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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Decay of the Gods

CLEARING out some old newspapers we came across two interesting copies. The first was a paper entitled "The Athenian Mercury" dated May 16, 1691—a legend almost. The other was an evening paper about seventy years old which gave an account of some international quarrels the outcome of which might lead to war between the two nations.

The editor sent an agent to report on the situation which turned out to be not dangerous at all.

Now let us imagine that we are back in the world at the beginning of Christianity and that there were newspapers and other means of communication which would enable all to understand what was going on. And assuming that England was interested in Palestine, and that a first class journalist was sent to report on the situation, what would be the result? I think the editor of the newspaper would publish something like this:—

"We are informed, on reliable authority, that Palestine has lately been the scene of a remarkable series of events. A young Jewish peasant, by name Joshua, some time ago forsook his occupation of carpentering, and travelled the country on a religious crusade. He gathered round him a number of men and women belonging to the lower classes, and is said to have been the possessor of miraculous powers of no mean order. Some, by merely touching his clothes, were healed of their disorders; blind men saw, and cripples walked at his command; he had the power of walking on the sea, and calling the dead to life; and, when finally executed for an offence, the precise nature of which it is difficult to gather, his death marked the advent of three days' complete darkness, and was the signal for many of the dead to rise from their graves and parade the streets of Jerusalem."

A plain-speaking reporter would add,

"One of our contemporaries, with a credulity as much to be deplored as denounced in these days of enlightenment, contained, in its issue of the other evening, a sensational account of an alleged series of miracles performed in Palestine by a young carpenter. We have communicated with our special correspondent at Jerusalem, who assures us that the whole narrative is a hoax of the flimsiest character. Our correspondent further points out that it is incredible that such things should have occurred without exciting the attention of people of all classes, whereas all the prominent writers that have been consulted are not only unaware of the occurrence of any such wonders, but are even ignorant of the very existence of the individual of whom they are related. Failing thus to find any contemporary corroboration

of the story, we may safely dismiss it as a pure fabrication, with the parting reflection that its publication reflects small credit upon either the intelligence of those who gave it publicity, or upon those who swallowed it so eagerly."

All things considered, if Jesus had been born say a million years later, the chances of Christianity being preached, or if preached, gaining acceptance, would have been remarkably small. A great man's eminence is as much due to the time at which he happens to be born as to the talents of which he is the possessor, and it is as certainly true that whether a given system shall live or die is determined more by the period during which it is promulgated than it is by the special teaching it contains. There is therefore, an unconscious sarcasm in the expression so often met with that "Christianity came when the world was ripe for its establishment." Exactly so, for this is only another way of voicing the obvious truth that given a different environment to that which then existed, Christianity could not have gained acceptance. Each age has its characteristic religious ideas, just as it has its characteristic social institutions; and, although a religion once initiated may perpetuate itself by a series of modifications, it is impossible for one to originate amid such conditions as now exist in all civilised countries. When credulity is widespread and a knowledge of natural processes non-existent or extremely limited in character, it is easy for stories of the miraculous to gain acceptance; but suppose such stories as, say, the miracles attributed to Jesus to be bronched to-day, what would be the result? If they were not immediately swept on one side as too inherently absurd to deserve serious consideration, steps would at once be taken to form a committee of competent witnesses, who would investigate in the most careful manner what amount of truth such statements contained. And even then nothing short of having all the miracles re-performed *under test conditions* would satisfy a committee that had been appointed to report upon the matter. It is only because these stories have been with us from our birth, because we have grown up with them, with parents and teachers dimming their veracity and solemnity into our ears, that we fail to recognise their ridiculous character. Brought before a civilised community for the first time, such legends would meet with nothing but derision and instant rejection.

Truth to tell, it is not without significance that all the religions of the world are old religions, or a dressing up of old ones. New religions do not make their appearance to-day, for the simple reason that the age for their production has passed by. Former generations viewed religious ecstasies as glimpses of the Divine vouchsafed to man; we regard them as pathological cases coming properly under the supervision of the medical practitioner. There can be no question, indeed, that in all ages morbid physical and mental conditions have played a large and a creative part in the production of religious beliefs. Emmanuel Deutsch notes that "There is a peculiar

something supposed to inhere in epilepsy. The Greeks called it a sacred disease. Bacchantic and Corybantic furies were God-inspired. The Pythia uttered her oracle under the most distressing signs." There is no question that Mohamet suffered from epileptic seizures. St. Paul offered a clear case of sunstroke. Swedenborg, founder of the Church of the new Jerusalem; Anna Lee, the founder of the Shakers, were also said to be epileptic. Many other similar cases may be given. Phenomena have changed, but the difference between our own times and the preceding cases is simply that we have different estimates of causes and cures. Given a man to-day preaching the same beliefs in the same manner as did many of the religious leaders of early times, and he would certainly be classed as of unsound mind just as many of the religious features of contemporary life are attributed to mental morbidity or mental unsoundness by our successors.

* * *

It would, however, be a mistake to infer that because morbid mental conditions everywhere accompany the rise of religions, that these are the sole factors in their production. This is far from being the case. The absurdity of to-day has not always been the absurdity of yesterday. There are stages of human culture when it wears a reasonable, even a philosophic aspect. It is no more absurd for the early Christians ascribing everyday events to the action of supernatural powers than it is for the tribes of Africa indulging in the same beliefs. To us such things are absurd but that is because the growth of civilisation has led us to view nature from an altogether different standpoint. To others, these beliefs, far from being ridiculous, may be as truly an expression of their civilisation as the doctrine of evolution is of ours. Religion is the consistent reflection of an epoch when man regarded the universe as alive and himself the sport of powers which were really created by his own imagination. It is when the terrestrial has been aggrandised at the expense of the theological, when in the progress of civilisation, art and literature become in a great measure secularised; when the mind is withdrawn by ten thousand intellectual influences from dogmatic considerations; and when the traces of these become confused and unrealised, a new habit of thought is gradually acquired. A secular atmosphere is formed, and the measure of probability is altered. People no longer, in the majority of cases, condescend even to discuss the belief in the miraculous or the supernatural, but brush it one side as something inherently incredible. Long experience has taught the world that such a matter is not so much a question of evidence as it is the result of the normal workings of the mind at one stage of its development. People do not see miracles unless they believe in their existence beforehand, and they cease seeing them only when they cease to believe in them.

It is the gradual growth of civilisation that renders the creation of a new religion impossible, and even its retention is a matter of increasing difficulty. The results of scientific investigation gradually sink from the study to the market place, and the mass of the people become infected with its teachings and its tendencies. Scepticism, once the property of the privileged few, is rapidly becoming the heritage of all. All are tinged with it; the most conservative cannot escape its influence, while the more progressive hail it as the dissolution of worn-out beliefs. Viewed in the light of present knowledge the religion of the civilised world represents but the varied survivals of forms of thought properly belonging to a lower stratum of civilisation than that in which we are living. Literally, religion in civilised countries is in the world, but it is not

of it, for it represents, not man's present knowledge of himself or of the universe, but rather the ideas of bygone generations, which continue to exist as the result of a spirit of blind conservatism quickened into activity by the operation of threatened interests.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE ORIGINS OF THE DETECTIVE STORY

IT is not often that we can definitely pin down the origins of a particular type of literature to a particular moment in time. Yet the detective story, which in the twentieth century has produced such dissimilar products as the works of Edgar Wallace and Conan Doyle, Dorothy Sayers and Peter Cheyney, Austin Freeman and "Sapper," can be so pinned down. Before the year 1841 no detective story worthy of the name had been written. From that year it was an art-form, accepted and practised by a growing number of writers.

It was in 1841 that Edgar Allan Poe was at the height of his power as a writer. He had recently been appointed editor of *Graham's Magazine*, at a salary of eight hundred dollars—more money than that tragic genius ever earned at any other period in his life. He rapidly built it up into the first American magazine to gain an international reputation, and he wrote for it many powerful and original stories, which are read and admired by countless readers, now, over a hundred years after their original appearance.

Poe had long been interested in the more imaginative aspect of crime and its detection. His early stories, strangely enough, reflect little of this interest. He was a terrified dreamer, producing such stories as "The Fall of the House of Usher." But in 1841 he suddenly devoted his keenly analytic brain to the question of crime, and combined the nightmare atmosphere of his tales of terror with a new criminological view of life. The result was a story which dealt with a brutal and sordid murder, but dealt with it in an analytical, almost coldly scientific way. It was "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," which has been boldly acclaimed by the majority of knowledgeable critics as the world's first genuine detective story.

Now, what makes this so clearly the first example of a completely new *genre* of story? Well, just consider the bare bones of its plot. A murder is committed in a room which is, in effect, hermetically sealed (a theme which has attracted countless writers since, including Leroux in France and Van Dine in the U.S.A.). The police, practically bewildered, arrest a man who is in actuality completely innocent, though he has great difficulty in proving it. The police, in fact, are the typical rule-of-thumb muddlers of so many later tales. A private investigator of eccentric habits works on the case, and proves the police to be completely wrong, eventually, by a piece of pure analytic reasoning, showing that the murder has been committed by an ape. The story is told in the first person by the private investigator's friend, who is not very intelligent, and who therefore, though he sees all that the detective sees, is totally unable to appreciate the detective's discoveries and deductions.

I think that, even from that bare summary, which does no justice at all to the ingenious way in which Poe tells his story, it will be clear that we have all the characteristics which have since come to be generally typical of the detective story of almost all types. Later writers, admittedly, have played all sorts of variations on the original theme. They have introduced more and more

fantastic ways of committing crimes: they have invented unbreakable alibis which eventually break down; they have made their detectives different in every possible way. But the essentials are there, in that one short story written by Edgar Allan Poe a hundred years ago.

The main point to be decided is why it was just at that moment of time in the nineteenth century that such a type of story should suddenly spring into being, almost ready-made, and this is a question not at all easy to answer. Probably the point is that it is only when the scientific arguing from evidence becomes generally accepted that detective stories proper can be written. It was, indeed, no accident that the Hitler regime in Germany condemned detective stories. Any country where denunciation to the secret police is the usual method of criminal investigation cannot expect to have any kind of detective literature worthy of the name.

It was only, in other words, when the true investigator of crime had arrived on the scene that he was followed by the detective story proper. And if, as is possible, the totalitarian philosophy of life is destined once again to sweep the world within future months and years, there can be little doubt that the detective story will fade into oblivion.

Poe himself was apparently in no way conscious that he had invented a new type of story. He wrote three or four more. One of them—"The Mystery of Marie Roget"—was an attempted solution of a crime mystery which was puzzling all New York. It was logically flawless, but completely in error! But it seemed as if he thought more of his tales of horror than of the detective stories on which his fame is bound eventually to rest. And when he died in tragic circumstances at an early age few, even of his friends, would have thought that there was any possibility that he would have founded a school of fiction which was destined to number its adherents in thousands within a comparatively short period of time.

More people, in fact, must have thought that Wilkie Collins would be the exemplar to be followed by the majority of writers of crime-stories in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Wilkie Collins, though he has his followers, wrote in a manner as different from that of Poe as could well be imagined. He wrote slow, leisurely tales, which were magnificent of their kind. *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* remain marvelously readable to-day; but the followers of his method (Freeman Wills Crofts, for example) are not to be compared in number to the followers of Poe. M. P. Shiel, whose *Prince Zaleski* (one of the first publications of John Lane, of "Yellow Book" fame) is probably the closest in the full Poe tradition, might well have been the greatest detective-story writer of the 'nineties and early years of the present century. But, like Poe, Shiel turned aside to write tales of fantasy and horror, and produced at least one masterpiece of that kind—*The Purple Cloud*, which still has a public, having lately been re-issued in the U.S.A. It was, then, Conan Doyle who firmly fixed the Poe tradition in the English-speaking world. Poe's Dupin, a rather shadowy figure, became Sherlock Holmes, a creature of flesh and blood, who is one of the most living characters in the whole wide realm of English fiction. Poe's anonymous narrator, even more shadowy than Dupin, became Doctor Watson, who is even more a human being than Holmes. And the background of Poe's tales, a highly artificial Paris, scarcely recognisable by those who knew the real city in his day, became a familiar London, with hansom-cabs, horse-lamps, gas-lights, and all pervading fog. *The Strand*

Magazine in which all the Sherlock Holmes stories made their first appearance, became, probably because of these stories, for a time the most popular magazine in the world.

So the detective story was placed on a firm foundation. It was comparatively easy for later entrants into the field to make their own contribution; but all the main items of the scheme were firmly settled. Poe, the weakling, the drunkard, the wastrel (I do not think that those terms are too strong) had done his job. Even though he died before his achievement was generally appreciated by the public, he still had the satisfaction of knowing that he had written some first-rate tales. What he would have said could he have looked at a railway bookstall of the present day, with lurid jackets and titles in which "crime," "death," and "murder" are the operative words, is something best left to the imagination.

JOHN ROWLAND.

BAPTISM INTO FREETHOUGHT

"WHEN'S your baby going to be christened, Mrs. Crawford?" asked Mrs. Robinson of her neighbour, who had come out into the garden adjoining hers and was hanging a row of napkins on the line.

"She's not going to be christened," replied Rose Crawford. "My husband and I are freethinkers, and we think it wrong to label a child with a religion at the beginning of its life. It's one of those things Pam will have to choose for herself when she's old enough to judge."

"But there's nothing binding in christening," protested Mrs. Robinson. "It's just a bit of a do, to celebrate like. Harry and me aren't the least bit religious, but we've always had our children christened. Registering doesn't seem enough; no more than you do when posting a parcel."

"Well," said her neighbour, "we are, as a matter of fact going to have our 'bit of a do' for Pamela on Sunday week, but it won't be a christening. Maybe you and Mr. Robinson will look in. You'll be receiving an invitation."

A few days later the Robinsons' post contained a card inviting them to be present at the "Naming Party" of the new daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Crawford, and the appointed day found them seated at the Crawfords' tea-table in a gathering of well-wishers of the six-weeks-old baby girl lying peacefully in her cot before the bay window. Before tea was served, Grandfather Preston, Rose Crawford's father, stood up and addressed those present.

"On behalf of my son-in-law and daughter I bid you all welcome on a happy occasion that I think has a certain solemnity about it. I need not enlarge on the happiness that the birth of a healthy infant like the one in the cot here brings to its parents, bound to each other by ties of love and shared interests, and to all who are kindly disposed towards this fortunate couple. I propose, however, to make a few comments on the serious purpose with which we have come together this afternoon. A name has already been selected for my grand-daughter, but it is characteristic of human parents that they like to mark the naming of their children in what they consider a suitable manner. That is why the parents of this child have invited us all here to-day.

"Now all who know my son-in-law, Fred Crawford, and my daughter, Rose, recognise them for a responsible,

high-minded pair, and it should give rise to no astonishment when I tell you that they could not see their way to taking part in any of the ceremonies most commonly used in this country when children are named. In their opinion these ceremonies are not in keeping with modern knowledge and ideas, and there are no reasons why people should continue to practise them, apart from their being widely considered respectable. They are very old and deeply rooted in social life, but Fred and Rose do not agree with them, and I share their disapproval. Our host and hostess have asked me, therefore, to carry out a ceremony to which nobody can object. That is a tall order, but I am here to do my best.

"I cannot, however, introduce into the naming of this baby the statement that she was born in sin, from which she can only be saved by admission to some religious body and the favour of some supernatural power. Nor can I call upon her parents to promise that she shall be brought up to accept any of the various beliefs to which children are commonly dedicated when named. Instead, what I say will be confined to the sphere of human life as we all have to live it, and I shall try to express what large numbers of good, kindly, fair-minded folk, whatever their religious or other views, feel in their hearts on occasions like this." At this point he bent down and picked the baby out of her cot. All present were giving him their close attention.

"I now have the privilege of declaring this child to be named Pamela Marion, in accordance with the wishes of her parents, Fred and Rose Crawford. To them she has come as a fulfilment of their love, and upon them has fallen the duty of bringing her up to play a constructive part in society when she reaches womanhood. Little Pamela Marion Crawford, like every other baby, is a potential source of profit or loss to the community she will enter when she comes to the age for responsibility. Whether she eventually turns out a profit or a loss, and to what extent she does either, will depend on the influences she comes under during her formative years, and most of all on her parents. Many people think that the best way to treat children is to inoculate them with fixed beliefs and ideas, so early in life and with so strong a dose that the effects are inescapable and of lifelong duration. Now Pamela's parents disagree with such a procedure and favour an alternative that is being more and more widely adopted.

"They know that the cherished beliefs of one generation often become objects of derision to the next. They know of many fixed ideas that history has shown to be opposed to human progress towards better ways of life. Therefore, they hold that the most precious heritage they can make available for their child is the right and ability to form her own opinions on the facts necessary for doing so. To this end, they will care for her during her childhood in an atmosphere of inquiry and freedom. They will encourage her to think things out for herself. They will not put their own opinions before her as if they were more than opinions, however sincerely believed and however highly valued; nor will they allow the opinions of others, however widely held and however socially respectable, to be presented to her as unquestioned and unquestionable. Thus they hope to enrich the community of the future with a citizen better able to grapple with the problems of her time than we appear capable of doing with our present difficulties.

"Pamela Marion Crawford, at the beginning of her life, is blessed by being in the care of those whose ambition for her is that she shall grow up according to

the good old Roman ideal of a sound mind in a healthy body, and I am certain that she will continue to enjoy the unanimous good wishes of us all, as she does at this moment." To a hearty round of applause, George Preston kissed the baby, who had throughout the proceedings shown no interest in them, and replaced her in her cot; whereupon the party fell to, and a good tea was enjoyed by all.

When leaving, Mrs. Robinson said to Pam's mother, "It really was much nicer than any of our christenings. But, then, you can't in fairness expect a clergyman to be as interested in a baby as its own grandfather. Wouldn't it be nice if 'Naming Parties' like this became the usual thing? But there aren't many men with heads like your dad's, so I don't suppose they will. D'you know, though, we're expecting our next in October, and Harry and me were wondering if Mr. Preston would come along and name it? We'd appreciate it ever so, wouldn't we dear?" Mr. Robinson grinned, nodding his embarrassed agreement.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

SELLING GOLD BRICKS

"The Gold Makers", K. K. Doberer; Nicholson and Watson, 12s. 6d.

WE INTERPRET the unknown in terms of the known and the individual's earliest awareness is of feeling, desiring and willing. Hence primitive man, and to some extent the child, interpret the inanimate in terms of themselves, i.e., animistically. Even much of our scientific terminology betrays such origins—"causation," for instance, is derived from willing. Likewise in order to react to complex phenomena it is necessary to simplify it, hence we find in primitive thought both the tendency to reduce the complex and to deify the non-material. Just as the human temperament was reduced to combinations of the four humours, so the material universe was reduced by Democritus to fire, air, water and earth, to which Aristotle added the imperishable element, the ether. What was more natural, then, than to presume that just as moods or humours change so substances could be changed into more valuable ones?

From early times in Europe and Asia gold seems to have been regarded as the most valuable metal (in the New World silver was preferred). Besides being easily worked and untarnishable, gold also had a similarity in colour to the sun, around which fertility, agricultural and many other religio-magical ceremonies were grouped. Hence by the doctrine of analogies which flourished right up to the Renaissance (and is found in such beliefs as Anthroposophy to-day) some causal link between gold and the life-giving sun was presumed. Much Egyptian voyaging and exploring was activated by the search for gold, the magical value of which was probably the important element in its later becoming the medium of exchange. Also by the doctrine of analogies, as human society had its king, so the lion was the king of animals, the whale of the sea, and gold of the metals.

And as astronomy grew from astrology, the Hermetic Street physician from the shaman, so modern chemistry evolved from the more ambitious alchemy, the search for the philosopher's stone and the means of compelling base substances to transmute into gold. Words in everyday use have their origin in this early pursuit. For instance, when we to-day speak of something being "hermetically sealed," we use the name of Hermes Trismegistos, who in a special process cemented and

rendered airtight by sealing with clay the "Philosopher's Egg," the vessel in which the transformation of gold was said to take place. Further, as we tend to greatly overvalue or undervalue what we do not possess or understand, the beginnings of scientific investigations were by the multitude, attributed either to miracle working or to contact with the Evil One. Hence the legend of Dr. Faustus, etc. The early investigator into natural phenomena, too, was guilty of "hubris" (incurring the jealousy of the gods) by attempting to elevate himself too much (like the builders of the Tower of Babel). Hence, the alchemist was an object of mystery and amazement, tinged with horror.

Mr. Doberer has traced the history of the alchemical search for gold from the time of Moses to the Polish engineer, Dumikowski, who, with his "radio active Z rays" for transmitting sand into gold, after interesting many people in Europe, including Mussolini, was last heard of in the Belgian Congo in 1938. The book is well documented and contains many illustrations from contemporary sources.

To the earlier investigators scientific interest was probably as strong as the desire for riches, or of fame, "the last infirmity of noble minds," but by the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when alchemists seem to have flourished, there was a strong scepticism of the theories on which their search was based, and at the same time a strong desire for marvels. In fact the atmosphere was somewhat like that of Europe just before the French Revolution when a mixture of scepticism and superstition made it possible for Cagliostro, Casanova and Saint Germain to flourish as purveyors of rejuvenating fluids and elixirs of life, while James Graham in his Temple of Health and Beauty at the Adelphi, was charging a hundred guineas a night for the use of his Electrical Celestial Bed, children begotten on which were healthier, wiser and more beautiful than other mortals. Consequently at this period, as in contemporary California (from the same sociological causes) the alchemist was much closer to the charlatan and the confidence man. But life was hazardous for him. The rulers of petty principalities, living beyond their incomes, were quite ready to swallow stories of gold making; but they were likewise prone to hang the gold-maker if he did not deliver the goods. It was not uncommon for him to be put to the torture to compel him to divulge his secrets.

In 1600, Alexander Seton, a Scot who boasted of having manufactured gold, fell into the hands of the Elector of Saxony, who stretched him on the rack, singed him with red hot irons, etc., to make him talk. He remained adamant and was rescued by a Polish colleague, who drank the governor and wardens of his prison under the table, and then escaped with him.

In 1700, a sixteen year old apothecary's apprentice at Berlin claimed to have produced gold. The Prussian King, Frederick I, heard of it and asked for a piece to be sent to him. The young alchemist, not awaiting his own summons to Court, went into hiding and finally arrived in the territory of the Elector of Saxony, who was Augustus the Strong, King of Poland. He was taken to Warsaw and when the King refused to surrender him to Prussia, war nearly occurred between the two countries. Augustus set him up in a new laboratory so that there would be no excuse for not producing results, with the order, "Make a job of it, or I'll hang you." A visitor described him at that time as "foaming like a horse, bellowing like an ox, gnashing his teeth, barging his head against the walls, shivering all over, taking the commandant of the prison for the Archangel Gabriel, and drinking twelve eams of

beer every day." Perhaps the beer gave him inspiration. At any rate, having no illusions as to his ability to make gold, he remembered that much of the King's income was expended on porcelains. He set to work experimenting, and ultimately produced what became known as Dresden china. By that means he preserved his head on his shoulders, but died, prematurely aged, in his 36th year.

In the surrealist world of inflationary Germany, one Tausend, the son of a Swabian tinsmith, believing that "sound and light and wave symphonies are the bearers of all material things," evolved a "Symphonie" chemistry, which opened the way to all sorts of transmutations. By 1923, he claimed to have produced gold and interested the Bavarian Minister of Finance in his scheme. By 1925 Ludendorff threw the weight of his authority and connections on the side of the inventor on condition that he, as trustee for the German people, was to have control of a large share of the profits, which were to be devoted to patriotic purposes. A German industrialist who had invested in one of the companies formed to exploit the invention, had the bright idea of wiping off all Reparations from the gold produced. But alas, no dream lasts forever, and, after an inquiry, made difficult because of the rank and influence of many concerned, the rash alchemist went to trial and was in 1931 sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for fraud.

This book is interesting both for its history and for the material it supplies for a sociology of ideas. A glance at it shows how gullible even experts are when the wish to believe is strong. The more insecure a people are the more suggestible they become to any scheme of salvation; and when an individual or community is in financial straits, the appearance of the gold-maker causes their powers of criticism to vanish. Afterwards they avenge their gullibility, in the Middle Ages by hanging the alchemist, in modern times by imprisoning him for fraud. But it is their gullibility that has produced him. Like Joseph Smith, the revealer of the Book of Mormon, his day-dream receives such an enthusiastic reception that he cannot go back on it, but must play up to rising expectations.

J. S. BARWELL.

JESUS AND LOVE

THOSE who maintain the absolute love and gentleness of Jesus, and who cannot reconcile this with his obvious contemptuous treatment of his mother through the Gospels, will be interested by this which we take from one of our religious papers:—

"Various interpretations have been given of the words in St. John: 'Woman what have I to do with thee?' The earliest is that of St. Irenaeus, who thought that our Lord was checking her unreasonable haste. St. John thought our Lord was gently indicating the distinction between human relationship and His divine authority. St. Cyril, Alexandria, thought that our Lord was admitting out of reverence to His mother what he willed not as yet to do. MacGregor, in 'Moffat's Commentaries,' reminds us that the term 'woman' in the original has none of the harshness it suggests in English, but is perfectly respectful and even intimate. Jesus even addresses his mother by it from the Cross. Language observes that the first half of the sentence ought not to be isolated from its explanatory conclusion. 'Mine hour is not yet come.'"

If anyone has learned anything from that long yarn, probably from a divine source, will they tell us exactly what it all means? It really looks as though someone has been out late.

ACID DROPS

"The Catholic Times" comes to the conclusion that "it is strange Atheists should hate God." We are surprised so good an editor should pass so silly a remark. The Atheist does not "hate" God, one cannot hate or love *nothing*. What he objects to is the foolishness, mischief and lying that have taken place in the belief that God exists. If one awakes in the middle of the night and believes that a man is breaking into the house, he may seize a weapon and rush to get hold of the thief. But when he finds that no one is there, he goes back to bed and calls himself a fool. That is exactly the position of the Atheist. He does not "hate" God, he simply hates the bad reasoning, and the vile things that have been done in the belief that something called "God" exists. The editor of the "Catholic Times" should try again. Meanwhile we should like him to explain how, or by what means anyone can hate a thing that does not exist?

While we are dealing with this matter we may express our surprise that so many of our leading politicians go out of their way to bow to "nothing" in the name of God. We could put our hand on a fairly large number of leading politicians whose belief in God, or gods, is just about as little as our own. It does not say much for the moral courage of our Members of Parliament who, time after time, allow the introduction of religion in the House without comment. It is almost impossible to induce professional politicians to set an example of honesty of speech, but some good work might be done if ordinary unbelievers now and then inform Members that Atheists are alive and can act accordingly. Some little comment might be made on our Chancellor, who will go to the House of Parliament and talk with sound sense there, and then will go to a church and tell his audience that their future rests upon God. If that were true, it should be said in Parliament. As it is not said there, we are forced to believe that things are not as they appear.

The Bishop of St. Alban's is objecting to any one person, or even a group of persons, providing enough money to run his Church. He says definitely: "The Church of England has lived too long on the endowments of the past and the generosity of the rich." We do know that, to a very great point, the wealth of the Church flowed in because its function was to keep the "people" quiet by means of "help," and as the priests played a very large part in the distribution of money, it formed a means of keeping the people quiet. The poor were kept quiet, and the clergy preserved their churches. It is perhaps true that the present-day clergymen are of a lower intellectual level than were the priests of, say, a few generations ago, but they do know which side their bread is buttered.

Those who listen to the wireless will be familiar with the—stage—name of "Gillie Potter," who usually makes people smile. But he would have been well advised if he had left religion alone. Wit and wisdom do not always run together. For example, there was a public meeting recently in the City church of St. Botolph. The Archbishop of York pressed Mr. Gillie Potter to address the meeting—B.B.C. advertising obviously counts for something. Here is a sample of what Gillie Potter said, as reported by "The Daily Express":—

"A number of people will tell you that only the foolish, the simple, and the unintelligent go to

church. I can tell you someone who is far from foolish, and is intelligent who goes to church—and his name is 'Gillie Potter.'"

Quite seriously, we think that the Archbishop might really have engaged, with profit to the church, another speaker. What kind of company does our comic of the B.B.C. keep? As well-known Atheists we are rather pleased to be able to say that we have known many church-going people who have been neither foolish nor bad. We wonder whether the star of the B.B.C. is pulling the leg of his friend the Archbishop. The Archbishops of to-day may be poorer in quality than they were a century ago, but they are not fools. But perhaps we were dull and missed the fact that both the Archbishop and the B.B.C'er were joking.

The Bishop of Southwark has in three years raised two hundred and fifty thousand pounds to rebuild churches. We are not surprised. There is a great feeling of charity among the poor, and those who really know them will agree with us. We have seen the poor give when they had precious little to give.

So we are not surprised at the poor of Southwark and neighbourhood who have collected the amount of money mentioned. But it was God's building that had been knocked about; and what did He do to save His churches from disaster? We believe that there were more churches and places of worship damaged or destroyed than were public houses. The Bishop may mean well, but he behaves very badly.

We were pleased the other day to come across—not for the first time—the remark that the ancient Romans were the greatest administrators of the ancient world. That is a very plain truth, and yet it is not commonly recognised. No nation in the modern world has ever done better than the Romans, and not many could even claim equality. Its laws are not worn out yet, and even to-day, in Scotland, in the absence of laws bearing on whatever is before the court, Roman law will stand. One other point to note is that in ancient Rome there was no "colour-bar." The coloured man stood on terms of equality with other citizens. Toleration was the keynote of Roman life. It knew little of the tyranny and the brutality with which the Christian Church was to pave the way for "the great lying creed."

In those far-away days of our youth we were of opinion that truth could hold the field with ease; but it did not take long to realise that a blunder had been made. One had to learn that opinions were formed, or we might say, accepted, not as a product of reasoning, but by the sheer impulse of one's surroundings. And what was more startling was the discovery that most people in their youth had to possess much courage to disobey their elders with regard to religion. The common remark was, "Wait until you are older," which was very, very wrong, because as one grows older, opinions are inclined to get fixed. Valuable understanding is not brought about in that way. Perhaps the best thing would be to say to the young, "Don't place too great a reliance on the opinions of your elders, they may not be right." Of course, there are children who never go any further than their parents, but that is something to be sorry about; it is certainly not anything to be proud of on either side.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

H. I. SEARLE, Bradford.—You are right. A mere statement made by one person only is of no legal value whatever. An affidavit to be of any value must involve both parties. The object of this affidavit is to mislead the unwary.

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SUGAR PLUMS

A dictionary is at once an infant clinic and a mortuary. It displays to visitors births and deaths, and just as in the one we can study the play of inherited characteristics so in the other we can discern their atrophy and disappearance. So it follows that so long as words represent thought we must dispute over them in order to get at the things for which words are supposed to stand. It is in virtue of language that man enters into a conscious relationship with his fellows, and with the generations that have gone before him. Without that we should be like each animal generation, who have to commence life afresh, aided only by the slow accumulation of purely biological acquisitions. Of all the tools that man has invented, there is none greater and none more powerful than words.

Come then let us praise the Lord,
Who created heaven and earth.
Let us magnify his name.
All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
The spirochaete that you dread,
And you, who shudder in your bed,
The Lord God made them all.
The weakly mice you hate to harry,
The typhoid bacilli they carry,
The corrugated pachyderm
And any microscopic germ.

This is not meant to be complimentary, and we are equally not inclined to be over-praising. We are told that we are disputing about words. Well, but what else should we be questioning about? Words should express thought, and thoughts in turn should stand for the representation of things, so that one might be led to enquire what else should disputes be about but words? Words are not dead entities, but living things. They have their ancestors, they carry with them the marks of their heredity, and they have their living relatives, which resemble human relatives in being both desirable and understandable and disputable. Words are born, grow and die. Every good dictionary stands godfather for the birth of some, and solemnly records the passing away of others.

THE BIRTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

(By Alfred Loisy. Translated by Dr. L. P. Jacks.
Allen & Unwin; 18s.)

IN the modern history of the Catholic Church a peculiar, as well as a distinguished place, is held by the Gallican French Church. For France, the traditional "eldest son of the Church" not only preserved a sturdy ecclesiastical individuality, which until quite recent times rejected the centralising *ultramontane* rule of the Papacy, but was also remarkable for producing a whole series of great scholars, the heretical tendencies of whom ended by getting them into more or less serious trouble with ecclesiastical authority and Roman orthodoxy.

In their widely various ways, Rabelais, Calvin, Pascal, Richard Simon (the father of Biblical criticism), Jean Meslier (the forerunner of the French Revolution), Lamennais, Renan, Joseph Turmel (most erudite of historians of Catholic dogma), and Alfred Firmin Loisy, all qualify for inclusion in this list.

The last named, author of the important book on Christian origins before us, was not the least illustrious even in the list of famous men just cited, a distinguished orientalist, a brilliant controversialist, and one of the most scientific historians of Christian origins in his generation. Alfred Loisy, throughout his long life (1857-1940) enjoyed an international reputation as a critical historian of liberal tendencies, and the book before us, the French original of which first appeared in 1934 under the title of "La Naissance du Christianisme," is, so to speak, a final summary of a theme to which its author had already devoted numerous learned volumes.

To the religious world of a generation ago, M. Loisy was widely known as the leader of the International Modernist movement in the Roman Church, which in the earliest years of the present century made a courageous though unsuccessful attempt to pour the new wine of historical and scientific criticism into the stagnant old bottles of Catholic theology.

All M. Loisy derived from this attempt was ex-communication by "bell, book, and the (proverbial) candle" at the hands of the still mediocally-minded Papacy. Doubtless in an older age, to which Rome still spiritually adheres, our author would have, literally, illuminated an Auto da Fe of the most Holy Inquisition. However, we live in a more secular age, and the only personal damage that M. Loisy seems to have suffered as the result of the "bell, book and candle" was that his pious charwoman promptly gave notice. Otherwise the ex-cleric continued to write mindless of the thunderbolts of the Vatican until his death at the advanced age of 83.

In the 359 pages and voluminous notes, there is a most interesting preface from the veteran Hellenist, Dr. Gilbert Murray. This is the first of M. Loisy's major works to be translated into English, soon, however, to be followed by others, also to be translated by the ex-editor of the "Hibbert Journal," Dr. Jacks.

The theme and historic scope of the "Birth of the Christian Religion" is the earliest and least known phase of Christian evolution which can be dated from the very first tentatives at preaching the new religion, in the first place as a mere Judaic heresy, until the final emergence of the Catholic Church about A.D. 180, with a finally formed canonical New Testament and an official creed.

Since the latter date the light of History has beamed fiercely upon the varied fortunes of the Church. But in the first century and a-half, the era here covered, we are still in twilight, and have to rely solely upon precarious glimpses, surmises and deductions, for the truth of what actually occurred during the earliest and formative years of what was destined to become the new world-religion.

We may add that no historian has understood better than does our author the limited material which is all that the student of the first half-dozen Christian generations has to work on. Again and again he goes out of his way to remind us that what written material we have before us in the New Testament and even in the writings of the Second century theologians, is not history, but pious legend, the mythological embellishment of history, or, perhaps the historical embellishment of mythology.

For no one knows better than does this most modest savant that no one ever will or ever can, write in full detail the history of Christian origins, the material for such a feat just does not exist.

It is perhaps inevitable that one should compare this book with the now famous work of the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, and judging from its similarities, Dr. Barnes may well have used it as one of his sources. The two books cover almost the same period, and stop at almost exactly the same point: at the final consolidation of the Christian Church in the second half of the Second century. In a general comparison the Anglican bishop's version of the "Rise of Christianity" has perhaps some advantage over that of the French ex-cletric in the brilliance and sweep of his opening survey of the pre-Christian evolution of religion, to which M. Loisy's book supplies no parallel. But the French author is not only the more original in point of time, but is clearly the more scientific historian.

If only, we may relevantly add, because what we may perhaps term without offence, as the Anglican bishop's "trade union" propensity for making *a priori* and entirely irrelevant assumptions about the "unique" moral and spiritual grandeur of Jesus, is totally absent in the work of M. Loisy for whom (what he rather vaguely describes as) "the religion of humanity" has entirely superseded every form of historic Christianity.

The actual picture of the titular Founder of the Christian religion given by both our distinguished authors is very similar except for M. Loisy's consistent abstention from those "trade union" lapses which are periodically interposed in a sometimes curiously incongruous manner through Dr. Barnes's generally scientific analysis of Christian origins.

Both the authors present an historic Founder, or, at least starting point of Christianity, and their general portrait is very similar: it is in the pattern made familiar by a century of Liberal exegesis since Renan and Strauss: Jesus Christ is represented as an heretical rabbi, a religious and ethical reformer, a preacher of the coming "Kingdom of God," with Messianic implications partly political in character, which eventually provoked Roman intervention and led directly to the execution of the Messianic preacher, and, therefore, indirectly to the rise of the new religion.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(To be concluded)

It is in the nature of man that every individual should wish for his own advantage, in preference to that of others.—*Terence*.

THE EARLY LIFE OF THOMAS PAINE

IX

WESLEY was in Thetford again in 1761, on his way from Lakenheath to Norwich, and as Paine was then staying in the town studying for the Excise, he may possibly have heard the great eighteenth-century preacher and founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. Paine was again in the town in 1787, and stayed with his widowed mother in Heathenman-street (now Guildhall-street), not two minutes' walk from the Friends' meeting-house in Cage-lane. The year before the market had been moved from its old situation by the Icknield Way as it passed through the east-end of the town to its present site, about 100 yards from the house in Heathenman-street. There are some curious references to the Thetford of this period in a letter (in my possession) written in 1790 by James Warner, alias King-bora at Thetford in 1764—from Jamaica. It appears that a William Payne, of Thetford, a carpenter, and possibly a relative of Thomas, had just emigrated to Jamaica, and Warner, in writing home, says:—

"Payne is an exceeding clever man, who bids fair to return in a few years one of the first men in Thetford, and he is very deserving any success he may meet, as he is an honour to his family and the place he came from, and I fear there are few his equals left behind, for as he says, and I believe, most of the young Thetford people are dissipated, simple, ignorant young men, that mind nothing but the low and insipid sport of cock-fighting."

Paine left his home at Thetford in 1755, and apparently did not again return until July, 1761, when, having renounced stayermaking, he came home for the purpose of studying for the position of an exciseman. He came with a varied experience of life. In the comparative peace and retirement of his parents' home at Thetford, he devoted himself to study, and doubtless also to inducing his friends to "pull the strings" by which alone he could obtain an entry into the government service. The chief of these friends seems to have been Henry Cocksedge, who had succeeded Sir John Wodehouse as Recorder of Thetford, and was in 1762 succeeded by the Earl of Hertford. He had also been Mayor of the borough a portion of the year 1719 (the Mayor having died during his year of office), and also in 1721, 1725, 1729, 1737 (the year of Paine's birth), and 1745. Chiefly through his influence Paine was appointed after fourteen months' study, a supernumary of excise. On December 1, 1762, he was appointed to gauge brewers' casks at Grantham.

In February, 1768, he paid a brief visit to Thetford after having been promoted to the position of excise officer at Lewes. When next he saw his native place he was a man of almost world-wide notoriety, for the great American Revolution had taken place, and the War of Independence, in which he took so prominent a part, fought. On September 3, 1787, he arrived in London from America, and proceeded straight to Thetford, entering the town by the London-road, past the old Grammar School where he was educated, the Bell Hotel (little changed since then), to Heathenman-street (now Guildhall-street). His father, from whom he received affectionate letters to the last, had died the year before and his mother had left the house in White Hart-street, and was living at No. 9 Heathenman-street, in what is now the fifth house east of Pike-lane, on the north side of the street. It is an ancient house of lath and plaster.

colour-washed, with low door and steps leading down from the street to the entrance-hall. It is probably over 200 years old. Here he stayed several months, and it is doubtless owing to this fact that there are strong traditions as to his having been born there. The name of the street—though occurring as early as 1507—also harmonised in popular thought with Paine's reputation, and was doubtless a factor in the persistence of the tradition. "Heathen-man" had, however, nothing to do with Paine, but may, perhaps, have referred to the Danes, who were described as "heathen-men" in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. This house was in St. Mary's parish, but the registers contain no record of the Paines of that period. On this occasion a local barber named Jack Whistler shaved Paine, and in later years related this fact to Mr. Stephen Oldman, who went to school in the house, and died in 1901 at the age of 85. With his father dead, and his mother age 91, Paine would doubtless be somewhat lonely; and writing to Jefferson from Thetford early in 1788, he said: "After I got home, being alone and wanting amusement, I sat down to explain to myself (for there is such a thing) my ideas of national and civil rights, and the distinction between them."

How did the people of Thetford look upon Paine as he walked the quiet streets of the town, sat in the meeting-house, or chatted with the friends of his boyhood—Paine who had written "Common Sense" and "The Crisis," had fought with the sword against the soldiers of George III, had given ungrudgingly of his time, his talents, and his money to the cause of the revolution, had filled some of the highest positions in the government of America, and was the intimate friend of George Washington and the revolutionary leaders? So far as we can judge from negative evidence, they evinced no hostility to Paine. With an illiterate populace, newspapers expensive, and with no organised system of obtaining accurate information, it seems probable that Paine's share in the American Revolution was not generally known. The "Rights of Man" which aroused so much political prejudice, and the "Age of Reason" which caused Paine and his memory to be assailed for a century by calumny and bigotry, had not yet been written. It is more than probable that at that date, even had the facts as to Paine's connection with the War of Independence been commonly recognised, sympathy would have been not altogether on the side of George III. Doubtless Paine found some of his school-boy friends to whom he could talk of his adventures across the seas, and of his friendships with the leading spirits in the newly-formed United States. On Sunday he may have escorted his mother the two hundred yards or so to the Friends' meeting house and sat with her in the barn-like building listening to the testimonies of the saints, and possibly judging their utterances by the known facts as to their daily life. On this occasion Paine settled on his mother an allowance of 9s. per week, but whether he was ever again in the town is not quite certain, though he was probably there at the burial of his mother in May, 1790.

His connection with Thetford was frequently alluded to by friends and foes during his lifetime. On May 23, 1791, a caricature by Gillray was published, depicting Paine measuring the Crown for a new pair of revolution breeches. There is a lengthy soliloquy beneath in which occurs the following: "Lord! Lord! I wish I had a bit of the stay-tape or buckram which I used to cabbage when I was apprentice, to lengthen it out. Well, well, who would have thought that I who have served seven years as an apprentice, and afterwards worked four years as a journeyman tailor," etc. Another caricature by Gillray

published in 1793 represents Paine fitting Britannia with a new pair of stays—evidently a painful operation. On one side of the picture is a cottage and over the door a sign, with the following inscription: "Thomas Paine, staymaker from Thetford—Paris modes by express."

W. G. CLARKE.

BELIEF IN IN-HUMANITY!

MR. ROY, in his article "Belief in Humanity" appears to consider himself something of a mind-reader—or why does he so boldly claim to know my own particular thoughts? He accuses me of *thinking* I had struck upon a great revelation in my criticism of "Equality." For his information let me assure him I thought of no such thing; nor have I ever attempted to criticise Marxism—for a very good reason. *I am not sufficiently interested in it.*

Evidently Mr. Roy is a red-hot Red—and like all other Communists who take themselves too seriously—he seems to possess a worshipping and all-consuming reverence for every word that ever issued from the mouths of Messrs. Marx and Lenin. No one, however inadvertently, must step upon his Communistic corns—a Bolshevik bunion is so exceedingly tender!

I am sure we are all aware that the Capitalist system is very far from perfect, but from what I have read about Communism and conditions in the U.S.S.R. I can only conclude that the Communist system is even less ideal. (Read Dennis Wheatley's "Red Eagle," or Ethel Mannin on her visit of investigation to Russia.)

At the risk of being termed an "idealistic dreamer" I do not agree that certain classes of humanity *never* can be reconciled. It may well take many generations and some hundreds of years to reconcile them; but is that any reason why the effort should not be made? As the poet says "There is no failure save in giving-up!"

Democracy tends towards a levelling of the opposite extremes and is essentially a tolerant and freedom-loving doctrine. Can this be said of Communism, Fascism or Nazism? No country has ever yet been *forced* to accept Democracy but the three systems above mentioned could only flourish by the forcible suppression of all opposition. They were born in a blood-bath and already two of them have perished in a blood-bath! I, personally, cannot believe in any political system that has to be forced on the people by means of wholesale slaughter; and which can only survive by the ruthless and tyrannical subjection of the masses.

Surely Mr. Roy has read the account of the eight Czech airmen who managed to escape from the Communist despots in Czechoslovakia by flying to England. These men fought for the Allies (including Russia) yet, because they did not accept Communism and Russian domination, they are forced to seek refuge here. Some of them had committed the unforgivable sin of marrying English girls, for which they were *marked men*, spied upon and distrusted in their own country, not daring to reveal their names publicly lest the parents they had left behind should be *imprisoned!* And this is what they said—"The principles of free-living for which we had fought for *six years* existed no longer."

Well, Mr. Roy, for you and for those of your persuasion Communism may be a fine thing. But it is *hell* for those who don't happen to agree with you! Thanks very much, but I happen to prefer *living* under Democracy to *dying* under Totalitarianism.

I am not prepared to deny there are *any* virtues in Communism any more than I am prepared to deny there are *many* vices in Capitalism, but somewhere between the two extremes I believe the ideal doctrine can be found.

In defending his beloved Communism Mr. Roy remarks that force and discrimination are necessary and that there can be no freedom without restriction. In other words, the Communistic conception of freedom is this: "You are free to choose—*For* or *Against*—but God help you if you choose *Against*!" No, no, that is not my idea of freedom.

Finally, Mr. Roy seems to be very peeved about what he calls "the slanderous Capitalist Press," because it has dared to criticise Russian tyranny in Czechoslovakia. But, after all, there surely *is* a striking resemblance in the Soviet policy of absorbing Europe to the Hitler technique* which we have taken so much trouble to exterminate.

Even if the obnoxious effluvia of the common skunk remains unnoticed by its dotting off-spring—*everybody else can smell it a mile away!*

That is all, Mr. Roy.

W. H. WOOD.

PLOTTERS IN THE HOLY SEE

IV

IN Germany generally, the Catholics comprise only one third of the population. In a number of the regions of Trizonia, however, notably in the Rhineland and Bavaria, they constitute the overwhelming majority and here the traditional clerical domination persists to this day.

It is in these regions that with the connivance of the British and American Military authorities the Vatican's agents have of late been developing intense activity. Cardinal Faulhaber—longstanding friend of Pacelli and Ledochowski, and an old champion of a "Danubian Confederation" comprising Austria, Bavaria, the Rhineland, etc.—continues to be the unowned king of Bavaria. An interesting report was given out some time ago that he went out of his way to persuade the Bavarian ex-Crown Prince Rupprecht to renounce his claim to the throne in favour of his nephew Otto Habsburg; the Austrian dynasty has long cherished pretensions to the entire Danubian basin, a plan which has certain patrons in the United States (where Otto lived during the war).

Politically, Bavaria is already a Vatican dependency under American military control. The monarchist-clericalist Christian Social Union, which heads the Bavarian Government with U.S. backing, is Faulhaber's personal organisation, and the Bavarian Premier, Ehard, is his creature of old.

In the Rhineland, Faulhaber has an ally in the person of Cardinal Frings of Cologne, who is regarded as the unofficial leader of the Christian Democratic Union in Western Germany. Under his leadership, this Union has begun to extend its influence to the Right-wing Protestant circles, including such diehard reactionaries as Schlange-Schoeningen, a former co-adjutor of Hindenburg and Hugenberg (Hitler's ally against the Weimar Republic) and now head of the food administration in the British zone.

An article in the London "*Tribune*" entitled "The Art of Sabotage" stated:—

"Cardinal Frings is the spiritual leader of the new German Right. It was he who in a letter to a Left-

wing Catholic leader coined the slogan: 'The enemy is on the Left.'"

This catchword has become the motto of German reaction. Frings has his private "economic advisory council," bent on food sabotage and consisting of some of the wealthiest of the German industrialists and landowners, including Dinkelbach, the "trustee" of the Ruhr steel industry. Another protégé of Frings' is Adenauer, former mayor of Cologne and now leader of the Christian Democrats, who at one time represented the Deutsche Bank-Otto Wolff group—the Catholic faction of the Ruhr magnates.

As the Vaticanites conceive it, a clerical bastion in the area between Cologne and Munich must inevitably extend its sphere of influence to Austria and Hungary, where the Catholic reaction is not wasting its time. Seen under this angle, the recent outbursts of hysteria in official quarters regarding the events in Hungary—where the subversive activities were led by Cardinal Mindszenty, a German whose real name is Phem—assume a new meaning.

This year, the Hungarian people are observing the centenary of the 1848 Revolution and pay homage to its leaders as national heroes. This is not to the liking of Cardinal Mindszenty and other Catholic reactionaries; last year, he declared on more than one occasion he would not participate in the celebration of the 1848 events. Among the jubilee calendars issued for the centenary two have been put out by the Catholic "Uj ember" (Man) Publishing house. In these two calendars Petöfi—the poet and spiritual leader of the revolution—and his young followers are denounced for having "led the nation to disaster, and the church to destruction." They are even charged with plunder and violence. The "Declaration of Independence," which is an occasion now marked by a national holiday, according to the Catholic calendars, "involved the bulk of the nation in a great sin for which we later had to pay with imprisonment . . . and the loss of national honour."

Jesuit fascism is duplicating the old tactics of Hitler all along the line. At the same time, the Catholic reactionaries are frenziedly and indefatigably active in order to bolster up Franco's tottering régime with dollars in spite of the formal dropping of Spain from the Marshall Plan.

Mr. Myron Taylor—multi-millionaire American steel and banking chief*—holds the official position of Personal Representative of President Truman at the Vatican. In this quality he conferred secretly with Franco a few weeks ago with an offer to make available both dollar and sterling credits, preferably through private banks.

Mr. Taylor is a Protestant—but religious denomination is not important in affairs like this. After a gap of 80 years, he was chosen to be the first American representative to the Vatican. His appointment, it was stated in the American press, was made on the advice of Cardinal Spellman of New York, one of the most influential Vatican schemers after the death of Ledochowski.

Spellman climbed the ladder of the Catholic hierarchy with spectacular speed. He is a graduate of Fordham University, the New York Jesuit academy. Until the last war he was just an ordinary provincial bishop; today he is a member of the College of Cardinals, Archbishop of New York, personal emissary of the Pope in negotiations with foreign governments, and Catholic Vicar for the U.S. armed forces. Through him the policies of Wall

* He is director of the United States Steel Corporation and closely connected with the firm of Morgan, which holds the controlling block of shares in the Steel Corporation.

Street and Vatican City are being co-ordinated; Spellman, therefore, is spoken of as the right hand of Pope Pius XII and a possible successor to the papal chair. At the same time he is one of the most influential inspirators of American foreign policy.

The alliance between the Holy See and Wall Street was concluded during the war when Spellman as Military Vicar made many trips to Europe—as will be remembered.

There are not more than 30 million Catholics in the United States; but unlike the Protestant camp which is divided up into numerous separate sects, the majority of the Catholics constitute a solid body of voters who obediently follow the lead of their priests. This is a very important consideration to the leaders of the ruling American parties. Since 1932, the chairman of the National Committee of the Democratic Party has invariably been a Catholic. One of the biggest contributors to this party's war chest is the banking firm of J. Pierpont Morgan which during the war had been appointed the Vatican's financial agent in the United States. The Holy See was anxious to safeguard its huge funds, accumulated in the course of centuries, against the risk of being moth-eaten or devaluated in war-shaken Europe.

This transaction, too, was arranged by Spellman who in 1945 received a Cardinal's hat.

TOM HILL.

A Trip to Hell

Not long after the opening of the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway (1841), the management advertised a day trip to Carlisle on Sunday. Alongside the posters there appeared, as if by magic, another poster which read: A reward for Sabbath Breaking. People taken swiftly and safely to Hell, next Lord's day, by the Carlisle Railway for 7s. 6d. It is a pleasure trip.—(From "Railways of Britain," by O. S. Nock.)

CORRESPONDENCE

ON AQUINAS

SIR.—It is unfortunate that Mr. Wood has not understood my thesis, however his own statement serves to confirm my charge that he is an "ignorant and ill-informed critic." It is, of course, unnecessary for me to point out that failure to understand one's opponent's case disqualifies one as a critic.

As an example of facetiousness, Mr. Wood's letter is excellent, had he remained in the category of the witty and ironic, there would have been very little with which to quarrel, his letter would have been merely an amusing contribution. However, his relapse into seriousness in the penultimate paragraph provides an outstanding example of illogical and muddle-headed thinking. His statement that "... the totality of contingent existences can only be *analogical* with contingent non-being ..." is just nonsense. An existence cannot be *analogical* with anything else, *statements* may be used *analogically*, but even if we amend his sentence to read "... statements about the totality ..." the result is no better. Statements about one mode of existence may be used legitimately about another mode of being (*analogically*), but, because being and non-being are antitheses, statements about the one cannot be extended to the other. Further, it is pertinent to ask, "What does Mr. Wood mean by the term 'contingent non-being.?'"

I will be very interested to know how Mr. Wood differentiates between different modes of non-being and also what conception Mr. Wood has of these different modes. I would remind Mr. Wood that in the final paragraph of my article I stressed the fact that the priority of existence over essence was one of the premises of the Thomist Cosmological Argument, and I am sufficiently acquainted with logic to know that if the premises are destroyed then the argument collapses. So I fail to see why Mr. Wood should choose to reiterate my statement.—Yours, etc.,
L. D. SMITH.

PESSIMISM AND OPTIMISM

SIR.—Without wishing to become involved in a "pessimism versus optimism" conflict, may I be permitted a few comments on a point raised by Mr. Moore in your issue of May 16?

Mr. Moore's cheerful outlook may or may not be justified, but his assertion that man with £4 per week is able to enjoy the "luxuries" of the finest films, the world's literature and music, plus an occasional theatre, needs some qualification.

Perhaps Mr. Moore will tell us how, on an income of £4 per week, a man and his wife (not to mention children) can pay for shelter—with a weekly rent of, say, £2—food, clothes, heating and lighting, and the aforementioned "luxuries"? I have omitted such important details as tobacco and beer out of consideration for Mr. Moore's unearthly cheerfulness.

One feels that the people who are so anxious to freeze wages, whilst producing atomic bombs in order to preserve peace, must be very grateful for the assistance so gratuitously tendered by Mr. Moore; and will probably recommend the immediate inauguration of a Society of Cheerful Hearts.—Yours, etc.,

J. PLIMMER.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon; Highbury Corner, 7 p.m.: Mr. L. EBURY.

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