves how indignant he was; but as a Great Reformer who always went about doing good it was necessary to chastise those sinners who resolutely preferred to go the way of sin rather than the beautiful paths of righteousness laid down so marvellously by the Wonderful Teacher. The reader may not believe it, but this is exactly the kind of argument I have had to face from many people who told me that they had completely given up Christianity.

And not even their beautiful pacifism made them less than violently angry with me.

One of the beautiful thoughts of the Great Reformer which has always intrigued me, and which is never repeated as an example of his great Intellect by his Agnostic adorers is "For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath." It has always appeared to me to require a miracle to take away something from anybody who hadn't got it, and I admit that I have always held Jesus to be a God and not a man or even a Man. But there is no doubt that these famous exhortations must have made a great impression on many other believers, for they are actually repeated both by Mark and Luke. And no doubt they are often meditated upon by many who follow Jesus, but who simply cannot stand "Churchianity."

That Jesus simply loathed family ties and could not stand his mother at any price must be apparent even to the most simple reverent Agnostic; but it is rather curious that in his defence of the Great Reformer he never, if he can help it, refers to Jesus and divorce.

Now the tie of marriage can be one of the most beautiful things in life, as well as one of the most hideous and unfair. The mating of man and woman touches the very root of our existence, and in the ultimate, is the be-all and end-all of human aspiration with almost everybody. I cannot here go into such a profound problem which concerns so greatly human happiness, but there surely can be no question that if anybody said what is reported to have been said by Jesus on marriage and divorce, it would be difficult to find anything more genuinely wicked. It is impossible to estimate the extent of misery which his "teaching" has resulted on this one aspect of human relationship. That the question of divorce should still have his dead hand and silly mind laid so heavily upon it is surely one of the most tragic things in modern civilization. And it is always studiously avoided by the gallant band of Jesus adorers, whether Christian or Agnostic.

There are scores of "sayings" of Christ which seem to me to be the last word in ineptitude, but space has run out. I may return again to them some other time.

H. CUTNER

Heretics and Heretics

(Continued from page 635)

LIBERTY was banished from Geneva, and nothing but Presbyterianism was left. Honour, justice, mercy, reason, and charity were all exiled; but the five points of predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, total depravity, and the certain perseverance of the saints, remained instead.

Calvin founded a little theocracy in Geneva, modelled after the Old Testament, and succeeded in erecting the most detestable government that ever existed, except the one from which it was copied.

Against all this intolerance, one man, a minister, raised his voice. The name of this man should never be forgotten. It was Castellio. This brave man had the goodness and the courage to declare the innocence of honest error. He was the first of the so-called reformers to take this noble ground. I wish I had the genius to pay a fitting tribute to his memory. Perhaps it would be impossible to pay him a grander compliment than to say, Castellio was in all things the opposite of Calvin. To plead for the right of individual judgment was considered as a crime, and Castellio was driven from Geneva by John Calvin. By him he was denounced as a child of the Devil, as a dog of Satan, as a beast from Hell, and as one who, by this

horrid blasphemy of the innocence of honest error, crucified Christ afresh, and by him he was pursued until rescued by the hand of death.

Upon the name of Castellio, Calvin heaped every epithet, until his malice was satisfied and his imagination exhausted. It is impossible to conceive how human nature can become so frightfully perverted as to pursue a fellow-man with the malignity of a fiend, simply because he is good, just, and generous.

Calvin was of a pallid, bloodless complexion, thin, sickly, irritable, gloomy, impatient, egotistic, tyrannical, heartless, and infamous. He was a strange compound of revengeful morality, malicious forgiveness, ferocious charity, egotistic humility, and a kind of hellish justice. In other words, he was as near like the God of the Old Testament as his health permitted.

The best thing, however, about the Presbyterians of Geneva was that they denied the power of the Pope, and the best thing about the Pope was that he was not a Presbyterian.

The doctrines of Calvin spread rapidly, and were eagerly accepted by multitudes on the Continent. But Scotland, in a few years, became the real fortress of Presbyterianism. The Scotch rivalled the adherents of Calvin, and succeeded in establishing the same kind of theocracy that flourished in Geneva. The clergy took possession and control of everybody and everything. It is impossible to exaggerate the slavery, the mental degradation, the abject superstition of the people of Scotland during the reign of Presbyterianism. Heretics were hunted and devoured as though they had been wild beasts. The gloomy insanity of Presbyterianism took possession of a great majority of the people. They regarded their ministers as the Jews did Moses and Aaron. They believed that they were the especial agents of God, and that whatsoever they bound in Scotland would be bound in heaven. There was not one particle of intellectual freedom. No one was allowed to differ from the Church, or to even contradict a priest. Had Presbyterianism maintained its ascendancy, Scotland would have been peopled by savages to-day. The revengeful spirit of Calvin took possession of the Puritans, and caused them to redden the soil of the New World with the brave blood of honest men. Clinging to the five points of Calvin, they, too, established governments in accordance with the teachings of the Old Testament. They, too, attached the penalty of death to the expression of honest thought. They, too, believed their Church supreme, and exerted all their power to curse this Continent with a spiritual despotism as infamous as it was absurd. They believed with Luther that universal toleration is universal error, and universal error is universal hell. Toleration was denounced as a crime.

Fortunately for us, civilization has had a softening effect upon the Presbyterian Church. To the ennobling influence of the arts and sciences the savage spirit of Calvinism has, in some slight degree, succumbed. True, the old creed remains substantially as it was written, but by a kind of tacit understanding it has come to be regarded as a relic of the past. The cry of "heresy" has been growing fainter and fainter, and, as a consequence, the ministers of that denomination have ventured now and then to express doubts as to the damnation of infants, and the doctrine of total depravity. The fact is, the old ideas became a little monotonous to the people. The fall of man, the scheme of redemption and irresistible grace, began to have a familiar sound. The preachers told the old stories while the congregation slept. Some of the ministers became tired of these stories themselves. The five points grew dull, and they felt that nothing short of irresistible grace could bear this endless repetition. The outside world was full of progress, and in every direction men advanced, while the Church, anchored to creed, idly rotted on the shore. Other denominations,

imbued some little with the spirit of investigation, were springing up on every side, while the old Presbyterian ark rested on the Ararat of the past, filled with the theological monsters of another age.

Lured by the splendours of the outer world, tempted by the achievements of science, longing to feel the throb and beat of the mighty march of the human race, a few of the ministers of this conservative denomination were compelled, by irresistible sense, to say a few words in harmony with the splendid ideas of to-day.

These utterances have upon several occasions so nearly awakened some of the members, that, rubbing their eyes, they have inquired whether these grand ideas were not somewhat heretical? Those ministers found that just in proportion as their orthodoxy decreased, their congregations increased. Those who dealt in the pure unadulterated article, found themselves demonstrating the five points to a less number of hearers than they had points. Stung to madness by this bitter truth, this galling contrast, this harassing fact, the really orthodox have raised the cry of heresy, and expect with this cry to seal the lips of honest men. One of these ministers, and one who has been enjoying the luxury of a little honest thought, and the real rapture of expressing it, has already been indicted and is about to be tried by the Presbytery of Illinois.

He has been charged:

First. With speaking in an ambiguous language in relation to the dear old doctrine of the fall of man. With having neglected to preach that most comforting and consoling truth, the eternal damnation of the soul.

Surely that man must be a monster who could wish to blot this blessed doctrine out and rob earth's wretched children of this blissful hope!

Who can estimate the misery that has been caused by this most infamous doctrine of eternal punishment? Think of the lives it has blighted—of the tears it has caused—of the agony it has produced. Think of the millions who have been driven to insanity by this most terrible of dogmas. This doctrine renders God the basest and most cruel being in the universe. Compared with him, the most frightful deities of the most barbarous and degraded tribes are miracles of goodness and mercy. There is nothing more degrading than to worship such a God. Lower than this the soul can never sink. If the doctrine of eternal damnation is true, let me have my portion in hell, rather than in heaven with a God infamous enough to inflict eternal misery upon any of the sons of men.

Second. With having spoken a few kinds words of Robert Collyer and John Stuart Mill.

R. G. INGERSOLL

(To be continued)

The Follies of the Astrologers

In the early spring of this year there was published, with a great flourish of trumpets, a book entitled *The Last Year of War—and After*. The author was Mr. Leonardo Blake, one of those mysterious gentlemen who have been granted specially unique information from that perennial source of "facts"—the stars. I must confess that I did not read the book itself, as it seemed to me that 3s. 6d. was rather a lot to pay for a couple of hundred pages of prophecy, when, by merely waiting for a few months, I could find out for myself the way in which the said prophecies would be borne out (or not). But I was sent, by the publishers, a copy of their catalogue, which listed a number of the more prominent predictions of Mr. Blake. The other day, when clearing a loft in obedience to the Government's request, I came upon this catalogue, and I looked at Mr. Blake's prophecies, not without a preliminary trembling of the heart lest, after all, the

terrible happenings of recent weeks or months should have been successfully foretold, in which case even more unpleasant things might be lying in wait for us.

But I need not have worried. Our modern prophets have not reached their enviable position by prophesying woe and destruction; to be cheerful at all costs has always been their principle. And in what follows I would ask the reader to bear one fact in mind—that Mr. Blake wrote his book before the successful Nazi campaigns in Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France, and his prophecies therefore began to deal with the months of February and March. Here is what he said was going to happen: in February a struggle was to begin between the German High Command and the Nazi Party leaders; in March and April the first wave of the German Anti-Nazi revolution was to show itself, and Hitler's rapid decline in power was due to start; in May moves toward peace were to begin with a probable Armistice; in June the war was to end and the German Revolution was to reach its final climax in Civil War, with Hitler losing power and Goering fighting to secure control of the Reich; in August revolution was to break out in many countries, leading, in the words of the publisher, to "widespread world changes, heralding a new world order."

Now, a phrase which has gained much popularity in recent days is "wishful thinking." People tend, we are told, to think what they would like to believe. Personally, I can only say that I have never known a more brilliant example of wishful thinking than that shown in the book, the main contentions of which I have now summarized. And certainly it would be difficult to find a more absurd travesty of the events of the last few months, seen retrospectively, than Mr. Blake's forecast. None of the much-vaunted prophecies has been fulfilled; countless important events have taken place, of which Mr. Blake's mysterious stars apparently had no knowledge. One need only instance the invasion of Norway and of the Low Countries, the collapse of France, the bombing of London, and (on the more cheerful side) the exchange of fifty American destroyers for bases in the West Indies. All of these will have results at present incalculable, but certainly of grave importance in the future development of the world. And no doubt other equally important matters will be occupying our attention in the immediate future.

I imagine that *The Last Year of War—and After* is already securing a position in its rightful place—the twopenny box outside the shops of the second-hand booksellers. Still, human nature being what it is, I have no doubt that a sequel will soon appear, perhaps under some such hopeful title as *The First Year of Peace*. If Mr. Blake has not already embarked on this new masterpiece, I commend the idea to him.

S.II.

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