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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The God Jesus

I COMMENCE my comments on Christmas with a passage which I wrote many years ago.

"All my life I have been a firm believer in the divinity of Jesus Christ. I do not believe that he was half a man and half a god. Neither do I believe that he was all man. I believe that he was just a god, all of him, and all the time. In this matter I am a whole-hogger. I have no belief in half-measures. My faith rests on the divinity of Jesus, without any compromising. I will not give way a fraction of an inch to those ethical culturists who are inclined to follow Jesus because of his teaching of morals, or to the half-accepted half-way sceptical Christian who will attribute the faults of Jesus to the God who took on the nature of man. Without the slightest shadow of compromise or qualifications, I assert that Jesus Christ was God, and was never anything else. No man could have been born as he was born, no mere man could have done what he did, no mere man could have risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, and remained there to judge both the living and the dead. Only a God of the first water could have done these things. Let us therefore keep to the one sure spiritual fact about Jesus Christ. He is God and nothing else."

There is something else in favour of the belief in the God Jesus Christ. He was following the group of gods that have been in existence in many parts of the world. They came into existence in the dawn of developing human beings, and were perpetuated all over the world. They are almost as common as rudimentary tails. We have not yet developed so far as to outgrow them. We have not even forgotten their original significance. Just as some religious egotists repudiate association with our tailed ancestors, so we find Christians indignantly rejecting a lineal connection with the forms of thought from which their own religion is derived. But it will not do. The evidence is too multi-form, the proof is too complete. Christianity in all its principal phases is a survival of savage cults, a perpetuation. The man who does not see this has not made an approach to a proper understanding of Christianity. Religions are fundamentally alike; they differ only in the degree to which civilised modes of thinking see them.

Long before Christianity saw men worshipping the sun as the god of life. They felt the sun and recognised its power. They saw the sun dying at the approach of winter, and watched eagerly and fretfully for the turn of the year. The victory of the sun over the winter cold meant so much that there is small wonder that men in their ignorance resorted to prayers and charms to help the sun regain its strength. In the ancient ceremonies of spring, summer and

autumn, we can see much of the significance of these superstitions which have come down to us in Christian forms.

In all this there was a germ of poetry. But when Christianity came along, these primitive myths converted serious things into ridiculous solemnities. A god who is literally born as a human baby, who passes through all the phases of babyhood, to be petted and fondled, even smacked by his earthly parents, to grow up to be executed, to rise from the dead when he might easily have openly confounded his enemies, is so absurd that it carries "absurdity" on every line of the story. It is not to be wondered that Christian legislators took steps to prevent people laughing at such a creed.

Over and over again common sense has shown itself too strong for religion in general, and there is no exception here with Christianity. Consider its applications and implications, theoretical and actual, that it is with all Christians the silence or expressed sorrow that one would expect. What we see is merry-making, good eating, and usually plenty of drinking. There is a room for rejoicing when the period marks the beginning of the sun on its movement towards the spring and showing a return to greater strength. But with Christianity, what room is there for rejoicing? Man made perfect by God had gone from bad to worse. Man had become so bad that there was no hope of his improvement by ordinary methods. The situation was so desperate that God himself had to come to earth disguised as a baby and then slowly develop to a grown-up, and then finally die the death of a common criminal.

The memory of that sacrifice, and of the circumstances that arose should have filled the mind of every Christian. But did it? Instead of sorrow we find jollification. Instead of the Christian regretting the execution of Jesus, he rejoices. If circumstances permit, Christians will celebrate the death of Jesus—by getting drunk—if price and quality permit. Plum-puddings and mince-pies, beer and whisky, Christmas trees and jollifications, what have all these things to do with the death of a man who—it is said—died for the benefit of others? Suppose the people who are said to have killed Jesus, instead of killing him, had met him with open arms and treated him with every kindness? Would the Christians have sorrowed over his *not* being executed?

Those last few words must not be taken lightly. For I find among my papers a statement in a well-established religious paper that it was only desperate methods by which people could be saved, and God was not certain whether he would succeed or not. As it is put, "Bethlehem was God's great gamble in which he staked everything to make men understand the amazing, tireless love of God." That is at least quite clear, for it appears that the saving of the world depended upon the Christians killing Jesus. It was God's gamble, and God won; but Christians have

never had the decency to say to the Jews, "Thank you for the execution."

While we are talking about the Father of Jesus, we may note that it was a very great Christian, Martin Luther, who said that "the cunning of Satan would get the better of poor half-witted God." These old theologians had a courage and a directness of language that our theologians completely lack.

I know it will be said that I am looking at Christianity from the wrong point of view. Christians rejoice at the anniversary of the birth of their God because his coming meant the ushering in of peace and love and brotherhood, because he opened the way to salvation. Well, the first Christians might conceivably have hoped that this would be the case—as a matter of fact they were looking for nothing of the kind but is the Christian of to-day justified in taking the birth of Christ as a starting point for these things? When Christ was born the herald angels sang of peace and good-will on earth. That is one of the profoundest pieces of irony in all history. One is almost inclined to believe that some enemy inserted that passage in the New Testament as a satire on Christianity itself. When were passions less controlled, hatred more vivid, or bloodshed more usual than under the shadow of the Cross? What amount of good-will do the so-called inferior races of the earth experience at the hands of the Christian visitors and rulers? They are outraged and exploited without shame in the name of Christianity and morality. For centuries it has been dangerous for any unarmed nation or people in the world to possess resources that would arouse the greed of Christians. At one time it is gold, at another diamonds, at another rubies, at another rubber, at another oil, always and everywhere the Christian nations of the world have gone all over the earth plundering and fighting, and sanctifying their piracy in the name of Christianity. Even after a war such as the one from which we have just emerged the Christian nations show themselves unable to settle down to peaceful paths. There are houses needed, there are roads that need remaking. There are a score of things that could be done with the money, which would give an equal amount of employment and would confer a benefit upon the community. The spending of money at this juncture of our affairs, is only an indication that our Christian governors and fellow citizens cannot yet think of the world in terms of peaceful intercourse, but only intercourse with the levelled gun ready for use. "Peace on Earth!" sang the herald angels at the beginning. Let us have atom bombs, and thank God for the peace and love which his religion brings, sing the Christians at the other end. The one is, perhaps, the best commentary on the other.

But I rather like the idea of "God's Gamble." He was evidently getting reckless. For a long time he had been backing the wrong horse. He had made a world and pronounced it all good, only to find it getting all bad. He had drowned all but a handful of his creations because he found it impossible to do anything with them, only again to find that the new lot was just as bad as the old lot, that they would go after other Gods and break every one of his commandments. And he had the mortification of seeing whatever civilization existed going with the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans. No wonder he got exasperated and tried a last desperate gamble. He was

like a man on a racecourse who has consistently backed losers all day and then stakes his only remaining "bob" on the last race. The production of Jesus was his "great gamble in which he staked everything," and like the almost "broke" backer, his last gamble went the way of his preceding ventures. He had again backed a loser.

Let us give God credit for the best of intentions. He wanted to back a winner as certainly as the man who has staked his last shilling on the 4-30. But with what success? His last great gamble worked out as badly as had his other speculations. He took on the forms of time and space in order to show to man a love that was without height or breadth, or length or colour, or smell or weight, or anything else, and with the result that men hated each other as they had never done before, because of this great gamble. In His name men used the rack, the torture chamber, and the stake; they lied and forged and slandered in order to demonstrate their sense of God's graciousness in taking on forms of space and time. And to-day if one were to take a census of the actual believers in the occurrence and the value of this great gamble it is extremely probable that they would not amount to a fifth of the world's inhabitants. To stake so much, and to win so little!

We come back to our subject. When Christianity took this nature festival and converted it into a genuine historic event it made the whole thing ridiculous. A God who appears as a human baby, who is fondled and smacked and physicked, who grows up to be put to death in order to carry out a compact with himself the story becomes completely absurd. Only a long practice could keep one's mind straight in such circumstances.

More serious still, if Christians really believed and actually visualised the story, Christmas would be no season of rejoicing. Such a sacrifice ought to fill a man with sadness. But instead of sorrowing, the Christian world is full of enjoyment. He does not fast, turkeys are slaughtered by the thousand because it is believed some very ancient Jews killed a God. Every year Christians show their sadness by getting drunk, and the general community imbibes puddings, mince-pies, beer and whisky, all to show how deep is the sorrow of Christians. For myself, I can appreciate jollification because a god has disappeared. But I cannot understand jollification for his return to life again.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE BISHOP AND CHRISTIANITY

III.

HOWEVER mythical are some of the stories connected with Jesus, Bishop Barnes is quite convinced (in his "Rise of Christianity") that Jesus himself was no myth. The picture given of him in the Gospels "is not vague or shadowy, but real and powerful." That is practically all the evidence we get from him that there was a Jesus, except that we are referred to Apollonius of Tyana as a further proof that Jesus actually lived. Personally, I should have thought a reference to Apollonius with his miracles, his exorcisms, and his other marvels proved, not that there really was an Apollonius, but that it was quite easy to write the life of such a hero, and, particularly, to endow him with the gift of performing miracles without being the Son of God. As he was performing these

miracles about the same time as Jesus, it is more than extraordinary that they appear never to have heard about each other. Here were two beings doing the most wonderful supernatural things almost at the same time, and yet nobody outside the Gospels appears to have heard of Jesus, while Apollonius seems to have lived a long life "meeting," says Dr. Barnes, "some of the great ones of the earth," his reputation lasting centuries after his death. There is confirmation from pagan writers that Apollonius really lived—whether he performed miracles is another question—but where can we find any mention of Jesus? As soon as we began to inquire, we are in the realm of lies and forgeries.

I have always maintained that if there had been a Jesus who really lived as a man, and who left, after being put to death, so many devoted disciples, all of them preaching and converting pagans and Jews in Jerusalem, it would have been impossible for some account of this to have been left out of the histories of Josephus. Yet we do not get a line or even a hint of the rows and squabbles between the apostles and disciples of Jesus so graphically described in Acts, in the pages of the Jewish historian. This was a difficulty which had to be faced, so Dr. Barnes does so by telling us that the "first dozen chapters of Acts contain no little legendary history." This appears to me to be a very drastic way of settling early Christian history.

John tells us—it is true that Dr. Barnes is convinced that the last chapter in John is an "addition," or to put it bluntly, a forgery—that there were so many things which Jesus said and did "if they should be written every one I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." This is about the biggest "whopper" in the Bible, but Luke, in the first verse following this, the first verse of Acts, calls John (by implication) a liar by saying that in the "former treatise," (that is in the Gospel of Luke) "have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach." Luke then goes on to describe all sorts of marvellous happenings, such as the Descent of the Holy Ghost, Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, a lame man healed, Peter and John brought before the council, the death of Stephen, Saul the persecutor, Tabitha restored to life, and so on—all of which, told with great detail, we are now assured by a Bishop, of the Church of England, "contain no little legendary history," which is a polite way of saying there is hardly a word of truth in them! No wonder Josephus knows nothing about such happenings, and I should like to ask, if a tissue of lies can be thus invented of the history of the apostles and disciples immediately following the "Resurrection," why are we asked to believe the story of Jesus at all? If Luke—or the writer of Acts—could thus palm off as history a number of forgeries, why are we to believe him when he is writing about a God?

Dr. Barnes records also a "most unexpected fact," that Luke, though he tells us so much of the "missionary" life of Paul "never once refers to his Epistles." Long ago, I noted this, and came to the conclusion that the Saul or Paul of the Acts was not the author of the Epistles which are, at least in the form we have them, edited or mutilated editions of the work of some pagan Gnostic who probably wrote in the first century, but whose work passed through the hands of pious Christians and was changed in the second century; which accounts for the eminent Dutch scholar, Van Manen, ascribing them to such a date.

Very few scholars ever question the existence of Paul—even that arch sceptic, Robert Taylor, believed that he lived and wrote—but when we put aside all prejudice and ask for evidence of his existence, as Dr. Barnes candidly admits, (and few writers have shown his courage) we find ourselves "baffled by lack of information and, more often perplexed by the quality" of what we find. It is quite impossible to reconcile the contradictions about the life of Paul in Acts and Galatians, and Dr. Barnes admits that the long speeches in Acts attributed to Paul "are

not authentic." They represent, in fact, "beliefs held by the writer of Acts about the year A.D. 100." That is the way modern scholarship vindicates the despised Freethinkers who have for one hundred years or more said or implied the same thing. Acts is a forgery, a tissue of lies, and to try to prove the existence of Paul from the legends is, as Dr. Barnes tries to say, almost hopeless. But of course it can be done—very much as one could prove the actual existence of Aladdin from the account given in the "Arabian Nights." This is what the Bishop tries though no one could show more perplexity than when he does his best to show Paul a Jew of Jews, a Roman of Romans, or a pagan apostate, all of which can be gathered from the New Testament. You pay your fee and take your choice. All I need say here is that as far as the writings attributed to Paul are concerned he is no more of a Jew than Sir Oswald Mosley. They contain nothing whatever of the special teachings which all Jews in general go through. They are a mangled hotch-potch (apart from ethics) of religious "mysteries"—the kind of thing we get in the Kabbalah, and other "occult" writings. The hopeless nonsense of "I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" is equalled of course by the "Kingdom of God is within you"—though it is only fair to say that anyone believing in God, and well read in esoteric literature, will swallow both sayings as easily as a delicious peach.

No one has ever successfully shown why Paul's visits to Jerusalem and the squabbles between him, Peter, and Barnabus, together with an account of the way in which so many Jews were converted to the new religion, find no place in the history of Josephus. Thousands of pages have been written to explain the two notices of Jesus in the current copies of the Jewish historian—for and against their authenticity, but as to the "acts" of the Apostles he is absolutely silent. If my "speculation" is worth anything, all I feel from this silence is that the whole story is not just "legendary" as Dr. Barnes admits, but a farrago of lies. The early history of the Church is an invention of later writers.

Again in discussing Paul, Bishop Barnes points out how "tolerant" was Judaism in comparison with the fanaticism of the early Christians—and coming from a Christian bishop this required a rare tolerance itself to admit. But how many of his fellow bishops will agree with him?

And what do we know of Peter? That his speech on the day of Pentecost is a "free composition" by Luke, as Dr. Barnes asserts, means that it was made up or forged. Was he really imprisoned and made a *miraculous* escape? Is not all this "legend" or to use a far better word, lies? Was Peter ever at Rome? Here again thousands of pages have been written one way or the other, but how can anyone say for certain? Dr. Barnes plumps for a "no"—"it is in fact," he says, "most doubtful if he ever reached the city."

We simply do not know anything whatever about either Peter or Paul outside the New Testament—and certainly nothing whatever of their deaths.

Who wrote either the Epistles of Paul or Peter in the form we have them no one knows. "Christian scholars," says Dr. Barnes, "showed surprisingly little critical sense" towards the end of the second century and so books were ascribed both to Peter and Paul which are not genuine. We are, in those early years of Christianity, in the midst of some of the most bare-faced forgery and fraud history records, but the reverent sceptic must never include Jesus in this mountain of lies. He, at least, must always be absolved. I am afraid that I have gone far past even an irreverent scepticism.

H. CUTNER.

Time antiquates antiquities and hath an art to make dust of all things.
"Urn Burial," SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

ACID DROPS

A Roman Catholic Church advertises that it has a special prayer for one lighting a fire. The prayer runs: "Almighty, whose wisdom has taught man how to free himself from cold by the presence of fire. . . . May the hearts of all be rid of the cold." This prayer, we understand, also has the power to rid "Man of the cold of unbelief." We understand that the same amount of money is required by insurance agencies against fire, and the Catholic, equally with the Protestant, pays it. There must be some broad smiles in the Catholic Church.

The "Great Lying Church" rarely loses an opportunity to live up to its name, by which it has been known for so many years. We are reminded of this when we see it stated that the number of adherents to the Roman Catholic Church is increasing. We should bear in mind that the Church acts on the axiom that "once a Catholic always a Catholic" and even if a member of the Church leaves the Church, does not attend Mass on Sunday, or doesn't perform his Easter duties, he is still considered a Catholic. The number of backsliders are not advertised. Sometimes, however, a little light is allowed—or slips in—as witness Father Ryland Whitaker, who complained in the course of a sermon in Glasgow that over six hundred thousand Catholics miss Mass on Sundays. We suggest that the Catholic Church, even as other Churches, is no longer holding its own.

The Oxford Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society asserts that in Germany, China and Japan the people are clamouring for Bibles and Prayer Books. We hesitate to suggest that such stout friends of God could also be liars, but having some knowledge of conditions in Germany we would be more inclined to believe that Germans are clamouring for food rather than Bibles, and we are fairly certain that the Japanese and Chinese, whose religious history was old before the British were even civilised, are not likely to take to themselves "other gods."

The Council of the Rural District of Bullington is shocked at the general dishonesty of the people of Bullington. We can assure the Councillors that dishonesty is rife not only in Bullington but all over the world. It is the price we pay for wars, during which dishonesty under the name of "scrounging" is considered to be quite all right, and straightforwardness and honesty as rather old fashioned and not in line with the times. It may be a matter of doubt whether we can avoid wars or not, but certainly war is always a development of the lower side of life.

That the Christian religion has done little to prevent war is not surprising when we have such Christian types as the Rev. F. Michael Healey, of Ohio, U.S.A., who wants to know "When shall we use the atom bomb in our hands to enforce peace?" Many have tried to prevent war by going to war, but peace has never been maintained by such means, and we doubt that by increasing the number of bombs war will be prevented. After all if people have bombs they will want to use them.

This preacher from Ohio is not alone in suggesting that "Christianity carries within it a force for peace"; we have plenty of parsons in England who say the same thing. Even some of our leading politicians are not adverse to appropriating some of the aura of respectability. We suggest that Sir Stafford Cripps ought not in his position to advertise the beatitudes of Jesus or the "value" of Christianity. We assert that in virtue of the important position he holds, his private opinions on the value of Christianity should be kept in the background. We would point out that if Christianity really developed a love of fairness and straightforwardness we would not be in the position we are to-day. After all, Christianity has been in existence quite a few years.

There seems to be a strong determination to keep the Royal family in the limelight as much as possible, and now the noise of the shouting and the tumult has died down, and the newspapers no longer deem it news to give photographs of semi-hysterical people struggling to get into a church to kneel and sit in the same pews that were occupied by the Royal couple, we get instead pictures of Princess number two "carrying a muff." This may mean something; we are not quite sure. That hysterical

outbreaks are not difficult to engineer we know; where they are likely to end is another question. What we are sure about is that these hysterical outbursts, encouraged by the powers that be, show a lack of stability that is not very promising for the future.

The new Russia has had for a long time the Church as its greatest enemy, and particularly the Catholic Church. Even when the war came and England joined hands with Russia on a 20-year agreement, and with a suggestion of a much longer period, the Roman Catholic Church in England could not bring itself to the comradeship that marked the connections between Russia and Britain, the Roman Catholic Church continued to father the lies concerning the Russian revolution. For some time Rome has been throwing more favourable smiles towards Atheistic Russia. But now there appears to be a change. For in a recent issue of the "Universe" we find boldly declared that "Russia is turning to religion." The "Universe" says:—

"There is a religious revival among the Russians. Almost all children are being baptised. The number of orthodox practising their faith is estimated to be 30 per cent. of the population. To this must be added another 30 per cent. who belong to other faiths. It is estimated that nearly 60 per cent of the population of Leningrad practise some sort of religion."

It is quite probable that some part of this, concerning Russia, is true, although where the Roman Church is concerned it is safest to take 70 per cent. Catholic outbursts as lies. But even if the figures of 30 per cent be true, then we can only say that Russia has worked with great success if 30 or 40 per cent. of the people are Atheists. For no one in Russia is compelled to profess Atheism. No one in Russia is penalised in not being an Atheist, as Christians, in all places where religion is strong, penalised those who are honest enough to profess "No religion." We should remember that in England up till recent times—say 70 or 80 years ago—people were penalised for not being Christians. With those figures as a basis, we are warranted to say that the development of Atheism in Russia is simply marvellous.

But we must always remember that we are dealing with the "Great lying Church." We should remember the words of that fine historian, Lord Acton, that "If a man honestly believes the methods of the Roman Church he can only do so with precautions, suspicions, and aversion for its acts. If he accepts the Papacy with confidence he must have made terms with murder." That is not something that applies to the Roman Church here and there, it stands wherever the Church has power. Even in the statement about Russia it must, by habit, lie. For many, after the revolution, Russia was all that was blood-thirsty. Then Russia came to England as one of us with regard to the war. Again the Church lied by constantly saying that any arrangement was to exist only for the duration of the war, and that with a long period agreed on between Britain and Russia. But the amusing feature to those who know is the fact that from the outset of the revolution it declared that religion was free to all, but the priests must not play the part they did before the revolution; that more churches would be opened as they were fit, and that religion was their own. To those who wish to get to the facts, we suggest they get a set of books, "Moscow Dialogues, 1933" and "Religion and Communism," both published by Chapman and Hall, in London. There is more to be said, but space bids us stop.

The Bishop of Bradford has been appointed to knock out of the ring the Bishop of Birmingham. In our opinion it would be fairly easy to settle both. We can guess that when the Bradfordian enters the ring, he will easily knock out his brother from Birmingham, and when the next round follows, Birmingham will just as easily knock out Bradford. Birmingham contends that historic Christianity will not survive real criticism, Bradford maintains that what the other wishes to throw overboard are exactly those things upon which historic Christianity rests. That is part of the beauty of "God's movements," no one can be quite sure what He means, why He does things, and whether they are to be measured by what we know. One thing we are certain of is that God's will must be obeyed, the trouble is that no one has discovered quite what his will is.

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SUGAR PLUMS

December 2 marked the end of the series of talks on "Belief and Unbelief"—alleged to be uncensored—by the B.B.C. We question that. It will be remembered that it was only after years of agitation, and when the B.B.C.'s Charter was threatened there was a promise made to allow greater freedom in discussions on religion. It took the B.B.C. a long time before venturing on such a dangerous policy, but eventually some well-known Atheists were permitted to express their opinions—with limitations. The B.B.C. has a keen appreciation of "Christian Truth" and "Justice," as for instance, Sir John Reith's question to prospective employees: "Do you accept the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ?" We regret that throughout the whole series of talks no serious attempt was made to get at the fundamentals of "Unbelief."

The Cardinal of Westminster does not hold a very high opinion of his flock when he tells them that to "deny God's existence, and man's duty to God," will be followed by unbelievable crimes. But then our own opinion of people who swallow this sort of thing is also not very high, they are certainly handing over to the Cardinal what little intelligence they may have. One may ask why all this fear and bother about people not paying attention to God? There are myriads of people who go through life without bothering their heads about Him. The Cardinal is unfortunate in his illustration. It is true there were slaves before the Christian Church was in existence, but it is equally true that, the worst forms, the widest, and the most brutal forms of slavery existed when Christianity was at its strongest. It is also true that the respect of man developed in proportion to the decline of Christianity. We are therefore not surprised when the Cardinal talks as he does when he is in a church, it is a safe place from which to spread lies and misrepresentations.

Christianity gets its full share of the unpleasant things. During the war its churches were bombed and blitzed like ordinary buildings. In the post war wave of crime, offertory boxes are rifled, church carpets have been stolen, and now thieves have stripped ten square feet of lead from the roof of St. John's Church, Croxall, Staffs. So far it has escaped the black market, there is no black market in gods.

The dull weather was not enough to damp the appreciation shown by a good audience when Mr. J. Clayton spoke at the Socialist Hall, to the Newcastle Branch N.S.S. The speaker was in good form and the audience evidently knew when a good lecture was being delivered. The many questions were answered in a pleasant and informative fashion. The local Saints, we are informed, were delighted. Mr. J. Clayton is expected to pay another visit soon. We congratulate Mr. J. T. Brighton and his supporters on the arrangements.

THE SOCIAL MIND

WHILE the mental functions are functions of the individual organism, the product, Mind, is more than individual product. Like its great instrument, Language, it is at once individual and social. Each man speaks in virtue of the functions of vocal expression, but also in virtue of the social need of communication. The words spoken are not his creation, yet he, too, must appropriate them by what may be called a creative process before he can understand them. What his tribe speaks he repeats; but he does not simply echo their words; he rethinks them. In the same way he adopts their experiences when he assimilates them to his own. He only feels their emotions when his soul is moved like theirs; he cannot think their thoughts so long as his experiences refuse to be condensed in their symbols. But because he has similar vocal function, and a similar verbal store, he can reproduce and understand their novel combinations of speech; and because he has similar experiences he can understand their novel combinations of thought, adopting both into his own and getting the range of his fellowship enlarged. . . .

Language belongs essentially to the community by whom and for whom it is called into existence. . . . A solitary man would feel, and think, and will; but he would no more fashion his feelings, thoughts, and volitions into conceptions which are the formulas of his knowledge than he would articulate them in words.

Further, the experiences of each individual come and go; they correct, enlarge, destroy one another, leaving behind them a residual store, which condensed in intuitions and formulated in principles, direct and modify all future experiences. The sum of these is designated the individual Mind. A similar process evolves the general mind—the residual store of experiences common to all. By means of language the individual shares in the general fund, which thus becomes for him an impersonal objective influence. To it each appeals. We all assimilate some of its material, and help to increase its store. Not only do we find ourselves confronting Nature, to whose order we must conform, but confronting Society, whose laws we must obey. . . .

Men living always in groups co-operate like the organs in an organism. Their actions have a common impulse and a common end. Their desires and opinions bear the common impress of an impersonal direction. Much of their life is common to all. The roads, market-places, and temples, are each for all. The experiences, the dogmas, and the doctrines, are for each and all. Customs arise, and are formulated in laws, the restraint of all. The customs, born of the circumstances, imminent in the social conditions, are consciously extricated and prescribed as the rules of life; each new generation is born into this social medium, and has to adapt itself to the established forms. Society, though constituted by individuals, has a powerful reaction on every individual. "In the infancy of nations," says Montesquieu, "man forms the state; in their maturity the state forms the man." It is thus also with the collective experience of the race fashioning the experience of the individual. It makes a man accept what he cannot understand, and obey what he does not believe. His thoughts are only partly his own; they are also the thoughts of others. His actions are guided by the will of others; even in rebellion he has them in mind. . . .

Individual experience being limited and individual spontaneity feeble, we are strengthened and enriched by assimilating the experiences of others. A nation, a tribe, a sect is the medium of the individual mind, as a sea, a river, a pond is the medium of a fish; through this it touches the outside world and is touched by it; but the direct motions of the activity are within this circle. Not that the individual is passive, he is only directed; he, too, reacts on the sect and nation, helping to create the social life of which he partakes. . . . That conceptions once incorporated in the General Mind become forces which coerce the individual is conspicuous in the terrible effects due to the idea of "saving souls."

This monstrous fiction of speculative logic scattered the amassed wealth of Grecian and Moorish culture, repressed for centuries the search after truth, made Doubt a sin, and placed the investigation of nature on a par with magical incantations. . . Nor did it end here. It embittered and embitters in many ways the lives of those whom it professed to save, and did its best to make Hell a reality in this world for those who ventured to doubt its reality in another. Happily the power of conceptions is not limited to disastrous errors, but extends to beneficent truths. If irrational conceptions have made man miserable and kept him ignorant, rational conceptions have made him less miserable and more wise. Our pressing need to understand the facts of the universe in which we live has forced us to encourage the pursuit of truth.

New and larger conceptions of man's nature and destiny have been evolved. These, slowly altering the structure of the General Mind, alter the Social Forms which express it, and both react on the individual.

"The Study of Psychology" (1879), pp. 160-70,

by GEORGE HENRY LEWIS.

THE CHURCH AND ITS BURIAL CUSTOMS

DURING the last few centuries some startling changes have taken place in our burial customs. Every one of our old parish churches have silently witnessed, by degrees, the slow passing of quaint modes of interment occasionally practiced by many of our forefathers, records of which are still extant and preserved in dry and dusty old tomes and other local documents or parish registers.

It is noteworthy to observe that a very important disuse of an old practice is that of permitting the burying inside the edifice. Controversy raged upon this topic for a long time but Archbishop Sancroft, during his lifetime, said that he thought it "improper that God's house should be made the repository of sinful man." Even pious Sir Matthew Hale was wont to state that "churches were intended for the living, and churchyards for the dead," a most proper observation, at that time.

Some of the local records and extracts of parish registers that I have been nosing into provide quite a number of instances where interments of very unusual style were practiced, and as the subject provides such scope for amusement, I have provided you with a few cases of this nature that have come my way. For instance, at Brent Pelham Church, in Herts., can be seen the resting-place of one, Piers Shonkes, the inscription on which has these words: "Hoc tamen in muro tutus" (whatever those latin words may mean!). It is related that the devil once swore he would have Piers Shonkes, no matter whether buried within or without the Church. So, to outwit his satanic majesty, the corpse was carefully built up in the actual wall of the Church.

Then there is an equally amusing legend about a similar case that has been handed down concerning the building of an ancient manor house, locally known as "The Barn Hall," in the parish of Tolleshunt Knights, somewhere near the eastern edge of the Essex marshes. In the middle of a field an enclosed and uncultivated spot can still be seen, where legend says it was intended to erect a hall, had not the devil come by night and totally destroyed the work of the day. A knight in company with two dogs of ferocious mien, were set to watch for the intruder; a tussle ensued, and the Devil, snatching up a beam from the building, hurled it to the site of the present hall as he exclaimed: "Wherso'er this beam shall fall, there shall stand Barn Hall."

The Devil, however, greatly angered by the knight's disturbance, and feeling the effects of the dogs' fangs on his limbs, vowed that he would have him at his death, whether buried in or out of Church. This doom was eventually averted by the act of burying him in the wall, half in and half out of the Church.

Ed. H. SIMPSON.

SAINT ANDREW

Patron Saint of Scotland

Saint Andrew, fisherman o' fame,
O'wr a' the earth is kent thy name,
E'er since there tae auld Scotland camo,
Your sacred banes,
To find at last a resting hame,
Mang sculptured stanes.

'Tis said ye were a canty chiel,
And fine yer maister's cause could speil,
Feared nane, not ev'n the muckle de'il,
Sae bold ye spak,
A fisherman o' men, an' weel,
They liked yer crack.

Nae doot when met wi' ither men,
Like ither fishin' folk we ken,
Ye could a fishin' story len,
An' tell wi' glee,
About the big yins weighing ton,
Frae Galilee.

This yin frae Mathy bears the gree,
'Tis gospel truth, he wadna lee,
'Twas near Capernaum by the sea,
Where Pete did hook,
And land a fish, wi' money free,
To pay tribute. (Matt. xvii-27.)

Were ye at Lake Gemmesaret,
When sic a catch, they broke the net,
And filled twa ships that nearly met
A watery grave,
By nearly foundering wi' the weight,
Beneath the wave. (Luke v-5, 6, 7.)

From scripture, fishing stories grew,
The old ones beat the modern new,
There's nothing yet appeared in view,
To equal Jonah,
Endorsed by Matt. as being true,
And nothing phoney. (Matt. xii-40.)

Aye, noted for your modesty,
Nae lecin' coard loon were ye,
Like Pete your brother, yet 'tis he,
Wha guards the gate,
And passes on the likes o' me,
My final fate.

Auld Scotland rallies at thy name,
A great magnetic, world wide claim,
That binds her sons to the auld hame,
Frae Tweed to Tay,
Each year we celebrate thy fame,
Saint Andrew's Day.

ROBERT HOWDEN.

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CORRESPONDENCE

"THE TWO BISHOPS"

SIR,—It is to be expected that, for many years to come, Archbishops, Bishops and clerics generally, who have neither the courage, the honesty, the perspicacity nor the scholarship to write a book like that written by Bishop Barnes, will continue to protest and to fulminate against that heretic's careful, calculated and considered pronouncement against the "accepted beliefs" of orthodox and organised religion. Bishop Barnes' traducers appear conveniently to forget that one of the claims of Jesus to be noticed, was his indictment of the then established, orthodox and organised religious "set-up" and its hierarchy.

It can be expected, too, that the orthodox believers and established leaders will continue, with great show of energy and sincerity to attempt to justify their position as against that taken up by Dr. Barnes. It is part of their job to do so. The exponents of orthodox, organised and established religion have always resisted, and always tried to belittle, any new idea which conflicted with their beliefs, practices and teachings; and just as surely have been compelled, in most cases, to yield and to modify their beliefs and dogmas.

As an item of news, which might be expected to interest a representative minority of religious-minded readers, an enlightened newspaper management might be expected to publish one bishop's view of another bishop's writings, but that any newspaper management should choose to bolster up with an editorial leader the obsolete, vague and pointless argumentation of Bradford, against the cogent and reasoned argument of the progressive and challenging Birmingham, is a matter which might seem beyond comprehension to some, though perhaps not so to others.

Anyone who has sufficient knowledge of these two bishops of the established Church to appreciate and to compare their temperaments, abilities, capacities, qualities, qualifications and intellectual attainments, would be obliged, in the absence of any prejudice or predisposition, to place a higher value on the considered views and pronouncements of Birmingham than on those of Bradford. Bradford himself may not realise that his very derogatory remarks about the intellectual attainments of a better scholar than himself, reflect very little credit upon himself and are quite on a par with those commonly used by "interested" believers, when their credulousness is exposed, and further that such remarks are not, in any sense, or degree, an answer to the challenge. 'Tis pity, indeed, that they cannot realise that, having no convincing reply to the challenge, they should seek refuge in that discreet silence which might be prompted by the idea of Christian charity and Christian tolerance, whatever these may be.

It should be stressed that Bradford's diatribes and the strictures which are advanced in support of these, do not put forward any sort of evidence to show that Birmingham is wrong and Bradford right. Whilst Birmingham stands for a healthy scepticism and for careful, cautious and deliberate examination of such facts as are available, Bradford advocates the headlong plunge of ignorance into the unknown and uncharted seas of Faith. Instead of seeking to extricate the masses from abysmal ignorance, bishops are advising such masses to put all their assets on a horse which carries the colours of Simple Faith, trained by Superstition out of Fear, owned by Blind Belief, trained by Ignorance, entered by Sheer Credulity and ridden by Dogma.

The Bishop of Bradford's cause is weak indeed, when it needs to be supported by a quotation from a review in the "Modern Churchman" to the effect that "mountains may produce mice, but a mouse has never yet produced a mountain." Such quotation has no more sense or significance than it would have if the nouns were interchanged, because a mountain has never yet produced a mouse, any more than a mountain has ever yet been moved by faith. If scientists, as such, offer no final or even convincing proof on abstract problems of faith and belief, the same is to be said of the theologians; and the latter have had a long start and are supposed to be specialists in their own particular department. Science can function only in the realms of discernible and observable phenomena and events. It still remains true, that a nebulous and a negative proposition can neither be proven or disproven.

Copies of this letter are being addressed to the Bishops of Bradford and Birmingham, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and to the Rationalist Press. Other copies are being prepared for use as occasion arises.—Yours, etc.,

"LUKE STRAIGHT."

AN APPRECIATION

SIR,—The ranks of the Labour Party's right movements has been depleted by the death of a friend and colleague, Mr. Henry Gale. Never one to be in the vanguard of the public platform, "Harry" Gale did estimable work in the progressive movement of the artillery and district.

I had the pleasure of his friendship for over 30 years, and, can conscientiously say that I never met anyone who impressed me so much in his opposition to all forms of cant and humbug as he saw it.

His reminiscences of his early working days in the Rhondda Valley were an inspiration and education in themselves. As one who took part in fighting for the elementary rights of the mining class in that district he thereby incurred the displeasure of the soulless men who represented the capitalistic system. What a change has come about since those days; due largely to the fighting qualities, and persistency of men like "Harry" Gale.

Many instances of his being victimised, as recounted to me never deterred him from what he thought to be right. His memories of the early Freethought movement, were equally educative, in this field of thought, he had a fund of recollections going back to the later days of Bradlaugh and Foote. In arguments on religion he neither covered up his own beliefs, nor spared the feelings of his opponents; this was characteristic of the man, who:—

"No fetter but galled his wrist;
No wrong that was not his own."

Our sympathy goes out to his son, Coun. T. Gale, and the other members of the family, in the loss of one who has left a great impression on scores with whom he came in contact with.

Yours, etc.,

A.J.C.

LEGAL MARRIAGES.

SIR,—Mr. Humphrey confuses licence with certificate. The latter can be obtained from the civil registrar after 21 full days' notice and avoids the publication of banns on three Sundays in our churches. A licence avoiding both banns and time limit can only be obtained from the ecclesiastical authorities (4 Geo. 4, c. 76, s. 20) and a licence from the civil registrar cannot be obtained for this purpose (6 & 7 Will. 4, c. 85, s. 11). The absence of witnesses would not invalidate the marriage as decided in Wing and Taylor (1861).

Marriages in all other buildings than churches belonging to the Church of England requires the attendance of the civil registrar to complete the legal formalities. Therefore I contend that marriages in our churches need no further affirmations than that made before an ecclesiastical person, made during the service by the contracting parties, to cause them to be legal.

Yours faithfully,

F. H. E. HARFITT.
Rector, St. Mary-at-Hill, E.C.3.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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SUPERSTITION AND SPEECH

FROM the earliest times the Symbols which men have used to aid the process of thinking and to record their achievements have been the source of wonder and illusion. The whole human race has been so impressed by the properties of words as instruments of the control of objects, that in every age it has attributed to them occult powers. Between the attitude of the early Egyptian and the modern poet there would appear at first sight but little difference. "All words are spiritual," says Walt Whitman, "nothing is more spiritual than words. Whence are they? Along how many thousands and tens of thousands of years have they come?" Unless we fully realise the profound influence of superstitions concerning words, we shall not understand the fixity of certain widespread linguistic habits which still vitiate the most careful thinking.

With the majority, and in matters of ordinary discussion, the influence of this legacy is all-pervasive, in language no less than in other spheres. "If we could open the heads of two men and read the thoughts of two men of the same generation and country, but at the opposite ends of the intellectual scale, we should probably find their minds as different as if they belonged to two different species. . . Superstitions survive because, while they shock enlightened members of the community, they are still in harmony with the thoughts and feelings of others, who, though they are drilled by their betters into an appearance of civilisation, remain barbarians or savages at heart."

Most educated people are quite unconscious of the extent to which these relics survive at their doors, still less do they realise how their own behaviour is moulded by the unseen hand of the past. "Only those whose studies have led them to investigate the subject are aware of the depth to which the ground beneath our feet is thus, as it were, honeycombed by unseen forces."

The surface of society, like the sea, may, as the anthropologist admits, be in perpetual motion, but its depths, like the depths of the ocean, remain almost unmoved. Only by plunging daily into those depths can we come into contact with our fellow men; only—in the particular case of language—by forgoing the advantages of this or that special scientific symbol system, by drinking of the same unpurified stream, can we share in the life of the community. If the clouds of accumulated verbal tradition burst above us in the open—in the effort to communicate, in attempt at interpretation—few have, as yet, evolved even the rudiments of a defence.

The power of words is the most conservative force in our life. Only yesterday did students of anthropology begin to admit the existence of these ineluctable coils by which so much of our thought is encompassed. "The common inherited scheme of conception which is all around us, and comes to us as naturally and unobjectionably as our native air, is none the less imposed upon us, and limits our intellectual movements in countless ways—all the more surely and irresistibly because, being inherent in the very language we must use to express the simplest meaning, it is adopted and assimilated before we can so much as begin to think for ourselves at all." Tens of thousands of years have lapsed since we shed our tails, but we are still communicating with a medium developed to meet the needs of arboreal man. And as the sounds and marks of language bear witness to its primeval origins, so the association of these sounds and marks, and the habits of thought which have grown up with their use and with the structures placed upon them by our first parents, are found to bear witness to an equally significant continuity. . .

In some respects the twentieth century suffers more grievously than any previous age from the ravages of such verbal superstitions. Owing, however, to developments in the methods of communications, and the creation of many special symbolic systems, the

form of the disease has altered considerably; and apart from the survival of religious apologetic, now takes more insidious form than of yore. Influences making for its wide diffusion are the baffling complexity of the symbolic apparatus now at our disposal; the possession by journalists and men of letters of an immense semi-technical vocabulary and their lack of opportunity, or unwillingness, to inquire into its proper use; the success of analytic thinkers in fields bordering on mathematics, where the divorce between symbol and reality is the most pronounced and the tendency to hypostatization is most alluring; the extension of a knowledge of the cruder forms of symbolic convention (the three R's), combined with a widening of the gulf between the public and the scientific thought of the age; and finally the exploitation for political and commercial purposes, of the printing press by the dissemination and the reiteration of *clichés*.

The persistence of the primitive linguistic outlook, not only throughout the whole religious world, but in the work of the profoundest thinkers, is indeed one of the most curious features of modern thought.

The Meaning of Meaning,

by C. K. OGDEN AND I. A. RICHARDS, pp. 24-9.

GOOD CHRISTIAN HUSBAND

BOTULIFORM, if you know what's the form of a sausage, that is.

Nice word!

Not that I'd call any good Christian husband a sausage, God forbid! Anyhow, the Metropolitan Divorce Court gave out the following:

Joseph J. Toploff got religion . . . rather in a virulent degree. Sofie, his wife, testifies that her husband, Joseph, the defendant, read the Bible every night pacing the floor back and forth till 4 a.m., for a period of four months, before she finally conked him on the knob.

In the interim she lost 50lb., reducing herself to a skeleton, and still Jesus hadn't come. And neither had the millennium. She didn't exactly get tired waiting for Jesus, she said, as for her husband, Joseph, to get unwound and go to bed.

Getting Joseph unwound seemed more of a problem than getting Jesus to come!

Which, after due consideration, my Sugar Pot and I (meaning my Stenographer who types this stuff) rather argue as to whether or not the said Christian, Joseph J. Toploff, ought to have his top "lopped" off and thrown in the ash-can—or whether his sweet and devoted wife wasn't devoted in the wrong direction?

Could she have been a schizophrenic? Could she have resented her said husband, Joseph's, six hours' prayers, mostly on the liet-motif of "God bless my darling, but fallen wife. Forgive her sins, Dear Lord! Wash her in the blood of the lamb!"

Who wants to be washed in blood?

No wonder she conked him on the cabaza.

EARLE CORNWALL.

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