

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Views and Opinions

Hail to the Cranks!

I HAVE always had a liking for cranks. I think also that cranks have generally had a liking for me. This was probably a case of like calling to like, but, certainly, when I look back I can see that cranks and myself have usually been chummy, even when crankiness has taken the form of some queer religious delusion. A man who is normally religious is usually just a bore, and the sooner one can shake him off the better. But the man who believes he is a reincarnation of Jesus Christ, or that he has just had a special message from God Almighty, gives one something that is out of the common, and for that reason he is a crank. "Something out of the common," or new, or unusual, or unconventional, these are the characteristics of all cranks, the signs by which a man may prove that he is worthy to enter the kingdom of the cranks. Being a crank does not guarantee that a man is right in his crankiness; neither does his being a crank, mean that he must be wrong. Cranks are often wrong, but then they are often right. It was a crank who first shocked common sense and religious orthodoxy by suggesting that the gods were merely exaggerated pictures of men, or that the earth went round the sun. It was a crank who believed that a steam engine could travel at the terrific speed of twenty miles per hour, or that men would be able to fly, or that they would one day travel under the sea. And it is only the cranks who to-day believe that it is possible for nations to exist without each one striving to play the part of a bully, or that men may be perfectly happy without making the misery of others the condition of their happiness.

Naturally the cranks have excited a great deal of animosity. They have roused the enmity of all the worshippers of things-as-they-are, and of all those "hard-headed practical men of business," whose contempt for crank theorists leads them to ruin their neighbours in the hope that it will turn them into good customers, and who are now clamouring that the only way to encourage friendly feelings in your

neighbours is to make it clear that you are willing, and able, to punch their heads on the slightest provocation. And yet I imagine that when Carlyle's muse of history comes to reflect on the matter, it is likely that he, or she, will decide that it is the dreams of the cranks of yesterday that have very often become the accepted truths of to-day, while the hard-headed practical man will figure as an unimaginative fool who is quite unable to foresee the future because he is incapable of understanding the present. And when that is realized the world may, instead of building monuments to an "Unknown Warrior," well decide to raise a very, very large monument to "Cranky Past and Present." The world owes a great deal to its cranks.

* * *

A Notable Crank

If and when the day arrives that the world is ready to realize how much it owes to its cranks, I think that among those who will be gratefully remembered as having helped to make the world better than it might otherwise have been, will be the author of *Creed and Kinship* (H. S. Salt. Constable, 5s.). He deserves a prominent place in the world of crankdom. Born in 1851, Mr. Salt has spent the whole of his long manhood in the advocacy and the practice of cranky, unpopular and "dangerous" beliefs. Now, at over eighty years of age he cheerfully advertises himself as "A Socialist, a Vegetarian, a Freethinker, a vigorous opponent of killing for sport, and an uncompromising Pacifist," and presents the world with a Testament to illustrate that the claim is no idle one. I think the list might have been extended—I am sure it could, but probably the publisher dropped a hint that the catalogue was already long enough and black enough. Anyhow, the man who can write such a confession and does it calmly and without apology or circumlocution, deserves the name which he says some journalistic friend gave him, "A compendium of all the cranks." Mr. Salt not only repeats the characterization, but apparently receives it, as it ought to be received when coming from an ordinary journalist, as a compliment.

The name was applied to Mr. Salt because, the giver explained, Mr. Salt "advocated not this or that humane reform, but all of them," and to this the reply is given:—

That is just what I desire to do. For what I anticipate is a fusion, a compendium of certain great causes; and I am less concerned about the irreclaimables, who feel no interest in these matters, but just cling to the old watchwords, than about those part humanitarians who see a portion of the problem—Socialism, perhaps, or some question of the welfare of animals—yet do not grasp its meaning or significance as a whole. . . . The creed which is to come includes a number of beliefs that are at present held separately, if at all; whereas my argument is that it is only when they are held as one that they can be

understood, that it is saner to be compendious than incoherent. The real crank is not the man who studies these matters collectedly, but the man who, except here and there refuses to study them at all.

Mr. Salt, it will be noted, sees life as a whole, and however much the circumstances demand that special emphasis shall be placed on one aspect of life, it is well to bear in mind that life is a whole, and must be ultimately treated as such. It is the enforcement of this that has been the main object of Mr. Salt's life, and he is as cheerful over it as an octogenarian as he was when a young man. I do not think there is a single humanitarian reform he has not advocated, nor has he waited for them to acquire a degree of respectable popularity before he pressed them on public attention. He was a Socialist, when to be one invited all the vulgar abuse that is now poured on Communism; and an avowed Freethinker when that term was made synonymous with the vilest rascality, and when the better treatment of criminals and the immorality of inflicting pain on animals, were treated as possible indications of incipient insanity. Mr. Salt's belief in the "Creed of Kinship"—the kinship of man with the whole of sentient life—if it is occasionally stretched a little farther than exact science would warrant—at least forms as solid a base as any for his confession of faith, since the realization of that faith means a broadening and a deepening of those feelings and ideas on which the welfare of civilization depends.

* * *

A Practical Theorist

But we are not in contact with one of those short-sighted, sentimental reformers who expects to reform the world in a year, and disgruntledly retires from the task because the work is not complete in eighteen months. Mr. Salt is a very deadly kind of crank because he is prepared to wait. He is so sure of his ground that re-luff only gives a pleasurable anticipation to the coming victory. After all, there is the whole of the future as the framework for reform. "If a hundred years may effect but little change, a thousand may affect more. . . . There is, in fact, no limit to the time in which humane influence may be brought to bear on this brutal and barbarous mankind. . . . I think the folk who smile so knowingly at the mention of a possible release from the savageries I have named are not quite so clever as they deem themselves, and that the 'crankiness' of which they talk, may prove in the long run to have been less on the humanitarian side than their own."

It is this large and leisurely view of human progress, with its recognition of the many difficulties that lie in the way, that should make the chapter on the thorny question of vivisection less irritating to critics than it otherwise might be. Correctly Mr. Salt argues that the inevitability of inflicting *some* pain provides no justification for inflicting *any* kind of pain on the animal world; but he rather overstrains the conclusions to be drawn from the experiments of Sir J. C. Bose on the sensitivity of plants. The likeness between the sensitiveness of plants and that of animals is not precise; the one is merely symbolic of the other, and there is some allowance to be made for the differences between the sensitiveness of the different stages of the animal world—including the world of man.

* * *

A Freethinker's Creed

Mr. Salt's book covers a very wide range of topics, as one might gather from what has been said. It also lends itself so much to citation as to make selection difficult. But there are one or two passages specially applicable to the present time. There is this on war:—

It is useless to talk of peace, and to pray for it as we do, so long as all the sentiment that men can muster is expended on war, or on ceremonies relating to war-burials in the Abbey, sermons about patriotism, and love of king and country, royal inspection of Guards of Honour, and the like. All such fooleries can be stopped, and must be stopped, if we are serious in desiring peace; for wars will never end so long as we picture them as heroic.

We are all ready to recognize the evil influence of military displays in Germany, but few will regard the ultimate effects of the way in which the Jubilee is being utilized to make great military displays in England. But, of course, our military displays, at what should be predominantly civic ceremonies, are in the interests of peace and national security. I fancy we have heard the same from Goering and Hitler. There is also this on crime and criminals:—

We begin to see . . . that the criminal is himself a product and reflection of social conditions. Society grows its criminals first, and then punishes them afterwards; it is society itself that is to blame. The sum of the whole matter is that if we wish to get rid of our criminals, we must cease to manufacture them; and this cannot be done without a complete reform of the present social system.

This teaching is at least as old as Beccaria, but with the notion of "getting level" with the criminal, and the persistence of the religious notion of punishment in the minds of judges and law-makers, it still needs saying.

The author has summed-up at the end of his preface the teachings of his book, and these may well be presented here as an implied challenge to a large part of our "civilization," and to the whole of our religion. These beliefs are:—

That our present so-called "civilization" is only a "manner of speaking," and in fact quite a rude state compared with what may be already foreseen.

That the basis of any real morality must be the sense of kinship between all living beings.

That there can be no abiding national welfare until the extremes of wealth and poverty are abolished.

That warfare will not be discontinued until we have ceased to honour soldiering as heroic.

That the rights of animals have henceforth to be considered, and that such practices as cruel sports, vivisection, and flesh-eating are not compatible with civilized life.

That Freethought is essential to progress, and that the religion of the future will be a belief in a Creed of Kinship, a charter of human and sub-human relationships.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ALTRUISM AND EGOISM

Altruism (other-love) is just as natural as egoism (self-love) is. There is not so much of it in the world as there is of egoism. But that is simply the misfortune of our place of existence. There is no reason why there might not have been as much, or even more, under different conditions. With the same antecedents, nothing can, of course, happen differently from what does happen. But with different antecedents, different causes, the results are bound to be different. Civilized men are not beings of altruism, because they are *not* the effects of that kind of causes. But there is no reason why there might not be a world—several of them, in fact, or even a universeful—where the inhabitants have never known or heard of such an indelicate thing as of beings preferring themselves to others—where it is as natural for them to act toward each other according to what we call the Golden Rule, as it is for us terrestrial heathens to violate it. It is possible to conceive of beings with even too much altruism. The ideal condition is one of balanced egoism and altruism—one in which each thinks as much of others as he does of himself, no more and no less.—J. Howard Moore, "The Universal Kinship."

Shakespeare and Democracy

"We can all think, and that is the only true beginning of Peace and Progress throughout the world."

G. K. Chesterton.

"Great books are not the only good ones. Any book is a good book if anyone gets any good out of it."

A. St. J. Adcock.

Was Shakespeare a Tory or a Democrat? Numberless critics have attempted an adequate answer to this interesting question, but in nearly every instance, according to their own political leanings. Bernard Shaw, in the strange company of the *Morning Post*, shares the opinion that Shakespeare was a hidebound reactionary in politics, and many Socialists have echoed the same views with the faithfulness of gramophone records.

Other men, other views. Professor Dowden had doubts whether he should label Shakespeare "Liberal" or "Conservative," and the poet, Swinburne, found that the author of *Hamlet* was a Democrat. On the other hand, John Morley considered Shakespeare was a Feudalist, and to William Archer he appeared an aristocrat. Frank Harris found that Shakespeare was a gentleman in the truest sense, whilst the Conservative press always hail the greatest of all dramatists as a "sound Tory." Amid this veritable babel of voices the plays and poems of Shakespeare provide the only key to the Master's political sympathies, and the evidence contained in them should make clear what Shakespeare really thought and felt on these momentous questions that knock at men's hearts and consciences.

Shakespeare, as revealed in his voluminous works, was above party feeling, and did not find ill alone in the meanest of his fellow creatures. He lived, it is necessary to recall, at a time when a padded and pedantic fool, such as James the First, might claim divine right without being laughed at. Shakespeare wrote in the bad old days when Democracy, in its modern sense, was as unknown as the aeroplane or the submarine. His detachment from the theological turmoil of the days when Europe was a sanguinary cockpit of religious bigotry, ought, in itself, to supply a guarantee that he could suspend his own judgment in matters political, no less than religious. Shakespeare has many messages for his countrymen, but few more valuable or more opportune than that mere party partisanship is a natural bane. That message is implicit, and to discerning readers, explicit in his works, beyond cavil and dispute. There is no need of tearing text from context in the plays, and fathering the views of his many puppets on Shakespeare himself. As well might we make Shakespeare a murderer because he was the author of *Macbeth*, a lunatic because he wrote *King Lear*, a lecher because he sung of "The Rape of Lucrece."

Sidney Lee, to whose untiring industry in Shakespearean scholarship we all owe so much, pointed out that the Master often states both sides of a question by various utterances placed in the mouths of his characters. This is a really distinguishing mark of his mind, for it is few men who can do this, and still fewer poets. It was this extraordinary judicial power of holding the scales of justice firmly that caused John Ruskin to say that Shakespeare was not only unknowable, but inconceivable. The angry utterances put into the mouth of a man-hater like Timon of Athens, or the bitter outbursts of Coriolanus, do not prove that Shakespeare himself was hostile to the people. Nor do they make Shakespeare inferior to Milton as a poet, because Milton was a fiery Republican, whilst Shakespeare introduces kings, queens, and princes among his puppets.

The truth is that Shakespeare stood for no class. He remains the poet of all, rich and poor alike. He cannot legitimately be made to support the people against the aristocracy, the nobleman against the citizen. All may learn from him; the monarch the necessity of good government; the people that the Kingly state is not always to be envied. The statesman may learn that popular verdicts are unstable, and the agitator that order and contentment are essential to a country's prosperity. Shakespeare did think about political matters. He had opinions, but in him the artist was always stronger than the politician.

Shakespeare was quite modern and democratic in his treatment of women in his plays. Indeed, he was far in front of all his contemporaries in this respect, for he depicts women as being in every way the equals of men. The brilliant and witty Beatrice is more than a match for the smart Benedick, and Emilia holds her own against the villainous Iago. In the play of "Macbeth," it is the woman who has the mastermind, and her husband is as clay in her capable hands. What comradeship, too, there is, between great Cæsar and his wife, and Brutus and Portia. What tribute there is in the welcome given by Coriolanus to his wife, quite in "the high Roman way." The poet Shelley paid a beautiful compliment to a friend by likening her to "one of Shakespeare's women," and Robert Ingersoll well said: "Shakespeare has done more for women than all the other dramatists of the world."

Consider, also, Shakespeare's equally broad-minded view of men. As in the case of Shylock, the Master rose superior to religious prejudices, so, in the case of Othello, he ignored prejudices concerning race. He had, too, a democratic dislike of men who "having before gored the gentle bosom of peace with pillage and robbery, make wars their bulwark." "How soon mightiness turns to misery," could be taken as a motto for all Shakespeare's historical plays. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" is Shakespeare's as well as Henry the Fourth's comment. Does not Richard the Second put a mine of experience in brief space when he says:—

"Sometimes am I King,
Then treason makes me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am; then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a King."

Shakespeare's political aloofness is shown in the words:—

"Well, whiles I am a beggar, I will rail,
And say there is no sin but to be rich,
And being rich, my virtue then shall be
To say there is no vice but beggary."

What searching criticism is in the passage:—

"How quickly Nature falls into revolt
When gold becomes her object."

A similar idea is in the following:—

"Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it."

These words, if written in our time, would be regarded as democratic. Three centuries ago, when the people had but few rights, Shakespeare held the balance steady. The quality of justice was as little strained in him as the quality of mercy. The profound and intimate knowledge of mankind, which went to the making of his matchless genius was not without pity, not only for his fellow-men but also for animals. He was great and good enough to say, "There is no darkness but ignorance." Shakespeare stands, not for Toryism, nor for Radicalism, but for Humanity, which existed before all party and political shibboleths, and will survive them all. Shakespeare's splendid genius is like a pure, white flame,

which, seen amid the grime and bigotry of those far-off days, remains a beacon to those who appreciate the best and noblest in literature.

Bear in mind that Shakespeare devoted his life to public amusement. His very name suggests joy and emancipation to the hearts of men. Despite the confident assurance in the sonnets that his work would outlast the gilded monuments of princes, he was cordial, gentle, kindly and modest. His contemporaries so esteemed him. His was not the kind of greatness which says: "I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my mouth let no dog bark," but the rarer kind which has love, regard, and service for all. He might have used of himself the arresting words he puts in the mouth of the clown in "Twelfth Night": "I am one of those gentle ones that will use the devil himself with courtesy." Similar ideas abound in Shakespeare's works. He chose the beautiful lips of the incomparable Portia to condemn the folly and wickedness of torture, which was then common in the entire jurisprudence of Christendom. Where else is there a similar protest in contemporary literature? The man who made this protest was not a Stone-Age Conservative, but a Democrat, in the highest sense of that much-abused word.

MIMNERMUS.

The Canon Misfires

ARE THE DOPERS DOPED?

THE Rev. Canon, otherwise "Dick" Sheppard, has written a book, in which he stands revealed as an optimistic rhapsodist and a violent critic of his own Church. Dr. Sheppard is evidently keen on showing himself to be very unconventional; and after his diatribes against the Leaders of the Church of England, one is left wondering why he doesn't establish an organization of his own? Like Jack Sheppard of old (though he has preferred to adopt Dick Turpin's "Christian" name) he levels his blunderbuss at the heads of the Anglican Teachers of Theology, cursing them for their aloofness from other communions; and charging them with responsibility for exploitation, war, slums, and unemployment. He prefers dynamite to dope; and is filled with indignation at the complacent off-putting of his own ecclesiastical leaders.

Well, this sounds all very bold and daring. But Dr. Sheppard underestimates the power of the wealthy supporters of clerics in all denominations. These are the gentlemen who pay the piper, and they insist on calling the tune that the piper is to play. The Christian Churches cannot afford to entertain the policy of Canon Sheppard. And even if they did, can he suppose that the deliverance of humanity is to be secured by rhapsodies, by veneration and adoration of a supposititious supreme being, who has permitted his earthly representatives so long to misrepresent him—assuming that Dr. Sheppard is right in his charges against those of them who direct the policy and propaganda of his own Church?

Dr. Sheppard, like a few more, is in the habit of proclaiming from time to time that "Man is by his very nature a religious being"—that he must worship something higher than himself. This is just as much dope as the sort of thing Dr. Sheppard condemns in his own Church. The Apostle Paul laid it down most emphatically that man is by nature at enmity against God; and the enmity is reciprocal. Man by his very nature, when he is informed of the true facts, is the very opposite of a religious being. He may wear a label or badge of religion; but he never, in his ordinary life and work, and daily walk and conversation, regards or accepts, or uses religion

as a vital force for any purpose. Like the rest of his doped brethren, Dr. Sheppard is chained to the superstitious belief that something or somebody external to himself can save man. It is this belief which has eaten like a canker into the very heart of humanity and justified all kinds of cruelty. There have been no fights so full of bad blood, ill-feeling and venom, as religious fights; and if an ardent believer in God comes up against an unbeliever, anything that he does to injure the latter is justified. Happily secular legislation has so far stayed the hand of the Christian bigot; but it is remarkable how many ways are still available to him by which he can injure the unbeliever, e.g., by ostracism, boycott, slander and vilification. It has been quite a common thing for Christians to represent Atheists as perverted, dishonest, immoral and unclean in mind. The Christian policy has ever been to identify Christianity with all that is pure, lovely, and of good report. On this last count, if Canon Sheppard is to be believed, there are some ugly conditions, not merely for which the Church is responsible, but which it has actually created!

It is not to be supposed that Canon Sheppard is altogether a voice crying in the wilderness. He has had a large measure of popular support from thousands, and it must be assumed that he has brother clerics who think as he does. Well, if the Church is what he says it is, and what these others think it is—why don't they start a Church of their own, and show the world how they can deliver it from its ills? It would not be the first secession, and it would not be the last!

The discouraging fact is that Christianity has been turned this way and that, and applied to human lives in varying forms and under different conditions. It has had myriads of interpreters and boosters in all these forms and under all these conditions. It has had every chance to change the face of the world; to abolish wretchedness and supply joy; to feed the hungry and clothe the naked; to break the rod of the tyrant and set the people free—and look at the world to-day after 2,000 years of Christianity. There have been enthusiasts like Canon Sheppard time and again in the history of the Christian Church; but what did their enthusiasms do for mankind? No, Canon Sheppard knows as well as anybody else that the big Ecclesiastical Corporations are not going to run the risk of dissolution by any drastic scheme of Reform, even though it may be proved to be in harmony with what Christ taught. Business is Business, and a job is a job—even when it is only a Bishop's.

A point stressed by Canon Sheppard for the advancement of improved conditions and the salvation of mankind is co-operation between differing Christian communions. He is keen on seeing Roman and Greek Catholics, Anglicans and Nonconformists all working together for common ends. Need he stop there? Why not include Jews, Mohammedans and all other Supernaturalists throughout the world? The trouble is that each faith believes it is the sole repository of Divine truth; and Dr. Sheppard's more modest aspiration is enough to be considering meanwhile! It is as likely to be realized as the expectation of seeing snow in hell.

No, it is for Canon Sheppard and every other man and woman stirred by humane feelings to get down to bedrock and find the root cause of all human suffering. It is to be found summed up in the simple and easily understood word—"Greed." In whatever relationship man is placed with his fellows, the doctrine of "Everyone for himself" has never been questioned—far less eradicated. Greed involves competition of a cut-throat kind; relentless rivalry; enduring emulation. In society and in business these things are to be taken for granted; and when you

enter the Church you find them embedded there too. The younger clergy jostle one another after ordination for "higher" posts. Touting, canvassing and thuggery are all practised unblushingly for personal advancement. Sordid ambitions rule everywhere—in the Church and outside the Church. The amazing thing is that preachers and teachers of humanitarianism are equally, with the financial thugs of the Market Place, keen on retaining and increasing the wealth which their talents or popularity have reaped for them! Is it surprising that there are movements towards communal action to restrict the power of greed? What the world needs is security. Seek ye first an equitable distribution of *knowledge*, and of the fruits of the earth and all other things shall be added unto you.

IGNOTUS.

Current Christian Apologetics

Scientific Theory and Religion (Bishop Barnes, 1933).

Vale (Very Rev. W. R. Inge, 1934).

Nature, Man and God (Archbishop Temple, 1935).

The Contribution of Christianity to Ethics (C. C. J. Webb, 1934).

The Revolt Against Mechanism (Rev. L. P. Jacks, 1934).

The World and God (Rev. H. S. Box).

LIFE is too brief for the militant Freethinker to pay attention to every effusion from the Christian pen, and in any case the monotonous mediocrity of such efforts is hardly calculated to render their perusal a profitable experience. The most one can do is to consider the apologetics of the various leaders, and so set Christians an example in keeping familiar with such works of their opponents.

The keenest and best informed intellect among Christians to-day is easily Bishop Barnes. Bear in mind, however, that his eminence is rather misleading in view of the low standard set by his colleagues on the bench. Still, a great portion of his book reads like a general handbook of scientific knowledge. Whether the Bishop has properly used that knowledge in making philosophical conclusions is not so certain. He is most at home in physical science, to which about half his pages are devoted, and he rejects the idea that Materialism is discredited in this branch. Energy, he allows, belongs to the material world, and "the suggestion that radiant energy is spiritual implies a complete failure to understand the implications of the analysis of matter."

Outside physics he is apt to cling to favourable philosophical speculations rather than scientific deductions, and he gives to "emergence" a quite unwarranted significance. For the Materialist new qualities emerge *out of* conditions, not *into* them, from some obscure spiritual region.

Though he calls his position Moderate Realism, it cannot be distinguished from Objective Idealism with the transcendent Absolute. Things "have a real and independent existence," he says, "because they exist in the mind of God," and the earth existed before man only because God held it as an idea. Barnes is alive, however, to the difficulty that in God's mind there must be such things as filth, disease, cruelty, war, and he attributes this to God having given the world a degree of independence. Apparently this purports to explain why God's ideas are filthy, cruel, barbaric, diseased, and it is here the bishop, not the truth-seeker, who offers a God who ejects ideas which, when they are found unworthy of him, must have somehow got out of control—with God's permission! God, that is, permits cruelty unrestrained ex-

pression. Belief in God, he contends, stands or falls with belief in survival, and he will not rest content with any abstract Deity. Science, he holds, cannot arrive at God, simply because Good and Evil do not enter its scheme (his book is comparatively deficient in treatment of the complex sciences). "Until we can think of God as Father," responsive and helpful, he is not the object of religious aspiration, but merely "the end of a limited range of speculative enquiry."

One cannot expect Barnes to be used widely from the pulpit. Pages of his book exhibit mathematical formulæ which will embarrass the pious.

In *Vale* there is the personal and homely touch, and more about the ex-Dean's beloved Plotinus. He has no use for mysticism when it comes from popular revivalists and evangelists, and considers his own and Plotinus' communion with the inscrutable mysteries, on an entirely different footing. Inge again defends birth-control and advocates a smaller population.

The Archbishop of York's Gifford Lectures for 1932-4 (*Nature, Man and God*), contain, among their 530 pages, the startling confession that "the eager interest on the part of theologians in the supposed discovery of indeterminacy at the basis of the physical world" is "misplaced."

Temple believes ardently in the Fall, which was "not utterly necessary," but "too probable not to happen," so that "sin falls within the Divine purpose." Better a redeemed world, he thinks, than one that had not known sin.

On the philosophical side he calls himself a Dialectical Realist, akin to Marxo-Leninism without Communist implications. Like Marx he follows the Hegel line, but through the late Bernard Bosanquet.

According to Clement Webb, of Oxford, Christian ethics, when based mainly on Christ in the New Testament, are superior to all others. Coming from the Old Testament, the notion of neighbourly duty is given a new significance in Christ, and his teaching combines the Stoic notion of human brotherhood, the religious loyalty of the Jew, and the Roman conception of a world-wide society. Christianity must, however, readjust itself, he thinks, to modern demands.

From personal contacts I should say Unitarianism is now reactionary; this "half-way house" has shed its Martineau for a Jacks, who in this book employs an obsolete Bergsonian interpretation for mechanism. The cultural attainments of the Unitarian Monthly are rather deplorable, both in style and substance, and probably the most intelligent Unitarians to-day, having abandoned chapel-going, read the *Hibbert Journal* or even join the R.P.A.

The Rev. H. S. Box's book is notable for a criticism of the scholastic approach to Theism.

* * *

The foregoing remarks, while not, of course, in the nature of a review, may serve to indicate a prevalent fact about apologetics to-day, i.e., Churchmen still quarrel.

For instance, the writings of Prof. Jacks cannot be welcome among the die-hards; he is too fond of pointing out *Religious Perplexities*, to quote one of his titles. And the criticisms levelled by Box at schoolmen like St. Anselm have earned him the reproaches of his colleagues in the faith (e.g., Webb). And what of Inge's championing birth-control, while other equally ordained disciples of God say otherwise? Compare, too, the Archbishop of York's assurance that religion has nought to gain from indeterminacy, with the eager acceptance of that theory by others. And Temple is right. Let Determinism be flung to the winds, let caprice rule the entire world, let matter

be annihilated, let the universe run down or blow itself up or do what it likes, let electrons jump and romp about "in fancy free," and religion gains not one iota.

The Freethinker may modestly ask what sort of a God it is that "calls" clerics to their profession, inspires them all with his holy truth, and then has to watch them commit themselves to various mutually conflicting opinions? Scientists may legitimately differ when facts are wanting, but how can this apply to a religion Revealed and Established?

G. H. TAYLOR.

Holy Wars

A LEADER of church thought calls for an authoritative pronouncement of the Church on the question of War. He says the Church stands at the cross-roads; either it must follow the State into militarism, or it must bear the stigma of pacifism.

As well ask the Bishops to give their blessing to contraception as to ask this! All history shows that the Church is militant in the temporal as well as the religious sense. What wars have been waged in the name of the Church, what horrors have been perpetrated under the cloak of Christianity! No national interest, no protection of rights, and no suppression of an oppressor caused the Crusades. They were simply the result of religious fervour.

In living memory we have the State Established Church stirring up "Patriotism," calling on the masses to gird their loins with bayonets to put down the unspeakable Hun, to uphold Right, to fight for a better, Christianlike world.

Those same people who swallowed that sort of rhetoric were, a few years later, asking why the Almighty allowed such slaughter to continue, why there was no divine intervention to blast for ever from this pleasant world pagans who bombed civilians and used poison gas. Without doubt, the German pastors were, on their side, fermenting their flocks with similar platitudes. The brutes who could blockade and starve a nation were surely forgotten of God and ripe for Hell?

To play upon man's susceptibility to religion is the surest way to trouble known. It has been going on in Ireland for centuries; the principle, slightly disguised, has been the corner-stone of "peaceful penetration" of all savage lands. Either the missionaries come first or the soldiers; the result is much the same. Religion is either the direct cause of conflict, or it is the excuse.

Critics have it that Germany has evolved a new form of so-called paganism. The word goes round the Churches; words are hot, tempers rise, soon action will be called for.

It is strange that two European countries, Russia and Germany, have arrived at similar destinations, the putting down of the old form of Christianity, and the substitution of another cult, wherein the power of the Church is broken, by vastly different methods and for dissimilar reasons. Russia is avowedly Atheist because religion has no place in her own economic order, and interferes with the liberty of the proletariat. Germany rides roughshod over the might of the Church because her leaders want all the reins in their own hands; because they want to use the institution of the Church for purposes other than its accepted one. Religion can stir, it can move people, madden them and urge them forward in almost irresistible surge. A powerful weapon, suitably controlled and directed!

Let us be logical! If we are to be cajoled, wheedled, or called upon to fight Germany in the interests of religion, when finally she throws off the last remnant of it, why have we not yet fought Russia, who long ago went out-and-out pagan? Further, she has attempted, so 'tis said, to spread her doctrine of Atheism to other lands; while so far there has been no attempt by the Germans to propagate their form of militant Christianity over here.

No! It will not do. We have enough on hand without interfering in other peoples' domestic religions. We

are a tolerant race; our best friend may be a Mormon, a Seventh Day Baptist or an Indifferent. Each to his own fancy. We objected very much when Spain and Rome sought to interfere; we could burn our heretics at the stake with the best of them.

Neither will we brook interference with matters of State which may or may not arise. Let the Church, which is sitting pretty behind the State upon which, part of it at any rate, depends for its continued affluence and position, stick to its last.

It is had enough to have puny politicians muddling us into and out of Wars without the added danger of meddling parsons. The living mean more to the State—and so to the Church—in man-power than mere names on the village war-memorial.

A. F. WILLIAMS.

Acid Drops

The Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Hewlett Johnson, admits that there is a great decrease of "formal religious knowledge" in the country. By this he means less belief in Christian doctrines and less religious belief in the Bible. But the Dean is not one to cry "stinking fish." So he explains that "the real spirit of Christianity is far more widespread to-day than in the past." So that the less belief there is in Christian doctrines the stronger Christianity gets. It is obvious that if Dean Johnson wishes people to grow more Christian he should advise his congregation that there is no need for them to come to Church, or to read the Bible, or to believe in set doctrines. The less they have of these things, the better Christians they will become. The upshot of the whole matter is that Dean Johnson appears to have a well-paid post for teaching people to believe in things which he also tells the world they are better without. No wonder the mental calibre of the clergy sinks year by year.

The *Daily Express*, ever ready to exploit the most ignorant section of its readers, having noted the Dean's speech, turns on one of its temporarily disengaged errand boys to inform the world that the "ideals of service" abroad, have been "chiefly created and preserved by the Churches, the Bibles and the Prayer-books." That catches the flats both ways. It secures those who believe in the supreme value of churches, bibles, and prayer-books, and it also grabs those muddled-headed ones who do not care much for bibles, prayer-books and Churches, but gibber about ideals or service and the "Spirit of true Christianity." But fools are caught so easily that it must provide poor sport.

Four women were fined £5 each at Marlborough Street Police Court on April 30 for telling fortunes. The fools! Why did they not get themselves registered as a religious organization, and mix up their prophecies about this world with other prophecies about the next?

The game is so easy! Tell a man what will happen to him next week, or next year, and you may be fined or imprisoned. Take money from him for securing his relief from purgatory or hell, or for getting the soul of his father or mother out of purgatory, and it is an act of religion, and nothing follows—either here or hereafter. Really there are so many ways of safely getting a dishonest living, it is surprising that so many adopt schemes that are almost certain, sooner or later, to land them in trouble.

Truth has a way of appearing in the most unexpected places. It has always been a sufficient reply to those who talked about the "saving" quality of Christianity, that it at least never succeeded in saving the ancient world from decay, and that, in fact, the decay went on most rapidly when the Christian Church gained power. Now Canon Streeter, addressing the International Education Conference at Copenhagen, points out that the Greco-Roman civilization was the highest and best that humanity had yet achieved, and that "if the early

Christian Church had been a little more Christian, it would have succeeded in regenerating the Roman Empire."

Of course, the Canon had to "save his face," so introduced the passage just cited. If the Christian Church had been more Christian! Remember that the Canon is speaking of the time nearest the beginning, when the influence of Jesus was greatest, and already it was too bad to do what it might have done had it been better. The Christian Church failed to save civilization because it was *too* Christian, and civilization could only tolerate the Church when it became less "pure" and more corrupt. That is, when it lost a deal of Christianity and came to something like terms with human decency and commonsense.

The Pope has had some thousands of masses said in favour of peace. Now the *Christian World* asks for a "world concert" of prayer for the same end. The immediate reply is for the nations to go on making increased preparations for war, which looks either that none of them think the Lord is likely to do anything in the matter, or if he did, and peace was assured for a definite period, then we should not be surprised if a new war—a religious one—started as to whether the Protestant call or the Roman Catholic one did the trick. We feel inclined to lay a wager that the Lord will do nothing at all. At any rate we have never believed he made war, so we may be excused believing that he has nothing to do with peace.

Girls dancing to illustrate certain hymns is now part of the proceedings in some New York Churches. We have no doubt but that, provided, the dancing girls are of the right Hollywood type, the congregations will increase. And if the girls will adopt the dancing costume used by David, the man after God's own heart, then, if the police do not interfere, there will not be a building in America large enough to accommodate the "worshippers."

As the old lady said when she was first told of the sufferings of Jesus on the Cross, "Let's hope it isn't true." The Lord's Day Observance Society is responsible for the statement that King George reads a chapter of the Bible every day. We have no other, and no better, authority for the statement. But it seems slighting the King to be told that he belongs to the type that reads a chapter of the Bible every day, wet or fine, whether he is busy or disengaged. But every man who occupies a public position is exposed to slander.

The Ingeworth Ruri-diaconal Conference called attention to the "alarming increase of atheistical propaganda in the world." We have noticed this ourselves, but haven't found it very "alarming." But what is the Ruri-diaconal Conference of Ingeworth going to do about it? The game of hiding one's head in the sand and pretending that Atheism doesn't exist is clearly no use. Ignoring it and inaugurating a mission or a day of prayer are also useless. That only adds to the gaiety of the ungodly and leaves religion where it was. Perhaps if the Conference induced a number of religious "big-guns" to enter into public discussion with these Atheistic propagandists something would happen. We believe that something *would* happen, but the results would not be likely to make Christians jump for joy.

We pointed out some weeks ago that just as the Jubilee of Queen Victoria set going a wave of imperialism and militarism, which culminated in the war of 1914, so the present Jubilee will be utilized to strengthen the same forces. The first naked exhibition of this is seen in the issue of huge posters (the largest ever used by the army authorities) advising young men to commemorate the Jubilee Year by joining the army. The place of honour that is being given to the armed forces in the Jubilee celebrations will also work to the same end.

Religion will, of course, have its gain in the general wave of reaction. The newspapers report that "groups of women" went to St. Paul's and enquired the exact spot on which the throne would be placed during the Jubilee ceremony. They then went down on their knees in prayer on what, we suppose, we ought to call the "sacred" spot, and prayed earnestly. The clergy and the army! A very ancient and a very significant combination.

Mr. Gerald Bullett writes in the *News-Chronicle*, on "What can we Believe?" Evidently "we" can believe anything we please so long as we use terms with sufficient looseness, and make generalizations that mean nothing because they can be made to mean everything. Naturally, in the course of his article, Mr. Bullett, says some good, but not very original things; but what is one to make of such an expression as "Man is an incorrigibly religious animal"? This may mean that most men have everywhere acquired some sort of a religion, but if that is what it means, it is so well-known and admitted as to hardly be worth the saying. It may mean that man cannot do without a religion. If it means that, then Mr. Bullett must have lived as a recluse all his life not to have met many disproofs of the statement. Or perhaps it just means a line or two in a newspaper, and that would certainly be the most charitable interpretation to put upon it.

Or take another passage:—

Now if the Christian ideal of civilization is threatened by political fanatics, whether abroad or at home, where do those of us stand who share that ideal, but are unable to swallow Christian theology?

What is a Christian ideal that is distinct from Christian theology? The Christian ideal of life is based upon Christian theology, or the ideal is not a Christian one at all. Why the Christian finds no meaning, or at least no meaning that is worth fighting for unless the basic assumptions of Christian theology are taken for granted.

The sort of stuff that Mr. Bullett provides his readers with can be ladled out by the yard by anyone with a capacity for stringing words together. But the world needs more than that at present. It needs clear thinking expressed in precise language. We say the world needs this, but perhaps we ought to except the newspaper world, which evidently will not have, where religion is concerned, anything of the kind.

It really is too bad of St. Anthony of Padua. This holy saint's help is always invoked by Roman Catholics to recover lost articles, but in the case of Mr. W. H. Godwin of Southampton, St. Anthony failed to do his duty. Mr. Godwin found his house ransacked of money and jewels, and, in addition, the thieves actually took a medallion stamped with the effigy of St. Anthony—and *nothing happened*. What a glorious opportunity was lost by the revered saint to prove the wonderful efficacy of Roman Catholicism in cases of this sort!

It would be interesting to find out where the Church (or the Churches) really stood on the question of "faith-healing." Speaking recently about it, the Bishop of Liverpool said: "It is true you can produce results of a kind by a sudden appeal to the emotions . . . it may bring immediate relief to some; but in the end, and on the whole, it may do more harm than good." What have faith-healers and Bible-believers to say in reply to that? And do the Churches agree with the Bishop of Liverpool?

Discussing the "problem" of whether women are worthy of admission to a "Ministry" which boasts of the calibre of the majority of our parsons, Dr. Irene Robbins gives as the first reason generally dragged out in opposition, the "Scriptural" one. Of course she claims that "Paul's attitude has probably been misunderstood." The great drawback of religion is that it always prevents people being straightforward when advocating ideas clearly opposed by their "revealed" scriptures. Paul is incapable of "misunderstanding" on this point. Dr.

Robbins is right in disagreeing with Paul. She has no right to pretend that her opponents are "misunderstanding" not only Paul but the entire Christian tradition. Christ chose twelve MEN. He preferred Judas to any woman. Women of sense and progress should rejoice that modern women have thrown over Paul and the Christian view of woman's inferiority.

"A nose of wax," to quote Luther's graphic phrase, is much in evidence in the *Christian World* correspondence between the Rev. John Bevan and his critic. Bevan quoted from Job, the well-known passage, "Yet in my flesh shall I see God," but quoted it as saying, "Yet without my flesh shall I see God." His correspondent complains of the "apparently garbled quotation." Mr. Bevan gives a host of authorities on the side of his own "paraphrase." We are not complaining. It is a charming book, the Bible. Stand it on its head, read it backwards, drop in a negative where a positive stood, it makes no difference—it is still the Word of God—it is still man's infallible guide.

The Archbishop of York claims that "Christianity is making greater progress to-day than in any period of Christian history." This claim is a sort of mascot—whenever things look rather black, it is trotted out with super-confidence, and the people who already believe are ready to believe again. One pious writer, however, commenting on the Archbishop does not seem quite so sure. "The Catholic religion," he admits, "is assailed to-day as it has never been assailed before. The enemy is battering at the gate, but the city cannot fall. . . ." How often have we heard this! And how often have we heard that Christianity has never yet failed—for it has never been tried. The truth is that during the past two hundred years and more, Christianity has been (and still is) on the defensive; and that many of the defences have fallen for ever. But we have no doubt that even if it were completely proved that both God and his son are myths, there would still be numbers of Christians shouting from deserted altars, that Christianity still stands like an impregnable rock.

On the other hand, a well known ecclesiastic, Father Clement, says "To-day we are faced by the break-up of the Anglican Communion, riddled by the Modernism of all parties of that Communion, and deserted by the masses of the English population." Surely the good Father would not have admitted so much without good reason? Does the Archbishop of York deny that the Anglican Church is riddled with what is now politely called "Modernism," but which used to be called "rank heresy"? Is everybody in the Church ready to declare that the Bible is absolutely inspired of God, that the Virgin Birth is true, that Jesus is God himself, that he flew up bodily to heaven after being dead for three days? That people do go to Church we readily admit. But how much do they believe?

Take the quarrel between Dr. Major and the *Church Times*, on "Modernism." The worthy Doctor fills six pages of the *Modern Churchman* in eloquent denunciation of the paper, and what it stands for—that is, extreme Anglo-Catholicism. The Editor answers that with "extreme" Modernism, he "can have no more association than with militant Mohammedanism." He adds, that he believes it to be "false immanentist philosophy, which tends to identify God with man and both with a mere aspect of universal nature." Whether this a correct description of "Modernism" does not matter. What does matter, is that with these grave differences of opinion in his own Church to-day, the Archbishop of York can calmly state that Christianity is making greater progress than at any other time in its history. What nonsense!

Archbishop Downey has discovered another new argument against contraception. In opening a new Roman Catholic school in Liverpool the other day, he pointed out that "since 1826, though twenty-two Council Schools have been built, the number of non-Roman

children in the city schools has increased by only 256, and that there is now excess accommodation for 21,000. In the same period seven Roman Catholic schools, with accommodation for over 5,000, have been built. If conditions do not alter, long before the end of the century Protestant Liverpool will have committed suicide." No one denies that the Catholic poor will nearly always beat the Protestant poor in increasing the population. There is some attempt among the latter to get the new knowledge and put it into practice. But Catholics are so much under the thumb of the wily priests, are kept often so densely ignorant and are taught that "increase and multiply" is a Divine command specially addressed to them, that it is no wonder they have a monopoly of big families these days. Perhaps it will be the families, when they grow up, who will realize that after all, in spite of God, woman is not just a mere breeding machine.

The Church Congress will be held this year at Bourne-mouth, from October 8 to 11. A fine Agenda has been prepared—mostly, it should be remembered, for true believers. The audience is nearly always composed of persons and their followers, and some of the subjects are admirably chosen. These good, earnest and sincere Christians will be able to hear lectures on "Grounds for Belief in Christianity," "The Witness of the Church to Christ," "What is Christianity?" "Christ in the Experience of the Individual," "Life or Death, the Eternal Choice," and other similarly original papers. We are sure the arguments put forward in support of the various theses will be just as original, and we only hope that the undivided faith of all the listeners will not only be more strengthened thereby, but also will be even made more undivided!

The Canonization of More and Fisher is already having its repercussions. Why, asks owld Ireland, should there not be an Irishman made a saint? In spite of its being the Church's Emerald Isle, or God's Precious Jewel, Ireland, according to Mgr. Langan, has had no man or woman canonized for 700 years. So now there is a League of Prayer, which will incessantly pray until "Blessed Oliver Plunkett" becomes a saint. We wonder whether one of the things God simply cannot do is to hold out against incessant prayer? Perhaps the Pope won't be able to stand it, either.

We are glad to note that Allah answered the latest prayer for rain. Morocco, after many weeks of drought, decided to try a prayer which had not been used for 173 years. This, coupled with the fact that the leader in the prayer was an innocent child, did the trick beautifully; and a general rainfall was the immediate result. We hope the hint will be taken by our authorities should we be threatened with a drought this year, and our own God fails us. Allah certainly ought to be given a chance.

Another new church has been consecrated at Becontree. Its foundation stone was laid by Sir Charles Marston, whose belief in the verbal accuracy of almost every statement in the Bible cannot even be beaten by Gipsy Smith, General Eva Booth, Mr. Belloc or the Bishop of London. The church will cost £8,000, and, believe it or not, the money will be found. Whatever people may or may not believe, somehow they find money for churches. Perhaps one consolation is that they find money for cinemas also. We wonder what the numbers of each are?

The Rev. Canon Deane, in his new book, *The Valley and Beyond*, a terribly morbid study, assures us that "the whole atmosphere of the gospels is sane and wholesome, free from the slightest tinge of religious morbidity." Canon Deane must think his readers never look at the Holy Bible for themselves. It is not worth while demonstrating the baselessness of so silly a claim, or we would advise inquirers to attend a Three Hours' Agony Service on Good Friday, and listen to the reading of the Crucifixion yarns from those light-hearted gospellers Luke and John. Even Matthew and Mark are scarcely "free from the slightest tinge of morbidity."

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. IRVING.—There was nothing that called for special mention in General Ludendorff's declaration that he was an anti-Christian, and it appeared in all the papers. But both he and Hitler are both very religious, and far more truly Christian than they think they are. There are so many things going on in the world that one has to make a selection.

T. BENSON.—We hope to publish Mr. Cohen's *Letters to the Lord* by the end of the month. It will be published at one shilling in paper, and two shillings in cloth gilt. We feel justified in saying that it is one of the wittiest and most provocative pieces of writing that the author has done.

J. WEIR.—A series of articles dealing with the likeness of pagan to Christian ceremonies has been done, but there is room for it to be repeated. Will see when and how it can be managed. Thanks for cutting. Lord Wolmer was addressing a Bible Society, and so gave the meeting the verbiage it expected.

R. K. NOYES (Boston).—Thanks for cards. The views are very interesting, but we doubt if we shall ever see them save in a pictorial form.

M. WHITEFIELD.—Your lecture notice did not reach this office until Wednesday (April 30). First post on Tuesday morning is the last date for publication in that week's issue.

J. E. LUCKENS (Auckland, N.Z.).—Subscription received for what you call, "The finest paper published." Hope your opinion of it will never alter.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Glasgow Secular Society, per Mrs. M. Whitefield, 108.

D. FISHER.—For Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*, 3s.

A. B. MOSS.—You are unquestionably right in your surmise.

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All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

Sugar Plums

We hope that Freethinkers are now making up their minds concerning attendance at Manchester on Whit-Sunday. There should be a record number of members present, and the discussions should prove more than usually interesting. Next week we hope to be able to supply details of excursions. Meanwhile, those who wish to have hotel accommodation reserved for them should write to the General Secretary, stating their requirements. Whit-Sunday is a very busy day in Manchester.

We regret that we are compelled to hold over, until next week, letters from Mr. I. Lewelyn Powys, Mr. H. G. Wood, and Mr. B. G. Theobald. The Bank holiday has upset our weekly routine somewhat.

When the Road Fund was formed from taxes on motorists, the promise was then made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the money should be strictly reserved for the repair and improvement of the roads. Mr. Winston Churchill was the first who raided the fund to make good his budget. Other Chancellors have followed his example, in spite of protests from a few members of the House of Commons. Mr. Chamberlain has followed suit in this matter, and a protest has again been raised. Mr. Chamberlain, in reply to these protests, said that it was ridiculous for any Chancellor to think he could bind down future Governments as to what they should do with the funds at their disposal, and the use of Road Fund is to continue. So far as we are concerned, we think that the Chancellor is strictly within his rights. Public money is public money, and there is nothing illegal in using money originally intended for one specific purpose for another purpose—so long as it is being spent in the public service.

We would like our readers to pay special attention to this, because it has a very clear bearing on one subject of interest to Freethinkers. When the question of the disestablishment of the Church comes to the fore again, we shall hear much of the property and the wealth of the Church. But the Church of England is a State establishment. It is as definitely that as is the British Museum. And the Church of England, as such, owns no property whatever. There is an amount of property earmarked for the service of the Church, as there is money earmarked for road-making and road improvement. But just as the State has the legal right to use one fund for a purpose other than the one originally contemplated, so it has the right to use another fund for whatever purpose it may decide. It has as much right to do this as a man has to spend on beer the money that he had set aside to spend on tobacco. We have pointed this out concerning Church property before; we are pleased to have the principle endorsed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. When property is given to the Church, it is equally given to the State. When certain taxes are raised for whatsoever purpose, it is money raised for disposal by the State; and the State may do as it likes with its own. For the time being the State uses some of its wealth for the benefit of the Church. One day the State will, we hope, be wiser and will use its wealth to a better end.

After a week's campaign at Finchley, Mr. G. Whitehead proceeds to Bolton, where he will conduct a series of open-air meetings commencing to-day (Sunday, May 12), and continued each evening during the week. The local N.S.S. Branch will co-operate, and there are more than enough saints in Bolton to make the week's work successful in every way. After Bolton, Mr. Whitehead will proceed to Blackburn.

A pious critic notes a point about Shakespeare which is worth repeating:—

Shakespeare so lived that his work, always poetic, only reflects incidentally his age; and so apparently indifferent is he to the torments of the Jesuit missionaries, the lesser persecutions of the Puritans, the bloody quarrel between Elizabeth and Mary, that these are but, at the most, reflected in the plays.

But may not the real reason be that Shakespeare was indifferent, not to the claims of humanity, but to those of religion? Otherwise, is it not almost impossible to account for his silence about the great religious quarrels of his time?

I have often thought that spirits of a higher order than man might be willing to learn something from a human mind like that of Newton, and I see no reason why an angelic being might not be glad to hear a lecture from Mr. Huxley, or Mr. Tyndall, or one of our friends at Cambridge.

The Poet at the Breakfast Table.

The Incarnation Delusion

MOST miracles are an incubus, a sort of old man of the sea, they give weakness not strength to the creed which is weighted with their defence. Once religion was believed because it was associated with miracles; nowadays it is partly because religion is based on a belief in miracles that mankind discards it.

Christianity used to boast of many miracles, and doubtless all its miracles are of equal worth and weight. It is growing more and more indifferent to most of its miracles. Finding money in a fish, and feeding a crowd on an inadequate commissariat cause only laughter and satire in these days. If Christianity could throw overboard all its miracles, many professors of theology would rejoice. Somehow there is a tendency to ignore all but two: the "Incarnation" and the "Resurrection."

The "Resurrection" has naturally received destructive analysis in all ages since the very moment of its invention. Since the days of Paul, critics have exposed its baselessness from every conceivable angle, partly no doubt because Paul challenged them to it by his boast that the Christian religion stands or falls by that doctrine. Paul's plea explains why Christians are still saddled with this unproved, incredible and exploded fable.

The "Incarnation" is in many respects in a different category. Multitudes have had, and are to have a "Resurrection." Although (contrary to Christian belief) "Incarnation" is common to many religious founders, and not unique, it is unusual, we might say rare. It is the least likely sort of thing to happen in a civilized community or to survive ten minutes' investigation. A "resurrection," on the other hand, might be said to occur wherever a premature burial had been discovered in time to save the victim's life.

Except for the dubious entertainment of "fulfilling prophecy," or merely because "miracle" is expected of religious teachers, there seems little utility in claiming Christ as a Physical Embodiment of God. That Jesus Himself "admitted" the claim cannot be denied ("The Father and I are one," and "Before Abram was, I am"). But perhaps these brave words were merely an answer to the greater absurdity of repudiating Joseph's fatherhood while pretending to trace the ancestry of Jesus to King David through this same Joseph. Christ's sentiment appears to have been similar to those of Tennyson's "Gardener Adam and his wife."

For all its antiquity, the doctrine of Incarnation seems irreconcilable with even the minimum of rationalism possessed by Modernist Theists. To primitive man, believing in a very human type of God, it seemed perfectly simple to discover incarnations. The complicated, mysterious deity of twentieth-century creeds doesn't fit into the personality of a one-minute-old baby-boy. The absurdly brief years of Christ's ministry compared with wasted years of teething, measles and the usual futilities of boyhood, suggest insuperable difficulties one would think, to any intelligence accepting so comic a dogma.

It makes little difference whether Jesus was a naughty boy or otherwise. If He had a "bit of the devil in Him," we might like Him more, but He could not then be God. On the other hand, he might have been as heroic as Casabianca, or a good little chap like Archdeacon Farrar's "Eric," and only prove how impossible it is to produce a "model" boy who is not primarily a prig.

On the other hand, a married man is almost essentially a kind of hero; in any case to have had the example of a God who had been a husband for fifty

years or so would have (perhaps) been capable of making "incarnation" interesting.

There are varying degrees of "incarnation." Different schools of Christians appear to regard God as differently incarnated in Christ. There is more "deity" or more "manhood" in the "incarnation," according to whether you are a Catholic, Fundamentalist, or Modernist Churchman. This is not to be wondered at. Nobody could believe that Jesus was all pure unadulterated deity; there must have been a man somewhere if any part of the story is to be believed. After all, any theory of "incarnation" on the face of it implies the existence of a human body. The "God" is only inferred; the "Man" is obvious.

Following Bishop Barnes's amusing discriminations, Dr. Maude Royden (in her book: *I Believe in God*) dismisses the "Virgin Birth," but clings to the "Incarnation." She is undismayed by the fact that Christian mythology follows a multitude of earlier "Incarnations." "The great truths of Christianity, the Incarnation and the rest," she says, "are recognized by us in many religions, not because they are false, but because they are true." If any but a religious teacher talked thus, we should understand that Christ was claimed to be no more God than (and only as much as) any other alleged incarnation. In that case Fraser's startling instances of incarnations "recognized by many religions," would also have to be called "Great Truths." But as Fraser says: "Strange as may seem to us the idea of a God incarnate in human form, it has nothing very startling for early man." It is certain that Dr. Royden does not include EVERY incarnation as equally true and great.

Dr. Royden, like other theists, very indefinite in her description of the essential features of "Incarnation," knows enough to be sure that "the nature of God could not be perfectly revealed in . . . non-spiritual creatures. . . . Had Christ appeared among the Bushmen of Australia, He could have achieved nothing." Apart from the fact that one might have thought the God of the Old Testament would have felt very much at home amongst a barbarous people, it is strange that God "could not" do any good where presumably improvement was most needed.

The *raison d'être* of the Incarnation is given by Dr. Royden, when she says, "We now know what God is like." If so, God seems to be an ordinary human being in regard to essentials, imperfect, possessing limited powers and knowledge, and of a character familiar to us all. Many others have claimed with equal credibility to perform miracles. His teaching was no more remarkable or original than that of the late C. H. Spurgeon.

If Christ were God's Incarnation, when did the "union" (or whatever it was) take place? Mr. Middleton Murry says that Jesus "was inevitably bound to become the Only Son of God, as He came up from John's baptism" (*Life of Jesus*, p. 159). From this it would seem not to have been anything to do with the Birth of Jesus, but something which had not occurred until after His baptism.

The latest booklet summarizing Modernist views states, "The matter is exceedingly obscure"; in fact the "Incarnation" is ignored except to the extent of such incidental nonsense as the words: "In one sense Jesus was Messiah, and in another He was not. . . . He knew Himself to be possessed of the secret of eternal life," but then He "could also reveal it to whomsoever He would,"* which seriously diminishes its uniqueness.

* *The Modern Meaning of the Bible*, issued by the Modern Churchman's Union (pp. 7, 11, 15).

The Rev. W. H. Odaker, M.A., writing in the *Modern Churchman*, takes for granted that "all (theological) teaching must be designed to show the gradual self-revelation of God which culminated in the Incarnation," but gives no clue to what he means by "Incarnation." He sneers at the "Jesus of the creeds," and finds his consolation in "the simple dignified story of Jesus in St. Mark's gospel." This "simple story" includes Christ's recognition by the Holy Dove, and a "Voice from Heaven" proclaiming Him to the world, angels coming specially from Heaven to "minister unto Him," devils ("evil spirits") obeying Him, and Jesus Himself claiming to be "The Son," who would one day be "sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." Really the "Jesus of the creeds" is quite as credible and even "simpler" than this.

That distinguished Modernist, Dean Matthews, in *Essays in Construction*, claims that "it is the essence of faith that God is manifest in Jesus as in no other and hence that Jesus is without precedent." While this takes us back again to the Unique Jesus, it offers no kind of definition of what Dean Matthews means by Incarnation. We look to the courteous scholarly Dr. Major, editor of the *Modern Churchman*, for an authoritative statement, but we find he can only tell us (in the *Modern Churchman*, November, 1934):—

The Modernist view of the Incarnation, which beholds the supreme unveiling of the Divine Nature under strictly human limitations in Jesus Christ, regards that divine unveiling as differing in degree, not in kind, from many preceding divine revelations made in the course of human history. . . .

It is a single divine revelation coming from the Divine Father, carried on by the operation of the Divine Spirit supremely manifest at one point of human history, Jesus Christ. This process of Incarnation is not only a process of divine revelation, it is in another of its aspects a process of divine atonement—the bringing together into sinless communion of man with God. This is the core of the Modernist Gospel, that the whole creative process is in its highest aspect a process of Divine Incarnation, Divine Revelation and Divine Atonement.

This may be the "core of the Modernist gospel," but it means (if anything) that everything on earth is Incarnation (and Atonement).

Professor Pringle Pattison, in the same journal, is quoted in terms which for all their lofty phrasing, are an absolute admission of ignorance as to the meaning of the chief item in the Christian mythology:—

We are far too apt to limit and mechanize the great doctrine of the Incarnation, which forms the centre of the Christian faith. Whatever else it may mean, it means at least this—that in the conditions of the highest human life we have access, as nowhere else, to the inmost nature of the Divine. "God manifest in the flesh" is a more profound philosophical truth than the loftiest flight of speculation that outsoars all predicates and, for the greater glory of God, declares Him unknowable.

Many Modernists, of course, have such impersonal views of God, that only the use of the personal pronoun "He" or "Him" (with a capital initial) makes their continued membership of a church possible. Others again would have us believe that they claim no more than that Jesus Christ was an "embodiment" of some high qualities to an unusual degree, He was "godlike"! In a sense purely colloquial we say that a man "is the very embodiment of human kindness," but when "Incarnation" and "God" are the terms used, we may be certain that we are in the presence of sheer mysticism—both theological and meaningless.

Believers in "Incarnation" never trouble to tell us the advantages of a man being a manifestation of

God. The Rev. Mr. Staton, an American Fundamentalist once belittled all the great men of history in order to glorify Christ as "incarnating Jehovah Himself." Silas M. Porter wrote in a New York journal suggesting that "Some of us would prefer to be incarnations of men like Socrates, Plato, Bruno, Lincoln, Lloyd-Garrison and Ingersoll, rather than incarnate the inspirer of the Old Testament and the Apocalypse."

It is surprising that Modernists do not boldly repudiate so stupid a dogma. To accept the Incarnation and reject any Bible miracles seems straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel indeed. These miracles were believed for fifteen centuries as confirming the Incarnation, of which they remain the only proof. These "proofs" can never bear the light of intelligent investigation. The Jesus who could curse the barren fig-tree for not bearing fruit out of season, was obviously not the Creator of fig-trees and fruit seasons. The "Temptation" of Jesus is meaningless if Jesus were not God. All Christ's utterances were of a human type, even when He boasted, "I and the Father are one." It was no more divine than the Kaiser Wilhelm's "Myself and God."

To what mean dodges are our theologians reduced when they write in these days about foolish dogmas like the incredible Incarnation. The well-known Professor Findlay, for instance, believes in, but cannot define his belief in the Incarnation any better than the following:—

Like ourselves, Jesus before the Resurrection could only be in one place at one time, for He was confined by our "prison-house of nights and days," to the little land of Palestine, to one frail body with nerves and moods like ours, a body which might be killed and did feel pain, and to three-and-thirty years. There were, consequently, some things He could not do and some things He did not know. All the same, He was not just like the rest of us. (*British Weekly*, April 11, 1935.)

People did not in the ages of faith regard the incarnate God as being just "not like the rest of us," because in those days they believed in God and in Christ. Does Prof. Findlay think he is helping matters by alluding to "Jesus BEFORE the resurrection?" But who on earth is concerned with any other period of the alleged Incarnation?

The "Incarnation" is a clumsy sort of "miracle" at its best. If God has any desire to show Himself to man He has many ways of doing so. Even though the Bible says, "No man hath seen God at any time," the same volume records numerous examples of God appearing to man with or without disguise. God "walked" in the Garden of Eden and interviewed Eve unblushingly. He met Moses (Ex. iv. 24) at a wayside inn, and attempted to murder him like any Chicago gangster. And if we credit the gospel story of the method by which God "incarnated" Himself in Jesus, we are obliged to believe that God came in some very carnal form to woo Joseph's fiancée before Mary conceived "God's Only Son."

One must feel that it would have been easier and less reprehensible to the puritan mind if God had boldly come amongst men as a God. He could, of course, have miraculously made men aware of His identity without making it necessary to involve a good woman in a mystery inadequately cleared up by a miraculous dream. After all, any "Incarnation" must be needlessly confused when Divine Fatherhood is complicated with Human Motherhood.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

—As you wish to be severe in repressing the rebels, be also severe in repressing the corrupters and the corrupted.—*Jean Jaures*.

Religion—A Bar to Progress

If a person with religious beliefs is asked what is the aim of human life he will return some such answer as that it is to fulfil the will of God, to do one's duty to one's neighbour, or to live virtuously. If he is asked further why any of these should be the aim of life, he will either fall back on authority or return further answers that are variants of those he has already given. The appeal to authority obviously raises the question of its reliability and of the grounds on which it rests, while the variant answers still leave the reason why unaccounted for. It will be observed, that in so far as answers are returned, they are given on non-supernatural and rational grounds, so it is still quite reasonable to protest that the answers do not meet rational enquiry. They do not meet it for the reason that they are *proximate* answers, whereas the question as to the aim of life, being a question concerning an *ultimate* end, can be answered, if at all, only by an answer embodying an end which is ultimate. All answers to this question, then, given on religious grounds are rationally incomplete. They do not answer the question that is asked.

Is there an answer? In terms of religious beliefs, no. In terms of human consciousness, yes. The reason is that the question is unintelligible except in terms of human consciousness because, apart from the fact that the person with religious beliefs answers (when he does not push it back on authority) in terms of his reasoning faculty, the question resolves itself into: "What is the aim of human consciousness?"—since human consciousness is identical with what was meant by "life" in the question. The only satisfactory answer, then, must be an ultimate one beyond which there can be no further "why" to arise, because it is an end satisfactory in itself.

Such an answer is "human happiness." There can be no further question arising out of this answer because the quest of the mind ends there, fusing itself in the ultimate satisfaction it has been seeking. Happiness cannot be a means because no end beyond itself can be conceived. If it be objected, for instance, that wisdom is greater than happiness, the question arises "greater in what way?" It cannot be in size. It can only be in terms of a recognized good in human consciousness, which leads on to the answer: "Wisdom is a greater happiness than a happiness without wisdom." Thus happiness remains as an ultimate aim which answers our question.

Now observation clearly reveals that it is not the aim of nature to endow her children with happiness, while it is the aim of her children to secure it whenever and wherever possible. Happiness, and the infinitely varying degrees of it down to indifference, together with pain and its infinitely varying degrees to its extinguishment in death, are properties of sentient matter without which the continuance of living creatures would be impossible. Without the pleasures (humbler name for happiness) of eating, drinking and sex, life would end like a spent force, which is only another way of saying that without the pain of deprivation of them living matter would have no impulsion within itself to continue. Pleasure and pain are the goads of nature indifferently applied—not that nature has any "purpose" in applying them, as the geological record abundantly shows, and as the recurrent miscarriage of theological attempts at human or divine justification of her vagaries abundantly proves. We are obliged to use such teleological expressions, clumsy though they are for rational exposition, because language has its roots fast in primitive anthropocentric conceptions. And this anthropocentrism, it may be observed, furnishes clear proof

that man does in fact regard and interpret the universe in terms of what he conceives to be his own welfare. And have we it not on the the highest authority, that every creature "cherisheth its own flesh?"

Then why does religion stand in the way of progress, which is a proximate end to the ultimate end, human happiness? Let us consider this by "going back to nature" (how securely is language bound in anthropocentric shackles!). Nature knows nothing of purpose. Her goads with all her children save man are pleasure and pain, and if they make a mistake about their aim (happiness) by misconceiving it, or fail to get back to it through the goad of pain, then, as even the reverent rather irreverently say: "God help them!" Nature has no heart to be wrung. The differentiated organic becomes homogeneous inorganic. That is all. And were it not so man could not have his privilege of mind and purpose, for if nature had her own compassion and purpose man could not have his. She might choose the mosquito or the cancer germ as the end to which creation moves. It is because she has no purpose that there is no challenge to man's—other than that of his own ignorance and limitations.

But his ignorance and his limitations are the measure of his failure to conceive the means whereby he may achieve the end for which he exists, his happiness, and still beyond, his greater happiness. And it is in this that religion is a bar to his progress.

The less sure man's knowledge is of the means whereby he must achieve his end, the greater the danger of his taking the next step forward. Pain is the penalty of error and fear is the monitor of pain. And religion is the organization of fear. That it is also the organization of self-felicitation in, and gratitude for the measure of happiness secured, negatively through the admonition of pain, and positively through past triumphs over the religious organization of fear, is no more than that it is a reinforcement of fear lest happiness gained should be lost. Its power is cautionary, fearful, negative. If tender blandishments to stay and rejoice in familiar bliss do not avail, like woman scorned, it moves swiftly to anger. And fear lends eloquence to denunciation, and to malediction a pious sincerity.

The utility of religion is the measure of man's danger through his ignorance. With every step in knowledge, enabling him to dispense with the admonitory lash of pain, religion, the embodiment of fear, becomes a bar to his progress. And worse. For the more he relies upon knowledge the more dangerous it is for him to seek refuge in fear. If danger threatens, safety lies in more knowledge. The very end of life, happiness, is staked on the bold venture. Man could not save himself by seeking refuge in faith even if he were willing.

The necessity of knowledge related quite clearly-headedly to human happiness, the only "end" of the universe that can be of any concern to man, is now paramount. There is no purpose in the world save such as he makes his own; no justice save that which he creates to secure the ends that seem good to him. His society, if it is to emerge from the blind and cruel see-saw of brute forces bearable to man only because he is himself the child of them, must be fashioned by himself after his own image, for there is no pattern laid up in any heaven but that which he has spun out of his own mind. He is the architect of his own universe, and his happiness is the only end of it that can concern him.

Would that he could have discovered that innocent truism sooner! Less chastening and more cherishing would have done a power of good.

H. E. W. GAY.

Some Real and Alleged Atheists

In days when Christianity was triumphant no charge was attended with more opprobrium than that of Atheism. To be even suspected of the "crime" was to be condemned and suppressed with horror and indignation. Atheism was thought the *ne plus ultra* of Satanic wickedness, and its supposed apostles were execrated as monsters doomed to eternal torments. The world branded and banished, and the Church burnt them. Of the heretics who were burnt as Atheists it is not easy to say how many were really deserving the name.

The Manicheans, Bogomiles, and other heretics who were relentlessly pursued to death during the Middle Ages, were commonly charged with Atheism. The disciples of Amaury de Chartres, who was burnt for Atheism at Paris in 1209, were probably only early philosophic reformers. Sagarel, who was burnt alive in 1300, held the heresy of the Everlasting Gospel, and probably in holding that the Father and the Son would give place to the Holy Ghost, meant that the reign of spiritual love would supersede dogmatism. Francis of Poitou, a Franciscan, who was also burnt for this heresy, was rather a mystic than an Atheist. Marguerite Porrete, burnt at Paris in 1300, was an Antinomian mystic. Lollard Walter, or Gauthier, burnt at Cologne in 1322, was apparently an Epicurean Deist. He asserted that God did not know of the evil done on earth, and denied all the distinctive dogmas of the Church. Many of his followers were also burnt. Herman de Ryswick, burnt at Hague in 1512, was a Deist and disbeliever in hell. The Anabaptists were commonly charged with Atheism even while they were most religiously striving to emulate the primitive simplicity and community of the first Christians. Louis Berquin, the friend of Erasmus, who was burnt in 1530, was only a monk-hater. Quintin of Picardy, the chief of the Libertines, who was burnt at Tournay in the same year, probably gave colour to the charge of Atheism by declaring the falsity of the Gospel. Gruet was burnt in 1549, more probably for his enmity to Calvin than for any distinct opinions. Etienne Dolet, who was burnt at Paris in 1546, was probably a sceptic of the type of his friend Rabelais. As a friend of heretics he was suspected, as a printer he was hated, as a satirist he was feared, and he was burnt for having wrongly translated Plato, whom he had made to say "after death *tu ne seras plus rien du tout*—you will be nothing at all." The last three words were declared a damnable addition to the text, and cost him his life. Geoffroy Vallée, who was put to death in 1574, was not an Atheist, but an Epicurean Deist. He wished men to believe in God without fearing him. Had the dialogues for which he was condemned appeared in our own time they would have been considered but mildly heretical.

Giordano Bruno, burnt at Rome, February 17, 1600, has been placed in all catalogues of Atheists down to modern times, and there are still many who hold with the Church and Lord Beaconsfield that Pantheism is only Atheism in disguise. Lucilio Vanini, burnt at Toulouse, February 19, 1619, wrote in favour of the existence of God; but then Atheism has had no more powerful auxiliary than certain demonstrations of the existence of God. Father Mersenne, who shared in the *rabies* common to Atheographers, declared that Vanini set out with twelve apostles to convert the world to Atheism, and that in 1623 there were fifty thousand Atheist followers of Vanini in Paris alone!

Manzoli, a Marquis of Florence, was burnt for Atheism in 1637. But the real cause was probably

his having spoken and written against the Pope. Renault de Poitou and Jacques Dupain, of Sens, also burnt at Paris in 1646, may have only blasphemed the Trinity, the Virgin, or the saints. Kuhlmann, burnt at Moscow in 1689, was, according to the Christian accounts, rather a fanatic than an Atheist.

One of the last cases of capital punishment for Atheism is also one of the most dubious. In 1688, a Polish knight named Casimir Liszinski was cited for Atheism by the Bishops of Wilna and Posnovia. He was excommunicated and condemned to be burnt alive. According to his defence, his only crime was having made a compilation of arguments for Atheism in order to refute them and, having written in the margin of a theological work that the arguments were inconclusive. Unfortunately for Liszinski, he had not commenced the second part of his work. By grace of the king, he was decapitated before being burnt at Grodno, March 30, 1689. His ashes were placed in a cannon and scattered to the winds.

When so many suffered the extremist penalty of the law for alleged Atheism, it cannot be wondered if many real Atheists carefully concealed their opinions. It is not entirely without reason that the charge has been made at least against five popes—viz., Sylvester (999-1003), Boniface VIII. (1294-1308), John XXII. (1410-1416), Alexander VI. (1492-1503), and Leo X. (1512-1522). Sylvester probably incurred the charge for his patronage of learning. Against Boniface and Leo X. there is some evidence, while John and Alexander were denounced for their crimes.

Atheism is by no means the abnormal state of mind that some theologians would have us believe, and there can be little doubt that thinking men in all ages have often been troubled with doubts as to the religious opinions of those around them. Practical Atheism, or living without God in the world, has indeed been the unacknowledged creed of most of those who, concerning themselves with the things of the world, have helped forward its progress. The name, however, can only philosophically be applied to those who deny a personal intelligent first cause, and it is best restricted to those only who willingly accept it.

With many zealous Christians, the charge of Atheism has been used in a most indiscriminate manner. Of course, there is a certain sense in which every man is an Atheist to every other, since no two men's gods are exactly alike. To the Swedenborgian, who believes not only that Jesus Christ was God, but that he was Jehovah the one only God, every Jew, every rejecter of Christ, must be strictly an Atheist. Unitarians may be said to be Atheists to the Trinitarian God, nor have the orthodox hesitated to press the charge even against fervent believers in Theism. Berkeley and Bentley both called Anthony Collins an Atheist, and even at the present day we occasionally find Paine and Voltaire termed Atheists in the religious press.

(Reprinted.)

J. M. WHEELER.

(To be concluded)

The decline of fear in religion is to be ascribed primarily neither to religious influences nor to critical doctrinal studies. Its more profound causes are, as I have said, increased knowledge of the physical universe; intellectual and moral training; and, above all, the realization of the defects of the fear inheritance. The nature of these causes indicates that the passing of fear observed in the Christian religion must take place in the religions of all progressive peoples, despite their theologies and creeds. As human nature changes, so do gods and religious change.—J. H. Leuba.

Christianity and Psychology

IN reading the articles on "Christianity and Mythology," by H. Cutner and H. J. Wood, in the *Freethinker*, February 27, March 31, April 7, and recent correspondence, I am struck by the absence of any reference to psychology; though it does not directly touch upon the technicalities of the point at issue, i.e., the historicity of Jesus.

In estimating the reasons for the rise of Christianity from its obscure origin among unlettered Jews to the greatest of the world religions if not in numbers, at any rate as a force to be reckoned with for good or evil in civilization—and whether its starting point is to be regarded as historical or mythical, it is surely of equal importance to both sides to look for the enlightenment thrown upon the problem by psychology. More especially is this the case at the present day, when we have M. Loisy's brilliant exposition of religious psychology in his book, *La Naissance du Christianisme*, an exposition which stands upon its own merits, whatever varying deductions may be drawn from it.

I cannot claim to have read M. Loisy in the original, but those who, like myself, want an easy road to him will have no difficulty in finding this in the pages of the *Hibbert Journal* for April and July of last year. There, the Editor, Dr. Jacks, gives as clear a précis as could be wished of the vital part which, as demonstrated by M. Loisy, the psychology of the early years of our era played in the spread of the Christian Mystery, accompanied as it was with scarcely a vestige of historical backing, and with no "biographical portrait of Jesus." In this connexion Dr. Jacks own words may be quoted "Except for the support, largely fantastic, which it was able to derive from Hebrew Scripture, Christianity was born as an undocumented religion."

Mr. Loisy's investigation of the problem leads him to a solution of it, which is largely based upon psychological grounds. The following extracts from the *Hibbert Journal* articles will briefly indicate his line of thought:—

The inquirer who would find a way through the baffling problems which gather round the birth of Christianity . . . must be able to place himself sympathetically in an atmosphere where ideas and beliefs, which he, as a modern, would regard as unimportant or even absurd, had the utmost importance for people as intelligent as himself. He must learn to be at home in conditions where faith was too intense, and enthusiasm too impetuous for leisurely self-criticism, after the manner of our introspective psychology. . . . He must school himself in partizan to share the uncritical point of view of the Jewish enthusiasts who, through no want of intelligence, but through an excess of faith, were ready to believe in all seriousness, that the complete destruction of the existing world order and the miraculous institution of the reign of God might occur at any moment. For this was the atmosphere in which Jesus proclaimed The Kingdom of God is at hand. . . . So, at least, M. Loisy assures us.

It was, we read, the inner working of their faith that raised Jesus from the dead for those who had first believed in him. Needless to say this faith was never analysed by those in whom it operated. . . . And they only, M. Loisy adds . . . will marvel at the result who know not *ce que c'est la foi religieuse*.

A religious faith is, by its nature, immune to refutation, either by argument or by events. Unlike the beliefs which rest upon purely intellectual foundations . . . a religious faith derives new energy, or at least new direction, from every obstacle that opposes it, affirming itself most vigorously when the opposition is most intense, a quality of faith which its persecutors invariably overlook.

We may reflect, moreover, that when faith has reached the point of intensity described by M. Loisy as that of Jesus' followers . . . such a faith will be inventive, creative and imaginative, translating all things to its own purpose, from current events to texts of scripture, and quick to recover in moments of desperation. . . . In all this it is obvious once more that we have to do, not with the logic of pure reason, but with a very different thing—the logic of religious emotion.

Though M. Loisy is apparently not concerned with the myth theory, believers and non-believers in the historicity of Jesus will deduce different conclusions from his historical and psychological premises. But it must, I think, be generally agreed that the light thrown upon the rise and rapid spread of Christianity by a recognition of the psychology of the age, and of religious psychology as a whole, has just as much bearing upon Atheistic Freethought as it has upon the ground trodden more cautiously by the Neo-Unitarian or the advanced Modernist.

MAUD SIMON.

Richard I. was satiated with the glory and misfortunes of his first adventure; and he presumed to deride the exhortations of Fulk of Neuilly, who was abashed in the presence of Kings. "You advise me," said Richard, "to dismiss my three daughters, pride, avarice, and incontinence. I bequeath them to the most deserving; my pride to the knights templars, my avarice to the monks of Cîteaux, and my incontinence to the prelates."

Gibbon.

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MIDDLESBROUGH (The Subway) : 7.0, Thursday, May 16, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Religion and Heathenism."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 7.0, Mr. G. H. Dalkin—A Lecture.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Bradill Square) : 7.0, Saturday, May 11, A Debate—"Is Christianity True?" *Affir.*: Rev. K. MacKenzie. *Neg.*: Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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