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Views and Opinions

Evolution and History

IN my notes on the "Race" question (November 24), it was said that all history is evolution and all evolution is history. That generalization will bear a little closer attention. In passing, though, it may be noted that "evolution" is not the best of terms to describe what the word is intended to cover, although it is now too well established to permit revision. "Evolution" means an unfolding, the developing of a plan, and science knows nothing of any plan in nature; it merely describes processes. But those who are familiar with the history of modern evolution will recall the fact that this literal interpretation of the term was seized upon by religious writers—and is still so used—to prove the "hand of God in history." Evolution became God's plan, when it could no longer be safely described as belonging to the devil. The sole scientific implication of "evolution" is that the state of a group of phenomena at one stage is the direct outcome of all the circumstances which make up a preceding situation.

In strict truth there never was before the world any other theory of the development of animal life than evolution. The choice has always been between some theory of the natural growth of animal life, that is, some form of evolution, and blank, immovable ignorance. Such expressions as "God said, let there be—" or "It is the work of God," were not explanations of why, or how, things happened; they were mere clutters of words, excerpts from the diary of a fool. Take any other word than "God" and the sentence is just as informative. Spencer properly described the religious explanation as the "carpenter theory of creation." The issue has always been, as far back as the days of ancient Greece, between some form of evolution and immovable ignorance.

In the early days of Darwinism some of the more astute defenders of the faith were alive to the fact that Natural Selection was no more than a *theory* of evolution, and that even were it proved to be untenable the fact of evolution remained, and these wide awake ones were ready with an argument which would find a place for God inside the Darwinian theory. Their defence ran on these lines. Natural selection is a theory of the survival of the fittest, and "fittest" means the better adapted forms to a given environment. Now the indisputable fact is that Christianity survived. More than that it has gone from strength to strength. It is still with us, and its survival is evidence that Christianity answered to a fundamental need of human nature. The argument was plausible, but completely fallacious; and I notice it here because of its revival in a slightly altered form by such apolo-

gists as the much muddled Middleton Murry, the present Dean of St. Paul's, the B.B.C., professional religious shock troopers, and others. These have given us nothing new; they have merely provided a new collocation of words for the old fallacies.

* * *

Nazism and Christianity

The claim made is that Christianity has survived because it was the "fittest" to survive, that is because of its superior quality, and because it was part of God's plan that it should do so. We may throw some light on both the moral quality of Christianity and the value of its claim that it survived because of its "fitness," by noting the rise of Nazi Germany. Like Christianity the claim of Hitlerism is that Germans are a superior people by "Race," and that they are favoured by Providence—a term of which Hitler is very fond. It took Christianity nearly three centuries to achieve domination; Nazi Germany has a history of power for less than ten years. During that time it has had under its control a new generation of young people. It gained control by force and has maintained itself by force. It has crushed out ruthlessly all antagonists; it has destroyed nearly all existing literature in Germany that was against it, and created a new literature which for scientific foolishness it would be hard to beat. It has brought into being a fabulous history, and its ethical code has converted the most brutal instincts of human nature into laudable actions. There is no future for anyone in Germany who questions the Nazi mythology, or who impeaches the practice of the Nazi priesthood. Finally, it must be remembered that the Nazi triumph has been achieved while surrounded by nations where freedom of thought, speech, and publication, existed, and what was going on outside Germany could never be altogether hidden from those inside.

Now take the case of the Christian Church. Here again we have the belief in a chosen people, a superior people in virtue of either their stock or their belief, or their being chosen by God for salvation. The rise of Christianity to power was not so rapid as was the case with Nazism, but, like Nazism, it eventually achieved power by force, and in nearly every country where it established itself it did so by force, and to some extent it has maintained itself by force ever since. Like Nazism the Christian Church provided the world with a more or less fabulous history of itself and of its competitors. Like Nazism it took care to see that the rising generation should know as little as possible of non-Christian or anti-Christian history. It persecuted when it could, and as far as it could; it shut non-Christians out of public office, and even private ones to a considerable extent. One can, in fact, take Christian history and parallel it—in general terms—step by step with what has taken place in Germany.

There is one other point in favour of Christianity that may be noted. Nazism had to revive a mythology that was rapidly losing strength. Early Christianity found its mythology in full public use. The god incarnate in a semi-divine man had been common in the pagan world for untold generations. The worship of the divine mother was common all round the Mediterranean area. Salvation by initiation and the securing of a "oneness" with the sacrificed hero, as Macchiore has shown in his *From Orpheus to Paul*

were existing dogmas. In the Dionysiac creed there is presented the belief in original sin from which man is saved by the blood of the God, and at Delphi there was shown the tomb of the God Dionysius through whose sacrificial death man received salvation. Every important item in the Christian creed was well known before Christianity, as such, existed. What took place was a redressing of ancient mystery cults that eventually faced the world as Christianity.

Finally, Christianity had this advantage over Nazism. There was throughout the whole of the Roman Empire a tradition and practice of religious freedom. Polytheism was the rule, and where gods are so plentiful—other things equal—a few more or less could make no material difference.

But even then it was touch and go whether Christianity would achieve supremacy. The decisive event appears to have occurred with the political conversion of Constantine. Then commenced the reign of the Christian Church, and the rule by methods which Hitler has made prominent during the past seven years. The suppression of non-Christian and anti-Christian opinions went on as rapidly as possible. Pagan writings were burned—a loss to the intellectual world far more serious than the destruction of obnoxious works by Hitlerism. Of the literature of antiquity much of it is known to-day only by name. The same holds true of much of the early Christian literature, destroyed because of its heretical character. (In this matter Hitler and Goebbels had much to learn from the history of the Christian Church, and probably did learn much from that source.)

Heresy was denounced as the greatest of crimes. The Biblical doctrine of a chosen people was taken over, and in a slightly modified form became part of Christian teaching, to be reinforced in our own time by Hitlerism. Not even Goebbels and Goering could work harder for the suppression of political heretics than did the Church for the destruction of religious ones. And, to this, Christianity added something that Hitlerism lacks. That is, punishment in a future life. The brutality of Hitlerism must cease with the death of its victims. Its tortures end with this world. But the Christian Church followed its enemies into eternity, and to the suppression of ideas, to the burning of books, to the outlawing of the families of heretics, to the slander of opponents, to the policy of unqualified and illimitable lying which to-day distinguishes Nazism—to all these things the Church added the threat of perpetual torture in a future state of existence.

If one considers the situations as they successively appeared during the time in which the Christian Church climbed to power, we have a very close likeness to the means by which Nazism established and has—so far—maintained itself. To an observer who had been capable of watching the rise of both systems the "miracle" of the rise of Christianity would be no more miraculous than the rise of the Nazi system. The growth of both is easily understandable. Mr. F. Legge in his authoritative work *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity* has given us a good sketch of the natural evolution of Christianity, and has laid special stress on the fact that the conquests of Alexander, which helped to make Alexandria a kind of clearing house for all kinds of Eastern mythologies, inevitably led to some kind of a new synthesis of ancient superstitions which the world came to know as Christianity. The internal decay of the Roman Empire also contributed to the rise to power of such an institution as the Christian Church.

* * *

The Survival of the Lower

I think we have in what has been said a complete answer to the claim that the survival of Christianity is, on evolutionary lines, a proof of its fitness to survive. We might admit it, as a mere truism, were it not for the fact that the statement is taken to be the equivalent of moral and intellectual values. And here, again, we have much the same apology in this country put forward on behalf of Fascism. The answer to this is—and I have now space only to state it baldly—that Christianity, as with Nazism, created an artificial social environment in which alone it could exert a controlling influence over society. To live men had to adapt themselves to the debased environment it had itself so largely helped to create. In that respect we come back to the reply made by Cotter Morrison. Christianity survived as the fittest

in an evil environment. And again one may see the analogy in Germany. Put aside the question of a future life and there is little in the claims made by Christians concerning survival and fitness that cannot be made on behalf of Nazism. Men of the type of Goering, Hitler and Goebbels fit an environment in which decent and upright men and women can scarcely live. Their survival is the registration of their degradation of character.

One further point may be made that is generally overlooked. A few centuries after the date given for the rise of Christianity another new religion, Mohammedanism, came before the world. This new religion arose among a primitive people with little culture. In the course of its career, and under its rule, there was built up in some of the countries under its control a rich culture, and great scientific achievement. Indeed, it is largely to the influence that came from Mohammedan countries that the impetus was given to the renaissance, to the recovery of much of the Greek culture, and to that scientific development which was to do so much to undermine the influence of the Christian Church.

Christianity, on the contrary, arose in countries when and where ancient culture and civic development were in existence. It had all the glory of the learning of ancient Greece, the wisdom of old Egypt, and of the East, the civic and legal development of old Rome at its service. With what result? That culture was so far lost that its reappearance took the world by surprise. The civilized world, under the almost unchallenged rule of the Christian Church, sank lower and lower. It gave the world the "Dark Ages"; it naturalized intolerance and placed ignorance as higher in the scale of religious virtues than intellectual integrity and personal self-respect. It gave the world a philosophy of life from which four centuries of development have not yet been able completely to free the human mind.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Birrell's Blunder

People swallow falsehood as a cat laps milk.

G. W. Foote

It is a pity that Augustine Birrell never wrote his reminiscences. When asked whether he was going to follow the fashion set by Lady Oxford (Mrs. Asquith) and Lloyd George, and write his recollections, he replied: "I have reached a serene and philosophic height, from which I do not want to upset anybody. If I wrote my reminiscences and told the truth, I should lose some very good friends, and if I do not tell the truth the book would be valueless. So I shall do nothing." He is not the first public man who could not summon up courage, and, like George Washington, "tell the truth." For Birrell possessed a whimsical humour of his own, which was as marked, as personal, as "the Correggosity of Correggio," to adopt his own smart jest.

Whether Birrell wrote on Charlotte Bronte or Marie Bashkirtseff, William Hazlitt or Matthew Arnold he always proved himself a rare humourist and a close student of literature. The flashes of fun are, perhaps, the best things in his many books. Hazlitt once said: "I started in life with the French Revolution," and he was actually baptized in a Nonconformist meeting-house. Birrell genially remarks that "there were always more traces of the Revolution about Hazlitt than of the rite of Christian baptism." Concerning Hazlitt's admiration for Napoleon, Birrell comments: "It is wisest to hate your country's enemies. The English Church allows it, the National Anthem demands it, and the experience of mankind proves it." Hazlitt said that Tom Moore ought never to have written his poem, "Lalla Rookh," for three thousand guineas, which, observes Birrell, is a hard saying. "Had he written it for nothing one might have wondered."

How good, too, is Birrell's remarks that "the thought of Milton's pipe of tobacco sanctified your own." There is really sly fun in the statement that "the motives that prompt so many men and women to go to lectures on cold winter nights are varied, and include many which

have nothing whatever to do with respect for the lecturer or interest in his object." Writing of the marriage of Roman Catholics and Protestants, he observes pleasantly: "The severer spirit now dominating Roman Catholic circles has condemned these marriages; but the practical politician cannot but regret that so good an opportunity of lubricating religious differences with the sweet oil of the domestic affections should be lost to us in these days of bitterness and dissension."

The following remark on nationality is perfectly irresistible: "No foreigner needs to ask the nationality of the man who treads on his corns, smiles at his religion, and does not want to know anything at all about his aspirations." Another fine example of Birrellesque humour is well worth quoting: "The attitude of his countrymen towards John Ruskin was both interesting and amusing. The *Times* newspaper alternately ridiculed his doctrines and demanded his burial in Westminster Abbey. He was, it thought, so glorious an impostor, so supreme a humbug, so paradoxical a preacher, so false a reasoner, so dangerous a character, that there was only one place for his bones, and that was the Abbey."

For half a century Birrell added to the knowledge and gaiety of book-lovers. Unlike so many smart writers, his quips were far other than veiled insolence. He seemed always tolerant and urbane, writing with unprejudiced pen of Benvenuto Cellini, who was a real scamp, and treating men so different from himself with sympathy and affection. Yet Birrell wrote an essay on Thomas Paine which was a standing example of how not to do it. So pleased was he with this ridiculous essay that he actually reprinted it in a volume entitled *Self-Selected Essays*, and made himself ridiculous for the second time.

This astonishing piece of sheer impudence was written as a review of Moncreu Conway's standard life of Thomas Paine; and a careful perusal of that monumental work would have saved the angry critic from much misconception. What was so much more serious, however, was that Birrell, who was usually an urbane critic, turned hooligan to attack the memory of Paine without the slightest knowledge of the facts of the case: "Nobody now," he calmly assures his readers, "is ever likely to read the *Age of Reason* for instruction and amusement." As a plain fact, Paine's book is not only a Freethought classic, but has actually been a best-seller for near a century and a half. While writers boast of "the glory of a fifth edition," this is a truly astonishing record, and the dullest critic must be aware that a book with such longevity must have very considerable claims on the attention of generations of readers.

Birrell went out of his way to attack Paine's literary style, and he dubbed him "a coarse writer without refinement of nature." Whether Birrell really thought that Paine was "coarse," or whether he was merely tickling the ears of the Nonconformist groundlings, it was a truly amazing criticism to come from a man who had praised William Hazlitt, who wrote the "Liber Amoris," and who defended Doctor Sam Johnson's antediluvian dialectics.

It cannot be too often emphasized that Thomas Paine was not only a great writer, but also a great man, and the proof is that his written words roused men like trumpets that ring to battle. It was the live, magnetic pen of Paine, no less than the sword of George Washington, that made the Great Republic of the West a political possibility. It is waste of time to pretend that Paine's works lack ordinary graces of imagery and metaphor. Many of his phrases are proverbial. "These are the times that try men's souls," has been quoted everywhere in the present world crisis. So great a literary stylist as Edmund Burke might have envied the illustration of his own far too exclusive compassion for the sufferings of the decadent French nobility in the French Revolution. Paine's rejoinder was a master-stroke: "Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but he forgets the dying bird." The poet Shelley, always a keen and discerning judge of literary artistry, thought this phrase so excellent that he used it as part of the title of one of his own political pamphlets.

Another of Birrell's trumped-up objections to Paine was that he was not a teetotaler. In that age of hard drinking, how many men were? Edward Gibbon, indeed, described the dons of Oxford University as being "sunk in prejudice and port," and Hogarth's paintings,

and George Cruikshank's etchings emphasize the Bacchanalian characteristics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Paine's many activities clearly absolve him from any serious accusations of debauched living. Birrell had humour, and he might have recalled a story told of President Abraham Lincoln, when some Puritan busy-bodies reported to him that General Grant was intemperate, Old Abe said "Gentlemen, find out what Grant drinks, and send some to the other generals."

Birrell's conduct is indefensible and inexplicable. As he wrote his libellous nonsense, he had before him Conway's *Life of Paine*, which he was professing to review. In its pages he would have seen a refutation of all the clerical libels and lies which had been used for over a century, and which had threatened Paine's very name with an immortality of infamy. Fortunately, Paine's masterpieces are still an inspiration. "Where liberty is, there is my country," said Benjamin Franklin, and Paine's magnificent answer was, "Where liberty is not there is mine." His was the hand that challenged the pretensions of all the clergy of Christendom, and his was the hand that first wrote the words, "The United States of America." He was so much more than a mere writer, for he flamed Liberty over the world. He broadcast the watchwords of Democracy, the marching music that drove Paine himself forth as a knight-errant, that sent Lafayette to America and Byron to Greece, and inspired generations of great-souled singers from Shelley to Swinburne to hymn the praises of Liberty.

MIMNERMUS

Mentality of Lord Halifax

FOR half-a-guinea one may now buy, if one is foolish enough, a collection of speeches on Foreign Policy 1934-39, by Viscount Halifax, K.G., published by the Oxford University Press. I strongly recommend every reader who cannot digest a deal of dry thistles not to purchase. For here is provender for asses and the jawbone of an ass—without doubt.

Of late years England has suffered terribly from mediocrity in high places. Prime Ministers of the low mental calibre of Ramsay MacDonald; the slightly better brain of Baldwin, and last, and perhaps not least responsible, the abler Neville Chamberlain—all failed to foresee, and provide against, the menace of Germany. Their complacency and self-satisfaction is now seen to be idiotic against the background of events. The men with whom they surrounded themselves such as Lord Halifax are equally "guilty men," and these speeches of our Foreign Secretary show clearly his incapacity for his high position. He gives evidence against himself in this book—and it can be no answer to say that he is "respected" or of "high character," the usual excuse for lack of brains in English political circles.

Let England read—if she can—these reprinted speeches. No pleasure is to be got from them. Composed, for the most part, in a ghastly jargon of "officialese," which I suppose their begetter mistakes for the King's English, they are deadly dull. Platitude and the pretentious *cliché* abound. The speaker is destitute of originality or vigour or foresight. (Compare a Halifax with a Churchill speech!) Never once in this book does the lightning flash: indeed, the speaker seems incapable of anything so illuminating as a spark. Reading him is like eating sawdust.

From these speeches it is clear that right up to the middle of 1939 Lord Halifax lived not in the real Europe at all but in the imaginary Europe of his constipated mind. As a result actual happenings take him by surprise. Never does he anticipate events: never does he show enterprise or initiative. His is a negative and sterile outlook. Not willing to form strong and sensible Alliances: "The establishment of armed camps ranged in opposition would be to court disaster," on the one hand, and not willing to "line up the Powers loyal to the Covenant of the League of Nations," because

"nation are unwilling to fight for outside causes not involving honour or outside interests," what did he do? He took refuge in a half-way house "Britain would fight only if France or Iraq or Egypt were attacked"; for the rest of the world Britain would judge whether she could (or could not) come to the aid of the "victim of aggression."

In the real world, of course, this foolish compromise never worked. The ultimate result was that Britain "dishonoured her Czechs," and the war started over Poland and we now fight single-handed. Rejecting big Alliances, Halifax was quite unable to grasp the reality that in 1936 Europe was already divided into two camps. Two years later when Austria was lost and the fate of the Czechs was in the balance he rejected Russian proposals to save the latter country, and said in the House of Lords in March, 1938:—

The Soviet Government's proposal would appear to involve less a consultation with a view to settlement than a concerting of action against an eventuality that has not yet arisen.

What an objection! Why shouldn't one decide on steps to meet what may (and indeed did) arise? Is foresight folly? (Note how the man's obstructiveness is clothed in pompous phraseology). How idiotic the Halifax attitude was, subsequent events showed. For the "eventuality" soon arose. But for him we should have had Czechoslovakia intact and Russia fighting with us to keep it so. But in his own words Lord Halifax did not believe in "diplomacy by collective ultimatums."

He was just as blind after Munich. In October, 1938, he declared:—

We must lose no opportunity of helping forward so that they may take substantial shape the results of the personal contacts established between Germany, Italy, France and ourselves at Munich.

There were no results. How could nothing take "substantial shape"? But Lord Halifax believed that Hitler's revision of the Versailles Treaty by bluff and force which he called "German equality unilaterally achieved" was "compatible with security." Poor blind bat! He had visited Hitler at Berchtesgaden in December, 1937, and the impression he made on Hitler was that England was weak and nervous. But the impression Hitler made on him was what one would expect: Halifax thought Hitler genuinely ready to be reasonable. So did Chamberlain at Munich, when he brought back "peace-in-our-time." Halifax called Munich "a real victory for reason and understanding over the forces of unreason, hatred and mistrust." He thought it was only revision of the Treaty of Versailles—for which provision was made in the Covenant! In plain words he thought—and said—that Hitler was doing the right work. That encouraged Hitler. Finally, as late as March, 1939, Halifax and Chamberlain both took an exceedingly optimistic view, and the equally foolish Sam Hoare—the M.P. for Chelsea, who lives in Spain to the amusement of the Spaniards—actually spoke of the beginnings of the golden age!

The Halifax weakness and complaisance which encouraged Hitler and failed to re-arm the country were a direct cause of this war. Everyone can see that now. Yet Halifax dared to suggest in February, 1940, to a youthful audience that youth and not "the mistakes, the pride and the selfishness of an older generation" had brought the world to war. He blamed the German youth! The speech was better-phrased than usual and obtained wide publicity, but its thesis is surely demonstrably false.

Finally in a notorious broadcast Halifax declared that this is a war—on our part of course—for Christianity. So far the Italian Pope and the Italian College of Cardinals have not replied to that *gaffe*.

But Lord Halifax remains at the Foreign Office. And we insult Russia one day and woo her the next; nobody, and especially not ourselves, knowing what our foreign policy towards her is. There is a pleasant story attributed to Lady Halifax about her lord in happier days: "What with cubbing and Christianity I'm never able to remain asleep after 7 o'clock in the morning." A sad plight for a wife! But it is nothing to the plight of Britannia who has to listen to Halifax also telling her as solemnly as ever about his miscalculations of 1934-1939 for which we now pay in agony and bloody sweat.

C. G. L. DU CANN

Detective Fiction and the War

At the outbreak of the present war, some of those wiseheads who are always able to prophesy with the utmost confidence about everything, announced boldly that the detective novel, which had slowly been dying for years, would be one of the first casualties resulting from the European conflict. Who, they asked, would want to read a book dealing with a single death when death was being dealt out in wholesale fashion all over Europe? Who could be interested in the solution of a simple little puzzle in criminology when mass-murders on a colossal scale were being performed in the belligerent countries?

The argument certainly appeared, on the surface, to be reasonable enough. It seemed to be impossible that Agatha Christie, Freeman Wills Crofts, Austin Freeman, and all the rest should hold the attention of their readers at a time when war communiqués were serving to reveal at any rate part of the truth about vitally stirring events. And one or two of the detective novelists thought that they had perceived the truth of this, and went off into strange bypaths which appeared to be more important than the provision of spare-time reading. Some (the lucky ones) secured posts in the Ministry of Information. Miss Dorothy Sayers, original as ever, devoted her pen to popularizing her own particular version of the Christian Faith, abandoning Lord Peter Wimsey and all his special charms until the post-war period, when he will be able once more to begin his married career.

Yet some writers of detective stories and thrillers have gone on with their job, and have been correspondingly rewarded. There can be no doubt that many more people are reading now than did so in the past. With theatres closed, the hours of cinemas seriously curtailed, and even the public-houses shutting their doors during the nightly "alert," more and more people are being driven back upon books for their recreation. And in this sudden increase in the reading public the detective story writer has to play his part. Only if he is prepared to "deliver the goods," however, can he expect to reap the corresponding benefit.

And here another point arises. What kind of crime fiction is wanted during this war? Do readers desire stories of anti-Nazi spy-ring breakers, walloping their way across Europe in a manner which out-bulldogs Drummond? Or do they prefer the quieter, domestic school of fiction, where the big business man, stabbed to the heart in his library chair, provides grounds for suspecting the whole household from the secretary to the chambermaid? It would seem to most critics, and to those with a finger on the public pulse, that, if there is to be any preference, the second type is more likely to be popular. After all, people get all the war news that they want in the pages of their daily papers. They do not desire to read more of Nazis and Democrats, of Bolsheviks and Fascists. Whether those who write the stuff like it or not, detective fiction is primarily "escapist," and to provide something interesting which is totally unconnected with the everyday world in which we live must for the time being be the primary aim of the writer of stories of crime. After all, his job is not a bad thing to do; the world has, at any rate for the time being, become so crazy that a neat little plot, logically worked out and satisfactorily rounded off, must have its appeal to war-weary people in all parts of this country, as well as those abroad.

When we sit in air-raid shelters, our gas-masks close at hand, we shall do well to remember that literature provides a means of temporary escape from the conditions which international affairs, in their present mismanaged state, have imposed upon us. And of all the types of reading best guaranteed to distract from the crash of guns and the whistle of bombs, the detective story will continue to take a high place.

S.H.

A man's opinions, look you, are generally of much more value than his arguments.—O. W. Holmes.

"Darkest England"

FIFTY years ago H. M. Stanley, the famous explorer wrote his book, *In Darkest Africa*. In the same year, 1890, there appeared another work bearing the title *In Darkest England—and the Way Out*, the author being William Booth, founder of that very large religious organization, the Salvation Army. The controversy which followed the publication of Booth's work is well-known, mainly due to Professor T. H. Huxley's participation in it. It is worth pointing out that Huxley had studied the book carefully before attacking it, whereas certain prominent religionists didn't even read his criticism. Cardinal Manning, for example, openly stated that "he had not the patience to read Professor Huxley's letters."

It is typical of the religious mind to be indignant against criticism without troubling to study the opposing case. Freethinkers are constantly encountering it among Christian laymen, but one would hope that a man of Cardinal Manning's standing would at least read both sides of an important issue. However, I am not so much concerned here with the disputation that took place, but rather to consider what in England most nearly approximates to "Darkest Africa."

Among the General's ten proposals to lighten England's darkness, we may cite the following points: Individuals should adopt the Salvation Army brand of Christianity of which the first condition of service (as Booth himself stated), is "implicit, unquestioning obedience." "A telegram from me will send any one of them to the uttermost parts of the earth"; each one "has taken service on the express condition that he or she will obey without questioning or gainsaying, the orders from headquarters." The success of the "Army" with its large forces, capital and income proves that its work has Divine assistance.

One of the evils that Booth hoped to get rid of was pauperism. That such a Christian organization as the Salvation Army, who in their doctrines "believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and *they only* constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice," should attempt to improve the lot of indigent people is impious. Mr. Booth must have forgotten that:—

The rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly and ordered their estate.

He must have overlooked Matthew xxii. 21: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," etc.; he must have neglected the Sermon on the Mount—put forward by most Christians as the highest of ethical teachings—where we find: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." Besides, a poor man has a much better chance of getting to Heaven than a rich man, and he can always pray for his daily bread in the Lord's Prayer. I repeat, Mr. Booth must have missed all these texts and many similar ones also. The whole teaching of Christianity is be content with one's lot in this life as it is the life to come that matters. Perhaps the General was like many other Christians and didn't know his Bible—either that or he didn't take much notice of it.

Like most Christians, however, Mr. Booth must have been better than his creed, and he did desire to get rid of certain social evils. Again like a large percentage of Christians he only played about on the surface instead of getting at the root of these evils, but it is his so-called remedies that are amusing.

To fully appreciate this we will recall that Booth got his title from Stanley's *In Darkest Africa*. Now let us imagine that we are in a jungle clearing in the midst of the Dark Continent. We see an assembly of a barbarous or semi-savage tribe arranged in a circle, and all dressed up for the occasion. There is a terrific din with the beating of tom-toms and the howling of the natives, while in the centre is the witch-doctor, the mediator between the tribe and its gods. He is working himself into a fervour and the others with him—he tells them how they have offended the deities and suffered in consequence, and that the only way to prosperity and reconciliation is by sacrifices and offerings to the "joss" through him (the witch-doctor.)

Now let us return to England, to some square or market place and witness another assembly. We again see

a barbarous community dressed up and arranged in a circle, with its leader in the centre. Once again there is bedlam, but with drums and tambourines instead of tom-toms—once again the audience and leader are "worked up." Then the leader or captain or witch-doctor addresses his flock. He tells them that the cause of all our troubles and suffering is sin against their god—"I was a drunkard and a wife-beater until I found God," he says, "we must all look for God by joining the Salvation Army, and reconcile ourselves with Him (God) by offerings through him (the Captain)." A collection follows and the lasses howl! "Hallelujah."

Having witnessed these two scenes, one in Africa, one in England, what do we conclude? Precisely this, that there is no essential difference between the two. Christianity is a primitive savage religion, and of all the many varieties of that faith the Salvation Army is just about the most primitive and savage of them all.

The "Army" accepts and teaches both Testaments literally as inspired by God. They believe in one infinitely perfect God, who is creator, preserver and governor. They believe that Jesus Christ is truly and properly God, and truly and properly man (figure that one out), they accept the story of the fall, and believe in the eternal happiness of the righteous and the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

It would be difficult to find anything more primitive in our midst to-day than the Salvation Army with its motto of "Blood and Fire," and its hymns of a similar nature. One hymn is particularly ludicrous. We refer to the popular number, "He brought us out of darkness into light," the reverse of the actual case.

Mr. William Booth is no longer with us, but his organization still flourishes profitably, and has a great deal of influence in many parts of the world. Many may laugh at it, but many more support it in one way or another. No impression is likely to be made on the actual members—there is little hope for them intellectually, though there may be plenty spiritually—but it is different with the layman. It is to him that the appeal must be made to refuse to help this body which is a direct obstacle to progress. Thus we say that Mr. Booth in trying to lighten "Darkest England" actually made it darker, for superstition is darkness, and it is not until superstition has been banished from the earth that man will see the true light.

C. MCCALL

Acid Drops

Parson Jones, with whom we dealt recently, advocates the formation of a "Parson's Trade Union," and says that the first plank in the platform of the union should be "Less pay for parsons." But why a union for that purpose? There is nothing to prevent any person who would join such a union refusing to take all of his present salary. It seems a lot of fuss to get something which anyone may get at once and without any agitation whatever. We are not suggesting that parsons should trust to the Lord in the matter of cash payment, only that they should prove they are in earnest by returning part of their next quarter's salary with a curt note, "My job is really not worth as much as I am being paid." Parson Jones should set an example.

But after all the strength of any trade union is, first, the power of collective bargaining, and second, the strike. The last is a very inconvenient weapon, and often punishes both sides, but there are times when it is unavoidable. But the only way in which a parson can strike is to refuse to conduct prayers and stop preaching, and, if they have the power, close the church which they control. But suppose *all* the parsons went on strike? How long would it be before people discovered that they were at least as well off without the prayers and sermons of the parsonry as they are with them? A real strike of parsons, if continued, say, for six months, would convince large numbers of people that the parson, as such, is about as great a value to the world as is the astrologer or the fortune teller.

The Sheffield Watch Committee has agreed to the opening of certain cinemas on Sunday. But ladies must not be permitted to enter unless they are taken by soldiers, and the soldiers must get the permission of their officers to take their girls with them. But they must not take a male civilian friend. For downright idiocy the Sheffield Watch Committee stands without a rival. Imagine any decent-minded girl having to get a certificate from a military officer to go to a cinema with a "boy friend." And surely if the soldiers have self-respect they will stay away from the cinemas, as a protest. An evening's entertainment is dearly purchased at such a price. And, once more, if soldiers are permitted to go to a cinema on Sunday, why not civilians? Really we know many civilians who are quite as respectable and as trustworthy as any soldier. But perhaps the people who are known to this committee of cranks are not so trustworthy as the men and women whom we ordinary folk know.

The Bishop of Bedford says that "our young people" do not want a watered-down religion. We have a suspicion that what is agitating the Bishop is that our young people, if left alone, fairly well educated, and properly brought up, do not want any religion at all. The semi-rationalized form of Christianity with which most of the "advanced" clergy try to hold their followers has no holding power. Exposed to the current of modern thought the religion that has been given them crumbles to pieces, and they are left exposed to the play of modern ideas instead of being tied up to the specialized mumbo-jumboism of orthodox Christianity.

On the other hand we are in considerable agreement with the Bishop, that if the clergy are to maintain their hold on the adult, it must in some way almost paralyse the mind of the child and the youth. Then when exposed to the play of modern knowledge and modern ideals, their understanding of what is before them will be blurred and the trouble involved in grasping a new idea correspondingly strong. He is more likely, in that case, to fall back into a semi-conscious frame of mind and mumble about the joy of finding Jesus, and the peace of being with God. We have a great deal of sympathy with the views of the Bishop of Bedford—or we should have if we were a brother parson. Anyway we hope the Bishop will be pleased at the explanation we have given of the real significance of his words.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is disturbed by the Military authorities taking church halls for their use. Now if they had taken some place on which the living of a number of people depended the Assembly would have remained unmoved. That would have been a military necessity. But to interfere with the trading interests of the Church is a quite different matter.

We are pleased to find the *Glasgow Post* calling attention to those ministers of religion who are acting as Padres in the Army, drawing a very comfortable salary for doing so, while receiving part of their salary from the Church. We see no reason whatever why parsons who are in the Army as non-combatants should receive either the rank or the payment of officers.

Mr. H. H. Martin threatens a strong campaign against the opening of cinemas on Sunday, whether the attendants are members of the services or just ordinary civilians. This movement will have the strong support of Lord Caldecote, our present Lord Chancellor. Mr. Martin is the Secretary of that strange body, The Lord's Day Observance Society, the members of which believe that the inhabitants of these islands are such vile creatures, men and women, that they will be ruined in character if they attend any sort of place of amusement on Sunday. What a lot of week-kneed, miserably ill-balanced people the members of Mr. Martin's society must be. And what a place heaven must be if it is stocked with men and women of that type. If some enterprising heretic gets to heaven and runs Sunday excursions to hell he will certainly do a roaring trade.

The Bishop of Winchester is concerned with the effect of the blackout on early morning church services. He says it is impossible to black out the whole of a church, and so, in many cases the service will be dropped altogether. Evening services may also be abandoned. But why not hold the morning service in the dark? Is the Bishop afraid that his congregation cannot be trusted in the dark?

From the *Catholic Herald* of November 29, we learn that Roman Catholic Members of Parliament are alarmed lest the British Government is about to come to some amicable arrangement with Russia. The *Catholic Herald* suggests that our Government is ready to conclude an agreement with Russia, which would prohibit in this country any criticism of the Soviet. We do not for a moment believe this statement, and where their religious interests are concerned that Church's capacity for lying is historically famous.

A terrible thing has happened in Essex. The Essex Education Committee has recently sanctioned the holding of educational classes on Sundays, owing to the difficulty of holding them on week-nights. We take it that all those not interested in some rival movement will find fault with this, particularly as quite a number of Churches and Chapels have given up holding services on Sunday evenings—presumably, on the ground that while the "Lord is our shield," yet he cannot be counted on with certainty on the shield warding off bombs during a "blackout."

But it is one thing to shut up a Church or Chapel on Sunday night, and to open school on Sundays merely for education. So the Bishop of Barking has protested against such an innovation. He says that the policy of the Committee places before the students the choice of whether they were "to put education or religion first." We are pleased to notice the distinction. And it is clear that the majority have chosen education. Otherwise the Bishop would not object. He protests that his objection is not raised on "narrow Sabbatarian grounds." On what other grounds is the protest made. Even the Bishop of Barking cannot pretend that by going to an educational class on Sunday these students will become poorer citizens. He is really afraid that if they are not kept religious during their early years they will be of no use to him or his order when they grow up. Some of the members tried to placate the Bishop by assuring him that these Sunday classes will be discontinued when normal conditions return. All we can say to that is that, if once having stepped out of the mire the Educational Committee voluntarily step into it again, its members are quite unfit for their position.

Bishop Poskitt, of Leeds, thinks that "a lot of nonsense is talked about education." He is also of opinion that "the first thing a boy should learn at school is religious instruction—how to become a real child of God." We are not surprised. In plain English the Bishop believes that all children should be brought up to look for guidance either to him, or to someone else in the same line of business. It takes an ecclesiastic so brazenly to announce that every child must be brought up so that it will support his line of business.

The Pope has recently surpassed himself in referring to the war by sending out a radio message to everybody concerned. This message is particularly addressed to Catholics on both sides, who are told "to pray and pray to the King of Peace in an immense chorus of supplication to extinguish all rancour in minds and give back to the world prosperity and a true and well ordered and lasting peace." For sheer stupid fatuousness this would be hard to beat even by a Winnington Ingram; but we would like to know how the King of Peace would deal with a German Catholic shrieking "Heil Hitler," and imploring God to give Germany victory, and an English Catholic damning everything concerned with Hitler, and an Italian Catholic yelling to the Lord or the Virgin to see that Musso gets the whole of Africa, at least, as the result of the war. Alas, as the Lord never speaks, nor does anything whatever, we shall never get an answer to our heartrending query.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. A. SANDERS.—Thanks for copy of letter. But you can hardly expect a Member of Parliament, probably afraid of offending those in high places and so jeopardizing his "career," to give a straightforward reply to a straight question. Once elected there is no way in which constituents can eject the subject of their choice.

A. DOWSON.—It is a scandal that questions on religion should be asked by any tribunal. That is one extra reason for keeping religion out of public life. We have sufficient faith in our judges that, if they had the handling of the matter, in most cases the question of religion would be ruled out as irrelevant. At any rate there should be some superior appeal from those on tribunals who act as defenders of the Churches.

S.H.—Received.—Shall appear as soon as possible.

L. BURNS.—The two things used as an illustration need not be equal in value in order to prove the illogical value of a position. The question "Shall I pay taxes," and "Shall I in the name of duty take the life of another man?" are of unequal value in themselves. But they may be of identical value in deciding a mere position.

"SCHOOLMASTER."—Thanks for cutting. You can hardly expect to convert religious bigots to a sense of social justice, but it is good to let them know there are others in the world.

N. A. SMITH.—Thanks for cutting, but we have already written a paragraph on the matter.

M. BARBANELL and C. L. G. DU CANN.—Will appear next week. Regret delay.

R. S. MASON.—We have always made it a practice to send this journal wherever it is likely to do good, post free. We are pleased to say that many new readers and loyal friends have been made in this way. Thanks for suggestions. We will bear it in mind.

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.

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Sugar Plums

To-day (December 15), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Dixon Hall, Cathcart Road, Glasgow. The subject will be, "Freethought Religion and the World Crisis." Chair will be taken at three o'clock. This will give visitors time to get comfortably home before darkness.

The Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S. has arranged for a theatre visit and supper for members and friends for Friday, December 20. The theatre outing will be to the Empire, and those who provide themselves with tickets will meet at the Empire at 6.30. The party will be together in reserved seats. Supper will be served at the Playhouse Cafe at 9 o'clock. Tickets 4s., may be obtained at Collet's Bookshop, Dundas Street, Grants Educational Company, Renfield Street and the Clarion Rooms.

In the *Freethinker* for November 24 we wrote a couple of notes commenting on one of a series of lectures delivered by Professor H. G. Wood, of Birmingham, in which he regretted that "In the creation of a new order the Churches are not looked to for advice." This appeared to us to be an exhibition of unwarranted arrogance, and we put to Professor Wood the following question, "Is there anything good done by Christians, are there any useful ideas held by Christians that cannot be found with others who regard Christianity—pure Christianity—as a survival of a particularly stupid superstition?" Professor Wood writes in reply:—

A TRUCE TO CONTROVERSY

SIR,—I presume I am indebted to you for a copy of your issue of November 24, which contains a reference to something I am reported to have said. I do not know why you honour me by thus trailing your coat before

(Continued on page 752)

War Damage Fund

We publish this week a list of responses up to Monday, December 9, to our special article in the issue for December 8. The response has been prompt and generous, particularly so in view of the general situation. And even more heartening than the financial response has been the many warm and appreciative letters we have received. We value these very highly and hope to quote from some of them in our next issue. All we can say now is just a simple "Thank you." We might say this in many ways, but could add nothing material to what those two simple words express. Were it necessary the loyalty of readers of the *Freethinker* would inspire one to fresh endeavours for the "Best of Causes."

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Total £164 7 0

We shall be obliged if any who note inaccuracies in the above list, or that any subscriptions have escaped acknowledgment, will be good enough to write without delay.

me. Under ordinary circumstances the temptation to tread on it would be too much for my Irish blood. When the war is over, I shall be most happy to engage in public discussion with you, if you and I are permitted to survive this ordeal. But the times are not propitious for such entertainments.

I can, however, give a simple answer to your supposedly simple question. You ask whether there is anything good done by Christians or any useful idea held by Christians, that cannot be found with others who regard Christianity as a stupid superstition. I answer that I do not know, since I do not know what you regard as a good deed or a useful idea. If it gives you any satisfaction, I fully recognize that Christians and Atheists like yourself brought up with a more or less Christian background, have much in common—including, I regret to say, stupidity.

We note Professor Wood's readiness to discuss this question—if and when we both survive the war. All the same, as Professor Wood appears to be of opinion that the issue raised is important he really lifts it to a matter of urgency. For if the Christian Churches can, as Christian Churches, contribute to the building of a new order, it does seem of moment to determine whether such a particular contribution is of value or not. If our view is right, then it would be waste of time. If Professor Wood is wrong he and others are wasting their time. And where there is time to raise an issue there should be time to discuss whether that issue is of importance. We need hardly say that we shall always be at the Professor's service.

Meanwhile, as he seems in some doubt as to exactly what we have in mind when we talk about a useful idea or a good action, we will clarify by way of an enlargement. Is there an action good or bad, or an idea useful or useless, existing with Christians that cannot be or is not found with those who reject Christianity, lock, stock and barrel? We leave the influence of a Christian environment, because that is a very complex and debatable matter, for the time when Professor Wood indents his readiness for debate. All we will say now is that if there is time during the war to raise a very debatable subject, there should be time to discuss it. The settlement of this point, one way or the other may be a very real contribution to the "new order." Nor does it seem quite fair for Professor Wood to introduce a very controversial question and then cry "A truce to controversy."

Apropos of our notes on the "Watch Story," Mr. G. E. Briddon sends us the following:—

THE "TABLET'S" REVIVAL OF THE WATCH STORY

Regarding the references in the current and last week's issues of the *Freethinker* to the above, I have been recently re-reading George Seldes' book on Mussolini, *Sawdust Caesar*, and came across the following incident.

It appears that a Protestant Evangelist, Alfredo Tagliatela came to Lausanne and challenged one and all to refute him. Mussolini with other working men was sitting at the back of the hall, and they accepted his challenge by rushing up the aisle and storming the platform. "God does not exist," shouted Mussolini. The audience, however, became angry and rescued the preacher, who turning to Mussolini, said, "You are the sort of atheistic fanatic who at the age of forty will turn reactionary and be a lickspittle of the Vatican." Mussolini shouted back, "Bourgeois! Renegade! Slave!"

I now quote, "A few days later, making an atheistic oration, Mussolini drew his watch from his pocket, placed it on the table, and defied God to strike him dead within five minutes.

No thunderbolt came.

This was the proof, the orator told his followers, that there was no God." [Page 30 et seq.]

It is always difficult to kill a lie, and the religious lie comes as near to achieving immortality as anything on earth.

May we remind our readers that gifts for Christmas and the New Year this year might well take the form of books. A selection of these will be found on the back page. We also gladly announce there is no increase in price.

The Things of the Mind

MATTHEW ARNOLD's essay on the *Function of Criticism* contained sledge-hammer blows at the cultural shortcomings of his fellow countrymen. He accused them of neglecting "the things of the mind" because the quick financial return from these imponderables was far from obvious. He called them Philistines—he was not the first to make this classification—and one of the results was that the more sensitive of them thus attacked tried to divert criticism from themselves by a kind of protective coloration. They bought books—quantities of them—gave Arnold himself one of the places of honour, and then exclaimed: Are you answered?

That attitude was one step forward, for their Philistinism up to then had been their boast. You will not, however, cease to be a Philistine by allowing a portion of your living space to be occupied by books. You may impose upon many by so doing—perhaps most. But culture (to Philistines, the black beast) cannot be acquired by any such feeble device.

The second step towards culture is that books should be read, and read in the sense that implies a transference in great part of the writer's thoughts to the reader. Unless that transference has been effected then the claim to have read a book is just vanity. This does not mean that intellectual agreement is necessary. One can read Newman's *Apologia pro vita sua* without falling into the arms of the Holy Mother. One can read Paley's *Natural Theology* and read it thoroughly without accepting the Design Argument. The transference of Newman's or Paley's mental position may have been effected all the same, and when this has been done you have read the book.

There are books, of course, written purely for their entertainment value; these are not primarily concerned with the things of the mind, and if you read them and are entertained (or are not entertained) you can say, and say truthfully, that you have read them. Some of these are written to entertain and, at the same time, instil into you homely truths. They attempt to "gild the philosophic pill." If you give this book your undivided attention and yet fail to swallow the gilded pill you have not effected the transference. All the same, we know that will not prevent you from entering it in your catalogue of Books Read.

For works that are not devised for either high or low scale entertainment the mere visual technique of reading is not enough. Most serious works contain a main thesis, and sometimes subsidiary ones and, if you are not able after visualizing its contents to put into words the thesis or theses accurately, you cannot properly claim to have read the work. You can and will, all the same, make that claim. Even book reviewers neglect to tell their readers in the majority of instances what their author is really driving at. The reason generally is that they do not themselves know, or they feel uncertain about it. So they repeat instead a story on page 134 telling you what Lord X said when discovered in compromising circumstances—an incident perhaps introduced by the author solely as an illustration of some point he was trying to make.

If a paid reviewer can get away with this, one can be lenient with the general reader anxious to clear himself from the charge of Philistinism. He reads a work and finds it, on the whole, rather heavy going. But he gets an excellent bag. He learns something about old Judge P. he never would have suspected. He collects three anecdotes and a witty retort. A curious habit amongst the natives of a small Pacific Isle, a particularly flowery couple of pages showing something rather like poetic inspiration but apropos of nothing at all, a couple of split infinitives and a bad case of sequence of tenses, complete his finds. If this does not allow him to show, at the dinner table, that he has read the book, and read it critically, what will?

When that strange but fascinating pietist, Alexander Cruden, was employed by Lord Derby to read French works to him, Alexander accomplished his task by spelling out each word in rotation. It was a weird performance, as no attempt was made at pronunciation, and it is

no surprise that Lord Derby was not satisfied at becoming acquainted with the contents of these volumes in this way. It is difficult to believe that even Cruden himself considered he had read this volume as he understood no French—or the merest smattering—but then, the texture of Cruden's mind was so peculiar that he may have believed anything.

A boy of seven could read "The cat sat on the mat," and the chances are that he could appreciate its significance and pass it on to a third party to prove that he had read it. Again he might visualize and pronounce other words such as: The Springbok stood on the bastion and kept its ground; and even if he recited it to another it might be difficult for him to prove that he had acquired any precise information from his so-called reading.

It has been said of marriage that we get out of it what we put into it, and much the same can be said of reading. It is absurd to read the advanced treatise before one masters the primer and yet this is being attempted by thousands every day. One cannot proceed with a sentence (and the sentence should be an integral portion of the work) if any of its terms are not understood. It is useless to discuss problems in mechanics, for instance, unless the exact significance of terms such as mass, density, stress, velocity, etc., is known. Unless these are mastered, one's talk becomes gibberish.

Theology, once known as the Queen of the Sciences, is the only science which does not feel the need for any such precision and its pronouncements testify to the fact. To do theologians justice, some attempt to standardize its jargon has been made. Such terms as spirit, the trinity, the Holy Ghost, and transubstantiation, have been considered with a view to standardization, but tempers have always become frayed, and often they have quite lost their heads, before conclusions have been arrived at. Consequently Theology is always in a class by itself—a thing apart. It uses terms liberally but without an agreed significance. Until it can come to such an agreement it will continue to remain a thing apart. Theologians may call their system a science but no one else will. To call it the *Queen of the Sciences* is perhaps only another of their anti-feminist outlets.

It is as well to approach the things of the mind with the disposition and some of the methods of the student. If a book has intelligibility the studious will discern it; if it is nonsense, the studious will be equally aware of the fact and be able promptly to brand it as such.

The man who possesses ten worth-while books of varied character, with power to add to their number, is enviable. Let him read them and read them well. He can then read more as his individual spirit moves him—reading them equally well. If he has judgment, culture will not elude him; if he has not judgment, no amount of reading will make him wise. He will continue to the end of his life a desultory reader, dipping every now and again into a volume (probably never mastered) for some sentence he remembers which bulwarks a sturdy prepossession, wrenched, alas, out of its context without which its emphasis and even its import is misconstrued. For its relative importance is generally a question of proportion or measurement, and without the unit of measurement one may find oneself with strange bedfellows.

T. H. Huxley wrote in his boy's diary something like this: "Let me remember this. It is better to read a little and read it well, than cram a multitude of indigested facts into my head." This analogy between mental and physical digestion is a useful one.

Elementary, my dear Watson! Extremely elementary. Much that you and I miss is elementary. The things of the mind can only be approached by having a wholesome respect for the elementary. Crawl in order to walk; walk in order to run; run in order to sprint.

Some person preferring to be a person of culture and not a Philistine, purchased Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* half a century ago. His name is on the title page. I picked his volume out of an hotel library last week-end and sat down to re-read the essay which has brought this article to birth. *I did not get further than page three before it became necessary to cut the pages.* One of the potential blows directed against English self-sufficiency has so far missed its mark. And I can see the ghost of that proud possessor looking at the volume exultantly and saying "Mine! I thank the Lord I am no Philistine." Does this sound sententious? It is not meant to be so. Any point these remarks may have is both for you and for me.

T. H. ELSTON

Prehistoric Pictures from Devon

IN 1816 an ancient bone cavern was explored which yielded, what was then sensational information concerning antique animal life in Devonshire. This discovery took place at Oreston, near Plymouth, while at Kent's Cave at Torquay, this county now possesses the outstanding habitation of primitive man so far known in England. Unfortunately, at the time of the early excavations at Oreston, although the fossil remains of the lower animals were preserved, a human bone associated with these relics was carelessly thrown aside, and lost, and many other remains of prehistoric man have shared its fate.

The antiquaries of Devon are justly proud of the fact that their county was not only the scene of our pioneer researches into the antiquity of man, but that the most fruitful discoveries were made in Kent's Cavern. In these researches the Rev. J. McInery, Godwin Austen, the Torquay Natural History Society and the British Association co-operated, and, from 1865 onwards, a systematic exploration of this famous Cave was conducted in which the eminent archeologist, Pengelly, performed an arduous labour of love.

These important investigations prove that Kent's Cavern was the abode of man from Palæolithic Times until modern generations. "There are abundant indications," states Mr. Burnard in the *Victoria County History of Devon*, "that it was very much used during the Romano-British period, and it was frequented as late as the fifteenth century, probably as a place of refuge." The Cavern has long excited the wonder of its visitors, for inscriptions dating back to 1615 have been made on the stalagmite.

As the rude stone human artefacts found in the Cavern were associated with the remains of long extinct animals such as the woolly rhinoceros, hippopotamus and cave-bear, it seemed clear to all who were not blinded by the Biblical legend that human antiquity was far greater than commonly supposed.

Yet, many doubted whether the animal fossils were truly contemporary with the man-made implements unearthed, and every conceivable objection was raised by the pious to negative the revolutionary nature of the discovery. But in 1858, the exploration of Windmill Cavern, Brixham, completely confirmed the testimony supplied by Kent's Cavern. The Brixham researches were placed in the careful and competent hands of Mr. Pengelly. "In twelve months," it is authoritatively stated, "this comparatively small cave was exhausted, and the result of the researches amply bore out the evidence obtained from Kent's Cavern . . . for flint tools were found unmistakably blended with the remains of extinct cave mammals and in such a manner as to preclude any of the objections previously raised."

In the bone-bearing strata encrusted with stalagmite of ancient formation, Palæolithic flint implements were discovered in the earliest loam deposit. Man occupied this cavern prior to the formation of this deposit. He preceded its habitation by the long-extinct cave-bear, for in the later loam stratum the fossil bones of bears and their cubs abounded. The cave continued the haunt of carnivorous, as well as herbivorous mammals, for the sabre-toothed tiger, rhinoceros, reindeer, bears and other quadrupeds have left their remains in the floor of the stalagmite formation.

Among the implements preserved in Kent's Cave were bone spearheads and a needle, "a perforated badger's tooth, a hare's leg-bone with holes drilled in it, suggesting its use as a whistle." In more recent deposits remains of the Bronze Age have come to light. These include bronze instruments and weapons, while, lying above these were bone combs, spindle whorls and decorated pottery dating from early British to the Roman occupation of our island.

The story disclosed has been thus summarized: Its Old Stone Age inhabitants "had massive tools made of nodules of flint, roughly chipped and irregular in outline, but no delicate flakes or implements of bone. They

left no trace of fire behind them. The later men of the cave-earth period possessed carefully chipped and symmetrically formed but unpolished flakes of flint; they had bone needles, could make a fire and adorned their persons with bracelets or necklaces strung with the perforated teeth of mammals. They had no pottery, metal, or spindle whorls. These were, however, possessed by the succeeding men of the black mould, who were advanced enough in civilization to smelt and alloy metals and wear amber beads."

The Torbryan Caves, near Denbury, contained the fossil bones of hyena, bear and rhinoceros, as well as a flint instrument of antique type, and the relics of the later Neolithic race have also been discovered in these caverns.

Happaway Cavern, Torquay, was very carefully explored by Pengelly. Most of its remains are those of modern fauna, but the cave's antiquity is attested by the presence of fossils of the long extinct Devonian hyena and rhinoceros.

In 1886 Cattedown Cave, Plymouth revealed conclusive evidence of the remote antiquity of Devonian man. "Avoiding all speculation," states Mr. Burnand, "one fact stands out clear and distinct, and that is, that human beings and hyenas lived in the flesh at one and the same time in the neighbourhood of Cattedown. This alone invests the human remains with an extraordinary amount of interest, for their discovery presents an opportunity of actually studying the physical characteristics of men who were certainly contemporary with these long extinct animals, and probably also (with) the rhinoceros and cave-lion. The human bones represent the remains of some fifteen or sixteen individuals of both sexes ranging from childhood to old age. . . . Some of the skulls were exceptionally thick, and others again very thin. The teeth generally are massive, and however much worn show but little traces of decay. . . . The race was a short one, various calculations making the average slightly over five feet."

The memorials of prehistoric man in Devon are mainly confined to the caves. But in the valley of the Axe, near Axminster, a drift deposit has yielded primitive stone implements. These were found in a ballast pit at Broom near the river. Some of these artefacts were large and composed of chert. Others were water-worn, but several were finely preserved and a splendid collection of these implements from Broom are housed at Exeter, in the Albert Museum.

The prehistoric men who frequented Kent's Cavern in the far-away past were succeeded, but only after a prolonged interval, by a people of far superior culture. In the intervening centuries immense modifications had occurred in the configuration of Western Europe. The temperature had risen, and the rainfall was more copious. The British Isles had been separated from the Continent and the sea waves washed the Devonian coasts.

The Channel waters still roll over submerged forests at Torbay, Northam, near Bideford, and elsewhere in Devon. Substantial masses of vegetable remains, including those of trees, repose in deposits of clay, and a submerged forest seems to extend to the five fathom line. Many faunal and floral remains of Devon's remote past such as the bones of wild ox, red deer, wild boar and horse, as well as man's handiwork itself have been discovered in various parts of the county.

The later human arrivals of Neolithic Times were far in advance of their Palaeolithic predecessors. They possessed domesticated animals and had acquired the arts of agriculture, weaving and pottery production. Their tools and appliances were of finer finish and effectiveness. Their dead were interred and, at a later stage, cremated, and the remains were placed in stone sepulchres overlaid with round barrows. People of this culture dwelt on Dartmoor, as their buried implements testify. But save for the exception of a dolmen-grave at Drewsteignton, little is known of early man's dwellings or burial places. Still, these may be discovered at any time by the tireless Devonian archaeologists who search unceasingly.

T. F. PALMER

The only sin which we never forgive in each other is difference of opinion.—Emerson.

The Financial Burden of a Parasitic Priestly Caste

WE wonder how much in hard cash priests have cost England? Reckoning only up to the year when the Pope was metaphorically kicked out of England (1531) the priestly parasites must, in one way or another, have cost England *hundreds of millions of pounds*. You can hardly believe it? Certainly exact facts and figures are not available, and no one ever seems to have attempted even an approximate calculation. But the "hundreds of millions" is just as certainly not an exaggeration. We will give three general statements, differing in kind and differing in time and from different sources, and we think they will convince anybody that our statement is no exaggeration.

(1) Tithe (literally, one tenth) was an income tax of two shillings in the pound on everybody, rich and poor, young and old, and was a legal liability over the whole of England by C.E. 846 (Prideaux, *On Tithes*, p. 167.) So this income tax was in force for about 700 years, and was only one of the many impositions of the parasitic caste. If it only averaged a million a year that meant 700 millions.

(2) In 1164 the scandals of the Bishop's Courts brought down on them the disciplinary action of Henry the Second. These courts dealt with crimes and delinquencies of priests, and in addition had a large territory in which they could deal with ordinary people for offences against morals, heresy and other vague "crimes" of which ordinary civil courts knew nothing. The scandals arose because any and every crime was simply made an occasion for monetary extortion. Even priestly murderers could compound for money, "to the profit of the clergy." (Details were given of over a hundred murders committed by priests and monks that had been compounded for money). By their nefarious methods, said the king, those ecclesiastical courts had levied more money from the people than had the king for the government of the realm; and they had left wickedness unreformed, secure, and triumphant. Atrocious crimes had in fact become epidemic amongst priests by this system of merely fining them if caught and proved guilty (which was no easy job in those priest-ridden days). But note again the financial point. The extortions of Bishops' courts were larger than government taxes, and were *in addition* to the ten per cent income tax; and even so we can hardly be more than half way into the parasites' Tom 'Tiddler's ground, as we will show presently.

(3) In 1380 the king asked for a subsidy for war. The Speaker of the House of Commons was instructed to make the following declaration: "They would grant the needed subsidy on condition that the clergy would support a third part of the charge, which was but reasonable for that they possessed a third part of the kingdom." In 1405 the House of Commons made a similar statement with amplifications. They said that the clergy possessed a third part of the realm, but they did not render the king any personal service. Not only that, but their wealth made the clergy neglectful of their duties and a lessening of their excessive incomes would be to the advantage of both Church and State. The Archbishops replied by saying that stripping the clergy would put a stop to the prayers of the Church night and day for the welfare of the State. To which the Speaker retorted that the prayers of the Church were a very slender supply for the King's necessities.

Our three statements are so authentic that they are practically incontrovertible. Yet no doubt they will be surprising. But consideration of some of the details of the parasites' methods will remove the surprise and will clinch our argument.

Remember for a start Froude's aphorism that with

papist priests it was "money, ever money" with them. Tithes were in theory for payment of their "services" and after receiving these they ought to have performed their "masses," preached, officiated at christenings, marriages, burials, etc., free. Did they do this? Not much. For most of their already-paid-for services they also charged fees or sent round the plate for the collection. In short, Holy Church, Holy Shop. They had always gone strong on preaching the duty of almsgiving, especially to "Holy Church." But they very early learned how to ginger this up by offering *quid pro quo*s of shadow goods which cost them nothing. Their chief commodity was "relief from the tortures of purgatory," (Technically known as indulgences.) They would sell this in chunks, 50 days, 50,000 years or even the whole lot at once (a plenary indulgence). In regard to a "plenary" they would explain to the mutt that it was only effective if his mental attitude was correct, and as there was always a doubt about this, he had better go on trying his luck. Which, being a mutt, he would do. Another commodity was "miracles." The Shop arranged that the higher powers should come to the help of humans in difficulties of illness, business, love affairs—anything. The arrangements, of course, meant fees. The fees were called "alms," and the transactions were *not* to be called sales. If you, gentle reader, like to call them sales it is all right to us.

Perhaps the chief of the day-to-day commodities hawked and sold by Holy Shop is the Mass. It is supposed to be the most solemn and sacred thing in the so-called religion of popery, notwithstanding which, nay, perhaps because of it, it is certainly one of the biggest money spinners of the confidence tricksters. The dupes are told that the mass has magical properties and can be said or performed for a believer's particular "intention"—recovery from illness, getting a relative out of purgatory, etc., etc. (The swindle—it is a swindle—is in full swing to-day). For the pre-Reformation period we will quote Froude (*Short Studies on Great Subjects*, p. 65):—

Religion, in the minds of ordinary people, meant that the keys of the other world were held by the clergy. If a man confessed regularly and received the sacrament and was absolved, then all was well with him. His duties consisted in going to confession and to mass. If he committed sins he was prescribed penances which could be commuted for money. If he was sick or ill at ease in mind he was recommended a pilgrimage to a shrine or holy well or wonder-working image, where, for due consideration, his case would be attended to. It was no use to go to a saint empty-handed. The rule of the church was nothing for nothing . . . the formulas and ceremonies were all in all; of God it is hard to say what conceptions men had formed, when they believed that a dead man's relations could buy him out of purgatory—BUY him out—for that was the literal truth—by hiring priests to sing masses for his soul . . . death was the sphere which the clergy had made peculiarly their own. When a man died his friends were naturally anxious for the fate of his soul. If he died in communion, he was not in the worst place of all (hell). He had not been a saint, therefore he was not in the best place (heaven). Therefore he was in purgatory—Purgatory-pick-purse as our English Latimer called it—and a priest if properly paid could get him out. To be a mass priest as it was called was a regular profession, in which with little trouble, a man could earn a comfortable living. He had only to be ordained and learn to say by heart a certain form of words, and that was all the equipment necessary for him. The masses were paid for at so much a dozen, and for every mass that was said so many years were struck off from the penal period. Two priests were sometimes to be seen muttering away at the same altar like a couple of musical boxes playing different parts of the same tune at the same time. It made no difference. The upper powers had what they wanted. If they got the masses and the priests got the money all parties were satisfied.

In *Lectures on the Council of Trent*, p. 16, Froude says:—

For the neglected souls of the people there were the mendicant friars, with their endless supplies of

indulgences, pardons, saints' relics, and lying legends. If this was not enough and conscience was still uneasy, there were pilgrimages and miracle working images, or masses said by ignorant priests who could read nothing but their own Breviary, and sold their repetitions of it by the dozens as a cobbler sells his shoes. So Erasmus says, and he adds that the saying of these masses was not confined to churches, they were said anywhere without regard to place. He ventures even the extraordinary statement that there was not a private house, not a tavern; *poene dixerant lupanar* (in plain words a brothel) where these priests were not to be found celebrating. I recommend this passage to those who wish to return to pre-Reformation practices. [Froude refers here to Anglo-Catholics.]

A golden vein was "confession." Everybody except mere children had to "confess" very frequently and every confession resulted in a "penance" that would, in whole or part, be commuted for money.

Some of the biggest chunks of plunder resulted from the nefarious custom of haunting death-beds for legacies. In the Middle Ages land was the chief wealth, and in every country in Europe the priestly parasites ultimately got hold of from one third to one half of the land, much of it obtained from dying people trying to save themselves from the torture of purgatory.

Finally a little explanation of the almost abnormal greed of the priests. The papacy after much dirty work obtained the right to nominate bishops, abbots, etc. For a man to get one of these jobs he had to pay a sum equal to one year's income, besides a good deal of back-stairs commissions. *To make a profit on his bargain he had to be diligent in avarice*, the more so as he had also to pay to the Pope "annates" which were an income tax of two shillings in the pound. And these jobs were worth getting. For instance, even after the Reformation and after being whittled down, the bishopric of Durham was worth £40,000 a year. In the Middle Ages, Durham was a county palatine and the Bishop a prince, who practically ruled the three northern shires, and had a mint of his own in which to coin money. In modern money he must have been worth at least £100,000 a year. He was a financial magnate if you like—and just a parasite, one of thousands, not all as big as he, of course, but all busy, very busy, battenning on the simple English. (And the Pope drawing at least his ten per cent.)

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