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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Continued from page 62)

God and Man

THE story of creation, as given in the Christian Bible, has its rivals. In addition to the parallels already given there is that concerning the creation of light. The Bible God had made the world, and with it the light and darkness. But it appears from the first chapter of *Genesis* that light and darkness had got mixed. So God definitely and peremptorily separated the two, and then found that the light "was good." How did this story get into the Bible? The reply is that it forms a part of many primitive religions. The native Australians have it that all was darkness, but an emu's egg was placed in the sky and became the sun. The American Red Indians have a similar story. The Iranians tell us that the God Ahura "Well working, created both light and darkness." The Bible romps in with God saying "I form the light and create the darkness." In the Babylonian mythology there are two Gods, Marduck the god of light and Tiamat the god of darkness. Egyptian, Persian and Indian mythologies give us similar information. With all of them light and darkness are considered as entities. The Bible account is evidence of this, so far as the Jews are concerned.

Of the whole case, the "New Commentary of the Scriptures"—one of the most authoritative works of recent years—contrasting these creation stories, says definitely that the story is practically the same in the mythologies cited. "There is the same primeval chaos of waters and darkness. The creation of light is the first act . . . then follows the formation of the dry land . . . and finally the creation of man."

It took many generations of hard fighting to bring the Christian Churches to agree to the identity of these legends.

This series of notes is in reply to a question: "What is Christianity?" There are so many forms of Christianity, we declined the task of answering. But Christianity is an historic religion based upon the Bible. The clergy are crying: "Back to the Bible." We take them at their word, and give the essentials of Christianity as presented in the Bible.

But it is worth noting that while the more educated Christian leaders have in controversy given up the orthodox ghost, in their sermons they affirm the truth and the unique character of the Bible narrative. Worst of all, where the education of the young is concerned, the Bible is still treated as though the holy book remains unquestioned. In controversy, in the public press the truth may be admitted, but not in the Churches.

God's Image

The Bible tells us that God made man in his own image. Read that "Man made God in his own image" and we have an important psychological fact. That being granted, we can say gods are in the image of man, or man is in the image of God. If A is like B, then B is like A. Take away the human qualities of any God, and we have—nothing. Says the Bible, "God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." In this the Bible displays little originality for many other gods made many other people from dust and then brought the model to life by breathing down its nose. Any reliable modern work on anthropology will provide similar examples. Thus, the Babylonian God, Bell, made man by cutting off his own head, and other gods mixed the flowing blood with earth into a kind of paste. In ancient Egypt, a country swarming with gods of all colours and degrees of power, the father of the gods, Khnoumou, made man out of clay, using his potter's wheel as the fashioning instrument. In Greece, Prometheus is said to have made men out of clay. Some evidence is offered in favour of this by people who visited the manufacturing centre "Penepeus" (the equivalent of our Garden of Eden), and found a litter of boulders with a distinct smell of blood hanging around. Many centuries after this alleged event Sir James Frazer visited the place and actually found the boulders still there, although, as is to be expected, the smell of blood had died away. We feel sure that the B.B.C. Brains Trust would find this good evidence—so far as it goes. (It is a pity the smell was not bottled. It could have been placed with the bottle of holy blood the Church exhibits at Naples.) The Australian natives record that their God, Pond-Jel, cut three sheets of bark, placed upon them the forms of men, and then breathed through the nose the breath of life. There are scores of similar testimonies, and may be tendered as evidence in favour of the Genesiac story. There seems to be a keen competition among gods in this matter, but one must remember that every god has a strong appetite for praise. They live on it and disappear quickly when it is not forthcoming.

The creative work of the Bible God was not yet finished. God had made man and placed him in a garden. But Adam found no mate among the animals with which he was surrounded. And, as God said—it is the first really wise and intelligent statement he made—"It is not good

for man to be alone." In what direction did the remedy lie? All the "Nothing" had been used. To have said "Let there be Woman" would have placed Adam's mate on the level of the animals. Family pride would have resented it. So God cast Adam into a deep sleep (as the celebrated Dr. Simpson suggested many centuries later, this was probably the first recorded use of an anæsthetic for performing an operation), extracted a rib from his side, and made a woman. Up to the sixteenth century one meets with the belief that man had one rib less than woman.

But again we have to note the plagiaristic character of the Christian God. Turning to the indispensable Frazer, we find the Karens of Burma with the belief that woman was made from a rib of man. In Tahiti the God Taora took a bone from the side of man for the same purpose. Others of the Polynesian groups have a similar story. The Bedel Tartars have the same legend, but in their case it is a devil who creates the woman. There are numerous accounts of the kind concerning a clay man and the after manufacture of a woman. There is a really singular lack of originality among gods. A dislike of anything new is a very strong feature of the Christian God and his followers.

Let us look at the situation. Adam appears to have met the arrival of Eve without an exhibition of extravagant joy. God placed the pair in a garden specially prepared for them, and Adam appears to have been content to just loaf around. And would have done so, but for Eve. Not for the last time was woman to act as a spur to move man to deeds of derring-do. Eve appears to have had some ambition to "go places," to know and to see things. The Christian Church rewarded woman for her inspiring work by placing the "fall" of man to her credit.

God had told the pair that they might do as they pleased with the eatables in the garden, with one exception, they must not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam was content. But Eve had scraped acquaintance with one "Satan." According to Milton and some hints in The Revelation of St. John, Satan was once in heaven, but engineered a revolution, was beaten, and he and his followers were cast into hell, a place which was to become a famous rendezvous for a large proportion of the most brilliant men and women the human race has known. Satan induced Eve to disregard God's order and to eat the fruit. She not only did this, but persuaded Adam to eat also. God discovered the act of disobedience, drove them out of his pet estate, told the man that for the future he was to eat the herb of the field in sorrow and earn bread by the sweat of his brow—nice "cushy" Government jobs had not then been created. Moreover, Adam's descendants were also to suffer for ever the consequence of their ancestor's sin.

To the woman God was more savage than to the man. God told Eve:—

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

And all for the offence of eating of the tree of good and evil. Long, long after the happening of this orchard raiding, in the seventeenth century, objections to using an

anæsthetic during childbirth were raised by good Christians because it would mean removing the curse placed upon woman in the Garden of Eden.

We consider this story of the origin of woman completely objectionable. The Bible account reads as though God had no intention of creating woman. She comes upon the scene as an afterthought—a kind of side-issue, made from a bone, much as one might manufacture a brace-button or a knife handle. Her origin is insulting. It is completely undignified. But for the interference of Satan, Adam would have continued in the garden as a kind of easy-going, lazy, unintelligent edition of Mr. Middleton. The Biblical origin of woman is undignified, insulting. It is unbelievable that woman, unflinching in her fidelity, unapproachable in her varied activities, incalculable in her moods, and endless in her consolatory devices for man, should have originated as a mere afterthought.

As for Satan, the most abused of characters by the Christian Churches, what does not the world owe to him? The whole Christian creed originates with him. Take the devil out of Christianity and it collapses at once. For one that paid homage to Christ because of his alleged goodness there have always been fifty who are in Church from fear of hell and the devil. At the background of love of Jesus is the fear of eternal torment. Out of sheer gratitude the Christian Churches ought to combine to offer at least an annual act of homage to Satan. Without him the Christian record would have been damnably dull.

Mark Twain reminded the world that so far as Satan is concerned, his case has never been heard. We have the case of the Church against Satan, but we hear nothing of what might be said in his defence. He has been indicted before a court of prejudiced and corrupt judges; his guilt was decided before the trial began. - And yet what a defence might be set up on his behalf. Consider the charges that have been brought against Satan by this or that Church. If Eve had not listened to Satan there would have been no such thing as intellectual development. The attempt to displace the miracle cures of the Church by the medical science of the Mohammedan world was denounced as the work of Satan. When the Copernican astronomy came before the world it was rejected as the work of the devil. The art of printing met with the same charge. The rise of scientific geology was attributed to Satan. From the awakening of Europe in the thirteenth century until to-day, from Roger Bacon to Darwin, almost every advance was denounced as due to the plotting of the emissaries of Satan. The combined forces of the godites were massed against the theory of evolution. It was denounced as an attempt to turn God out of his own universe. When Robert Buchanan wrote his "Devil's Case" he did well to make Satan say:—

I'm the father of all science,
Master builder, stock improver,
First authority on drainage;
Most renowned in all the arts.

While the Priests have built their churches
To a God who does not heed them,
I have fashioned decent dwellings,
Public hospitals and baths.

Year by year, with God against me,
I for humankind have striven,
Winning patiently and slowly
Thro' a small minority.

Poor are all the Church's martyrs
By the side of mine, the Devil's.
Those have died for Filth and Falsehood,
These for Liberty and Light.

Mine the seers and mine the poets,
Stoned and slain in every nation.
Even those who most denied me
Learned thro' me to stand erect.

The greatest good that God conferred upon the human race was when he made woman and Satan. One can almost excuse his blundering on that account. Woman made life interesting and progressive.

(To be continued.)

CHAPMAN COHEN.

OSCAR WILDE'S FRIEND In Memoriam: R. H. Sherard

AN interesting friend of mine, Robert Harborough Sherard, has committed a fearful crime: the crime of dying.

To die in your own home may be a discretion or an indiscretion; to die in a hospital or nursing-home is the usual and proper thing; but to die in an English hotel or boarding-house is well known to be a crime difficult to palliate. It is bad for trade.

However, Robert was nothing if not courageous. It was a suburban boarding-house that this distinguished man of letters honoured by dying in it. His body was speedily removed to the undertakers, where I paid my friend the last visit—the only time I was unhappy to see him.

Poor Robert!
England owed him much—and paid him nothing! France, more discerning, gave him the Legion of Honour, which his courage and character well merited. If the Chevalier had been a soldier not of letters but of the barrack-square, his breast would have glittered with medals and a pension would have eased his last years. As everyone knows, heroes of the pen are not honoured in England; quite the reverse.

He was a convinced Freethinker of the Agnostic rather than the Atheistic variety, particularly contemptuous—with the bitter contempt that Jesus Christ showed—towards religious hypocrisy, and it is fitting that a tribute should be paid to him in "The Freethinker."

Two services that Robert Sherard rendered to humanity ought never to be forgotten—and probably posterity will not forget them. First: he befriended and sheltered Ernest Dowson, the hapless poet who wrote the immortal "Cynara" poem amongst other lovely little lyrics as fair and frail as snowdrops, when poor Dowson was in poverty, sickness and despair. Robert was the "friend himself in some difficulties" who took the dying poet to his own Catford cottage and "there generously looked after him for the last six weeks of his life."

Secondly: Robert was the devoted and disinterested friend of Oscar Wilde in good days and evil. He was the passionate defender of his reputation against all comers, after Wilde's death. With exact justice, Bernard Shaw—our reigning Pope of English letters—described Robert in relation to the Wilde story as "Don Quixote" in his 52-page reply to him in the preface to Frank Harris's fictional bowdlerised biography. That Shavian jibe certainly was the *mot juste*.

For not only was Robert the defender of his friends. In his day he was the champion of women nail-workers, the phosphorus workers, chain-makers, child-slaves and others of the economically disinherited of the late Victorian era, and his journalistic exposures of their plight did much to bring about better conditions. He was a personal friend of such French masters as Zola and Daudet and Maupassant; and, a fine French scholar, he did much to cement Anglo-French amity. As a journalist in Paris, New York and London, he was well-known in his prime; and though his pioneer work for oppressed women and children has been forgotten, even England's ingratitude cannot efface the fact that it was done.

When Robert died, all the London evening papers found to say of him was: "Robert Harborough Sherard, the great-grandson of Wordsworth, has died at Ealing, aged 81." The B.B.C. was longer but also extremely inadequate. Less could hardly have been said than "The Times" obituary.

His biographies of Oscar Wilde and Guy de Maupassant, first-hand works that every student of those writers finds indispensable, were not even appraised. His best work, "The Story of an Unhappy Friendship"—that moving little book—was not mentioned. This brochure is the quintessence of Sherard's warm heart and generous mind and a portrait of the author as well as its subject.

If Bernard Shaw's nickname painted Sherard accurately, so also did Oscar Wilde. Once when Robert and Oscar, as young men exploring the underworld of Paris, were attacked by roughs, Wilde, describing the incident, declared: "Robert was splendid: he defended me at the risk of MY life." (Shaw's verdict was similar but expressed more rhetorically, less tersely and less wittily.) Again, in the celebrated Wilde letter from prison (which Robert gave me long ago) Wilde adjured him: "Don't fight more than six duels a week. . . . Your fine, chivalrous friendship is worth more than all the money in the world." Robert, in fact, did fight duels in those days. He was the sort of man who, if he had been at the scene of the Woman Taken in Adultery, would have picked up "the first stone"—to throw it at her accusers, and follow it up by a handful. He cared ever for persons, never for causes. He was a knight-errant, without fear, but with plenty of reproach for the other side.

Sherard, a descendant of the Earls of Harborough, was at New College, Oxford, when Wilde was at Magdalen, but they did not meet until later in Paris when a Polish countess invited Sherard to dinner "to meet Mr. Oscar Wilde." Sherard was reluctant to accept, regarding Wilde as a mere *poseur*, but, meeting him, immediately fell under the spell of Wilde's fascinating conversation and personality. Together they explored literary and other haunts in Paris; together they experimented in poetry, Robert producing a slim volume entitled "Whispers"—of which a witty reviewer, possibly cribbing from his friend Oscar, wrote "These whispers will never make much noise in the world." In London, the two friends took rooms together in Charles Street, where they cultivated a little literature upon a great deal of living for pleasure. But the need of making a living finally broke the *ménage*: Oscar went to lecture in America and Robert into journalism and novel-writing in France.

When they next met, their friendship was less cordial, for Robert thought Oscar bloated with prosperity, and Oscar perhaps thought Robert vulgarised by journalism. But when Oscar's débâcle came Robert rushed to the aid both of Oscar in prison and Mrs. Wilde in debt and distress. He was the ambassador of Wilde to Sarah Bernhardt, and a letter of gratitude from Constance Wilde to him is extant. From then onward, to his own harm, Robert Sherard was, both during Wilde's life and after his death, his stout uncompromising defender.

All this story now belongs to literary history.

(Continued on page 80)

ACID DROPS

MR. A. A. MILNE'S article in "Time and Tide," in which he substantially threw overboard all forms of Christianity, seems to have disturbed some of our leading Christians. One of these is Canon Roger Lloyd, who, without really replying to Mr. Milne, very loudly proclaims his dissent from Mr. Milne's attitude. Naturally, the Canon is a dealer in religion and does not like to see the quality of his stock-in-trade questioned. But the Canon appears to take assertions of his own predilections as an equivalent to argument, if not evidence. He says he "must have a world that makes sense." That seems to turn things upside down. What we all have to do, if we wish to argue sanely, is to make sense of things; to make the world of to-day agree with a world that really ceased to exist several centuries ago is sheer folly. The world that "makes sense," he tells us, "must bring in the natural world, and the supernatural and spiritual world which I experience from time to time." The complete answer to this is that the Canon mistakes mere verbiage for reasoning. We agree that a sound theory of the world must fit in with the facts, but the Canon wants more than that. His world must fit in with all the foolish and childish ideas he has imbibed, or he dismisses it at once.

Finally, Canon Lloyd wants "from God the assurance that this life is not the end, for I can have no sort of belief in the nonsense about death being unimportant." Canon Roger Lloyd thinks he is playing the part of a religious dare-devil when, in plain language, he is playing the fool. For whoever we are, ultimately we are bound to deal with the world as we know it, not as we would have it be. If the Canon's belief arises out of the facts of experience he should be able to state these facts. But to say I will not accept what may be facts because they do not fit in with my fancies may be very good Christian reasoning, but to the ordinary intelligence it only serves to prove how much religion, and Christianity in particular, distorts one's power of judgment.

The "Church Times" in its Editorial Notes for the issue dated February 5 remarks that the Army chaplain's job is a difficult one. The reason for this is apparently that "the majority of his congregation would never come to church at all if they could help it." We have been saying this for many years, and it seems a very good reason for abolishing altogether compulsory church parades. One day we may treat soldiers as though they really are responsible human beings, and that they are not to be marched off to a religious service whether they wish to attend or not.

Meanwhile, the Roman Catholic "Universe" draws a very gloomy—religiously gloomy—picture of the state of affairs in the U.S.A. It says there are 20,000,000 Protestants and the same number of Roman Catholics in America. That leaves over 100,000,000 in the U.S.A. who are outside Christianity. Let us suppose the U.S.A. will still be claimed by the "Universe" as a Christian nation.

But the writer of the above information finally decides that "The American soul is thirsty for God and, being unable to find him, is led to Atheism." And that is one of the most remarkable statements we have ever read. Usually the alleged Atheist is miserable and gloomy, afraid to die and yet not wanting to live. That is how the Christian advocate pictures what he would feel like if he gave up believing in the existence while being convinced that he didn't exist. But a believer in God who falls back on Atheism because he cannot find him is really remarkable.

The world is full of things and sayings that are interesting, amusing and instructive, and not less so because things that are intended to be humorous are not humorous, the instructive often gives no instruction, and the interesting things are only interesting because they arouse a smile by their stupidity. Still, he who cannot learn something from a fool will not benefit even though he listens to a philosopher. Consider how much one may learn

from the fools of Shakespeare; or the warnings from a B.B.C. religious philosopher.

Apropos. The leader-writer of the "Manchester Evening News" earned his daily rations by depicting the terrible state in which Atheists find themselves, or to be correct the state in which Christians find him. The writer says:—

If there is no warm-hearted personal God behind the universe flowers are just flowers, iron is just iron, and stars are nothing but stars.

What else would the fellow have them be? If these things were not just wood and iron and flowers and stars, what would they be? Suppose iron sometimes behaved like flowers, stars like iron and wood like stars, what then? Life would be incalculable. Anything might be any other thing. All we can say is that if some writers did not sometimes write like fools they might often find themselves hard pressed to get a living.

The leader-writer reads that if we take the Atheist view we can have no romance. It almost looks as though the "Evening News" man is trying to pull some parsonic legs, for turning to a dictionary we find "Romance" is described "To invent fanciful stories, to tell highly coloured tales, to exaggerate, to embroider in one's accounts and descriptions of incidents and experiences," and a "Romancer" is "One who invents fanciful accounts and touches up and embroiders what he is told." We have no difficulty in believing that the man who wrote the leading article for February 6 is full of "romance." Certainly, one may learn something from a fool, even though the gleaner does not bring very much wisdom.

Some time ago there was much talk in the Roman Catholic papers about a Jewish refugee, one Werfel, an author, who wrote a book about Bernadette, of the Lourdes Grotto, and was so impressed that he had entered, or was about to enter, the Church. Werfel has now denied this report, although he thinks Roman Catholicism is "the purest power sent by God to this earth to fight the evil of materialism and Atheism." It was another really great German author, Heine, who characterised the Papal structure as "the great lying Church," and we fancy that his judgment will stand when Werfel has recovered from his hysterics.

We think it was another German who wrote the story of the Jew who went to Rome in the 16th century and, after a brief stay, entered the Church. He explained that he had joined the Church because he felt that for such a damnably bad thing to survive would require a God to keep it going. There was some wit in that story, but Werfel's outbreak looks like a cheap advertisement.

The present standing of Russia in this country is another illustration of the same point. It may safely be taken that the admiration that Russia has properly earned is due mostly for its tremendous fighting power. So far, so good. Russia has played a great part in the war, and but for her the outlook for Europe would be far different from what it is. But the war will pass, and what then? We shall need another standard of greatness and courage if the after-war world is to be better than the world we have at present. We should do well to accustom ourselves to the idea that Russia has shown itself great, not because of its capacity for war, but for the enormous change in the civic life of nearly 200 million—and in little more than a single generation. Grasp that fact, the malleability of human nature, the courage on a higher level and of more permanent benefit, and the world will have learned from Russia a lesson that might have been found in the history of many human groups, if we had been inclined to seek it. When a man dies the Chancellor of the Exchequer is concerned with "How much has he left?" The world should be concerned with "What has he left—good or ill?"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. POLDING.—Thanks. We are much obliged to our readers who send us items of local information. They are not useless even when not immediately used.

F. VINEY.—Naturally we do not think we are too hard on the Brains Trust. Keeping the mind of the public active concerning subjects that are neither of first-rate nor urgent importance is a very old method of guiding people off topics that are urgent and important. This was one of the charges Martin Luther brought against the Roman Church, and it was very pertinent.

J. H. EVANS.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the series. May consider reprinting. Handbook is being sent.

For distributing "The Freethinker": J. H. Evans, 18s. 6d.

"THE FREETHINKER" ENDOWMENT FUND.—North Staffordshire Branch N.S.S., 5s.

The General Secretary, N.S.S., acknowledges the receipt of £1 to the General Fund of the Society from Mrs. A. B. Cheetham in memory of her late husband, Leonard Cheetham.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

FEBRUARY 10 marked the centenary of the death of Richard Carlile, one of the greatest fighters for freedom of thought in the history of this country. It is to the disgrace of Englishmen that a man of the calibre of Carlile is ignored by most historians. Green, who stands well for having at least attempted a "History of the English People," says nothing about him; H. A. L. Fisher, in his huge "History of Europe," never mentions him; Benn, in his "History of English Rationalism," has no place for him; even J. M. Robertson, in his valuable "History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century," introduces him with the remark: "those who value obscure service to human freedom." That is certainly a curious thing from an Atheist of Robertson's learning, ability and standing, for there was no better known man of his time than Carlile. He kept the government and the authorities in a constant state of alarm, and no man was more hated and feared, or who gained more devoted friends among reformers than Richard Carlile. Mr. G. M. Trevelyan does Carlile no more than justice when he writes in his "British History of the Nineteenth Century" deliberately that Carlile "suffered and achieved more for the liberty of the Press than any other Englishman of the nineteenth century." That was written in 1922.

We were the more pleased to see in the "Evening Standard" for February 10 the place of honour given to a full column of eulogy to Carlile. The writer, presumably the editor, says:—

"We dip freedom's banner to salute one of freedom's grandest sons. Richard Carlile died one hundred years ago to-day. He was among those who defied Lord Sidmouth's gagging Acts, routed the Society for the Suppression of Vice,

which was the hated Common Informer of that time, and drove the Press censor out of Fleet Street. He was a noble fanatic for the right of free opinion."

We need merely say, now that Carlile died at the early age of 52. That was a result of his strenuous life and his over nine years in prison. A great deal of his own literary work was dictated from prison. He warned the authorities that while they might break him they could never bend him. And when Carlile threatened he performed, should the occasion arise. He might be broken, but nothing could bend this valiant West Countryman.

Nothing can take away from Carlile the credit for being in the front ranks of English fighters for freedom. He was an incitement to all who loved liberty. His rule for himself was a simple one, but comprehensive. It was: "Whatever the government says shall not be printed I will publish." He was as good as his word. Attack after attack was made on governments that feared the influence of the French Revolution, even more than later governments hated and feared the overthrow of Czardom in Russia. Liberty is a contagious thing, as all tyrants know. Paine's "Rights of Man" was outlawed by the government, but it was the secret bible of multitudes of men and women throughout the country. Then "The Age of Reason," a deistic attack on Christianity, was suppressed because of its "blasphemous" character. Carlile reprinted both, and from his shop in Fleet Street man after man went to prison for selling these prohibited works. How many men and women went to prison in the Carlile period has never been calculated; the figures would run into hundreds. Carlile fought tyranny in the only way in which it can successfully be fought—by defiance. That is a lesson that some of our respectable contemporary reformers should consider. Reformers should not go in for "careers," political or otherwise. A title or an office may be very attractive, but the reformer who accepts either hamstrings himself in the majority of cases.

There was one incident in the Carlile prosecutions that is worth noting. Carlile had been prosecuted for selling "The Age of Reason." He read the whole of the book right through in the course of his trial, in spite of the attempts of the judge to prevent him. As a result of his trial Carlile sold many thousands of "The Age of Reason," to say nothing of his other publications. The law was not powerful enough to stop a man of such giant courage. The two books are still widely read.

Carlile's devices for overcoming the difficulties were numerous, and he was backed by men of means as well as by the bravery and help that is usually forthcoming with the "common people" when they are bravely led and honestly dealt with. The fact is that devotion to principle, and sacrifice for principle, is commoner amongst the masses than it is with the wearers of the "old school tie." But it is the good qualities of the latter that are trumpeted, the mass of the others live unknown lives and lie in unknown graves. Their merits are embodied in the wider and better life they have helped to create, and they asked for no more.

Carlile's services to humanity were equalled by the example he set to others: to men like Hetherington, whose stubborn opposition to the newspaper tax led to its practical disappearance before the further action of Bradlaugh caused it to be wiped off the statute books. Two such men as Carlile and Hetherington was rather more than the Government could stand.

Want of space prevents our saying more concerning Carlile. But as we conclude these few lines the post brings us an excellent essay, "Richard Carlile," by G. D. H. Cole, with portrait and bibliography (price 1s.). Within its limited space of 38 pages Mr. Cole has turned out a good piece of work, and we commend it to our readers. But the receipt of this pamphlet calls for some hearty "cussing" on the burning of our offices in Farringdon Street, in which we lost about 1,500 volumes, a large part of which consisted of scarce Freethought writings by the better and less known heretical authors of the 18th and 19th centuries. They are irreplaceable. We still have the consolation of our home stock of trials, essays, etc., but we are too old and have too

little spare time to go book-hunting, although we should enjoy nothing better. We could smile at the time of the Farringdon Street fire and afterwards; we could smile at the loss of machinery and other things. But we still swear when we think of the loss of those many monuments of human courage and devotion to the well-being of mankind.

"The Times Literary Supplement" devoted an editorial page to Richard Carlile, marred by a few cheap sneers. We may have something to say on this next week.

One of the outstanding books for propaganda among Christians is our "Bible Handbook." It is now in its ninth edition, and the demand for it has increased. Many who have read it for the first time confess that they never knew what was in the Bible until they read the "Handbook." That is, of course, because comparatively few really read the Bible. What they read is a passage here and there. It is a most dangerous book to put in the hands of a Christian—if he reads it. The price of the book is 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

We wish to thank all who have given us copies of the questions sent in to the Brains Trust. Not one of them has been given the light of day. The extent of the deliberate lie told by one of the B.B.C. leaders to a South African correspondent is obvious. This was that questions concerning religion would be welcomed by the Brains Trust. A more barefaced falsehood it would be hard to match.

After the war we shall need the co-operation of all nations, "great and small." That expression "great and small" is a very common one, but it has a bad connotation. As it is used, it stands for little more than a measure of size, and the world has seen the evil of this. What is needed is to do away with this notion of size expressed in cash, or brute force, and substitute "little and big." We shall then have taken a step towards securing international co-operation, and once for all drop the idea, and even the feeling, that we can measure the greatness of a people by the territory they "own," the Navy they have, or the number of death-dealing planes they can put in the air. We need watch our words, for words are the preservers of thoughts.

The first annual meeting of members of the Radio Freedom League will be held in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, to-day (February 21) at 3 o'clock. The report to be presented to members will be a gratifying one. The League has secured support from all parts of the country and from all ranks of society. The League has but a single principle, that of securing freedom of speech in broadcasting. The radio is a tremendous weapon for either good or evil. It can only be for good so long and so far as the air is free to seriously conflicting opinions. But a Government and a religion-controlled radio is a direct threat to freedom and progress.

The Birmingham Branch N.S.S. will hold a members' meeting at the Key Book Shop, 115, Dale End, Birmingham (side door), on Sunday, February 21, at 3-30 p.m., to discuss future activities. Light refreshments will be available, and if members will make a point of attending, a pleasant and useful afternoon should result.

We have had many days of prayer for victory in the world war—most of them followed by a set-back. But it has now struck some of our religious leaders that we should address God directly through a day of prayer for Russia. But this appears to be rather risky. Russia happens to be the one godless party in this war. More than that, it is only the other day that our churches were praying to God to rescue his followers in Russia against the atheistic brutalities of the Russian Government. It is therefore risky to call God's attention to the fact that the world is filled with admiration for these godless people. The Russians are not asking for God's help, and we are certain that there is more guile in this Christian move than honest concern for Russia.

THE JEWISH QUESTION

(Continued from page 64)

HAD the Jew been content to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water; had he been content to fulfil menial tasks, there would be no anti-Semitism to-day. As civilisation advanced and as a greater number of ways of living was open to the Jew, he brought a keen, alert mind, sharpened by years of persecution, to bear upon finance. Of course, this did not apply to all Jews. Thousands of them are not in the least interested in amassing money but throw their undoubted skill and energy into science, medicine, music, art, literature, etc. And the world owes a deep debt of gratitude to these men, for they have given much to the world. It would take too long to list the scores and scores of really great men whom the Jews have contributed to civilisation.

Let us, however, take three: Paul Ehrlich, the discoverer of Salvarsan; Sigmund Freud, whose work had opened an epoch-making chapter in the story of human psychology; and Albert Einstein, the physicist. If these were the only men the Jews had contributed to humanity, their contribution would still be great.

Would any man of intelligence, having the choice of procuring a blood transfusion from the veins of a man like Ehrlich or some other Jewish scientist, prefer the blood of a syphilitic degenerate like Goering, a paranoic like Hitler, or an insane sadist like Goebbels, who are all—save the mark—"pure Aryans."

When Goering, a drug addict and suffering from syphilis, was undergoing treatment, he did not refuse injections of "606" because the discoverer of the drug was a Jew. To-day there is not a single advanced humanitarian cause in which Jews are not co-operating whole-heartedly and disinterestedly. It is also quite true that there are Jewish financiers just as there are Gentile financiers who are out for one thing only—a return to pre-war conditions, their money-making concerns, and to wreck all efforts for a just peace and freedom from want for the masses of the people. Here is a story bearing on this subject:—

About the time of Munich a stockbroker whom I knew said to me: "These Jewish swine on the Stock Exchange are selling pounds and buying dollars as fast as they can." "But aren't the Gentiles doing exactly the same thing?" I asked him, and he had to admit that they were. That is how anti-Semitism spreads. In the same way we have seen that in the prosecutions at the courts for offences in the Black Market, it is nearly always men who have Jewish names who are charged. When the Jewish Association protested against this and pointed out that in over 1,400 prosecutions there were less than 50 cases in which Jews were involved, the explanation given by the newspapers was that Jewish names gave an added interest to the news item.

Religion has been just as much a foe to progress to the Jew as it has to the Gentile. Everywhere the Jews are demanding freedom, but they must free their own minds first from their old Jewish Eastern god and such habits and customs which apply to their race when they were a primitive people centuries ago. That freedom of mind is just as necessary for the Gentile as for the Jew. After all, the Jew reacts to a drug in exactly the same way as his Gentile brother, and religion has been truly described as "the opium of the people." The Jew claims equality with other men, and all decent people should be prepared to grant it; but the orthodox Jew believes that he is superior to the Gentile because his religion teaches him that he is one of the chosen people, and until he is prepared to discard this false belief he will always bring upon himself hatred from those whom he regards as his inferiors. An orthodox Jew calling himself a Britisher is distressed and upset if one of his family marries a Gentile; in fact, many would think it a disgrace. Well, they can't have the argument both ways.

We owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Jew for all he has given to the world, and we owe an apology for all the wrongs we have inflicted upon him, and it is tragic to see a foul thing like anti-Semitism rearing its head amongst British people.

The Jews are clever but they are not cleverer than the Gentiles—that is a popular delusion. In England we have one Jew to every thousand Gentiles—a thousand to one—and many people who pride themselves on their sense of fair play are permitting hatred to possess their minds.

Many Jews are clever, but unfortunately many, especially Jewish women, are so tactless. During this war some thousands have left London for country districts and have, in many cases, made themselves thoroughly detested for their arrogance and unreasonable behaviour. The Jews, as a people, cannot be blamed for those of their race who are most certainly helping in this way to justify anti-Semitism, but nevertheless the fact remains that this minority are doing their own people a grave injustice. Finally, the Jew will have to get rid of his narrow nationalism—he will have to stop talking about the persecution of MY PEOPLE.

It is not a question of the persecution of any one race of people that shocks all real humanitarians; it is the question of any persecution, whether of Jews, Christians, Protestants, Catholics, Communists or Radicals, etc. When we resent and are prepared to fight all persecution, then we are going a long way towards the brotherhood of man.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

MOTHER CHURCH

Mother Church, O most merciless Mother!

Proud Parent of liels and lies,
Whose delight has been ever to smother
All babes who dared open their eyes;
We proclaim thee a downright delusion,
A Phantom, a fiction, a snare,
A promoter of fraud and confusion,
As false as thy features are fair.

Thou hast lived upon lies and illusion,
And fattened on falsehood and fraud,
Ever ready to levy large dues on
The dupes who would dine at thy board!
Thou hast traded on tricks and tradition,
Made market of souls to thy shame,
While the millions, with lamb-like submission,
Obeyed the prestige of thy Name! . . .

Let her perish and part with her plunder—
The hoards of her ill-gotten gains—
She will perish! the voice of the thunder
Already peals over the plains;
Lo! the cloud, like a hand, has arisen,
It's coming up out of the sea,
The storm winds are loosed from their prison
And flapping their pinions with glee!

—THOMAS HERBERT NOYES.

CORRESPONDENCE

SIR,—Re article in your number of January 3, 1943, on John the Baptist by Mr. H. Cutner.

Mr. Cutner will find quite a lot on this subject in a book by Robert Stahl entitled "Les Mandéens et les origines Chrétiennes," published by Rieder, of Paris, one of a series on Christianity under the general editorship of P. L. Couchoud.

From this work it would appear that the myth of John the Baptist had its roots in the same seed bed of pre-Christian Gnosticism, as did the Jesus myth; i.e., in the synagogues of the Diaspora, in which the ferment at that of Ephesus seems to have been most prominent.

The "Mandean" heresy was driven out of Jewry by persecution, and I suspect that the stoning of Stephen as per the Acts of the Apostles is a reflection of this.

The next split off from this Synagogue at Ephesus seems to have been that of Appolos, who came from Alexandria, where he had studied under Philo. This secession seems to have been peaceful.

Stahl shows that a number of incidents in the Acts, which on the surface reads as if applying to Paul, really concerns Appolos, and to my mind makes Appolos the originator of Pauline Christianity.

Then where does Paul come into the scheme? He seems to me a lay figure, introduced at a later date, round which could be co-ordinated—more or less—a number of incompatible doctrines, including some Mithraic elements. If he is historical he may be Mr. L. G. Rylands, second editor of the Pauline Epistles.

Incidentally, is the name Paul the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament Saul? I don't recollect seeing discussed the sudden change of Saul to Paul in the Acts.

Stahl traces a number of ramifications of the John myth starting with the God-Man, John the Revealer of the Mandeaus. The Jews represent him as a Jewish prophet, the writer of the Apocalypse.

In Luke and Mark he becomes the Forerunner John the Baptist, though in Matthew he is of the type of the Hebrew prophet again. Finally John the Apostle of the Fourth Gospel created at Ephesus by Appolos.

The Christian writers give John the priority to their own God-Man Jesus but strip John of his divinity, otherwise he would have overshadowed the later Jesus.

The above must naturally be an over-simplification, as it is an attempt, in a short letter, to give the results of a book of 187 pages and some thoughts arising therefrom.—Yours, etc.,
ALBERT R. THORNEWELL.

G. B. S. AND FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—I feel that I must express my great disappointment with the review in "The Freethinker," by T. F. Palmer, of the "Standard Biography of Bernard Shaw."

Recently I read this book, and I was glad to notice that Shaw's Freethought opinions are expressed in his own inimitable language and yet these are not brought out in the review. It is remarkable because the biography abounds in them.

There is no doubt that G. B. S. is a Freethinker and has supported this paper. He was a great admirer of G. W. Foote, with whom he debated on a political question.

Do you think Mr. Palmer might give us another article? These anti-religious opinions of Shaw ought to be reproduced for the benefit of your readers.—Yours, etc.,
A. D. CORRICK.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead):
Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Sunday, 11-0, Dr. C. JOAD, M.A., D.Lit.—"Eighty-Seven Years of Bernard Shaw, the Socialist and Playwright."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. Meetings every Sunday at Laycock's Café, Kirkgate, 6-30 p.m.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): Sunday, 3-0, Dr. C. A. SMITH, B.A.—"Is Nazism a Form of Capitalism?"

Newcastle-on-Tyne (Socialist Café, Old Arcade, Newcastle): Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON—"Faith or Fact To-day."

THE ENTRY OF THE CHURCHES INTO POLITICS

IN the last two years there have been increasingly vocal discussions as to whether the Churches should enter politics. Those in favour have well learnt propaganda methods from their elders and have been labelling religious opponents as "blimps" and so forth.

But even these opponents, being in the Church themselves, have not made clear the genuine case against it. It is undesirable for the Church to delve in politics because in practice it always attempts to induce in its members the same attitude of awe and credulous acceptance of the infallibility of its views which it carefully cultivates under the heading of faith towards its religious doctrines and teachings.

Whatever may be one's opinion of faith in matters of philosophy and ethics, it is certain that the same attitude over political questions is most objectionable. It is the attitude cultivated by the Nazis and Japanese in their own populations which our Church would introduce here with regard to its political policy. The temptation to do so is obvious, and I have not a shadow of doubt that our clergy would give way to it. And in actual practice the Catholic Church in France and elsewhere has always attempted to infuse its members with the same unthinking, reason-proof, fervid zeal and hate in politics that the Churches obtain in religious ideas.

To a continental Catholic, a politician condemned by the Catholic Church (which does not restrain its language of abhorrence) is a black devil, and nothing too violent can be said of him—for the devout Catholic too often believes unconsciously and sometimes consciously that "the end justifies the means."

The unreasoning, religious outlook and its overwhelming emotional hates and zeals is quite out of place in politics, and could not help but be disastrous. The application of the religious attitude of mind, uncritical, unreasoning and credulous, to the study of controversial post-war political problems, is the surest way to head for fogged issues and to make certain of failure in our attempts to create the better world all of us wish to work for. We must therefore oppose the entry of the Churches into politics strongly. The Churches may lose some members in the first years or so among the politically conscious who do not happen to agree with their schemes, but infinite harm will be done by turning large numbers of our hitherto politically lamentably unconscious populace into purblind bigots on that subject.

BASIL BRADLAUGH BONNER, B.Sc. (Econ.).

OUR GUIDES

This craving to be meddling and omnipresent has been exploited by the showman side of the British Broadcasting Corporation and also by various Transatlantic radio systems. There are a number of these "Bottoms" who are ostensibly leading a liberal world movement and have been induced to exhibit themselves periodically as a "Brains Trust," answering silly questions that are sprung upon them, exchanging gross mutual flatteries and displaying a giggling insensibility to the grim realities that close in so swiftly upon mankind. Such fun! The Revolution can have no dealings with those who lend themselves to this grinning at the public through horse-collars for money and so bring down the idea of an urgently needed intellectual renaissance to the level of a burlesque. No diabolical reactionary could have planned a more effective reply to the appeal for thought. How can we dispose of this nuisance upon the flank of our movement?—From "Phoenix," by H. G. Wells.

* Bottom, the Weaver.

OSCAR WILDE'S FRIEND—(Continued from page 75)

In his old age, living in Corsica, Robert carried on a truly Corsican vendetta against any and every detractor of Wilde. At times he fought such former friends of Wilde's as Shaw, Frank Harris, Robert Ross, Lord Alfred Douglas, André Gide, with the utmost disinterested ferocity. But if sometimes his friendship for the dead outran his discretion and sense of proportion, he never fought unfairly. Our Corsican brigand of letters was ever chivalrous; and later he made proper amends to Douglas, of whose incomparable sonnets and lyrics he was, as every cultivated mind must be, a whole-hearted admirer. He regarded Shaw as misled by old kindness for Harris, but for Harris's novelette-biography of Wilde he had nothing but unmitigated contempt, for he regarded it as a cheap falsification of facts designed to glorify Harris and denigrate Wilde.

Finally, just before the war, Robert Sherard retired to England to pass his last years in neglect. The new generation of readers was tired of the ashes of the Wilde controversy, and publishers did not care to publish Robert's trenchant reply to Shaw. Literary quarrels are not profit-making as a rule—except in libels for lawyers.

Poverty, ill-health and lack of appreciation are heavy burdens, but this fine old Chevalier was too proud to complain. His virile, combative spirit remained undaunted, if not untouched. Only when his devoted wife had to go out to work to assist his support did one who had been squire at Guilsborough Hall wince at the last blows of Fate.

Well, this gallant spirit has gone. A link—how strong and fine a link!—with the Past is broken. On guard outside the tomb of the Emperor Napoleon in the Invalides is the tomb of his faithful general, Count Bertrand—a fitting juxtaposition! If Robert Sherard—or the heart of Robert Sherard—could be buried on guard beside the Wilde grave in the cemetery of Pere Lachaise, that similarly would be fitting. And a fitting epitaph might be: "Great-grandson of Wordsworth, devoted friend and biographer of Oscar Wilde: 'I was in prison and ye visited me.'"

Oh my friend! "Good, reckless, chivalrous friend," as Wilde described you. An English municipality will give a pension to its scavengers—a pension greater than the British Empire gives to a writer or a scientist or to their widows or orphans. You got nothing, Robert. Will there be a Civil List pension for your widow? Hardly. Our British Empire is so desperately poor, owning only a quarter of the world, that it can scarcely spare the Civil List pittance. What a misfortune it is that we do not own the other three-quarters so that we might afford to give the widows or orphans of heroes of the fine arts and the noble sciences a very little to starve upon! Surely Moloch and Mammon—the only two Gods that Britain worships to-day—might spare a crumb since the Government can't afford it.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

SHAKESPEARE'S RELIGION

The religious phrases which are thinly scattered over his works are little more than expressions of a distant and imaginative reverence. But on the deeper grounds of religious faith his silence is significant. He is silent, and the doubt of Hamlet deepens his silence, about the after-world. . . . Often as his questionings turn to the riddle of life and death, he leaves it a riddle to the last, without heeding the common theological solutions around him. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep."—J. R. Green, "History of the English People."