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Views and Opinions

Jesus the Teacher

LET us grant two things. First, that the Jesus Christ of the New Testament is an historical personage. Second, that he laid down ethical rules, or laws, that are of inestimable importance to mankind. It will be noted that I say the "New Testament Jesus," the miraculous incarnation of God, born of a virgin, who performed miracles—none of which were in any way original in the history of mythology, that he was crucified and rose again from the dead, reappeared to some of his disciples and went straight "up" to heaven. Merely to believe that some man existed, who gave the world a good system of ethics, or valuable guidance, is not the material on which a religion can be built. No religion in the world has ever been built on that foundation. Nor can a single authoritative statement of Christian belief be found right through the ages, whether Roman Catholic or other, that assumes otherwise. Reduce Jesus Christ to a mere man, however admirable, and the Christian religion disappears. The question of whether Jesus really existed, divorced from its value to an authoritarian religion, is of no greater importance than that of settling whether Shakespeare wrote "Hamlet." "Hamlet" remains what it is whoever wrote it. The play remains what it is whoever happens to be its author.

It is well to bear this point in mind, because among the more "advanced" of the clergy there has been going on a game of ecclesiastical thimble-rigging. They know that it is the miracle-working god-man who is alone of value to them. They are also aware that any system or religion is forced to endorse a moderate morality if religion is to survive. And our modern clergy are alive to the further fact that as the supernatural loses its hold on the modern mind, ethical and social questions tend to become of greater interest. The consequence of this is that the clergy are, as a whole, engaged in preaching to the better-educated public one thing while inducing them to support something else. The Jesus they preach is the moral reformer, but the Jesus they aim at perpetuating is the miracle-working incarnate God of the New Testament.

Some might describe this process as the triumph of life over mythology. We prefer the use of plain terms, and there are other considerations. It is never very easy to get rid of inherited

thought-forms once these have become incarnate in institutions, and part of the common language of the people. This difficulty is the greater when so many vested interests are guarded by current religious beliefs. Right through the history of civilization we find ancient myths clogging the wheels of social progress. And every-day experience proves how easy it is to get unconscious support for a supernatural Christianity, by stressing the importance of certain moral teachings. It is a policy of appeasement that existed long before the one practised by Nevil Chamberlain.

It is here that the clerical sleight of hand trick comes into play. The Jesus they offer openly to the public is the moral teacher, or the social reformer. The Jesus they want, must have, is the miracle-working supernatural one. In plain language, the public is sold a pup, and the clergy benefit from the sale. Down Club Row, if anyone sells a bird painted to look like a canary for the genuine article, he is called a swindler. In Christian circles, he is a man working in the interests of God. In civil life he may get a month's imprisonment to show that the State recognizes ability. In the Church he may receive as much as £15,000 annually, and be given a seat in the House of Lords.

* * *

A Plain Issue

Now we may work on our assumption, we hope, without being misunderstood, although with our own experience of the Christian clergy we should not be surprised to hear that we have confessed our admiration for the ethics of Jesus. We do nothing of the kind. The ethics of the New Testament are inadequate in extent, they are suicidally selfish in their teaching, and they are based on the absurdity of belief in the Bible God. But we will assume with the greatest Jesuites they are unique in character, and that without them the world would not be the world of kindness, good behaviour, love of truth and graciousness of character that it is. People would be to-day fighting each other, lying about each other, were it not for the influence of the moral teachings of Jesus Christ. We will say of the ethical Jesus what Pilate has had put in his mouth: "We find no fault with this man." To whatever praise is given to the ethical teachings of Jesus we will add one hundred per cent. We will go further and allow the historical lie to become established truth, by saying that such ethical teachings were never heard of until Jesus Christ appeared, and had he not come they never would have been known. No Christian can ask for more, nor could those non-Christians who must have Jesus on some count or other.

All this granted, is there even then, justification for those who do not believe in the supernatural Christ hanging on to the morality-teaching Jesus? We think not. And we may commence with the simple, but indisputable truth that teaching of any kind, or an idea of any kind, once given to the world is independent of its enunciator. We are surrounded by scientific and other truths that illustrate this. The theory of universal gravitation is associated with the name of Isaac Newton, that

of Natural Selection with the name of Darwin. There are scores of other truths, scientific, or social, ethical or artistic, that might be cited to the same end. Now suppose that it could be shown that neither Copernicus, nor Newton, nor Darwin, nor Faraday had ever lived. That would not affect in the least the truth of the discoveries or theories that are associated with their names. These would not be less true than they are now, they would not be less useful than they are now. They would all remain what they are, just as surely as the old saying that the sun shines on the just and the unjust alike, remains true whether one believes in God or not. But we are quite sure that if it had been possible we should have found Christians arguing that this is only because of God's magnificent resolve to treat all his children alike.

But suppose that the names of these men had been also associated with a number of stupid beliefs, that these beliefs in turn supported the perpetuation of social wrongs, and that the authority of these men were being used to perpetuate these. Would there not be then urgent need to cease to use the names of these men, and so rob obscurantism of its power?

What we are trying to make plain—I do not say prove, because the point is so obvious that we do not expect anyone to contradict it—is that a truth of any kind once enunciated ceases to be the property of an individual and becomes part of the possession of all. The discoverer no longer possesses it, he cannot withdraw it. It becomes the possession of everyone. Every truth, every piece of counsel, whether it be good or bad or indifferent falls into this category. Of course, the bottom truth here is that no single truth or invention is ever the complete work of any individual. There are always situations, suggestions, ideas afloat that are elaborated and expressed by some individual. But the fact we have stated is indisputable.

Why, then, the insistence or the persistence of the name of Jesus? The reason for the insistence is plain. Christ is the figurehead of a very large religious institution. Give up Jesus the God, and Jesus the man would cease to interest the forty thousand clergymen in this country, and all the Churches would have to be put to other uses. There is not a Christian Church in the world which would dare to preach that it did not matter whether you believed in Jesus as a God, or whether he was a genuine messenger from God, so long as one's moral behaviour is impeccable. There was a time when Churches agreed that without belief in Jesus the God incarnate you could not be accepted as a Church-member or even as a Christian. To-day they say, "We don't care what your private opinions are about Jesus; if you will come to Church, stand up and sit down at the right times; join in our hymns and listen with apparent reverence to the sermon. You will be setting an example to others, who may take you for a real Christian.

But the others, the non-Christians, what of those? Their attitude is not so simple, but it is not impervious to analysis. In the first place there is the unconscious environment pressure. Those who have had the name of Jesus held before them since their early childhood, and have had it associated with all that was good, and the neglect of religion held as essential to decent human behaviour. Naturally they show a not astonishing inclination to save something from the religious wreck. Habits are stubborn and folkways are not easy to ignore. The vicious teaching "Be good and God will love you; disobey and God will punish you," is driven home to the young, and

everyone knows how much resolution is required to strike out an entirely new path. The fight of the Churches for the child is literally the fight of the Church for existence, even to induce silence where faith in doctrines has waned almost to the point of extinction is something for which a hard-pressed priesthood will be, in these days, thankful. The New Testament says, He who is not with us is against us. The present-day clergy say, "He who is with us, if he will remain silent concerning the quality of his belief is yet doing us service." A very large part of the strength of the Church in these days is derived from this class.

And there is another class—one that flourishes in the political and social fields. The politician pleads that he must remain quiet concerning his non-religious opinions if he is not to sacrifice his political career. The social reformer thinks that his cause will benefit if he clothes it in language and appeals to names with which the public is familiar. Both appear to agree that to attack religion direct, not merely in its coarser and more objectionable doctrines, but in a criticism of familiar names is to pursue a short-sighted policy.

We do not agree. The motto here should be "Hasten slowly." During the past century and a half students of British history will be able to recall many reforms that have been ultimately frustrated in their best effects because of the concessions made to existing institutions, and the pandering to familiar, but none the less dangerous, terms. When Churchmen, some of them with the best intentions, took up with radical reforms, and did so in the name of their religion, they went a very long way towards frustrating the reforms advocated. The reformer must be made of tough stuff. He must face isolation; to stand with others when possible, to stand alone when necessary. The early Christian Church won its victory because it moved on the same level of doctrine and authority as did the religions around them. The transfer of the less educated and less advanced of the pagan world to Christianity by the use of teaching similar to those the people were asked to forsake, was easy. The influence of the Church in producing the Dark Ages should serve as a salutary lesson to those who can absorb it.

Natural or Supernatural?

The choice is really that between naturalism and supernaturalism. One must hold that morality is something due to social growth, or that it is of supernatural origin. We may hold that morality is, as the Christian Church has taught, and still teaches when it can, a gift from God, that man displays a tolerably morality only because he believes in God and a future life, and because of the example and teaching of Jesus Christ. If we believe this we shall be very careful lest we drop such familiar names as Jesus.

But if we believe that morality is absolutely independent of religious beliefs of any kind, that it is a product of associated human life, that moral laws are no more than summaries of the physiology of social life, then we shall do what we can to drive supernaturalism from our midst. We shall recall the fact that there is not a vice that religion has not sanctified, not a virtue that it has not at some time or other labeled a virtue. We shall recall also that familiar terms bring up familiar associations, and that this is largely responsible for the muddled thought of so many men and women who are in earnest in their expressed desire to create a better social state. To make the figure of Jesus the example of a reformer, Jesus the professed foundation stone of one of the most primitive superstitions that is established in the civil-

ized world, is to play into the enemies' hands. The world is not confined for moral teachers to the fictitious character of Jesus, a name that is inseparably associated with the reign of a religious system responsible for some of the most objectionable teachings and practices the civilized world has seen. If we really believe that morality is the product of social life, and is to be improved by an understanding of the laws of social situations, the less we have to do with supernaturalism the better.

CHAPMAN COHEN

The Strange Story of Rasputin's Misrule

THE sinister series of assassinations, civil commotions and military plots that has stained the records of Russian history very naturally culminated in the pitiless murder of the Imperial family during the Revolution of 1917. For, so common were tragic events in Moscow, that the wholesale extinction of the royal house could scarcely be expected to excite the indignation expressed in other lands. Humanists almost instinctively deplore the sanguinary occurrences which accompanied and succeeded the Russian upheaval, and would have welcomed a democratic in place of a totalitarian State. Still, despite these imperfections, no real Rationalist who is cognisant of the conditions that prevailed in Russia in pre-Revolutionary days, can seriously contemplate any return to the cruel and corrupt Imperial past.

The humiliating disasters of the Russo-Japanese War, with their direful sequel, seriously increased the discontent so widely spread. Later, the dreadful experiences of the World-War intensified the troubles of the people. Muddle and mismanagement seemed ubiquitous, while the military scandals were colossal. Indeed, from its inception to the close of the conflict, chaos was in the ascendant.

The Emperor, Nicholas II. was a mental pigmy. An inborn autocrat, like the old Bourbons, he had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing despite the enlightening revelations of the War. From time to time, progressive ministers were appointed, but their tenure of office was ever precarious owing to the powerful obscurantist influences persistently present at Court. Still in 1915 the prospects of domestic improvement seemed so promising that, as Professor Pares intimates in his "History of Russia": "It appeared that the long process, which since 1861 had led towards a Russian constitution, was about to culminate in its achievement."

But while the Emperor seemed constrained to bow to the liberating spirit, his German wife's stern antagonism to a granted constitution persisted. Her Teutonic ancestry did not prevent her from displaying wholehearted pro-Russian sympathies throughout the War, yet she was utterly opposed to any system of Government likely to lessen her son's authority when, as she expected, he would succeed his father on the throne. Also, whenever the Emperor yielded to the counsel of his more liberal ministers, his congenital indecision of character made him a pliant instrument in the imperious hands of his wife. Thus, what Nicholas conceded to his more enlightened advisers, he renounced at the Empress' bidding.

The succession was very uncertain, as the Imperial couple's only son Alexis was the victim of a dire disease. To preserve Alexis' life was his

mother's main desire. A morbidly religious woman, her spiritual cravings seemed insatiable. Professor Pares has travelled widely in Russia, and has witnessed many of the more recent events he records. He states that: "The Empress was a mystic; she was capable of long religious meditation; she found her greatest pleasure in Church; having no great intelligence, she easily fell under spiritualist influences. The French spiritualist Philippe of Lyons . . . was succeeded by Gregory Rasputin, a man of the foulest life, who, however, was credited by all who met him with powers of clairvoyance. His connexion with the Imperial couple, who knew hardly anything of what was going on outside their narrow circle, was at first limited to intervention in dangerous crises in the health of the heir to the throne. On two occasions during the war when the best doctors despaired of the child's life, Rasputin (in one case by telegram) risked the prophecy that he would recover, and in each case the recovery set in from that time."

However undimmed the integrity of those who warned the Empress of her idol's true character, which was notorious in the outside world, she obstinately rejected their solicitations. To this infatuated woman Rasputin was semi-divine, as well as a most devoted adherent of the throne. Moreover, she bitterly detested the Duma and that assembly's progressive leader, Guchkov, because they had exposed Rasputin's villainies in pre-war days.

Rasputin was in deadly enmity with every official who favoured the granting of a Russian constitution. He was the self-appointed champion of the loyal peasantry and, as such, he was welcomed at Court. His successful predictions strengthened his position, for in 1914 he opposed the war and foretold the rout of the Russian army if hostilities began. In the eyes of the credulous Empress his foresight into coming events vindicated his claims to the possession of supernormal powers. Again, during the Emperor's two month's stay at Tsarskoe Selo, his meddlesome spouse succeeded in securing the dismissal of the Grand Duke Nicholas from his position as Commander-in-Chief, and the utterly incompetent Emperor soon assumed this post himself. His shrewdest advisers strove to dissuade him from this disastrous step, but without avail.

With the Emperor at the front, the real rulership of Russia devolved on the Empress, who was so completely infatuated with the rascally Rasputin, that she obeyed all his instructions to the very letter. The immediate dismissal of every minister tainted with a tinge of liberalism was decided on. All the efforts of those who realized the dangers the autocracy was incurring were nullified by the Court, and Rasputin's infamous rule began.

Naturally, the Church was soon involved in scandal. A clerical confederate of Rasputin's set the Canon Law at defiance, and Samarin, the Procurator of the Holy Synod banished him to a monastery for his pains. But the case was decided in the law-breaker's favour, and Samarin was contemptuously dismissed, and the Minister for Agriculture soon shared his fate. Pares tells us that: "Rasputin had in the spring visited some of the Holy Places in Moscow and, while there, had made himself notorious by his disreputable behaviour in a public place; the police record of the scene was sent to General Dzunkovsky, a devoted servant of the sovereign, who held a high place at Court, and Dzunkovsky handed it to the Emperor, with the result that he was dismissed from all court appointments. A similar protest from an-

other of the oldest friends and servants of the Emperor, Prince Orlov, had the same result. These incidents became well known to the public. In nearly all the Empress' further recommendations of candidates for ministries comes the consideration: 'He venerates our friend' [Rasputin] or 'he does not like our friend.'"

But even subservient ministers were soon at cross purposes with Rasputin and the Minister of the Interior, and the Police Director plotted his murder, but the plot was discovered and Rasputin escaped. The whole amazing episode reads like an Eastern romance.

The two sovereigns being reduced to mere puppets, Rasputin remained at the helm. He floated an immense State loan on his own initiative, and issued commands in every administrative department. Incredible as it seems, Dr. Pares assures us that Rasputin even applied his prophecies to the movements of the army, and "demanded that the plans of operations and the intended times of their execution should be communicated to him in advance, so that he might assist them with his prayers."

Rasputin was the centre of a gang of dishonest officials and perverted parasites at home, while disaster succeeded disaster at the front. A state of complete chaos seemed inevitable, yet the Empress turned a deaf ear to all the remonstrants, including the leading members of the Imperial family, who daily dreaded an insurrection. Nor was any notice taken of the urgent advice of the French and English ambassadors. So a desperate remedy became imperative and a member of the royal family, Prince Yusupov, and the conservative statesman, Purishkovich, terminated Rasputin's inglorious career. The dictator was enticed into Yusupov's residence and, an attempt to poison him having failed, Rasputin was shot dead. Later his corpse was recovered from an island on the Neva. Even then, the bemused Emperor of all the Russias actually deserted his military command and journeyed to Tsarskoe Selo to attend Rasputin's funeral, and then remained in apathetic seclusion in his palace for several weeks. When we consider the scornful disgust of every intelligent Russian who witnessed this exhibition of fraud and folly, it is no marvel that the Revolution was not long delayed.

T. F. PALMER

(Continued from next column)

leaves two beady eyes watched the scene below, and Chak had travelled only a few silent paces when Grum, clutching a long rope-like creeper, swung down in a great arc, fastened his terrible grip round Chak, and, crushing his ribs until they cracked, carried him out over the cliff edge, where the ape released his hold, dropping his screaming victim to death in the pool far below.

Awah embraced his lifelong friend and, with memories of his lost father returning to his mind, commenced to tear up the boulders that lay around the base of the stone idol, while Grum danced unceasingly.

Shadows lengthened as Awah and Grum, exerting all their strength in one mighty thrust, brought the great stone crashing down to split and splinter in the red dust. The wind sighed in the trees, but the voice of the God had faded for ever.

The fiery sun sank swiftly behind the gloomy forest as Awah and the ape picked their way down from the chilly heights towards the river and the shelter of the caves. The night mist rolled along the darkening valley. The moon shone clear in a cloudless sky. High in the steely blue sparkled and quivered a solitary star.

IAN YULE

Iconoclast

HIGH in the haze the noonday sun blazed pitilessly down on the primeval forest, where Awah, the hunter, with his constant companion Grum, the giant ape, in search for fish had followed the rushing river's course to the deep pool below the high red rock, where the tribal God, when angered, shrieked and with his breath blew trees from the earth and babies from their mothers' arms.

Squatting in the cool shade of forest giants festooned with many-coloured creepers, Awah ate his midday meal, looking sometimes at his catch and then at the long wooden fishing-spear stuck in the soft green moss that carpeted the forest floor, while Grum swung high in the dense foliage above. The hunter, after drinking from the stream, crouched on his toes and let his eyes rest on the great cliff that rose from the dark silent pool and soared upwards into the blinding sun-light. There at the top against high trees moved Chak, guardian of the tribal God, who slew all who ventured to approach the precincts of his sacred charge.

Atash, father of Awah, perhaps his old head dazed after a long hunt in the heat of the summer sun, had one day wandered from his accustomed homeward path, pressing his foot on taboo earth, and what he there beheld no-one would ever know, for Awah had dragged his dead body, transfixed by Chak's spear, from the smooth waters below the gleaming precipice. Awah's grief had turned to hatred, and now the sight of Chak made his vow of vengeance transcend all fear of the God up on the heights.

The blistering heat of noon had passed when Awah and the ape skirted the boulders that lay along the river bank, and climbed, twisting and turning amongst tall trees, towards the forbidden ground. Resting a while now they had reached the higher slope, Awah heard the wind murmuring in the leaves and then his ear caught the dreaded sound—the voice of the tribal God. It rose and fell, faded, strengthened, and Awah had to grip his hunting-spear and wriggle his toes into the earth to keep from dashing headlong away. But seeing Grum move unconcernedly forward, climb swiftly up the trunk of the nearest tree and swing along the branches, the hunter took courage and advanced.

Ten paces from the cliff-edge stood a great red-stone column backed by creeper-clad trees, and as Awah drew near the voice seemed to break from a long narrow cleft, shoulder-high in the stone. Unable to stand for long in the strong wind that pressed him towards the edge of the precipice, Awah moved warily behind the stone, where his broad back accidentally shielded the wind from the cleft—and instantly the voice of the God was silent.

Awah stood as though petrified. All his life he seemed to have heard that voice. As a child the old men had told him of it. Sometimes it was a gentle whisper; other times a deeper note with anger in it; and when it shrieked, the tribe covered in the caves. Awah managed at last to step sideways and peer fearfully round the stone—the voice returned as loudly as before. Jumping back in fright behind the stone, he stumbled and fell against the cleft, and again the voice abruptly halted. Awah for a moment remained motionless, then moved cautiously back and to the side; the voice slowly returned. Exultation lit the hunter's face as he realized that he controlled the voice; he, Awah, could master it!

Enthralled by his discovery, Awah had forgotten his main purpose in coming to this long-feared place, and as he pondered, Chak stole from the deep undergrowth beneath the trees, his spear poised ready to hurl between Awah's shoulders. Up in the rustling

(Continued on preceding column)

All Hands to the Pumps

THOSE who are concerned with the fate of Christianity are bestirring themselves. God, it is felt, at the moment, badly needs men's help, and from a medley of motives they attempt to give it. Fortunately for the cause of humanity they often have not the slightest idea how usefully to give a helping hand to the dying creed. A general expression of the usefulness of religion, by which they certainly do not mean Muhammadanism or Confucianism or Mormonism, will gain their lip assent. Any pious resolution will ensure the raising of both of their hands. Cheap support of that kind they are willing enough to give, and they might give more if they knew how to give it.

Are they (they ask themselves) going to ally themselves with those of their friends who hold quite vigorously that the organized Churches of Christendom have gone clean off the rails? Jesus has in fact, in their view, been betrayed by the Churches. The regenerating influence of religion lies, to them, in the Sermon of the Mount, which fat ecclesiastics have played ducks and drakes with. But the fat ecclesiastics have still got control of the Money Bags, and it is these fat ones who are perhaps the more concerned about putting Christianity upon a firm, intellectual basis. This is to be brought about by hammering it into the skulls of children in their early years; the State to do the hammering, the State to provide the funds. That is, the State puts its hand into the pockets of you and me who want children to be educated, and not maltreated, and take out of our pockets that which will help to pay for the spreading of a belief in the Apostolic Succession, Holy Men, Holy Books, and how, after æons of time, God sent us his Only Begotten Son in order to give us a big chance of Damnation, and invented the Sacraments to give us a small chance of escape.

The Men with the Money Bags know what Christianity is well enough; so well do they know it that they know that no youngster will believe in it if the belief is not hammered into him early in life. Christian Morality teaches us that this process is a reputable one, a holy one. Christian Morality teaches us also that when the process is carried into effect by other Nations on behalf of other beliefs, it is a vile process, an iniquitous process. Their Graces of Canterbury, York, and Wales know what constitutes a moral action. They are professional Good Men—but not good for nothing. A Moral Action is one which strengthens the Church. O yes, the Sermon of the Mount comes into it as well—in a way. It is for the Church to say when it comes in, and how it comes in, and how much it comes in. It is the Bishops who are divinely appointed to feed their flocks, and flocks naturally cannot be fed if there is no wealth behind the Church. So all is for the best and the best is for the Bishops.

The Archbishops and the Bishops know there is nothing like Magic in order to keep a hold on the elusive masses. After that, a long way, comes the Sermon on the Mount. Splendid stuff this Sermon on the Mount! Oh, grand stuff, this talk, for instance, of it being more difficult for a rich man to get through the eye of a needle than to enter the Kingdom of God. Excellent stuff! But there is other excellent stuff. For example: Fear God, Honour the King; wives be obedient to your husbands. Save your souls and do not let us hear so much of this gross materialistic note as to the body. The body is a vile body; it will become, in due time, food for worms. But the Soul; ah, you

must look after that. If you don't you are in for trouble. We are the men who know all about the soul. We are the servers up of Magic Sacraments; we give you the Blood and the Body. We have the power; we have the authority. No one would believe it to look at us. No-one would believe it if they read up our record. But we will change all this, for Christian Morality teaches us the way. It tells us to get into the Schools and play tricks with unsuspecting youngsters. Then we will become Holy Men again.

Dorothy and Willie who are beginning to think, and who are told by our Press that Christianity is a Good Thing, wonder if they should pin their faith, in these hard times, to the Sermon on the Mount or to the Historic Church. Perplexed in a very short time, they take a bit here and a bit there; and fashion a Christian Religion to their Heart's Desire. Sometimes they realize that they are treating the Oracles of God with scant respect. Sometimes they become suddenly aware that they themselves are making a new religion, a thing of shreds and patches out of which they hope that some good may come at last. Very often they find themselves such weird company, people closely in touch with Big Business and Shady Practice, Low Politics and Artful Diplomacy, all shouting so vociferously Christian Morality, that they feel quite uncomfortable. But they would feel less comfortable if the glass of wine and the generous cut off the joint were to become more difficult to get. So they succumb. And the process they have been subjected to in childhood plays the part it is devised to play. Possibly before long they will be shouting quite loudly: Great is Diana of the Ephesians—with the corpulent and reaping their reward. Loyalty it will be called.

Christian Morality was in its swing in my boyhood. It aligned itself with the cry "Get On, my boy. Honestly, if you can, but get on." If one is told that in the next street is a Christian gentleman who does not model his life on that injunction, what does that prove? What did the atheistic cobbler who did his job well and didn't overcharge, who gave every one a square deal and every man the benefit of the doubt, what did his existence prove to the Christian gentleman in the next street? "Get On, My Boy" is still as representative of Christian Morality as it was fifty years ago. And to-day Christian Morality is still found in high places, fawning and begging for the retention and extension of privilege. Christian Morality can still go marching along quite bravely, blind to every iniquity as long as its wealth, power and privilege remain the same. Christian Morality can still put the telescope to its blind-eye in the presence of social injustice. It can still prate about the dangers of a gross materialistic outlook whilst clutching fearfully its loaves and fishes. The desire for power has almost passed me by, but if I were to have Power at this moment I would it were of the kind to bring down with its appropriate contempt this cry of Christian Morality. There may be a more despicable slogan—but I doubt it.

T. H. ELSTOB

Nothing contributes so much to the reputation of a Prince, as great enterprises and extraordinary achievements.—Machiavelli.

The man of science raises up a whole bygone world from the dead, and discovers for us not only the features of the Past, but even the warts upon those features.

Balzac.

Acid Drops

We do not listen regularly to the B.B.C. 7.50 religious horror, so we cannot say with confidence that some of the men have not broken the rule by saying something sensible. At any rate, when tuning-in the other morning we heard the voice of a woman—of a sufficiently unpleasant timbre—giving us the religious thought for the day. If our assumption is correct and the male speakers have given offence by letting out something sensible, we congratulate the B.B.C. on having a “cert” this time. To call the address empty would be inadequate. It was so full of solid emptiness that nothing that was something could ever hope to penetrate. As a religious address it would make Reith shiver in ecstasy. We do hope that Mr. Walter Pitkin, when he publishes the second volume of a *History of Human Stupidity*, will devote a section to the 7.50 B.B.C. performances. In their way these addresses are priceless—as case book material.

Of course there is a possibility of explaining the unbroken sequence of religious absurdity kept before the public by the B.B.C., and that is the existence of a “fifth column” within Broadcasting House. Can it be that after Reith was snapped up by politics—God only knows why—a number of unscrupulous Atheists have gained control of the B.B.C., and have determined to make plain to the world what a mass of stupidity and rascality is in the modern religious position? One feels certain that this theory would cover the facts. But as Atheists we protest against this policy. The trouble is that so many take these speakers as expressing truth, and will remain wedded to their delusions, while others who are struck with the foolishness of what is said would in all probability get rid of their religion on their own account. In spite of the whole bench of bishops and the whole of the House of Commons, we still believe that in the long run honesty is the better policy.

How the poor soldiers and sailors and airmen are being badgered night and day into religion is admitted by one of the writers on a Catholic newspaper. He suggested to a Royal Naval Reserve officer to take some religious medal with him on his hazardous duty. The officer appeared to restrain a violent emotion and then said quietly: “Listen, I am carrying 17 prayer cards, and I have been told to say each of them three times a day. I have various medals (producing a handful). If anyone gives me another prayer to say or medal to carry I shall yell.” We think he ought to have yelled anyway.

Quite recently the *Church Times* gently admonished some of its correspondents for believing that our victories in the war sphere was God’s answer to the Day of National Prayer. The *Church Times* actually says it is “bordering on superstition.” Now we like that “bordering on superstition.” It is so Christian, so Britishly Christian. If expecting “God” to interfere—not to prevent the war, not even from the moment war begins, but only when we, his favourite people are in a corner, is not superstition, what is? And if to return thanks to God for saving some of his favourites—the British and some of their Allies—and then allowing other troubles to come to our armed forces, if this is not superstition, what is?

Just look at it! God, says the devout Christian, helped us to take a large part of Libya, and also helped the Greeks to take a large part of Albania. “There,” sez he, “that should please him,” and he “listens-in” to the British songs of praise for his goodness, and power, and good taste in helping us. But then he turns round and permits, or helps the Germans to regain part of Libya, and to restore to Italy a part of Albania. In between he permits the German planes to bomb London and to wipe out hundreds of places of worship in England devoted to him. What can one do with a God who acts in this casual and incalculable manner? The good Christian replies that He knows best, we can only ask that His will shall prevail. But that is sheer impudence. It is saying to God, “We suggest what you ought to do, but we expect you will do as you please anyway.” In that case, why pray?

Now will the *Church Times* be good enough to answer a plain question? Does it really believe, and will it give the evidence for its belief that (apart from the influence of

auto-suggestion, indicated by the belief that God will help) God had anything to do with either our victories or our defeats? Christians do not blame God for our defeats, but by thanking him when we have a victory they are, by implication, blaming him for our set-backs. We like fair play, and we do not think it just to accuse God of anything. A God nowadays has enough to do to live, without expecting him to take a hand in a world-war. Let us be fair, even to gods.

The Catholic heads of the Vichy Government seem to be in a state of confusion about teaching their religion. It appears now that religion *must* be taught to children, but not in the State schools. It has to be taught by religious and not lay teachers outside the school buildings. In other words it looks as if the Government does not want religion in the State schools at all, or to pay for it to be taught there. This appears to us to be very near Secular Education as advocated here—only we are opposed to compulsory religious education at any time. The people who want religion taught to their children should pay for it outside school hours, and we claim this to be the only satisfactory solution of the problem as it would leave to parents the responsibility of religious education. It is a pity that this solution does not appeal—yet—to the present French Government.

A new book has just been published on Pope Alexander VI, one of the wickedest of many similar Popes, with the object of doing a little whitewashing. The author, Orestes Ferrara, curiously enough, is not a Catholic, we are told, but a Freethinker, and he writes as an ordinary historian. The work comes as great relief to at least one Catholic reviewer, who declares that “really no one could be quite as black as Alexander VI has been painted.” We have an idea that enough will be left of the “blackness” to overcome in that way many other historical figures, whose records still shock even hardened sinners. In any case, that such a man as Alexander could have been God’s Viceroy on earth, and in direct succession to Peter, ought to be enough to make even such a criminal lunatic as Hitler gasp. And there are many Popes whose record can never be white-washed.

Mr. Philip Ashton, Secretary of the Manchester and District Congregational Board (what a mouthful) writes to the *Manchester Guardian* that his society was perturbed at the information that as a result of the opening on Sundays of Cinemas it was found that no fewer than thirty of the Sunday School scholars on their books were absent from school. He asks therefore “that action, national or local should be taken to restrict attendance at cinemas on Sundays to adults.” The impudence of it! There is not a complaint that the pictures were indecent or in any way unfit for children. There is no complaint from the parents. Presumably the parents gave them the entrance-money, or they may have taken the children with them. The real offence is that they—the children and their parents, preferred the cinema to the Sunday School. The taste of the children was excellent, but the trade of the Sunday schools fell off. So Mr. Ashton calls for local, even national, action to prevent interference with his business. Oh, the cheek of it! That is the whole objection to Sunday performances. They interfere with the Churches. And we are fighting for liberty? But not where religion is concerned.

TO THE MEN OF THE FORCES

ALL men joining any branch of the military, naval or air services, and who have no definitely religious belief, have the legal right to register as Atheist, Agnostic, Freethinker, or Rationalist, without giving any explanation whatsoever. If they are already registered under some religious heading they have the legal right to apply for a suitable alteration. If difficulties are put in the way of their avowal being registered as requested, appeal should be made to the superior officer. The armed forces will be the better for men placing a value upon intellectual integrity.

Should difficulties be experienced, or the right to be registered as desired refused, a man joining any branch of the services is justified in refusing to sign what to him is a false declaration, and information should be forwarded to the General Secretary, National Secular Society, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

"FREETHINKER" WAR DAMAGE FUND.—H. Johnston (Durban), 5s. 6d.; J. Carpenter, 5s.; Mrs. Wood, 5s.; W. Perry, £1.

THE General Secretary N.S.S. acknowledges a donation of 3s. 6d. from C.S. as a donation to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

F. WARBURTON.—It is the usual Christian-bred impudence. Will note it.

E. HEMMINGTON.—Some of the last issue was set up before the raid, which for the time put our machine out of action. Some of the rest was set up by another firm. The corrections had to be made at another press. Hence the variety of types. But the paper was produced, and nothing else mattered.

H. JOHNSTON.—Thanks for order and book despatched. Your kind wishes are heartily reciprocated.

R. TRASK.—Obliged for cuttings. Next week.

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

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THE DIVINITY OF A KING

"What is the divine King to us?" exclaims the Youth Movement, "what have we to do with ancient superstitions? Our eyes are on the future. The last vestiges of Divine Kingship were wiped out by the Great War." Were they? In 1933 I read of thanks being rendered to God and his instrument Adolf Hitler (Just as the Roman Catholic considers the Pope infallible in all matters concerning religion and morals, so do we National Socialists believe with the same inner conviction that for us the Leader is in all matters concerning the national and social interests of the people simply infallible. . . . For we love Adolf Hitler because we believe deeply and unswervingly that God has sent him to us to save Germany—H. Goering, in Germany Reborn, London, 1934). A second instrument of God in the city of the Pope is scarcely possible, but the Fascist State claims infallibility, which is the substance of this new divine kingship. Austria is far enough removed from the Holy City to be free from rivalry. It has recently discarded a democratic Republic whose Right proceeded from the people, in favour of a right that proceeded from God Almighty. Moscow has abolished, but the change is not so great as it may seem; for the philosophers have long reduced God to an Idea and the Idea is still there, the final Immutable Truth expressed the infallible State.

So far from having done with divine kingship, we seem to be returning to it in a more virulent form. It is a harmless doctrine that God is life, and the King is the repository of that life. There are obvious dangers to a doctrine that God is infallibility, and that the chief gunman is the mouthpiece of that infallibility.

A. M. HOCART, *Kings and Councillors*, pp. 99-100.

Greece

"THE Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece,
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
When Rome's aggression broke thy peace,
To arms a warlike people sprung—
The fasces never shall be set
Where Socrates and Plato met.

Old tales of deeds, repeated yet,
Tell of the fields their fathers won.
What son of Hellas can forget
The story of her Marathon?
And we shall remembered be
The narrow pass, Thermopylae.

On "Sea-borne Salamis" the wave
Breaks, where once rode the Persian Fleet,
And Xenophon's Ten Thousand gave
A grandeur even to retreat—
The "Glory that was Greece" shall be
The portent of her victory.

EDGAR SYERS

Sugar Plums

Last week's issue was produced under great difficulties, and at the last, due to circumstances over which we had no control whatever. The copy was set in one place, the corrections made in another. Hence the different types. The distribution was delayed, in some cases for a whole day. The last raids left part of the city without gas, and much printing machinery was unusable. By the time this issue is in the hands of readers we hope that conditions will again be normal. All these interruptions involve a further increase in expenditure, but that, thanks to the ready generosity of our friends, gives us the least concern. But we *do* have some anxious hours now and again as to whether we shall get the paper out to time. We need add only that we have taken all reasonable steps to make this likely.

Volumes of the *Freethinker*, for 1940, strongly bound in cloth are now ready. We have been running through it, trying to preserve as unprejudiced a mind as far as is possible. And we feel prouder of the *Freethinker* than ever. We do not know a periodical in this country that retains so high a level, which gives the same ease of reading with so much valuable thinking, and is so independent in the expression of opinion. Even the paragraphs, however lightly written, are usually solid in their substance. If anyone will compare the paragraphs in this journal, week after week, with the alleged witty columns in other journals they will see what we mean. We may sum up all in saying that the *Freethinker* is a paper to keep for reference and for re-reading. There are but a limited number of the bound volumes available. The price is 17s. 6d. plus 1s. postage.

Readers will find capital value for their fifteen pence in the last addition to the "Thinkers Library," *The Myth of the Mind*, by Frank Kenyon. It is an uncompromising essay in materialism. Even the little differences that may arise in a reader's mind, will be found to be more a complaint at the form of expression rather than in matter. We are pleased to see a well-sustained protest against those who try to give a theistic twist to the indispensable theory of emergent evolution. We should like to see more books from the pen of Mr. Kenyon.

Another work more ambitious in its scope, which contains much good, even excellent, material, but is marred by one or two features, is *Life Magnificent*, by Henry Atkinson (Watts and Co., 7s. 6d.). In some respects Mr. Atkinson gives his readers a serviceable and interesting sketch of the scientific conception of man and of the evolution of the universe. But it is marred by a theory of "intelligence" as an independent force dating from the earliest condition of things. This we feel would have been avoided had the author shown a better acquaintance with the functions of the categories in science, and also of the scientific and philosophic importance of the theory of emergence. The assumption that intelligence is a primary quality of existence is meaningless and useless. Intelligence whenever it occurs is a function of an organism, and to treat it as anything else is to confuse those who are not sufficiently on their guard. If Mr. Atkinson will examine the situation from another angle he will find that the origin of intelligence presents exactly the same features, and is of the same nature as the origin of anything new in the chemical, biological and mental series. There is also a curious opposition to "Determinism," shown by the author when he is dealing with human nature. The sentence "Determinism has no choice" is an indication of this. Choice is actually essential to a right conception of Determinism. But we fancy it is the remnants of the author's theism that is responsible for what we have taken exception to. The informed reader will just smile and pass on to the more interesting section of Mr. Atkinson's work.

Freedom and Power

Whoso upon himselfe will take the skill
True justice unto people to divide,
Had need have mightie hands for to fulfil
That which he doth with righteous doome decide.
And for to maister wrong and puissant pride:
For vaine it is to deeme of things aright,
And makes wronge doers iustice to deride,
Unlesse it be performed with dreadlesse might:
For powre is the right hand of iustice truly height.

Spenser "Faerie Queene."

"MAN is born free and everywhere he is in chains. Many a one believes himself the master of others, and yet he is a greater slave than they. How has this change come about? I do not know. What can render it legitimate? I believe that I can settle this question." . . . So Rousseau opens his treatise of the "Contrat Sociale," and in order to answer his question adduces a theory of the origin of Government—that of an original compact by which man surrendered his natural freedom and independence for a protective association. This somehow has failed to work and must be modified under other more or less contradictory interpretations which he develops in his argument. Ideas that influenced the Jacobins of the Revolution.

The knowledge of his time was largely a blank on social origins. Hence the field could be filled by fanciful speculation; from which more sober thinkers like Locke were not immune. It is only in recent years that it has been surveyed and is still imperfect. In this light, so far from man being "born free," etc., from his earliest days, the nature of his needs and surroundings, the perils that compassed him about some form of association with his fellows however limited would be imposed by necessity; of which "the family" might provide a nucleus expanding into the gens or tribe. This would carry regulations obligatory on all its members, later closely connected with tribal beliefs. The line of development of human consociation as it expanded into large aggregations under the pressure of arbitrary authority, superstition and force, was indicated in a previous survey; factors persisting into the modern age.¹

Liberty, freedom as a basic principle of order is almost unknown until comparatively recent times. This is shown indirectly in the "Oxford Dictionary," which devotes several pages to the wide and varied meaning attaching to the use of these terms. In their political or intellectual sense its definitions are largely negative. To take a few illustrations, Liberty, the more abstract concept, is the condition of being able to act in any way desirable without interference or restraint; the faculty or power to do as one likes. Freedom is its concrete interpretation in modes of action or forms of thought and legality. Free—not in bondage to another, enjoying personal rights and liberty of action as a member of a society or State, enjoying civil and religious liberty, existing under a Government which is not arbitrary or despotic, and does not encroach upon individual rights; not subject to foreign dominion; noble, honourable, allowed or permitted to do something, also permitted by one's conscience—feeling it right to do something, or think something; the power of self-determination attributed to the will, readiness to act and easy facility of action . . . boldness and vigour of conception and execution.

Most of these phrases suggest relief or emancipation from oppressive factors set in old combinations. The last cited implies a more positive concept—presence of opportunity justly recognized. And opportunity is the keynote of Liberty—dy-

¹ *Freethought and Illusion.*

namically interpreted. . . . A Libertarian doctrine in theory and practice has emerged into being during the last two or three centuries of Western experience, springing from diverse sources, empirical effort, armed struggle, conscious intellect, little co-ordinated into a component whole. In its completer aspect it enshrines an original Life Conception in direct antithesis to obscurantist tenets. Here then we may indicate, as a personal contribution to its exposition, what this conception may be taken to include.

This presents two main aspects; one personal, the other communal. Individually it implies self-ownership or independence in the expression of personality. As a basis it posits the mens sano in corpore sano; healthy nurture as the means to all else, adequate physical and mental preparation for action and the duties of adult life. Pursuit of whatever interests, tastes, beliefs, accord with one's idiosyncrasy. . . . Self-determination links with community—a measure of control over the circumstances of destiny. This involves the form of polity under which the State, as such, carries on. It consists with active citizenship, responsible representative institutions, local or national, normally elected on a popular franchise; much as the managing committee of a private association is elected by its members. So come open canvassing and discussion of policy and acts of administration—the development of agencies fulfilling this purpose.

And as the foundation of sound conduct is Knowledge (=Science), unfettered pursuit of Knowledge, of critical investigation and exposition of cosmic and phenomenal interests and traditional beliefs herein, is an essential phase of a Libertarian Culture. Which further implies complete detachment of the things of spiritual and intellectual life from any official connexion with or control by State Government, and the modes and associations, religious, philosophic, educational, æsthetic, literary, scientific through which it functions. That would not exclude, of course, endowment of research or any special interest. Yet this is the sine qua non of free thought in the free state; a principle which admits of no compromise as a complete repudiation of the old regime.² It equally impugns each contemporary barbaric reversion to Authoritarian countenance of some State-dogma; be it economic, philosophic, or racial; be it red, black, brown, yellow. . . . It pertains to eternal verity.

Beyond institutional considerations, is the part to be played by personal character in the interpretation of Liberty through conduct harmonious with its spirit. Qualities of will, probity, courage, resolution, faculty to combine individual initiative with co-operation for the commonweal. Together with the factors indicated above, this must ensue in a general liberation of power and suffused energy rising to the maximum of common achievement and ascendant Life.

This status is challenged by its enemies as ending in a diffusion of aims and policy in comparison with the disciplined purpose and organization of the robot nation under its (self-selected) leaders. A contention which suggests further as-

² The existing Anglican connection is an archaic survival from the Reformation. The Nonconformist attitude to the Establishment has weakened with the redress of their old grievances: and the indifference of the outside public—the majority, to sectarian concerns allows of its continuance, which it takes every care to exploit. Yet its position is incongruous, in more ways than one, in face of the great activity of scientific and humanist interests, led by numerous associations, which represents the real cultural life of the nation to-day. Candid Churchmen who realize these things would welcome independence.

sociations of our doctrine. For "power" is the one thing esteemed among unregenerate mankind.

AUSTEN VERNEY

(To be continued)

The Lion and the Unicorn

THE conflicting questions of War Aims have in recent months attracted the pens of many able writers, and the kind of world which we may hope to see when the war is over has been discussed almost ad nauseam. It is to be doubted, however, whether of all the many books, pamphlets, and papers on this most urgent topic, there has been anything better of its kind than Mr. George Orwell's "The Lion and the Unicorn" (Seeker and Warburg; 2s.).

Those not already familiar with Mr. Orwell's name need only be reminded that he wrote in "Down and Out in London and Paris," and "The Road to Wigan Pier," two of the finest exposures of the economic contradictions that seem to be inherent in our Christian-capitalist civilization. Now he has become even more directly political than before, with the result that he has produced a book as fascinating to read as a detective story, but with an intrinsic interest such as no work of fiction could hope to possess.

In essence, the book is an analysis of what is sometimes loosely called "the British character"—in other words, that mixture of environment and heredity which gives us what we recognize as most characteristic of Britain. Mr. Orwell analyses these things cleverly and acutely, proving beyond a peradventure that such matters are not, as is sometimes blithely assumed, the prerogative of the "upper classes," but the mental property of the people as a whole. As a result the book becomes to some extent a plea for Socialism, but it is not a party form of Socialism. Indeed, Mr. Orwell is, if possible, more severe in his criticism of what he conceives to be the mistakes of the Left Wing than of the Right, as a result anyone who wishes to make the future better than the past could spend an hour or two in reading it with very real profit. In fact, Mr. Orwell, though highly controversial both in his selection of topics and in his discussion of them, has much to say that will give pleasure to political thinkers of all schools—and this, not by being all things to all men, in the approved manner of politicians, but rather by criticizing the weak points of all sides.

It is not easy, in the middle of such nerve-shattering events as those through which we are now passing, to maintain one's balance and to continue on one's way mentally unperturbed. Such sane and friendly critics as Mr. Orwell serve to assist in the worthy cause of mental enlightenment, and for that reason, if for no other, deserve to be read by all Freethinkers.

S.H.

James and his Epistle

(Continued from page 201)

THESE allusions show that the phrase was in use among the early Christians; but they may have got it from "Wisdom" (iv. 2; v. 16) where in the last instance it is called "a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand." James might have got it independently from the same source, as his work echoes "Wisdom" in other parts, four or five times. In this case "the Lord," meaning "the Lord God" is, perhaps, the missing word in question.

Everyone of the ancient philosophers who believed in the existence of a Deity would have warmly supported James in his defence of the divine honour:—

Goodness and being in the Gods are one,
He that makes them evil, makes them none.

Where would be the goodness of a God whom we had to beg not to bring us into temptation? A most interesting problem here arises. If James were a Christian, how did he dare to condemn the Paternoster, alleged to be Christ's own composition, and certainly the oldest piece of ritual used by the Church? Was this prayer an invention attributed to Christ after his death, and was James seeking to attack its authenticity? There is no doubt that Christian tradition was a long while in getting fixed, and that the Gospels report conflicting traditions about what Christ was believed to have done and said. The time and place, where and when the Paternoster was first taught, the number of its clauses, and even its very wording, differ in the two accounts of its institution. Revisions of the text have caused the rejection of matter formerly considered as part of it. Some scholars think that it is compiled from old Jewish prayers. If this opinion is correct, and if the Paternoster were in existence at his day, James might have found the objectionable clause in one of the aforesaid prayers, before ever Jesus was credited with it. In this case there is nothing in his remarks to disparage Jesus, whilst if he tried to prevent the petition from being imputed to him, he was actually doing him a great service. On either of these suppositions James may quite conceivably have been a Christian.

Besides this contradiction between the teaching of Jesus and that of James, there is a doctrinal difference no less striking between Paul and James. Here, the point at issue regards the means whereby sinners become justified in the sight of God. Paul declares that:—

A man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law (Romans iii. 28). To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. (Ib. iv. 5 and 3.)

Moreover, in Romans (iv. 12). Paul refers to the above faith as, "that faith of our father Abraham," and later on in the same chapter he affirms Abraham to have displayed this faith by crediting the promise of God that he should beget a son, although he was old and his wife was passed the age of child-bearing.

Here the son referred to is Isaac. Also in his Galatians Paul mentions Abraham's justification by faith, and adds that "they which be of faith, the same are the sons of Abraham" (iii. 67). But James in his Epistle (ii. 14-26) asks, "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? can that faith save him?" He instances neglect of charity to the poor, and then, assuming that the neglecter professes belief in God, he replies:—

The devils also believe and shudder. But wilt thou know, vain man, that faith apart from works is

Luther directed a vigorous attack upon the Archbishop of Mayence, brother of the Elector of Brandenburg. This church dignitary, in need of money, had again set up the traffic with indulgences in the city of Halle, establishing a great shrine of relics, and inviting all to visit the same. He had collected a multitude of glorious relics, about nine thousand in number. Among these were remains of saints, a portion of the body of Isaac, remnants of manna, pieces of Moses' burning bush, jugs from the marriage at Cana, some of the wine which Christ made of water on that occasion, thorns from Jesus' martyr crown, one of the stones with which Stephen was killed, and many other glorious relics. Against all this abomination, Luther wrote a treatise entitled *Against the Idol of Halle*, and sent it to Wittenburg for publication.—Rein's "Luther."

barren? Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac, his son, upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works faith was made perfect. . . . Ye see that by works a man is justified and not only by faith.

The subject treated in the above extracts was of the highest importance to Paul, whose cardinal doctrine is that Christ through his sacrificial death procured complete justification for all those who by faith accept this sacrifice. Hence, although James never mentions Christ in this connexion, yet, nevertheless, his view of the relation between faith and works would, if valid, undermine the distinctive article of Paul's creed. For, if the efficacy of faith has to be assisted by works, then, believers in Christ's atonement on their behalf have to complement it by their own good deeds; and most certainly this complementary performance would destroy that all-sufficiency of Christ perfect accomplishment which Paul so fervently believed. Before going further, I should note that James includes the harlot Rahab as one who, like Abraham, was justified by works; and that Hebrews, which if not by Paul comes from a member of his party, makes the same inclusion. On considering the above extracts, it appears impossible to admit the mutual independency of the two writers. This, however, does not mean that the replier, whichever he were, had read the other's written account of his teaching, for he might have heard him teach or have got a report of his opinions. Taking into account the industry of Paul in preaching his doctrine of justification and in writing about it, I cannot think that these elaborate efforts were occasioned by his perusal of the brief and casual exposition of the opposite views occurring in the Jacobian Epistle, which, on the other hand without naming him, seems to be a pointed negation of his judgment upon the matter now under discussion.

In his Galatians, Paul gives some reminiscences which may serve to enlighten this obscure subject. Over three years after his conversion, he went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, [alias Peter] with whom he tarried fifteen days, seeing no other apostle "save James, the Lord's brother." The phrase rendered "save" may also be rendered "but only." The first rendering includes James among the apostles, whilst the second excludes him from their number. At the end of fourteen years, dated, either from this visit or from his conversion, he returned to Jerusalem, where he then conferred with James, Cephas, and John, reputed "pillars" of the Church, on matters concerning his mission to the Gentiles. The three "pillars" gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and his companion, Barnabas, and agreed for them to deal with the Gentiles, whilst they themselves kept on dealing with the Jews. Paul and Barnabas then retired to Antioch, where Cephas subsequently arrived. At first he displayed no reluctance to eat with the Gentiles; but, later on abandoned the practice, being in fear of persons who had come from James. This conduct excited the anger of Paul, and he rated Peter soundly for his dissimulation, saying, among other things to the same effect, "We believed on Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law: because by works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (ii. 16). There cannot be any doubt but that when Peter got back to Jerusalem he told James what Paul had said to him, and what sort of instruction Paul was giving to his Gentile converts. The letter here quoted was written by Paul to the Galatians several years later than the above incident, and his reason for composing it was that someone had been among them trying to undermine his teaching. Acts

(xxi. 18), declares that when Paul came to Jerusalem for the last time, he called upon James and the elders who persuaded him to practise a piece of legalistic conformity for the purpose of appeasing the scruples of the many Jews who professed Christianity. As such conduct would have been utterly at variance with Paul's character as well as completely destructive of his life's work, there is good reason for rejecting the painful story. Even in that case its invention supplies further evidence of the discord which existed between Paul and the earlier apostles. This is clearly traceable in his epistles, and in extracanonical works of the primitive Church; whilst the repeated but unavailing efforts made by the author of Acts to disguise it, renders its presence all the more conspicuous.

C. CLAYTON DOVE

(To be concluded)

P.E.—On page 200, col. 2, line 14, for "assures" read "accesses"; page 201, col. 1, last line but one, for "and on" read "whilst on."

Denunciation

SANDY: "Your deenoociation o' the wark o' the Almighty, in the Auld Beuch, an' the doctrine o' an Eternal Hell in the New Ane, Donal, may be pairfectly true, but ye must admeet that the Lord God Almighty is obleeged tae dae mony things in his official capacity that he wad scorn tae dae as a private indeeveedual."

Robertson of Brighton (the Rev. F. W. Robertson, 1816-1853), a Churchman, was a remarkable clergyman, who tried to speak the truth in his "offeeshal capaicity"!

In taste, disposition, culture, manners, he was almost perfect. He radiated sweetness and light.

His lectures, addresses, and sermons, all of them repay reading; Wordsworth and Tennyson, particularly his analysis of "In Memoriam," are dealt with in lectures; and his sermons show an insight into, and fine defence of Christian truths, that has rarely been equalled. But he allowed his fitful Christian light to blind him. He failed to find a material redeemer, and his devotion to truth shortened his life.

The cause of Brighton working men, their library, and institute, he worked for and made his own.

One of the many lectures delivered there, "on the question of the introduction of sceptical publications into the library of the Brighton Working Men's Institute," should prove of some interest to readers.

A few quotations taken from this lecture will serve to indicate what manner of man he was:—

Anathemas, whether thundered from church courts, from pulpits, or from platforms, are foolish and impotent. . . .

Cowards Castle is that pulpit or that platform from which a man, surrounded by his friends, in the absence of his opponent, secure of applause and safe from a reply, denounces those who differ from him. . . . All topics are the fit subjects of free inquiry; but all are not the fit subjects of public discussion. . . .

Infidelity is often only the unmeaning accusation brought by timid persons, half conscious of the instability of their own belief, and furious against every one whose words make them tremble at their own insecurity. . . .

When the most spiritual minds of the sixteenth century protested against Rome, Protestantism was called infidelity. Eighteen centuries ago, the Christians were burned at the stake under the name of Atheist. Only a few weeks ago, I saw one of the most precious works of one of the wisest of the Christian philosophers of England—Samuel Taylor

Coleridge—denounced as the most pestilential work of our day, by one of those miserable publications, mis-called religious newspapers, whose unhallowed work it seems to be on earth to point out to its votaries whom they ought to suspect instead of whom they ought to love, and to sow the seeds of dissension, malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness.

... that which professes to be infidelity, is disbelief, not of God, but of the character which men have given of God; opposition to the name of Christ, but not to the spirit of Christ; hatred rather of the portrait by which His followers have represented Him. I believe we should never forget, that if infidelity be rife in this country, we who profess to be the servants of God have much to answer for. Our bitterness and superstition, and rancour, have been the representations of the spirit of Christianity from which men have recoiled. Dare we brand infidelity with hard names, as if we were guiltless? . . .

... In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Christianity itself had become form and magic, the result was the polished infidelity of the Papal Court of the tenth Leo. When Puritanism of words for a Pharisaism of ceremonies, regulated the simplicities of human life by a rigorous proscription of all free-hearted mirth, and even restricted the dishes on the table to a religious number, the reaction was the light, sceptical licentiousness of the reign of Charles II. It is a fact worthy of deep pondering, to me a singularly startling one, that at the moment when we the priests of England, were debating as a matter of life and death, the precise amount of miracle said to be performed in a Christian sacrament, and excommunicating one another with reciprocated charges of heresy, the working men of this country, who are not to be put off with transcendental hypotheses, and mysterious phraseology, on whom the burdens of this existence press as full realities, were actually debating in their societies . . . a far more awful question, whether there be indeed a God or not. It might suggest to one who thinks, a question not altogether calming in these days, what connection there is between these two things.

Unable to furnish us with any proofs of the existence of God he falls back upon "the grand, simple land-marks of morality," and assures us that "Only to him in whom infinite aspirations stir, can an Infinite One be proved."

Drops of compassion, tremble on our eyelids, ready to fall as soon as he has told his pitiful story, but, after telling working men that their library should be filled with books meeting the wishes of all, and be disagreeable to none, that medical, theological, and chemistry students must find their books elsewhere (infidels included!) To supply individuals with such books will wreck the institution. "For example, take the books referred to . . . or, if there be a taste for infidelity, it is their bounden duty to furnish the works of Tom Paine; or, if a man descends in taste, to a lower depth still, if he can revel in the "Mysteries of London," it is the bounden duty of the Committee to furnish books of that character. Admit that principle and your society is shattered into fragments."

Story, God bless him! he had none to tell sir! Paine was denounced by millions of men, but he was profitably read by a few men that mattered, of whom Robertson was not one. He had laughed over Channing's "Needy Knife Grinder," that was evidently all he knew of Paine. Only that and nothing more! He supplies endless proofs.

Later he asks members of the Institute, "how comes it that the language of your publications now is so immeasurably inferior in moral tone?" The objects of the institution, according to one of the rules, are to provide means for the moral and intellectual improvement of its members.

He advised them, therefore, "to reject pre-eminently these infidel publications."

It will be said that without wide study much

will be lost, that restricted studies tell against inquiry and education, "I can only say that it proves we want more education. If I want a proof of that, I should find it in this—that the working men of Brighton have not yet got beyond Tom Paine."

And his last pronouncement contains absolute proof that he never had read Paine. He was too much of a man not to have noticed his brother's superiority. In 1850 he delivered this address, nearly 100 years ago, and the working men of Brighton are still far below Paine's mental stature.

With most of the above he would have agreed and probably quoted from his favourite prophet—Isaiah—"we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." The clay feet of our early idols when we first catch sight of them, give us aching hearts. Later, we learn that idolatry is a heartless thing, even if its images have interesting feet!

GEORGE WALLACE

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

THE WATCH STORY

SIR,—Some weeks ago you made reference in the *Freethinker* to the revival in a Catholic contemporary of the hoary old legend that Charles Bradlaugh, at a public meeting, had once pulled out his watch and challenged God to strike him dead in five minutes.

Shortly afterwards I called attention in your columns to the fact that in his book *Sawdust Caesar*, George Seldes had laid precisely the same charge against Mussolini.

A few years ago Messrs. Cassell published a book, *Great Contemporaries*. It is a collection of short biographies by various writers, and amongst them is one of Bernard Shaw by James Bridie.

After describing Shaw's message as essentially a religious one "for Mr. Shaw is essentially a religious man," the writer continues, "If the description seems odd to the old lady who recently tore her copy of the *Black Girl* to pieces before her bookseller's eyes, or the people who recall with horror how Mr. Shaw once took out his watch on a public platform and challenged the Almighty to strike him dead within two minutes, I cannot help it." (p. 394.) Bradlaugh, Mussolini, and now Shaw.

Perhaps I should add that both these instances were encountered entirely by chance, and not in any attempt to discover how the original story arose.

GEO. E. BRIDDON

FREETHINKERS AND CHURCH PARADE

SIR,—I was interested and amused by a recent letter from "S.W." in your current issue regarding Freethinkers and Church Parade, as I had a similar experience three weeks ago. I marched to the church, and on arriving at the door, of course, I stepped from the ranks. The officer in charge of the parade asked me what I was doing, and on my telling him, he sent me to sit in the Colonel's car until they came out. This I did, spending a very pleasant and instructive hour reading the *Freethinker*. I sincerely hope that "S.W.'s" and my own experience will encourage the timid ones to stand up for their rights. After all, it does not take a terrific amount of courage to do it, and it helps the cause so much.

H.S.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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