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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Way of Salvation

NONE of us can make certain of bequeathing to our children a good, sound physique. In spite of all we may do, some hidden physical weakness that has been latent for generations may develop in our offspring. Neither can we be sure of securing for our children the possession of a strong, well-balanced intellect. Many a fool can claim a clever man and woman for his parents, and a genius may appear as the progeny of ordinary folk. The laws of heredity are obscure in their operation, and where the mental qualities are concerned, biologists often tend to darken counsel rather than help in enlightment.

But a study of Christianity will convince us that there is at least one thing that parents can do if they wish their children—religiously—well. Let them make sure that they cultivate a fair stock of bad habits, before good ones become so ingrained that they make the lodgment of their opposites difficult, if not impossible. This task is really not a difficult one, because the " Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness " has seen to it that bad habits can be acquired with greater ease than good ones, and they are not so quickly lost. Of course, we cannot be sure that even when we have given them this good Christian start they will continue along the road on which we have set them. But we have done our best to give them a bad beginning in order that they may achieve a good ending.

Two things recently brought this cardinal aspect of Christian ethics to my mind. One was a picture in a daily paper illustrating a religious talking film. The picture showed a parson talking to a couple of burglars. The satisfaction of all was expressed in their faces, and while it was a play, yet the producer had been quite correct in his appreciation of the central truth of Christian teaching. The parson appeared to be delighted to welcome these burglars, after he had been bored to death by a congregation in which the husbands did not beat their wives, the wives get drunk, or the children go early to prison. And the burglars evidently felt their religious value—a far greater value to the Church than if they had been ordinary men practising the common-place virtues of everyday life.

The other thing that impressed upon me the religious importance of bad habits was my picking up an account of a long list of thieves, drunkards, etc., who had spent the larger part of their lives in developing those bad habits, the renunciation of which had opened for them the gates of salvation. Without these bad habits they never would have been heard of, they would never have devoted their declining years to the service of the Lord, they would never have been able to stand on a platform as a glorious example to others. They would have died unknown; their virtues would have been unsung, they would have had no place in the literature of the Christian world. They would not have died so good if they had not lived so bad. Whether they owed the possession of the bad habits to the thoughtful care of Christian parents, or whether they acquired them by sheer persistence, I do not know. But the result is there for all to ponder.

Now while the principle involved in what has been said has always been evident in Christianity, it has never been quite plainly avowed—that is if we set on one side the recurring principle of Antinomianism in Christian history. But as this taught that a Christian could do no wrong, and things which were sinful with others were not sinful with one who was saved, the matter hardly applies. We are concerned with the fact of the emphasis that the Christian Churches have actually placed on the value of bad habits. They have benefited by it, as they have benefited by the belief in the Devil, but they have been ungenerous in their acknowledgments in both directions. Yet it is deeply embedded in Christian teaching. It begins in the New Testament, at the Crucifixion, in the touching story of the men who were being crucified with Jesus. What these men were being executed for we are not told. The only information is that they were malefactors. Neither of them professed regret for the life he had been leading, but one of them asked Jesus to remember him when he came to heaven. The response was that he should go that day, with Jesus, to paradise. Had this man not lived on the cross he would never have died on it, and he would never have had the distinguished honour of being the first of the believers in Jesus to enter paradise. Without his early development of bad habits he would have gone through life unknown and have died in a condition of undistinguished mediocrity. With merely good habits he would never have died on the cross, he would never have met Jesus, he would never have found salvation, he would have just gone his own road to hell. If any man ever had cause to say " Thank God for my bad habits," it was that malefactor on the cross.

To that example Christianity has remained true during the whole of its history. Anyone who will look into the matter will probably be astonished to find out how many of the Christian " Saints " paved the way to salvation by contracting some very, very bad habits. From St. Augustine onward the story runs, down to the modern revival meeting. Ordinary, unimaginative people may denounce the " evil lives " of many men and women, but it may well be that these decried ones are building better than their detractors know. These men and women would never have awakened to the need for salvation without that instinctive wisdom which had led them to store up the material for a glorious conversion. I think it was Walter Pater who said that the public was just a dung-hill on which to breed a genius, and it may be said, from a Christian standpoint, that the evil a man may do, the lives he may wreck in doing it, is the raw material out of which the

Saint and the hero of the conversion platform is made. Without these bad habits the revivalistic platform would be bereft of its brightest ornaments and myriads who are now in heaven would be elsewhere.

Wise in their generation the Churches have never laid great emphasis on keeping men good from infancy. They have never laid chief stress on the people they have kept from going wrong. There would be no more advertising value in that than there would be in Keatings advertising the names of people who had kept themselves free from verminous visitors without using their powder. It is they who have been far-sighted enough to develop bad habits who are valuable to the Church. The cry is "Repent and be saved." and how can a man repent if he lacks the proper material. The value of a "saved" man at a revival meeting lies not in what he is, but in what he has been. At any of these gatherings the man without bad habits would be of no interest whatever. At a revival meeting it is the converted criminal who is the centre of attraction. The women look at him admiringly, the men envy him for the "good time" he has had, the boys look and wonder in what way they can emulate his past, so that they may make sure of having such a glorious present. It is the saved blackguard who is to shine as a precious jewel in the Saviour's crown, not the unimaginative performer of the humdrum virtues of ordinary life.

So a new commandment I give unto you—or rather I put Christian philosophy into plain language. "Whoso would be saved let him take unto himself during his youth bad habits, so that when the time cometh he may have that whereof he may repent, and so gladden the hearts of the godly and make the angels that are round the throne rejoice. For how shall a man waken to his own need for salvation if he hath not done that which, if he leaves undone, affords him no ground for repentance, for forgiveness, and for the wearing of a heavenly crown? When a man who feeleth sick goeth to a physician he is straightaway questioned as to what bad habits he hath, and when these are confessed he is told to give them up. And soon after he doeth so, he is a whole man. But if he hath no bad habits, no past ill-deeds that teareth at his soul, if he cannot give up smoking, or drinking, or over-eating, or late hours, then is the physician greatly harassed and the man's position is like unto that of a ship labouring in a storm, but which hath no cargo that it can throw overboard and so save the vessel.

"So unto all parents who wish their children well, I say, give your children bad habits, for these in their later years will pave the road to salvation. For what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, and yet lack those 'secret sins' through the confession and renunciation of which he may enter paradise? To be saved a man must repent, and the more of which a man may repent, the greater shall be his reward. Hearken not to those who say that the evil consequences of what a man doeth are not removed by his repentance. It is a man's own soul that must be saved, and such cannot be done without repentance of old sins, even though it may offer no security against committing new ones. So, therefore, let all parents take heed. Let them give their children bad habits, for it is in the giving up of them that the Gospel of Christ opens the way to salvation."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ERIN IN THE REIGN OF ANNE

THE oppressive restrictions imposed upon Ireland by the Revolutionary Settlement under William III. remained unrelieved for nearly a century. Even then, Erin was the most depressed British possession, until ameliorative measures, leading to the present independence of her Catholic provinces had relieved the gloom.

Protestant Ulster has played an important part in Erin's modern history. The siege of Londonderry in 1689, the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, followed by the Treaty of Limerick, long rankled in Catholic remembrance, especially as these events were celebrated in Protestant Ulster as anti-Romanist successes.

Amid the stirring happenings of the time, the thoughts of the English people turned to the colonial, commercial, naval and military activities in which their country was engaged. Ireland's wrongs were forgotten or denied, while the native Irish brooded over their grievances and meditated coming revenge on her oppressor.

Whig and Tory politicians alike regarded the sister island exclusively from an English standpoint. Ireland's industries and agriculture they penalised to give preference to British interests. This shamelessly selfish policy proved the harbinger of many mischiefs, including those of a sectarian character.

Yet, as Dr. Trevelyan judiciously notes in the third volume of his "England Under Queen Anne": "It is only fair to recognise the difficulty of the question that faced our ancestors, however much we may regret the answer they found. Their military and political task was to prevent Ireland from being made a place of arms for a French attack on England and on England's commerce. To hold Ireland was as necessary to Britain's existence during the French wars of William and Anne as during the German war of our own day (1914-18). And it was not easy to maintain military control over a country where at least four-fifths of the inhabitants were Roman Catholic Jacobites at heart in league with France." This danger certainly palliates, if it does not justify, England's enactments.

These harsh laws proved repressive, and Ireland remained apathetic for several generations, despite the Stuart risings in Scotland in 1715 and 1745. Unfortunately, the Penal Laws of William and Mary violated the Treaty of Limerick under which Irish Catholics were promised the privileges they possessed under Charles II.

But the Penal Laws were not strictly enforced, yet priests were persecuted and the liberty and property of their flocks were liable to various harassing encroachments. Under Anne, both in 1703 and 1709, the rigours of the Penal Laws were increased. It was hoped that the priests would be severed from their flocks, but this proved so futile that the attempt was abandoned. Still, these Laws succeeded in retaining the land, wealth, culture and social influences of Ireland in Protestant possession.

This partial failure of the Penal Laws on the one hand, and their success on the other, made the priest the protector of the Celtic population. Thus, the Catholic Irish became perhaps the most priest-ridden peasants in the whole of Europe. Also Protestant ascendancy deprived the native population of secular leadership, as leaders would have arisen from a Catholic laity that the Penal Laws had impoverished or driven away.

An attempt was also made to convert Romanist Ireland to Protestantism. The Lord Lieutenant was requested to bring this about by means of charity schools and the distribution of the Scriptures and "The Whole Duty of Man," translated into Ireland's Celtic tongue. For it was feared that the natives were relapsing into Paganism as a result of the Penal Laws. Moreover, it was conjectured, quite vainly, however, that the priesthood might be extinguished if the Statute which aimed at the ending of priestly succession might be so applied that "in some counties the whole succession may be extinct in a few years."

These proceedings naturally disconcerted Rome, and in answer to appeals to the Vatican, Pope Clement I. undertook the restoration of the Papal policy of Elizabeth's reign in order, if possible, to dethrone the heretical ruler of England and Ireland by means of a French invasion.

But in the long run, the Laws practically proved abortive. King, the Archbishop of Dublin, a shrewd observer, noted in 1715 that the Papists were permitted a priest in every parish who had been duly registered. "All bishops, regulars, etc.; and all other priests not registered," King proceeded, "are banished, and none allowed to come into the kingdom under severe penalties. The design was that there should be no succession and many of those registered are since dead; yet for want of a due execution of the laws many are come in from foreign parts, and there are in the country Popish Bishops that ordain many."

Endeavours to induce the French to invade Ireland during Marlborough's Continental campaigns, were unavailing, although they were assured that 100,000 Catholic Irishmen would rise in rebellion as soon as a French army landed on the coast.

Protestants and Catholics were alike made sufferers. For the English Parliament destroyed the economic prosperity of Erin. The commercial advantages granted Ireland by Cromwell. were withdrawn by Charles II.'s Parliament which prohibited the importation of Irish cattle and cloth into England. But Erin's cloth exports abroad survived, until the Revolution, when, in 1699, it became illegal despite the fact that Ireland's cloth industry was in Protestant hands. Ulster's linen alone, which in no way competed with English trade was encouraged and allowed to export to America. The Catholic peasant dependent on the soil, suffered less from these intensely selfish restrictions, for the English and Scottish settlers in Ireland were the chief cattle breeders and industrialists. No wonder they were embittered by the poverty to which they were reduced by England's short-sighted proceedings.

As Trevelyan reminds us, this mischievous policy promoted Protestant emigration before the Catholic Irish were induced to follow their example. As our historian testifies: "England prevented her own children and their Scottish cousins from bettering themselves in Ireland, and as Scots and English are always determined to better themselves somewhere, they went to the Colonies, carrying overseas a traditional desire to be revenged on England which their descendants amply gratified at the time of the American Revolution."

To aggravate the scurvy treatment of the Catholics and the economic ruin of the Protestants, Anne's Ministers disregarded major evils and devoted their attention to the endless squabbles between Anglicans and Presbyterians in Ireland. The Toleration Act was not extended to Ireland and the brave men who had withstood James II and sent their sons to fight and die in Marlborough's battles were not legally entitled to worship in their own way. Yet the Presbyterians held their own services and attended their Kirk sessions unmolested, except when, in a few instances, Anglican Tory magistrates incarcerated ministers charged with the heinous offence of establishing meeting houses previously non-existent.

But in truth, the Presbyterians of the period were as aggressive as the Orangemen of today. When their Synods assembled they paraded in public in a manner that menaced their Prelatists fellow Protestants. And so far as they were able they created a tyranny mildly reminiscent of the despotism of Calvin in Geneva. At least these were the charges of their critics, and they certainly stigmatised the Prelatists as brazen idolators, while the Churchmen retorted by accusing them of the sin of schism.

In 1704 the Secretary of State, Lord Nottingham, imposed a Test which embittered the quarrel between the rival religionists. The exclusively Protestant Dublin Parliament was then passing another Penal Law against Papists, so Nottingham induced the Privy Council to insert a clause applying to Ireland the Sacramental Test for public appointments—a Test long in operation in England. This included both Presbyterians and Catholics. Previously, the Calvinists, if devoid of legal toleration, had not been debarred from State or Municipal appointments, while under the new law they were henceforth ineligible.

This encroachment was not taken submissively. No love was lost between Church and Kirk, and the Schism Act inspired by the sacerdotalists once more manifested the love Christians bear one another. As Dr. Trevelyan observes: "In the last summer of Anne's reign the Schism Act to suppress Presbyterian and other dissenting schools had been passed at Westminster, and, by an act of partisan fury that was almost insane, was specifically made to apply to Ireland. If it had been enforced in practice the result would have been a civil war between the two sections of Irish Protestants, for Ulster would never have submitted to persecution. . . . The Schism Act was repealed by the Whigs in the reign of King George."

The Test Act still disgraced the Statute Book for generations to come, and the Irish Presbyterians remained excluded from all civil and military offices under the Crown.

T. F. PALMER.

CHURCH ACTION

A RECENT debate in the Church Assembly was concerned with prospective disciplinary action against bishops with the aim of making the law, as it affects members of the episcopate, at one with that which applies to the lesser clergy. Under the proposed measure, a diocesan bishop can only be impeached for moral or professional shortcomings at the request of three other diocesan bishops whilst a suffragan can only be proceeded against if his diocesan bishop requests that this action should be taken. At the same time, it was agreed that political or social activities and opinions might be made the subject of a charge. The decision is serious and one which the Rationalist will do well to watch closely. If the Church of England had the status of a sect, it could take the line that it was free to manage its own affairs and to decide the limits of moral tolerance which it would allow to its officials. Thus, tectotalism might be made into a requirement for episcopal office and the non-tectotal bishop forced into an early and undignified retirement from duty! The issue of tolerance would concern its membership alone. But the Church of England does not occupy this position of spiritual and moral liberty. It is the established church of the nation and the Rationalist, as a ratepayer, is as much concerned in its details of organisation legally as is the most devout of its communicants. As a gigantic organ for the creation of opinion, with the most trivial utterances of its dignitaries accorded an inordinate space in the press and by the B.B.C., it attracts the interest of the unorthodox to the manner in which it works. Most of its bishops are appointed by the Prime Minister and the political reference in the new offence which it is now proposed to create is not without its significance.

In point of fact, a whole new series of clerical offences are now in process of creation. Laws have existed for many years which have enabled the church to rid itself of the clergyman who shows polygamous or like tendencies. When, in 1822, the Bishop of Clogher was arraigned for a series of unmentionable offences, the Church of Ireland (then an established body) found no difficulty in depriving him of the episcopal office. But new charges of neglect of duty have now arisen and are being pressed home. In part, they would have led to the deprivation of more than one past hero of the Anglican sanctuary. Archbishop Laud, to whom high church divines delight to refer as "the martyred Laud," was notoriously neglectful of his non-political episcopal duties, rarely if ever confirming or exercising pastoral responsibilities. Non-residence is an abuse which has only recently come to an end in the Anglican system. But a period has now

been reached when a new offence, that of neglect of duty, has been invented. Its open link with proscribed opinions is significant and shows the type of church which the Anglicans are busily constructing.

Faced with the decline of churchgoing and the general refusal to take the bishops seriously, the Church of England is in process of transforming itself into a corporate state. Mediaeval conceptions of the church have been revived and an inordinate stress laid upon the whole conception of priesthood. As was shown by Nazi Germany, liberty of opinion is one of the tolerances which cannot be allowed within such a system. The Church of Rome affords yet another example of a complete totalitarianism. It is the obvious intention of the Church of England to accept the prevailing temper and to meet its losses in the contemporary world by closing its ranks. A fixed stereotype of doctrine and opinion can then be imposed upon its clergy of all ranks. When it is recalled that the established Church has long been a minority body in England, standing in open rivalry to other bodies whose origins are also to be traced to the Sixteenth Century, it is not surprising to find that the majority of its members and officials are drawn from the most reactionary classes both in social outlook and in speculative opinion. The result of the new measure, if it passes the House of Commons, will be a complete cessation of tolerance for the dissenter from the conventional viewpoint.

It is not without interest to recall some who would doubtless have suffered from the application of the new measure. The spread of Rationalism has owed a great deal in the past to modernist divines, by no means popular with their fellows. More than one prominent theological modernist would be held to hold undesirable "social" opinions, a term which could be extended very widely before a tribunal. The services of Bishop Colenso of Natal to free inquiry in religion during the middle years of the last century are well known and received tributes both from distinguished Unitarians and from the late Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson. High church fanatics sought to drive Colenso from his post but were thwarted by the laws governing the ecclesiastical establishment; state courts proved themselves of wider tolerance than did church tribunals. An examination of the "Life of Bishop Colenso" by the Rev. Sir G. W. Cox recalls a further point. He made far more enemies over his championship of the Zulu against exploitation, an exploitation both tolerated and encouraged by the orthodox party, than he did by his heretical theology. Colenso's fate before a court empowered to take undesirable social views and actions into consideration would have been certain. Not much speculation is required to imagine the end, so far as the church is concerned, of the championship of the Soviet Union by the present Dean of Canterbury in the years before 1941! Some twenty years ago, the present Bishop of Birmingham was at loggerheads with his Anglo-Catholic clergy because of his modernism and his rigid application of sheer common sense to some of the most cherished Catholic dogmas. Although he is the only bishop to hold the distinctions of D.Sc. and the Fellowship of the Royal Society, he was forced to submit to the rebukes of the Archbishop of Canterbury and to the studied coldness of his fellow-bishops. Fanatical lay fundamentalists were stirred up against him and his championship of evolution, common in the cultured world since the days of Darwin and T. H. Huxley, was paraded as a blasphemous novelty. The bishop also chances to be a pacifist and to hold opinions on peace not unlike those of the Synoptic Gospels but at complete variance with the conventional ecclesiastical attitude of supporting the state as it is. Once again, it is difficult to imagine his acquittal before a court empowered to deal with political and social opinion.

In a leading article, "The Manchester Guardian" criticised the new measure and pointed out that, in a church where the dignitaries are government-appointed, the political or social dissenter from conventional opinion is at times a very useful person. It might have gone further and suggested that the stark subservience of German Lutheranism to the state in the past rendered it impotent when the Nazis came to power. If the Church of England is to remain in its present position, it is in the interest of the upholder of Rationalist opinions to see that it is kept as broad and tolerant as possible and that the law works to this end. Such was the conception reached over half a century ago by the distinguished Unitarian, Dr. Martineau. But the question may also be raised whether the Church of England should be kept in its present position, a position which hampers its own obvious intentions and which likewise works unjustly so far as unorthodox minority opinions are concerned. If it wishes to follow the examples of the churches of South Africa and other dominions by becoming a small sacerdotal clique with a totalitarian outlook and a domination over the various opinions held by its members, it must follow them by asking for disestablishment. Certainly, the position envisaged in the new measure should not be allowed to come about. In that case, an established Church, with all the prerogatives of state establishment, would form itself into a totalitarian body and would interfere in political and social life from this point of view. Ecclesiastical Fascism would then be well on the way and the ordinary citizen has every right to make his protest against the planting of its roots.

JULIAN.

HOW ODD!

THE "fact" that a dipsomaniacal surgeon performed a successful operation the day before his death at the age of 140, is not entirely without interest. For myself, I am more attracted to a deliberately unsensational report, well documented and carefully argued, on the more famous claimants to longevity—even if I end up with a parcel of shattered illusions. The "fact" is typical of the work of R. L. Ripley, the report equally typical of that of R. T. Gould. These two men share an almost passionate attachment to the phenomenal and the mysterious—to, in short, *oddities*, Gould having written a book with that very title, Ripley having opened an Odditorium in Broadway. The two methods of externalisation of the same interest are significant, and perhaps even symbolic.

Ripley is, of course, by far the better known. His daily "Believe it or not" strip, done in I don't know how many languages, girdles the earth. Everything about Ripley is staggering and super-colossal. His research staff runs into scores, his income into hundreds of thousands, his readers in tens of millions. He lives in a kind of museum-house crammed with oddities (and a million letters he's not yet got round to reading, let alone answering) on Bion (Believe it or not) Island in New York. Besides cartoons, he does film and radio work and has incorporated himself and his activities as Believe It or Not Inc. Ripley is indeed among the modern moguls. He keeps this position, as he has attained it, by informing us, complete with little picture, that a woman with a unpronounceable name living in an inaccessible corner of Ruritania, has green teeth and can play the dulcima with her shoulder blades.

Gould, I fear, is no millionaire, nor, with his scorn of serving caviare to the general, is he ever likely to become one. He lives unspectacularly in an English village and rubs along without a research staff. He has indeed fabulous resources; they are however neither fiscal nor material but mental. Glimpses of this wealth have long astonished radio audiences. His writings provide more dazzling views. It hardly surprises when he calmly mentions that he has "read through both Chamber's Encyclopædia and the Encyclopædia Britannica . . ." In a world crawling with experts he stands out as an authority on chronometry, typewriters and astronomy. In a quiz-minded community he can pontificate on alchemy and giants, on perpetual motion machinery and Nostradamus, on the canals of Mars and

all the mysteries of the seven seas. If he cannot—and I dare not put it as more than an unchecked supposition—emulate the operatic Major-General's ability to "write a washing bill in Babylonic cuneiform, and tell you all the details of Caractacus's uniform" we at least have his own assurance that he has "repeatedly written the (Lord's) prayer, three times over, in Latin, English and Greek, in capitals, within the disc of a silver threepenny-bit," and the evidence of our own ears that he can rattle off *pi* to 30-odd places.

Yet Gould does not always handle his material felicitously. Odds and ends of wildly irrelevant knowledge clutter his essays in the form of asides, parentheses and footnotes. Can bizarrerie be carried further than ". . . 'Surely them as has money, no brains, was made for them as has brain, no money' Arthur Orton, *alias* Thomas Castra, *alias* Sir Roger Charles Tichborne, Bart., C33 Dartmoor—in a pocket-book found at Wagga-Wagga" footnoted to a casual mention of rogues and their ways? And if it's not gratuitous erudition, it's apt to be pedantic humour. Reference to the insolubility of gold in ordinary acids inspires, "Hence the joy of the *Puer Hebraeus* at being able to inform his astonished parent that he had been swindled, since his offspring had 'tested der goldfish mit acid, and dey are not gold at all!' *Puer Hebraeus*, indeed! And he cannot write of an adult woman without footnoting, "Or, as a young French lady once phrased it in her anxiety to speak correct English, 'adulteress'."

It would be unfair to cavil at Gould's many prejudices and occasional blind spots. We all have them, and Gould may even be admired for his forthrightness and his bland indifference to fashion in beliefs. Besides, it makes for the beautiful surprise, as, for instance, the reader's being dazed to find himself imbibing a plea for the restitution of the Wager by Battle in the Appeal Courts. But Gould at his best is peerless. To follow his construction of the landfall of Columbus or his re-assessment of the evidence surrounding the murder of Mary Ashford is very, very fascinating. He may have missed fortunes by not entering the law, and it's perhaps as well for him as for us that he didn't.

The pleasures of being able to say, "Look, *here's* something you'd never have thought possible," are as old as civilisation itself. But there are many ways of saying it, and Ripley and Gould, separated by over-elaboration, dollars and ballyhoo, are in this respect antipodal. It is tempting to suggest that the contrast between the men reflects certain contrasts between their respective countries, particularly as both contrasts have a background of multiple similarities. So it does, but we must add the rider that these aspects of Britain *vis-à-vis* U.S.A. are neither the most striking or the most significant.

N. T. GRIDGEMAN.

SEX—AND CHRISTIANITY

AMONG all the deadly sins of the Christian faith Sex comes first and foremost.

To the good Christian Sex is Public Enemy Number One. Perhaps that is why his priests must run about in long skirts—even the sight of their own legs in trousers is too shocking and immoral! Anyway, the Church quite obviously regards all normal men and women as potential sexual maniacs living only for the gratification of their animal passions and for the debauchery of all innocent persons.

It condemns as utterly immoral hard-working chorus girls because they dare to display their shapely limbs to the public gaze. Can you imagine a *Deaconess* doing such a thing?

This is but one example of the strange mental processes peculiar to the chosen Man of God who considers himself fit to order our daily lives. With such a mind he is not fit to order anything except a bar of carbolic soap!

And by what right does the Church assume that all human beings are "miserable sinners"? *And* order them to confess themselves such in public worship? It must be that its own outlook is so foul that it can see only evil in everything.

The missionaries prohibit the South Sea natives from dancing—which has always been their natural custom. They order the women to dress themselves in shapeless "Mother Hubbard" overalls to hide their human forms. They banish all the joy and laughter from one of the kindest and most generous races in the whole world. Why? Because the Church is obsessed with the sin of Sex. What sanctimonious impudence and cruelty to deny a simple people the ordinary right to enjoy themselves in their own way! To teach them that natural gaiety is a vice and misery a virtue!

Even in this country a religious person will not believe it is possible for two people of the opposite sex to be left alone without committing fornication. In the British Law Courts today a man would not be believed if he said he had spent the night in the house of an unchaperoned woman and did not commit upon her some criminal assault! and platonic friendship is simply laughed out of Court.

All this, of course, is the result of Christian teaching. The fruits of a pure and beautiful Belief! The truth is that religion so cramps and soaks the mind with sin that it is no longer a mind at all—but a sponge saturated in sewage.

At the mere mention of Sun-bathing the parson throws up his hands in horror. In their black frocks and stiff collars anæmic parsons blush with shame at the thought of men and women in bathing suits basking in the sun and fresh air while their own germ-laden clothes stick heavily about them and poisoned sweat stinks in their nostrils.

The shamefulness which the religionist attaches to the human body is all the more illogical because it is a direct insult to the Christian God. According to them God made Man in his own image—therefore God not only made something indecent and obscene but his *own* form must also be indecent and obscene! As no other living creature is condemned to wear artificial clothing perhaps when God decided to create Man he had already bought up shares in the textile industry!

Common sense must deny that either sex or the human form is an outrageous and sinful thing. They are a part of Nature and Nature only tolerates what is essential and is not concerned with Man's morals—still less with the Church's morals. The procreative act is necessary if the race is to continue—only the warped mentality of the nasty-minded religionist can regard it as a nameless sin. Exactly what *his* opinion is worth may be judged from the fact that he quite conveniently turns vice into virtue by payment of a small fee to the Church. That, of course, puts everything right—according to *him*. But we fail utterly to see—if the act is sinful—how it can be made virtuous by the mumbled blessing of a priest. And so the farce goes on and everyone is satisfied. Sex is evil—unless the Church is paid to whitewash it! Surely if vice can become virtuous by such a process then we might as well cast our common sense into the nearest dust bin.

It is time someone had the courage to call this colossal bluff once and for all. Sex is *not* sinful—neither is the human form. Only Christianity has made them so. The Christian must have his bagful of sins, the more the merrier, or how can he justify himself as an honest-to-goodness miserable sinner?

So let us leave him playing happily in the cesspools of iniquity with which the Church has surrounded him. He will cry like a small child if you try to take away one of his favourite toys—and Sex is definitely his favourite toy-sin. The parson can also be left, hiding in shame his own spindly legs under layers of black clothing—and removing his black glasses to peep at the happy couples sun-bathing on the beach; when there *is* any sun!

W. H. WOOD.

ACID DROPS

All over the country wages the battle between those who wish a civilised Sunday and those who struggle to keep alive the foolish tradition of "sacred" days. Of course, no one who loves freedom would prevent any Christian having a sacred day if he feels inclined that way, or even seven sacred days per week. But wherever fervent religion is on the carpet, foolishness, bad manners, and tyranny appears to be the rule. The Roman Catholic priest must not marry a woman. The Protestant has a larger outlook, but without much development of commensense. And so it runs. A really sensible religion would not remain alive long enough for anyone to recognise it.

So we have seen a fantastic war to prevent people going to act on Sunday at least as sensibly as they act on the other six days in the week. No one pretends that there is any misbehaviour in going to cinemas on Sunday, and those who go pay for their admittance; no one can be forced to attend the "shows." The police all over the country bear unbroken testimony that the behaviour in young people in the streets has improved ever since the Sunday "shows" made their appearance, and most of us have outgrown the stupid belief that young people are no better for their indoor entertainments. The only people who are responsible for this foolish attack on Sunday entertainments are the clergy and their followers. They cry out that Sunday entertainments led people to forget God. All we have to state is that a God who cannot hold his own against the harmless enjoyment of men and women should not bother anybody.

There are quite a number of things which the parson may now omit, if he cares to do so. In reading the marriage service, he need no longer go over the disgusting, and half-obscene, portion which must have often caused a sensitive girl to blush; and a man to wish either to walk out of the Church or to punch the parson's head. It is quite certain that, if the same language had been used in Registry Offices, few would have submitted to it. All the talk of "satisfying men's carnal lusts and appetities, like brute beasts," may be dispensed with; the pointing to Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, is also dispensed with. Probably it has, at length, dawned upon these reverend fathers of God that these particular ladies and gentlemen do not form very shining examples for modern men and women. The parson is no longer bound to inform a parent who brings a child to be baptised, that the wicked little devil was "born and conceived in sin"; or, in the marriage service, that God "at the beginning, did create our first parents. Adam and Eve," and did appoint that "out of man woman should have her beginning." The really up-to-date clergyman may, also, leave out such statements as "Thou didst save Noah and his family from perishing by water, and also didst safely lead the children of Israel, Thy people, through the Red Sea."

These be brave words; and they help us to realise the dare-devil character of these bishops. After a hundred years of intense scientific activity, they will leave it optional on a parson's part whether he tells his people, as true, things which every well-educated schoolboy knows to be false. Even now, the Prayer Book does not say that these things are not true. It simply advises that one had better not say they are. If you believe them to be true, it will not contradict you. It may even count to you for righteousness, so to believe. It is, obviously, not the business of the bishops to tell you what is true; their business is to advise parsons not to say such things as will cause anyone, who is not qualifying for a pulpit, or an asylum, to say at once, "It is a lie!" The bishops carefully explain that their proposals are permissive. "Permissive falsehood" would be a bad term to cover the arrangement. But that would be too straightforward for any genuinely Christian assembly.

John Batty, writing in his book, "The History of Rothwell" (a small township a mile or two south of Leeds) states that whilst looking over the depositions from the castle of York relating to offences committed in the Northern Counties in the 17th century we find a curious phase of society as instanced in a remarkable case of witchcraft, tried on January 11, 1655, from this neighbourhood, before John Hewley, Esq. "Henry Hutchfield of Rhodes parish Rodwell, gent, sayeth that about August last, Katherine Earle struck him on the neck with a docken stalk, or such like thing, and his maire upon the neck also, whereupon his maire immediately fell sick and dyed, and he himself was very sore troubled and perplexed with a paine in his necke, whereupon Ann, the daughter of the said Katherine, seeing him so pained tould him 'Doth the divell nip thee in the necke? but he will nipp thee better yet.' And the said Katherine hathe beene searched, and a mark found upon her in the likeness of a pappe. And the said Katherine clapt one Mr. Franke, late of Rhodes, between the shoulders with her hand, and said, 'You are a pretty gentleman, will you kiss mee?' Whereupon the said Mr. Franke fell sick before he gott home and never went out of doors after, but dyed, and complained much against the said Katherine on his death-bed."

The accused person was committed to the Assizes.

"A witness says that Mr. Franke languished for three years. The woman was examined by the women of the village and two witch marks were found upon her—a wart behind her ear and another upon her thigh. There was evidently a lingering belief in the notion that a person might possess an evil spirit within, and so have dangerous and evil power over another, and this even amongst what might be termed the educated people of the day, for such a case of superstition was allowed to be brought before Sir John Savile, an important magistrate of the West Riding, and who figures in many transactions at this time. We are not, however, informed as to what punishment was awarded to this saucy and impudent dame."

Rothwell Church was notorious at one time for "runaway" weddings something after the "Gretna Green" style especially so in Parson Taylor's time, as he was commonly called. It was not that this or any other clergyman had a special licence or patent to marry fugitive couples, but a certain carelessness or perhaps indifference was shown in regard to this solemn ordinance. No strict inquiry being made as to the truthfulness or eligibility of the parties applying. Often for the accommodation of late couples, *the clock was stopped or put back* and when the interested persons were asked, "What part do you come from?" they generally contrived to name a place within the parish, whether it was so or not, and almost invariably chose "Carr Lane." Mr. Taylor jocosely remarking that he had married every man, woman and child in Carr Lane "seven times over." Yet, for quite a while later, according to an old account, these ceremonies continued and the candidates for matrimony had their wishes gratified without trouble or hindrance.

Here is what Nietzsche says about Christianity:—

"I condemn Christianity. I bring against it the most terrible accusations that ever an accuser put into words. It is to me the greatest of all imaginable corruptions. It has left nothing untouched by its depravity. It has made worthlessness of every value, a lie out of every truth, a sin out of everything straightforward, healthy, and honest. Let no man dare to speak to me of its humanitarian blessings. To do away with pain and woe is contrary to its principles. It lives by pain and woe, it has created pain and woe in order to perpetuate itself. It invented the idea of original sin. It has bred the art of self-violation—repugnance and contempt for all good and cleanly instincts. Parasitism is its praxis. It combats all good red blood, all love and all hope for life, with its anæmic ideal of holiness. It sets up 'the other world' as a negation of every reality. The cross is the rallying post for a conspiracy against health, beauty, well-being, courage, intellect, benevolence — against life itself.

"This eternal accusation I shall write on all walls. I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous, secret, subterranean, mean. I call it the one immoral blemish upon the human race."

"THE FREETHINKER"

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SUGAR PLUMS

We are a little too soon to offer our best wishes to all our readers during nineteen forty-seven. It would be just a mockery if we wished each other a "happy" new year, for what we have to face is to keep things from getting worse, and so make nineteen forty-seven a better year than we have seen for some time. Wars of any magnitude leave behind them evils that accompany conquest by sheer force, and the war that has just ceased gives ample evidence of this. We strained our energies and resources to conquer Germany, and having done so find that our welfare—along with that of other nations—is now seeking to put Germany on its feet again, and to train them to believe that lasting good living cannot be produced by sheer brute force.

There is an old Greek story that is very apt to this point. It runs that a young prince announced that when he came to maturity he should conquer first one country, then another, until he had conquered the world. "Good," said his teacher, "and having conquered the world what would you do next?" "Oh," replied the Prince, "then I shall settle down to a life of peace and comfort." "Good," again said the teacher, "but why not do that first?"

We leave that story for all our people who imagine that war makes brave men or leads to human greatness. When we note all that is done during war and after war, and count up the losses and gains we find there is little done that is good with war that could not be done without it. The conquerer glorifies the power of his armies, the loser considers that if he had possessed a larger army he would have been the conqueror. And as war logic goes that conclusion is indisputable. There is nothing done with war that cannot be done without it—if people are not poisoned with false notions of greatness. In our "smaller" wars we have not felt this. They were a long way off and they were with people less "civilised" than we were. In the last war things were on a different level. The result is that we came close to destruction, with our civil life plentifully sprinkled with house breakers and the like who continue robberies of shops and houses.

Yet, in spite of all that faces us, we venture to send our good wishes to all readers of the "Freethinker," the oldest Freethinking paper in the world, with the exception of the American. But there is one item that remains to which we wish to call the attention of those who are interested in the "Freethinker." The paper is widely distributed; it is read by all classes of the community, and it is well appreciated. We are not saying too much when we say that the "Freethinker" is more than a mere journal. For the reason named, and for its value as a paper, we suggest to readers that they should do their best to introduce the paper to likely subscribers. Or they may help by sending names and addresses of those whom they think would be interested in Freethought. By so doing they would help to make our aims better known than they are.

The Newcastle Branch N.S.S. holds another Sunday evening meeting in the Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street, to-day at 7 o'clock. Mr. F. A. Hornibrook will be the speaker, and his subject, "The Vatican in Politics," is one of growing public importance. There is a large number of people who do not realise the part the Roman Catholic Church is playing behind the scenes in world politics to-day. The local saints will no doubt see that another successful meeting will be added to its record to-day.

APOLLONIUS OF TYANA

I.

THERE appears to have been very few more remarkable characters in the first century of our era than Apollonius—not even excepting Jesus Christ, if we admit the real existence of this popular Deity. It is certainly rather strange that he should have been born about the year 4 B.C., the date given these days for Jesus, that he should have lived and worked in the East for nearly 100 years, and that he appears to have heard nothing whatever about the Christian God—or even about the work of the twelve Apostles and Paul in propagating their new religion.

Classical scholars long knew the existence of a life of Apollonius written by Philostratus, but it has never been easy to get a translation of this work—for a very good reason. It was not considered policy to allow the "vulgar," that is, the common people, the man in the street so to speak, know that Apollonius is claimed by his biographer to have performed many miracles quite like those attributed to Jesus, some indeed so very like that they look extremely silly and exaggerated. A God can always produce a miracle most acceptable to his adorers, but a similar miracle performed by a mere layman generally looks a piece of trickery. In any case, it can always be explained as such, but you can't explain away a Divine miracle without accusing the Deity concerned of fraud, and that would never do. I think a translation of the work of Philostratus appears in the Loeb Classics but it is not generally known.

Philostratus, who was born about the year A.D. 170, and lived to A.D. 250, was commissioned to write a biography of Apollonius by Julia, the wife of the Emperor Serverus. She appears to have had all the papers and manuscripts left by Apollonius, and also earlier and slighter biographies. Philostratus, who was actually a fine writer, put them into ship-shape order, and practically all we know of his subject comes from his famous biography, but how much of it is true, and how much due to the writer's imagination is another matter. For us, however, one thing does remain true—the actual existence of Apollonius. He really was an historical personage.

It was one of the earliest of the better known Deists, Charles Blount (1654-1693), who translated a portion of the work of Philostratus with copious notes. I have not seen this work, but it seems to have caused a great deal of indignation among those Christians who, in the front line of battle, felt themselves obliged to meet and beat if possible the first really great onslaught on their religion since the Reformation.

Many of the most notable Elizabethans, like the Earl of Oxford, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Christopher Marlowe were accused of Atheism, but it required a great deal of courage to deny God Almighty; and the first notable attempts to grapple with religion were made from a Deistic standpoint. Among the earliest writers was Blount, his notes to Philostratus' "Life of Apollonius" being particularly directed against the "revealed" Christian religion. The point he made was the similarity of the miracles of Jesus and those of Apollonius—and how can we explain the latter?

Let us glance briefly at the career of Apollonius. Taken to Tarsus at the age of 14 by his father, he rapidly became dissatisfied with his teaching there and went to Aegae where he met Platonists, Stoics, and Epicureans. He readily imbibed their doctrines but found in the philosophy of Pythagoras exactly what suited his temperament. Like the Pythagorians, he abstained from meat, and lived strictly on fruit, herbs and vegetables. He wore only the skin of animals—something perhaps our own vegetarians might kick against—he went barefooted, and never cut his hair. Jesus, it will be remembered, disputed with the rabbis in the Jewish temple at the age of twelve. Apollonius was somewhat older when he engaged the priests of Aesculapius in their temple in discussions, and he gained a great reputation.

To qualify for a "professorship" in the Pythagorian philosophy, he had to go through the "discipline" of five years complete silence, which he did successfully, and he then visited Antioch, Ephesus, and many other famous centres of learning. He refused to waste time with the illiterate—so unlike Jesus!—and discoursed chiefly with priests and sages. He held a kind of "brains trust" for his pupils who were permitted to ask any question they pleased, and he gave lectures at noon to the public at large. He got a reputation for force, urbanity, and persuasion in his arguments.

But Apollonius was anxious to imitate his master Pythagoras, and so he determined to travel extensively attended only by two servants. His reputation followed him and he appears to have persuaded his hearers that he knew all languages without learning them, and that he could understand even the language of birds and animals.

He went to Babylon where he made a great impression on the king, thence to India where he spent some months, eventually returning to Babylon and to Greece. Here, it is claimed, he performed a number of miracles—one of them raising the shade of Achilles, and another the casting out of a demon. I do not see why these miracles should not be just as authentic as those of Jesus.

Some other miracles are just as gravely affirmed. He predicted Nero's attempt to cut through the isthmus of Corinth, and declared that an island was rising out of the sea between Crete and Thera at the moment it was rising through an earthquake. These and other marvellous feats of prophecy almost made the common people worship him as a God. And—remembering Jesus—we can ask, why not?

But Apollonius was still intent on travelling, and he went to Rome, to Spain, to Italy, and to Egypt, where he was received with great favour by Vespasian. That astute general, who became the Emperor of Rome, was no mean hand at miracles himself, and recognised the advantage of having at his side a "wonder worker" always a big card to play with the multitude—even at this day.

One of the things which Apollonius told Vespasian was that he was destined to rebuild the temple of Jupiter in Rome—which rather astonished him as he had no idea it had been burned down. Apollonius had got the fact somehow, but in those days there was no telegraph or wireless; it must have been through a miracle.

All these things are described very minutely by Philostratus, with long conversations and extracts from letters written by Apollonius—everything gravely told by the biographer, just as the details of the life of Jesus are related by the Gospel writers. And the miracles of Apollonius were later never questioned by those Church Fathers who deal with him any more than they questioned the miracles of Jesus. If the true miracles have behind them the true God, obviously the others must be the work of Demons—and that is how the Fathers accounted for the miracles of Apollonius. They never really questioned the authenticity of the recital at all; it was in a book, properly related, and therefore must have taken place.

But while Jesus was said to have been brought up for trial and crucified, Apollonius, who was "wanted" by Domitian, went to Rome of his own accord. He was tried, and conducted his own defence against the charge of sedition so well that he was acquitted, but not before astonishing his captors with some remarkable phenomena. Domitian asked him to stay as he wanted to talk to him, but Apollonius, sternly reproving him, suddenly disappeared. Such a sudden dematerialisation appears to have caused few of his friends any surprise.

H. CUTNER.

TOM PAINE

The Civil Servant Turned Revolutionary

IF ever the Association needs a patron saint it might do worse than elect Thomas Paine, for it was his dismissal from the Excise Department following his leadership of a claim for increased wages that led directly to the great sequence of events which culminated in "The Rights of Man" and "The Age of Reason."

Born of a Norfolk quaker, Paine had been sailor, stay-maker, shop-keeper and excise officer, when his agitation on behalf of his fellow civil servants attracted the attention of Benjamin Franklin, who was then in England. On his dismissal from the Excise Department Franklin arranged for his passage to the American Colony, where he soon identified himself with the growing antagonism of the colonists to the England of George III. His first great pamphlet, "Common Sense," caused an enormous stir among the disgruntled colonists, and when the day of action came, Paine joined the Revolutionary army, fighting by day and writing by night. The armies of Washington achieved success and Paine became in effect the Foreign Secretary of the young Republic.

He was sent on various missions to France, and there observed the rising anger of the workers against a corrupt aristocracy. He was filled with disgust when his erstwhile friend, Burke, made a slashing attack on the people in his "Reflections on the French Revolution." Paine immediately replied with the greatest of his political works, "The Rights of Man." It was an immediate success, and brought an enormous demand for cheap editions from working class societies all over the country. Its fame spread to France, where the author was elected Deputy for Calais and other Departments.

The English Prime Minister, Pitt, became seriously alarmed and arranged for Paine's prosecution. Warned by William Blake and other friends, he escaped to France in the nick of time and, in his absence, was found guilty and outlawed by a picked jury, who did not even wait to hear the judge's summing up.

In France, he received a tumultuous welcome and enjoyed the friendship of most of the great revolutionary figures, allying himself to the party of the Gironde. His plea for the life of Louis XVI., however, incurred the suspicions of Marat and Robespierre, and, when the latter gained power, he was thrown into prison, where he escaped the guillotine by a miracle.

"The Age of Reason"

His next great work, "The Age of Reason," brought him more abuse and persecution than any of his other writings and, even now, is considered by many to be an atheistical book. There

is no need to look further than the author's great creed in Chapter 1 to see how false this accusation is:—

"*I believe in one God and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.*

"*I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy and endeavouring to make our fellow creatures happy.*"

In "The Age of Reason" Paine's object, as was Voltaire's before him, was to replace by a scientific and critical study of religion the chicaneries practised by the established Churches of the day. He wanted not so much to attack Christianity as to release Christians from the chains of superstition which were keeping the people in a mental miasma against which all institutional changes were useless.

Released from prison on the fall of Robespierre, Paine, broken in health, retired to a small farm in America, but even here the bitter hostility created by his "Age of Reason" pursued him, and when he died in 1809 it was almost impossible to find a Christian sufficiently christian to give his body decent burial.

He died a disappointed man. He had helped to make revolutions in America and France, and to sow the seeds of working class activity in England. He saw the American Government becoming increasingly aristocratic, the power grasped by the French workers being seized by the bourgeoisie, and the beginnings of bitter repression of the workers in England.

Nevertheless, his fame and influence increased steadily after his death, and became greater perhaps than that of any other revolutionary writer during the formative period of the 19th century.

His claim to fame rests on two pillars. First, in his person he set an example of courage, humanity and single-mindedness. He lived and died a man poor in the goods of this world; because he would not temporise where his principles were concerned, he brought on himself the enmity of three of the most powerful men of his day, Washington, Robespierre and Pitt; he never flinched from the unpopular course when he knew it to be the right one; he was indeed "the Knight Errant of the Democratic Revolution."

Secondly, his writings were the first great political pamphlets to examine the problems of democracy scientifically; in addition they were written for the worker in language which, although it often attained heights of great beauty, he could understand. He made the preaching of democracy democratic. He was the pioneer of agitators in the best sense of that word. Most of his utterances apply as well to-day as they did when they were written. The famous opening of "The Crisis" might well serve as a call to action for our own times:—

"*These are the times that stir men's souls.*"

(From Red Tape, November, 1946).

W. J. F. THOMPSON.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

I.

WHAT shall we do with the empty churches?

This scans so like "What shall we do with the drunken sailor?" that one is tempted to treat it similarly:—

"What shall we do with the empty churches?
What shall we do with the empty churches?
What shall we do with the empty churches?
Where we pray no longer."

Proceeding to answer in the same jingling rhymes.

Regretfully putting such levity aside, handling it with the seriousness it needs—for it is serious to those who make their living out of churches, tragic to them—the problem may appear to be largely solving itself.

Going about the country one finds churches and chapels especially the latter, being put to most diverse secular uses, as stores, warehouses, bazaars, British Restaurants, printing works, cinemas, and perhaps unkindnest cut of all one is a Repertory Theatre. Cynics will exclaim: How appropriate!

A few have become dwelling houses, and a number locked up are yet in fair preservation, while others are derelict or ruinous. These last if beyond repair for other uses should be pulled down, the materials employed for housing or renovation of houses; the sites rebuilt on with modern structures.

Fewer Anglican churches have suffered secularisation or despoilment. The English Church is wealthy with endowments and investments, so can keep churches open no matter how few attend. If no congregation is present at services it continues to pay stipends. So clergymen minister to scanty and dwindling assemblies of worshippers. The Church can afford to pay rectors and vicars to do little, nearly nothing; does so in many cases.

There is small sense in allowing this to continue. Where congregations fall below a reasonable minimum, say, one-quarter of the seating accommodation, the building should be closed and the faithful combined in another fane.

At the same time the superfluous priests, pastors, parsons or ministers should be dispossessed, dismissed or transferred. In no other trade or profession would men be paid to do little or nothing, or retained at large salaries in offices where their duties decline yearly.

II.

Curiously some of the largest emoluments—next to bishops and deans—go to men with the smallest congregations, as in old country parishes, while many big town vicars are paid much less. Here the Anglican Church should set its own house in order, pooling its funds, which would then be ample for all clergymen to be paid the same stipend, or alternatively a sliding scale based on population of parish; better on the number of adherents to the Church.

This is revolutionary, but one sees the day not far distant when an inquisitive and aware public will ask the churches what they are doing with their vast wealth, both accumulated and current. Lacking a satisfactory answer there will be a move to take that riches and apply it to secular purposes; social, educational, recreational; something to benefit the mass of people instead of paying exaggerated stipends to men who merely entertain a few specialised religionists.

Pending settlement of the financial and economic side the question of disused, rarely used or little used buildings can be decided. Some, as seen by those who like to notice, are already being put to full use. The process could well be accelerated in greater variety.

Empty or nearly empty Sunday Schools and places of worship should be transformed into Youth Hostels, clubs, libraries, art galleries, museums, lecture and concert halls, cinemas; there is a diversity of uses apart from demolishing them and selling the materials and sites.

III.

The problem is complicated by the existence of ancient churches which have architectural value, or archeological, antiquarian or historical interest, and sometimes a sentimental attachment. The best of these could be retained, possibly getting congregations if others were pulled down or employed in non-religious purposes.

Some of our great cathedrals, abbeys and priories are beautiful. It must be conceded many are not. More than one is ugly almost to hideousness, though there are people who would defend such on their value as museums. They should be openly ranked as such, stocked with more antiquities than they at present possess, as pictures, statuary and other relics.

To this could be added the rendering of fine music, as is done at the Three Choirs Festival, and production of plays and pageants. Thus the greatest religious edifices would acquire educational and cultural importance. Those already in ruins

should be cleared. Enough complete medieval churches remain entire for all instructional and show purposes.

Increasingly it becomes apparent that church officials and declining congregations, also government and local authorities and the general public will have to face the interrogation: What is to be done with empty or nearly empty places of worship?

This will have to be followed; it will follow logically; by inquiry into their great funds and salaries of dignitaries, with decisions what is to be done with such as well as disposal of the buildings.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

AN APOSTLE OF OBSCURANTISM

IN her recent very interesting book of reminiscences, "The Merry Wives of Westminster," Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes alludes to the late William Hurrell Mallock as a writer whose works need re-study; as a reviewer of Mrs. Lowndes (Desmond MacCarthy) expressed it, "an old-fashioned author who is patiently waiting for a second hearing." This is very true. Mallock—novelist, satirist, political and theological controversialist, poet—was a writer of great power and charm. He deserves perusal also as representative of one aspect of the later nineteenth century and the pre-1914 years of this one. He stood for "die-hard Toryism" in politics and for the maintenance of orthodoxy and authoritarianism in religion: though on the latter subject his method of defence was odd, as we shall see later in this article.

Mallock's autobiography ("Memoirs of Life and Literature") published in 1920, is a very entertaining and instructive work as displaying the life of a privileged few in the last days of the 19th century. Mallock came of an old West Country ancestry, and was brought up in a strict Tory atmosphere amidst wealthy landowners. He describes complacently how in the days of his boyhood he used to see cottagers humbly curtsying "and the men touching their forelocks when a member of 'the family' passed." This state of things appealed warmly to his sympathies. When very young "he thought any protest or revolt against the established order an impertinence indeed, but otherwise of little import." Later in life he seems to have passed much of his time as a guest in stately castles and wealthy Victorian country houses, of which he gives eulogistic accounts, and of which "memories recur to me like the voices of evening rooks." How strange, in these days, seems a point of view such as that expressed in these words: "Chance reminiscences such as those which have just been quoted will be sufficient to indicate what, so far as a child could understand them, the conditions and ways of thinking of the rural population were, and how easy and unquestioning were the relations which then subsisted between it and the old landed families. These relations were easy, because the differences between the two classes were commonly assumed to be static, one supporting and one protecting the other, as though they resembled two geological strata. In slightly different language, society was presented to us in the form of two orders—the men, women and children who touched their hats and curtsied, and the men, women and children to whom these salutations were made."

Read this gem! "Bishop Philpotts, holding till the day of his death a 'golden stall' at Durham, the emoluments of which amounted to £5,000 a year, interested me rather as a lay magnate than as a clerical. Among the many villas then rising at Torquay the Bishop built one of the largest. This agreeable residence, in the designing of which he was helped by my father, and which overlooked extensive glades and lawns sloping down towards the sea, enabled him to enjoy a society more entertaining than that of his Cathedral close. His mundane hospitalities were as familiar to me as any character in a novel of Miss Austen. . . . But my boyish appreciation of the Bishop's mundane qualities was equalled by my belief in the sacro-sanctity of his office. I never for a moment doubted that men like Henry of Exeter were channels through which the Christian priesthood received those miraculous powers, by their exercise of which alone it was possible for the ordinary sinner to be rescued from eternal torment."

Brought up in, and being naturally sympathetic with, these aristocratic circles, Mallock was sure to become a strong opponent of Socialism, Radicalism and even what to most other people would appear to be moderate democratic reform. He soon realised that modern revolutionary movements, even if still "an impertinence," are by no means "otherwise of no import." He came to view them as grave menaces to "the established order," and, having great literary talent, he set out writing books to oppose them. He directed his efforts especially against the Socialist pioneers. His contention was not only that Socialism is economically unsound and that it involves State slavery, but also that its assumption that "labour is the source of wealth" is a gross fallacy. He maintained that labour alone could produce only a minimum of goods, the indefinite increase of wealth being the result of the efforts of "great men" "superior minds"—not superior in general culture necessarily, but in the special spheres to which their energies are directed.

His book "Labour and the Popular Welfare" he thus describes in "Memoirs": "The argument of the book, in general outline, is as follows: Without manual labour there can be no wealth at all. Unless most of its members are labourers no community can exist. But so long as wealth is produced by manual labour only, the amount produced is small. In whatever way it may be distributed, the majority will be primitively poor. The only means by which the total product of a given population can be increased is not any new toil on the part of the labouring many, but an intellectual direction of the many by a superior capable few." In a later, larger work—perhaps the most ambitious of his books ("Aristocracy and Evolution")—he elaborated in great detail this theory of "the functions and rights of the wealthier classes." In it, incidentally, he opposed general popular education as likely to raise up agitators to spread crude and false ideas. Whatever we may think of its theories, the book is able and deserves reading.

With regard to religion Mallock was as strenuous a defender of conservatism (that is, of maintaining existing religious institutions) as he was in politics, but he was so in his own special way. He had early imbibed the idea that the ordinary methods of Christian—indeed, of general religious—apologetics are obsolete. Science, he thought, has exploded them so that they have become even absurd. Nevertheless, he was of a strong opinion that without belief in supernatural religion a tolerable human life-theory is impossible. "The moral (of his early book, "The New Republic"), the fruit of my education at Oxford, and also of my experiences of society before I became familiar with the wider world of London, was that without religion life is reduced to an absurdity, and that all philosophy which aims at eliminating religion and basing human values on some natural substitute is, if judged by the same standards, as absurd as those dogmas of orthodoxy which the 'naturalists' are attempting to supersede."

In 1903 he issued his once celebrated book, "Religion as a Credible Doctrine," in which he set out in detail his theory of how, in spite of the fact (as he thought it) that the familiar old arguments in their favour had been defeated beyond recovery, yet belief in a personal God, free will, and life after earthly death, can still be vindicated as "worthy of a reasonable man's belief." His theory, to put it baldly, was that we can accept apparently contradictory statements as both true. He had shown, or endeavoured to show, that the arguments usually advanced for religion are opposed to scientific facts. He then proceeded to maintain, however, that when we analyse these "ultimate scientific and philosophic conceptions" are also full of what, so far as our intellects can see, are flagrant self-

contradictions. He illustrated this by analysing our ideas of space, time, ether, etc. Clearly, then (he argued), we can accept what seem to our minds contradictory facts. This is not because truth can contradict itself, but because, as a result of the limitation of our powers, "the ultimate nature of things is to our minds inscrutable." As, then, we can accept apparent contradictions in science, why not also accept the beliefs both of science and of religion, although we cannot in our minds reconcile them?

This line of defence is of course a fallacy. The comparison of religion and science is unsound. It may be that we cannot understand "ultimate reality"—but there is agreement as to plain, overt facts. We all agree that the sun shines, gravitation pulls, men are born and die, and so on. In religion, on the other hand, there are endless sects, offering opposed beliefs even on basic matters. The Christian says Christ is God; the Jew denies it; the Muslim believes in one God, the Hindu in many; and so *ad infinitum*. All that Mallock's theory, even if accepted, would do then is to give an excuse for a person to believe whatever appealed to his emotions. A Buddhist could employ the theory as readily as a Christian. It would vindicate Mohammed as much as Christ. In short, it would vindicate nothing, for it destroys the basis of objective truth. If religion is proved false, the fact must be faced. If, on the other hand, it is credible, it must be capable of defence by normal reasoning. "We cannot have it both ways."

Mallock's books were a pathetic attempt, in an age of decaying institutions, to uphold "old ways" against the merciless erosion of the tide of new knowledge. Clever, eloquent, and earnest, they merit re-reading as "period pieces" as well as for their literary skill.

J. W. POYNTER.

NO FEAR IN DEATH

"ENJOY all—be kind to all!" is one of the philosophic maxims enunciated by John Cowper Powys in his very analytical "The Art of Growing Old," first published in 1944.

A comment by him in this connection is:—

"Of all great religious teachers the most monstrously wrong-headed was undoubtedly St. Augustine. No old classical moralist, no old Chinese moralist, no old Egyptian moralist could possibly—could conceivably—have attributed to the Moral Government of the Universe a horror like this wicked saint's vision of unchristened babes, a span-long, on the floor of Hell! Therefore when we find St. Augustine teaching that evil is a negative thing we can refute him out of his own positively-evil conception of a positively-evil baby-torturing God."

Powys declares that what "the 'Higher Authorities'—all these 'Leaders' and 'Messiahs' and Priests and Prophets and Dictators—have always made use of in their proud and cruel art of moulding the generations into Master-men and Untouchables is the ignorance and superstition of the masses," adding: "Why was the Church infallible and supreme in the Middle Ages? Because the people were illiterate."

In his closing chapter, "Old Age and Death," Powys begins with the statement, "The one supreme advantage that Old Age possesses over Middle Age and Youth is its nearness to Death"—a statement he proceeds to examine at length, with this conclusion:—

"Thus the final and ultimate effect of the presence of Death upon an old man or an old woman may well prove to be, when the mind is driven back to its last barrier, nothing less than abysmal 'doubt of all appearances'—that doubt of all human reason and all imagination, which reverts to the childish question that has never been answered, and can never be answered: 'Why am I myself? Why is the World the World? Why is anything anything?'

"This is that sublime and comical doubt upon which at the last all our hope depends and which nothing can take away.

"So absolute are the limitations of our minds, so questionable the whole panorama of what we think we see and have seen, that the attitude upon which we are thrown back at the end of our life is one of cheerful ignorance and fearless expectation.

"One thing we are sure of and only one—namely, that whatever the reality may be, if 'reality' itself is not a figment of the brain, it is a reality totally different from anything we have imagined, or thought of, or dreamed—a reality that is quite as likely to come nearer the heart's desire than in our ignorance we thought possible as it is to defeat our hope, mock our struggle, deny our instinct, confound our faith, annihilate our being.

"What rises up within us to face this tremendous finale is in fact what all along we have secretly guessed—namely, that though in reality we know nothing and have found little, we are likely enough to lose less and need have no fear of anything."

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia. J. Y. ANDERONEY.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held December 19, 1946

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Rosetti (A.C.), Griffiths, Seibert, Ebury, Lupton, Morris, Barker, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. The Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Manchester, Bradford, West London Branches, and to the Parent Society.

Matter concerning the Bradford Branch was before the meeting and action taken. Correspondence from Merseyside, Hamburg, and London areas was dealt with and decisions given. Lecture reports were received and future lectures arranged.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, January 23, and the meeting closed.

R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 7, 7 p.m.: "Rationalism in Post-War Europe," Mr. JOSEPH MCCABE.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Hopes and Fears for 1947," Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (The National Trade Union Club, Gt. Newport St., W.C.1).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A Social Meeting.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A Lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—6-30 p.m.: "Gods and Politics," Mr. F. J. CORINA.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool 1).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Religion and the Worker," Mr. C. MCKELVIE (Blackpool).

Newcastle Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Vatican in Politics," Mr. F. A. HORNIBROOK.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Hotel, Sheffield).—Thursday, January 9, 7-30 p.m. Debate: "Christianity—The Historic Enemy of Progress," pro. Mr. G. L. GREAVES (President, Sheffield Branch), con. the Rev. WILLIAM WALLACE.

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