

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXVIII.—No. 25

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

IEWS AND OPINIONS

Religion Necessary

SOME time ago I picked up a magazine containing a series of articles bearing the title "Substitutes for Religion." It interested me, not because it offered anything new, but because it indicated an author of ability who really believed in his semi-historic Christianity. And to come across an honest and intelligent Christian leader is something worth noting.

The main feature of the series of articles was first an assumption that some sort of religion was essential to human welfare. Second, that all the good in human life, must logically be based on some kind of religion. Finally, there was the assertion that Secularism aimed at being recognised as a substitute for religion. On this basis we are asked to believe that a strong case could be made out for the necessity of belief in religion.

The weakness of this argument is that it ascribes to the Freethinker something he is far from intending. The Atheist is not seeking a *substitute* for Christianity, for the reason that he does not believe in religion in any shape or form. He does not submit for discussion the necessity of any kind of religion.

The Freethinker asks people to consider whether anything that is done by religion or religious bodies in the shape of ethical teaching, social guidance or political counsel, could not be done by social organisations free of religious teaching. This raises the essential question in a perfectly unambiguous manner, for it is part of the Freethinker's case that good can be done by people who believe in gods. But what is good in fact and good in intention is often misunderstood. The fundamental position of the Atheist is that essentially good qualities are soiled, or in some way distorted by a misinterpretation. The Christian is often found fighting against qualities and actions he believes he is supporting.

It may be granted that in much of the good done by Christians there is a conviction that their good conduct is an outcome of their religion. The simple reaction to this is that, religion or no religion, a certain measure of decent (social) play is inevitable if group life is to exist. It is not seen that life is far more insistent on essential behaviours than it is on much that we are apt to consider of first importance. The causes of our actions are often misunderstood, and the religious and secular aspects of life easily lead to their being regarded as inseparable.

The cardinal fact of the matter is organisation, and organisation is not a religious fact at all, it is a social characteristic. Men organise themselves for all sorts of ends, religious and non religious, and once the organisation is effected there is manufactured a social pressure that keeps individual members up to the mark. Social pressure creates organisation, which is afterwards utilised in the interests of religion. Those who have watched closely the reported cases of conversion by the Salvation

Army and other religious agencies will have realised that it is not a belief in any sort of doctrine that is the really effective force, but the social pressure exerted by a new circle of acquaintances.

Eliminate the influence of organisation and what is left to the credit of religion? Leave an individual to the unsupported influence of religion, and the result is the production of an anti-social asceticism or an unstable social type. In brief, the good usually ascribed to the Church, as a Church, is mainly the product of organisation. In this respect a Church is a replica, on a small scale, of society at large. Trade unions, political clubs, sporting clubs, schools all have the same influence on individual members. It is the simple pressure of the herd upon its units.

An organisation, therefore, may serve the purpose of inducing compliance with a fixed standard of conduct. Whether it is a good one or a bad one, it will at least do this, because it is ultimately expressive of the fundamental characteristics of gregariousness. But while some organisation is inescapable its form will be determined by the presence of a belief. And again the kind of belief is of subsidiary importance. The essential thing is that the belief shall be shared by several, and whenever this is the case we have the consciously expressed desire for organisation. Thus it is often urged against the Freethinker that a religious belief leads people to work heartily for various causes. But this is not a peculiarity of *religious* belief, it is a common feature of all belief. The Anarchist, the Socialist, the Atheist, are all moved to action by their beliefs. It is possible to argue that religious beliefs have a greater value than others, but it is the height of folly to argue that their disappearance will alter either the desire or the capacity for organisation and effort.

The fear that a rejection of religion involves a lowering of the standard of life may be met by one or two simple observations. The history of religion, like all else in nature, is the record of an evolution. We no more have the same religion that our ancestors had nor did they wear the same dress we wear to-day. In a world of incessant change it is impossible for even religion to remain stationary. The fact of change is obvious and undisputed. But the more closely this question is studied the clearer it becomes that instead of religion moulding life, it is ultimately life that moulds religion. One need only look at current Christian teaching and compare it with the teaching of religion a hundred years ago to realise this. Such a doctrine as eternal damnation was not dropped by Christian teachers because it shocked Christian sentiment or because it was discovered to be theologically unsound. It was dropped because the pressure of non-religious forces made it impossible to be longer held. A more truly socialised feeling rejected such a teaching, not as an outrage upon the nature of God, but as an insult to the nature of Man. So also with the clergy dwelling upon a "social"

development. It is always the pressure of opinion outside the Churches that determines the change of those within. In relation to this the problem of a Church is always twofold, first the endeavour to keep the people in line with the Church, and when this can no longer be done, by methods more or less dishonest, to bring the Church into line with the age.

We see the same thing if we take the history of religion on a broader scale. The Eastern races, who were among its earliest converts, continued substantially unchanged. The same religion came to Western people, and, subject to different circumstances, became translated. Gibbon, with that skill that has kept his history to the front to-day, pointed out that if Charles Martel had been vanquished, the Koran might have been preached at Oxford in place of the New Testament.

The problem, then, is not that of providing substitutes for religion; this assumes that religion is discharging some useful function in life, and consequently that its disappearance will leave a gap that must be filled. The vital problem is to discover how best to make people realise that the credit given to religion belongs elsewhere, and that a society without religion would not lack anything in life that is of real value. It is not merely that art and science, literature, human courage, intelligence, and affection remain apart from religion, but that the so-called religious life itself remains in what religionists now regard as its most valuable aspects.

We realise, as Freethinkers, that to-day religion is living by an exploitation of the social side of human nature. When Christians tell us of the good done by this or that Church, we are not at all surprised, and it offers no presumption against our Freethought. We should be the more pleased if Christians were twice as good than they are and Churches many times more benevolent. But it would not alter our opinion on either Christianity or religion in general. For we see in this no more than the working of human nature, which is older, wider, and deeper than any religion that the world has ever seen. Our work, therefore, is not to provide a substitute for a decaying creed, but to make all realise that the essential qualities will only gain in clarity of expression and effectiveness by the removal of all superstition and so clear the way for a worthy humanity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

CATHOLIC PERSECUTION IN SPAIN

THE history of the Papal Inquisition is one of agonising torture, peculation, hypocrisy, injustice and incineration. Still, incredible as it may appear, the avaricious and blood-stained annals of the Spanish Inquisition are even more astounding. Yet, to this day, the misdeeds of the two Inquisitions find their Romanist apologists and there is too good reason to suspect that, were the Catholic authorities permitted to resume their former powers, the terrors of the past might be repeated. For we must remember that the Church has never surrendered her arrogant and audacious claim of spiritual and civic supremacy over all temporal powers.

In extenuation of the Papacy, it has been urged that while the comparatively mild Roman Inquisition was created by the Pontiff, that in Spain was instituted by the State. Yet the Spanish Inquisition was modelled on its Roman prototype, and its vilest excesses were almost invariably approved by the Popes.

Until 1480, Spain was among the least priestly persecuted countries in Europe. Catholics, Moslems and Jews dwelt more or less in accord during the Moorish

ascendancy in the peninsula. As Dr. Coulton notes in his "Inquisition and Liberty" (Heinemann, 1938): "Religious persecution is always based on the hope of exterminating one's opponents; or, if not completely, at least of paralysing all his energies. Under Saracenic rule in Spain, there seemed less chance of such success; moreover, Islam was not hypnotised by the belief that disbelievers are doomed to an eternity of torment, and therefore that all free interchange of thought is deadly. They allowed the Christians free use of their religion."

Trading and social intercourse served to harmonise Christian and Moor. But the Jews, who were usually tolerated, led precarious lives. As physicians, financiers and administrators they were unrivalled and their abilities gained them opulence and power, but their eminence aroused envy and hatred which occasionally led to outrage and murder.

When the Spanish Christians began to recover their lost dominions, the conquered Moors were allowed to retain their property and cult. This was in the tenth century, and Moslem and Catholic lived on friendly terms during the two centuries following. Spain was prosperous, but intellectual strivings brought forth many heresies. In a time of toleration, freedom of thought became too pronounced to please the priests. So a badge of infamy was worn by those who dared to dissent from the official creed. Yet, the Moorish artificers and agriculturists were the cream of reconquered Spain. Still, despite their admitted integrity they were penalised for their nonconformity. As Coulton states: "The Lateran Council of 1215 had already prescribed this for all Jews and in 1371 Henry II of Castile prescribed it for Moors also. In 1266 Clement IV wrote to the King of Aragon urging him to expel all his Moors; it is disgraceful in him to suffer this religious anomaly for the sake of mere temporal advantages." Again, in 1311, Clement V counselled all rulers in Spain to restrain the Moors from calling their people to prayer from their minarets. But as the people continued tolerant and the princes ignored the Papal admonition, the Vatican decree was repeated in 1329 and again in 1429, but it was not enforced until the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Upon the Jews, however, the prescription had already fallen, for cupidity as well as creed stimulated persecution. The employment of Moors and Jews as doctors was forbidden under threat of excommunication. But princes and prelates retained their Jewish medicines despite the clerical cry that they poisoned their Christian patients. Even Clement VI protested against the absurd charges levelled against the Jews, but this appears an isolated instance. For the friars and clergy so inflamed the passions of the populace that the pillage and slaughter of these alleged Christ killers was continually emeted during the "Holy War against the Jews."

In 1391 the synagogues in Seville were pitilessly plundered: two were converted into churches, while one was reserved for the Jewish remnant that survived the slaughter. Thousands were slain in Barcelona, Valencia, Toledo and other cities. "In other places," records Coulton, "the Jews did not wait for murder, but crowded to the churches for baptism. The myth of the Ritual Murder was revived or invented, with the parallel story of the consecrated Host stolen and cast into a boiling cauldron, from which it miraculously emerged. Under sufficient torture, victims were found to confess these things." These and other atrocious activities were encouraged and praised by St. Vincent Ferrer whose impassioned oratory inflamed the feelings of his

auditors. Moreover, at a time when rival Popes reigned in Rome and Avignon, this distinguished preacher swore by the French Pontiff and consigned to eternal damnation all—save those who could plead invincible ignorance—who favoured the Italian impostor at Rome. It is also said that the fiery Ferrer baptised several thousand repentant Jews.

These compulsory converts—the Conversos—commonly cloaked their insincerity by appearing more hostile to their unbaptised brethren than many of the Catholic persuasion. Coulton concludes that, "as early as 1449, many of the noblest houses had Jewish blood in them, for these Conversos were men of more than the average ability. King Ferdinand the Catholic himself was of such a family, so was the Inquisitor Torquemada and his next successor in the Inquisition General; so was a contemporary Archbishop of Granada."

Aragon and Castile were virtually in a state of anarchy when Ferdinand and Isabella mounted their thrones. One of the first acts of their reign was the demolition of forty-six baronial castles, the strongholds of turbulent robber nobles. Also, the Church was corrupt to the core, and so illiterate were most of the priests that ordination was henceforth forbidden to those who could not construe the Latin of their own Litany.

Meanwhile, Conversos occupied many lucrative positions in the Court and, as their sincerity seemed doubtful, while the common clergy deeply resented their subordination to converted Jews, a fierce and fanatical religious campaign was directed against them, with the result that Spain's rulers determined to introduce the Inquisition. This step had already been suggested by the Pope Sixtus IV and a Bull was sent in 1478. But, whereas the confiscated property of heretics in Italy had always been taken by the Roman Court and Inquisition, the rulers of Spain insisted on the appropriation of heretics' possessions to the Crown. Again, the Inquisitorial officials were made strictly subservient to the Spanish State and, although both sovereigns professed the most rigid orthodoxy, they reserved the power to violate or evade any concordat should it infringe the requirements of statecraft.

As already intimated, the Spanish Inquisition proved even worse than its bloodstained predecessor. As Coulton declares: "Here, even more than in other countries, there was the terrible temptation that Inquisitors and their officials might enrich themselves, almost to any extent, by stretching every point for the conviction of a wealthy suspect, or by accepting bribes for his release. . . . No man was safe from his neighbours, his servants, or even his children. It was not only that an enemy might take advantage of this secret tribunal, but an ordinary well-wisher or even a true friend might fall under threats or torments and give incriminating evidence."

Some of the higher Inquisitorial officials so shamelessly defrauded the Crown of vast sums of its ill-gotten gains that they were tried and condemned, when the infamies of the Inquisitor, Lucero, became so glaring, that Cardinal Ximenes persuaded the Supreme Committee to order an investigation.

Amid scenes of unspeakable misery and destitution, the persecuted Jews were banished from Spain. The poor remnant that reached the coast experienced an evil fate, robbery and murder by sea and in the lands of their refuge."

More calamitous still was the fate of the Moors when their expulsion took place. Although Charles V had solemnly sworn "that he would neither expel these new subjects nor make forced conversions," that time-serving Pontiff, Clement VII, absolved the Emperor in 1518 from his oath. All Moors who refused baptism were now liable to expulsion, but their wholesale banishment was delayed to 1609. The story of their sufferings is too sad to relate, and that hardened statesman, Cardinal Richelieu, stigmatised this expulsion as "the boldest and most barbarous in human annals." "Yet," comments Coulton, "Archbishop Ribera, the main author and executioner of this abomination, was formally beatified by the Papacy; so that men may now as lawfully pray to God in his name as in that of St. Peter or St. Paul."

Little marvel then that the then world power, Spain, speedily declined in prosperity, prestige and population. The Crown and clergy grew increasingly parasitic on the body politic. In 1586 the peninsula's population was estimated at eight millions, but by 1700 it had fallen to five. Yet there remained 22 Inquisition Courts with 20,000 salaried and privileged officials. This loathsome institution completely deadened the sense of justice among the Spanish people. Again, Spain's monasteries numbered nearly 10,000 and possessed an enormous proportion of the nation's wealth.

T. F. PALMER.

THE LEGEND OF NEWCASTLE'S CANNY LEE-STONE

"It is recorded in local chronicles that when the dread plague was stalking its way along Tyneside during the 16th and 17th centuries, the inhabitants made a frequent practice of sending for the *Lee-penny*, which, being a most valuable asset, they never failed to provide a good bond of a large sum in trust for the loan; and they really believed that its peculiar properties did so much good that they offered to pay the money and keep the *Lee-penny*; but the proprietor would never part with the bauble. There is believed to be still extant an actual copy of this bond which is very well attested, and known to have been amongst the household documents belonging to the family of Lee.

This strange and very curious piece of antiquity, called the *Lee-penny*, appears to consist of a stone of a dark-red colour and of triangular shape, its size being about half an inch each side. It is set in an ancient piece of silver coin, which, though much defaced, by some letters still remaining, is supposed to be a shilling of Edward I, the cross being very distinct as it usually is on his shillings. This bauble then has been, by tradition, kept in the Lee family possessions since about the year 1320; which would be some little time after the death of king Robert Bruce. This stone is said to have possessed many virtues; that it cures all diseases in men and cattle, and the bite of a mad dog both in man and beast. It was used by dipping the stone in water that was given to diseased cattle to drink or the person who had been bitten, and the wound or part affected is washed with the water. Many cures are said to have been performed by it; indeed, it is recorded that people came from all parts of Scotland, and even as far up in England as Yorkshire, to obtain the water wherein the magic stone had been dipped."—vide "Local Historian's Table Book." E. H. S.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

ACID DROPS

Prepare to weep for the Vicar of Bulwell, shed a tear and try to feel a pang of sympathy, for the Rev. C. W. Younge, according to a report in the "Daily Mirror," will have to buy his own coal this winter. The National Coal Board have decided to cut all grants and gifts in kind to the Church of England. According to the vicar, the outlook is very grave for many Nottinghamshire parishes, and many may have to close down. The living of his neighbouring parish is only worth £400 per year; we wonder how many coal miners get £8 per week, and their work is important. Modern civilisation without a parson is conceivable, but without a miner . . . we leave our readers to fill in the blank.

An appeal is being made in Camberwell for funds to repair St. Giles' Church which sustained damage during the blitz. The War Damage Commission will meet only half the cost, hence the appeal. Apart from the obvious rebort that God ought to be responsible for his own repairs to his own house, we feel that so long as there is one family in Great Britain inadequately housed, St. Giles, and, indeed, all other damaged Churches, should not be repaired. Churches may have had their uses in Medieval times, in modern times they are an anachronism and should be left to decay as "interesting ruins" and a legacy to future generations as evidence of Man's folly in thinking that help could come from the "skies"—which, as old Omar has it, "rolls impotently on as thou or I."

We live—and learn. A Notts. parson informs us that the pre-National Coal Board mineowners made grants and endowments to the Church in order that parishioners would be able to be baptised, married, and buried in a Christian manner—not forgetting "Churching," that insulting Christian ceremony. On our reading of medieval times, we drew the conclusion that wealth handed over to the Church was an endeavour to short circuit the fires of Hell, a kind of Medieval Fire Insurance, or a conscience salve. After all, the Good Book has it that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter Heaven. The Christian religion is certainly individualistic when it comes to the efforts made to save one's own soul.

A correspondent in the "Baptist Times" informs us that "God is marching on." Maybe, but he seems to be the only one in step.

It appears that the ex-Queen Helena of Rumania wishes to go down in history in much the same fashion as another ex-monarch. Henry IV thought that "Paris was well worth a Mass," and Helena obviously thinks that Bucharest, too, will be worth it, even if it differs slightly in its implications from the Mass that Henry IV thought so little of. The Queen's decision that her son and Princess Anne of Bourbon Parma, although Roman Catholics, shall be married in the Greek Orthodox Church in order not to offend 80 per cent. of devout Rumanians, is causing quite a stir at the Vatican. We can quite understand Pius's concern; he will not have control over the Byzantine Branch. What a farce these royal puppets make of their religion!

Our attention was drawn to an advertisement by the R.S.P.C.A. in the "Observer" wherein an appeal was made for funds to help the work of the Society in its endeavours to stop cruelty to animals. We cannot but

help thinking that the fact that it is still considered necessary to draw people's attention to the cruelty to animals that still exists is an indictment of our "Christian England," even after "two thousand years of Mass"; or does the cruelty exist because of the two thousand years of Christian influence? The "lower orders," of course, have no "souls," and there is no place in Heaven for them.

In the House of Lords debate on the Death Penalty, the Archbishop of Canterbury said the Church recognised the full right of the civil magistrates in certain circumstances to take away life, whether in the case of a just war or for a heinous and grievous offence. This is a frank statement of the Church's attitude in practice, but the Archbishop seems to have forgotten that this cuts across the usual pulpit patter of curing moral disorders and abolishing war by examples of Christ's humility.

During the war, the Germans were considered barbarians animated by a low materialism. General Robertson has suddenly found out that they are now civilised and Christian; surely there is something wrong somewhere. For two and a-half years since the war ended British troops were not allowed to fraternise. We would like to know how, in such a short time 80,000,000 materialistic barbarians became "civilised Christians." The truth is, of course, that General Robertson is indulging in religious tomfoolery, and is not likely to fool anyone but a Christian. The German population has its good and bad characteristics as any other civilised country, and the insinuation that "civilisation" and "Christianity" are synonymous terms is not only sheer nonsense but rather insulting to non-Christian peoples (by far the majority) in the world.

President Truman is heading for trouble. The "News Chronicle" reports him as saying that "you cannot stop the spread of an idea by passing a law against it." This is Freethought in the best tradition, but it is not likely to commend itself to the vociferous section of Roman Catholics in the U.S.A., or, indeed, the world, whose very existence is owed to repressive measures and decrees. President Truman also said that you "can only stamp out Communism" by "more and better democracy." We are not quite sure what this means, but if it means more freedom to express one's opinions, better opportunity to express heretical beliefs, in short, the free expression of unpopular opinions without fear of Blasphemy Laws, censorship, subversive activity, legislation, and all the usual paraphernalia of oppressive State legislation, then we are all for it.

The Archbishop of York says that we have only to look at the world to-day to see that what is needed is a "Gospel." That, too, is a very old song. What is there in present day life and culture to bring back to the Christian religion its historic position and teaching? Freedom of opinion and speech grows more and more common; and what religion has ever been known to fatten on that food? Dean Inge was right when he said that Christianity logically died with the theory of Copernicus. Man may stumble, and here and there fall a cropper, but the decay of religion is so obvious that sensible Christians are ashamed to see what was once one of the rulers of the world has hardly any dry ground to put its feet.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601. 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mr. A. D. CORRICK.—Pleased to note that you appreciate the new format of "The Freethinker." Others have also commented. The paper is steadily gaining new subscribers. We hope you are well.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.

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

Owing to an alteration in office hours, Lecture Notices must reach 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, by first post Friday morning for the following Sunday week's issue of the "Freethinker."

SUGAR PLUMS

We have always said that the great fight of the future concerning religion will be between Catholicism and Atheism. They stand clear in their positions, and there is no room for compromise. On the other hand, Protestantism is an illogical compromise, an impossible attempt at reconciliation of faith and reason, and so its power can be but temporary. Sects multiply, doctrines fade away into nothingness, and the philosophy finishes in a form of Deism that is usually vague. We may say that Protestantism would, if it could, come to terms with Atheism. It claims to have a god, but it really does not know what to do with it.

On the other side the Catholic Church holds on to its old dogmas, and it makes no real concessions to the modern spirit; and it thus satisfies all those to whom the modern spirit is alien and hateful. That indeed is the main secret of its strength. It really represents the past with all its superstitions and primitive traditions. We have nothing in common with the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church lies and falsifies, and we simply cannot encourage that. The Catholic Church persecutes, but we cannot do that. We cannot commit murder in the name of God, or torture in the name of religion. You cannot triumph over enemies by repeating their policies. In that feature the Roman Church differs from the Atheistic philosophy.

One of our readers gives us a kindly-meant letter in which he says it appears to him that we lack faith in the power of better ideas. We would rather have it that we have a lively sense of the power of uncivilised ideas. Our primitive ideas are not lost, they are only buried. Not all the expressed and loudly voiced "patriotism" of the war period prevented advantage being taken of the community wherever possible. The predatory appetite disguised under various names; and the function of our current religion has been always to supply this ethical disguise for the operation of some of the most unlovely aspects of human nature.

We are shocked! One of our religious papers says that 90 per cent. of the young men of this country are to-day "outside the Churches." Another expert gives the figure as 95 per cent. In either case, we might express pity for our religious leaders, but religion has had a good run in civilised countries, and now no one can expect to fool all the people all the time.

THE BIRTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

(By Alfred Loisy, translated by Dr. L. P. Jacks. Allen and Unwin, 18s.)

II

IN all this there is nothing particularly new nor original, for we must warn readers of the "Freethinker" our author is no "mythicist." For him, Jesus, that is the "Jesus of History," and *not* the "Jesus" of the Gospels is a recognisable historical figure. Indeed, our ex-cleric obviously dislikes those who would reduce the Christian Gospel to a collective myth. For, ironically remarking that, he has "never made the discovery that Jesus did not exist," M. Loisy assails the mythicists, several of them by name, with considerable asperity, and subsequently returns to the subject more than once in the course of his magnum opus.

However, despite all this, it must not be supposed that the learned author's actual interpretation of the "Birth of the Christian Religion" is after all so very different from that of out-and-out disbelievers in the historicity of Jesus Christ. For, in actuality again, Loisy's historic Christ had very little to do with the subsequent rise of the world-religion which historic irony has dowered with his name. Even the "Jesus Christ" of the Gospels had not too much in common with his historical namesake.

One could, we think, accurately express our author's thought if we said that according to his exegesis, Jesus was not so much the actual founder of historical Christianity, as the peg on whose name—or rather—title (Christos—The Anointed, it is not a proper name) later generations erected an elaborate religious synthesis, partly pagan, and partly Jewish in ultimate origin.

For the early Christian writings, those covered in the book before us, including the entire New Testament, are emphatically, so our author asserts repeatedly, *not* in any sense, histories (in the modern sense) of persons, but are records of the growth of an *institution*, the Christian or Catholic Church, and are not only heavily charged as such with mythology, but could only be accurately understood in detail by people familiar, as we are not, with the day to day struggles, controversies and apologetic needs of evolving Christianity.

Or, in brief, the finished Gospel is *not* the accurate history of a *man* Christ Jesus, but *is* the accurate reflex of the growth of an *institution* the Church over the approximate century and a half that separated the first preaching of the coming "Kingdom of God," the original germ of Christianity, up or down, to the final consolidation of Catholic Christianity towards the end of the second century.

Incidentally, we may add, between our author's position just outlined, and that of the out-and-out "Mythicists" there does not, in the last analysis, appear to be much *real* difference. We can perhaps, summarize such difference as there is in these terms: for the "mythicist" pure and simple Christianity is the historic outcome of a—may we phrase it?—mythological mythology. For M. Loisy it is the record of a mythology in which are embedded some historical elements.

In our opinion, if the reviewer may venture an opinion upon a so hotly controversial theme, M. Loisy has the better and more probable case. In a scientific historiography a finished mythology contains a little of everything—even of authentic history!

In a phrase that verges on the classical M. Loisy sums up the essential transformation of the Galilean mission of Jesus into the Catholic Church, the embodiment of historic Christianity: "Jesus expected the Kingdom of

God, but it was the Church which arrived." By far the greater part of the "Birth of the Christian Religion" deals with this ironic metamorphosis of a rustic Galilean preacher's dream or delusion into a world-wide ecclesiastical empire, that "mausoleum of dead religions" as a modern critic (Mr. Grant Allen) has aptly styled it.

For whatever may be the case with regard to the personal identity of its founders, it is at least quite certain that they had no conception whatsoever of the world-wide destiny of the institution of which they were the effective but entirely unconscious founders.

This transformation, and no one can dispute at least, that *this* is historical eventuated, according to our historian, in some such manner as this:

The authentic founders of Christianity as a cosmopolitan religion were those personal followers of the crucified Jesus, who, after his death, saw visions—here regarded as subjective impressions and not as objective facts—of their supposedly risen leader, and who thereupon resolved to continue in existence as an heretical Jewish sect which believed that the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament—the Bible of the earliest Christians—had actually appeared.

However this early sect would have died out like the contemporary "Baptist" sect of John the Baptist, from which Jesus himself may have originally broken away, but for its divisions into two rival sects, the Jewish Christians who kept the Mosaic Law, and the Gentile (Non-Jewish) converts who from the start took up a hostile attitude towards it. Stephen, the predecessor of Paul, was martyred by the Jews, and it was his followers, not the original apostles, who started "Christianity" by flying from Jerusalem and carrying the Gospel into Gentile lands.

M. Loisy's account of this initial "Christianity" is extremely suggestive, and goes far to correct the one-sided emphasis on Paul as the "Second Founder of Christianity" which has characterised even much liberal exegesis. Actually, Paul only developed certain cosmopolitan non-Jewish elements which were present in the new religion almost from the start. If we are to believe M. Loisy, Stephen, not Paul ought to be regarded as the "Second Founder."

Paul himself is regarded as an important figure in the early Christian propaganda, though not exactly as the pre-eminent apostle of the orthodox legend. Like Dr. Barnes, Loisy credits him with, at least, the literary nucleus of several of the epistles which bear his name, and he undoubtedly assisted to transform Christianity from a mere Jewish sect into a cosmopolitan world-religion by denying the necessity of imposing the Jewish ceremonial law upon the gentile converts. M. Loisy holds that he was probably executed in Rome somewhere near the traditional date (c. A.D. 64).

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (A.D. 70) indirectly assisted the growth of the new religion both by weakening Judaism, and still more by destroying, within Christianity itself, the primacy of the Judaizing "anti-Pauline" Jerusalem Church of the original apostles. The new gentile Churches became more and more characteristic of the new religion, and got further and further away from Judaism. The Messiah Jesus became the Divine Christ, born of a virgin like a Pagan god. The original simple meal of commemoration of the death of Jesus was changed into the magical "Sacrament" of the Eucharist.

By the Second century Christianity had become a "mystery religion," and our Gospels, in no sense to be regarded as exact history, reflect these ideas entirely strange to the earliest Christians, but closely similar to

the Pagan mystery cults of the decline of the classical civilisation.

The final crisis occurred about the middle of the second century, and is described by our historian in concluding chapters of outstanding ability. Threatened by a flood of Hellenizing theosophical (Gnostic) sects with dissolution into the surrounding Pagan world, the Church reacted sharply. It consolidated and centralised its organisation as the "Catholic" (Universal) Church, subordinated its prophetic visionaries to the ecclesiastical rule of the episcopate, denounced its Gnostic critics fiercely as "heretics"—new and terrible crime—and, in particular, formed its own authoritative Christian Bible, the "New Testament," to the books of which it ascribed an apostolic origin, in all cases fictitious. (The actual idea of a "New" Christian Testament is derived from the Gnostic Marcion, an important "heretic" who edited Paul's epistles.) Not to be outdone, the Church re-edited them, and in addition fabricated new ones in the name of Paul, in which Marcion's doctrines are condemned and his book the "Antitheses" is mentioned by name (I Timothy VI, 20) at least eighty years after Paul's death. So did the Holy Ghost write the Sacred Scriptures!

As a result of these emergency measures dictated by necessity, the fluid Christianity of the first century and a half gave way to the highly organised Church of which History takes cognizance. This dramatic history has often been related, but we take leave to say, never with more learning, and even more important, with more scientific caution than in the book before us. It is one of the few works on Christian origins of permanent intellectual value, and we shall eagerly await its promised successor now in process of translation by Dr. Jacks.

F. A. RIDLEY.

SOME NOTES ON EVOLUTION

I

ONE of the subjects which I have studiously avoided discussing in these columns is Evolution.

I have always felt that it was too vast to write about in an article or two, and that it was up to any reader to get some of the popular expositions written by first-class scientists if they wanted to know something authoritative about it.

It happens, however, that there is a very strong movement these days in favour of Special Creation by a number of earnest Christians, and their arguments and criticisms of Evolution appear to be worrying quite a number of people. Headed by a gentleman called Douglas Dewar, and backed by a scientist like Sir Ambrose Fleming, they are making a terrific onslaught on the theory in books and pamphlets, and the last thing we ought to do is to ignore their arguments.

The fight is between the Special Creation of Genesis with the Jewish God Jehovah (or Elohim) as the Creator, and the theory of a self-existent Universe which in the course of countless ages constantly changes in form and content. What may or may not be happening on the stars and planets other than our own we do not clearly know; but we have a pretty good idea of some of the changes which have taken place on our own Earth—that is, if our scientists and other investigators can be trusted. The question or the problem is, can they be trusted?

Now if I were a Christian, I should very strongly oppose Evolution. If the theory is true then there

no room whatever either for God or the soul. There simply could be no Fall of Man or the necessity for a Saviour. At one clean swoop Evolution clears away the whole paraphernalia of Gods, Devils, Angels and Souls. It was useless for those Godites who found that science had proved to most reasonable men that there were overwhelming proofs for the truth of the theory of Evolution admitting it was right providing it was allowed that their particular Deity started the ball rolling—on the plea that somebody must have started Evolution. Other believers were by no means ready to credit their God with deliberately designing the terrible agony of hundreds of millions of years during which life, as we know it now, was evolved. They did not like to think that God Almighty was responsible for the blood and tears shed by Man as he evolved from some kind of Ape to the glorious—or perhaps inglorious—Being with a Soul he is now.

In short, Christians are beginning to discover that the best way now is to deny Evolution altogether, and fall back on God's Glorious Word. There, in the first chapter of Genesis, is the truth—Man is an Immortal Soul created by God Almighty on the sixth day of Creation with one purpose only—to adore and worship him; and he is going to be a very angry God if he is not so worshipped.

Backed up by a body called the "International Christian Crusade," the opponents of Evolution have now issued a pamphlet for 6d. entitled "Evolution," and from their point of view an excellent one it is. Most of it consists of some 200 extracts from biological and anthropological works very cleverly chosen. The average Christian who has probably not made an intensive study of books on Evolution will, I am sure, be staggered at some of the extracts, and will rejoice exceedingly that the ignorant and infidel theory of Evolution has at last been so effectively annihilated.

Now we Evolutionists must concede some things at least. When we look at the different parts of the human body with its extraordinary "make up," we can only marvel at the "Nature" which has produced it. Man is just as marvellous whether we believe in Special Creation or in Evolution. I cannot explain the bearing of fruit on a cherry tree—except that it happens—any more than a thorough believer in God. It is true that he says "God did it," which may convey some meaning to him but conveys absolutely nothing to me. Life, in short, is a mystery to us all no matter what our beliefs; but the anti-Evolutionist very cleverly talks as if he had an explanation, and the ignorant Evolutionist had not. "God did it!" he cries unceasingly, and the good Christian goes away triumphantly declaring he knows all about it. Of course he knows nothing of the kind.

The strange thing is that in all sorts of things the thorough believer sees some kind of evolution at work. He sees it particularly in inventions, of course, in literature, and art, in the changes going on all the time in our daily life. But he can also see it in the "in-breeding" of some forms of animal life, and in the way flowers and fruit have been made to change colour, shape and taste. It is the evolution of "species" which he denies.

Now if it were possible to produce fossilised forms of the earliest types of whatever "animal" type Man came from and show his descent with the aid of all the other "missing links," there would be no problem of Evolution whatever. But as we cannot, we have to go on the most likely speculations of what may have happened. We can see Man now in various stages of Evolution—there is a great difference between pygmy

man, or Australian aborigines, and the highest type of white man. It is useless to deny this. Scientists who have studied heredity know that the difference is not just one due to mere environment; for, as Dr. Darlington recently pointed out in his Conway Memorial Lecture, "We now know the physical materials in the cells which are responsible for differences among men. We can even control and predict over a wide range the ineradicable inborn differences which determine the varying qualities of the individuals, families, classes, and races of mankind." If this is so—and science can demonstrate it—we can the better understand that thousands of years ago there were similar differences or even more of them, and from that it is not difficult to speculate on the early forms of mankind, and still earlier forms, till we get to more ape-like beings—also of different kinds—from whom present-day Man has descended. It is extremely difficult to imagine that a few thousand years ago Man was "created" and began to change immediately into the various species of him we have now.

The anti-Evolutionist is, however, not going to be caught on what he calls "natural changes" in the living plants, animals, and Man, "which we see all around us," and "which is an entirely different phenomenon" from organic Evolution. He is obliged to admit that there are changes, but what he wants are not these little differences, but definite mathematical proof that cannot be gainsaid that an ape has become a man. He wants us to show it so clearly that not even a pygmy could controvert it. And he knows that in our present stage of knowledge that is quite impossible.

H. CUTNER.

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.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: MESSRS. E. C. SAPHIN, JAMES HART, G. WOOD.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Purpose of the Criminal Law." Prof. G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D.

Streatham Debating Society (White Lion Hotel, Streatham High Road, S.W.).—Friday, June 25, 7.30 p.m.: Debate, "That the re-advent of Christ would confound the Churches."—pro, Mr. F. V. SHILSTONE; contra, Rev. ERIC SHAVE.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. V. SHORTT.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 3-15 p.m. and 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Crawshawbooth.—Friday, June 18, 7.30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. S. BRYDEN, E. LAWRIE and J. HUMPHREY.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers' Pool).—Sunday, 7-8.30 p.m.: MESSRS. A. SAMMIS, G. L. GREAVE.

Worsthorne.—Wednesday, June 23, 7-8.30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

PLOTTERS IN THE HOLY SEE

V

IN order to further its reactionary policy, the Vatican's College of Cardinals has been reinforced by a number of active reactionaries from various countries, first of all the United States, the present stronghold of world-reaction. In December, 1945, four cardinals were appointed from America, including Francis J. Spellman, the same number as was chosen from Italy. Three each are from Germany, France and Spain, one each from Poland, Portugal, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Hungary, Holland, China and even Armenia (where the Armenian Church prevails!). Six of the new Cardinals originate from the Latin American countries. Thus, at one stroke, the Vatican enlarged the number of members of its College of Cardinals to seventy, with the object of improving the political direction of Catholic organizations all over the world under the pretext of fighting communism.

It would, however, be a mistake to regard the Holy See as the moving spirit of world reaction; the chief incentive to its alliance with the imperialist centre of warmongering was the interest of American heavy industry. In order to clear the way to the world markets, the American billionaires must first bring their European competitors to heel. In the first place—with the aid of the well-rooted Catholic organisations—they must draw into their sphere of influence the principal bases of Europe's heavy industry, around which other important branches of production centre. If the heavy industry of Western Europe retains its independence, it may set up insuperable tariff barriers to American commodities and retaliate with dumping. Had the British steel syndicate succeeded in effectuating its plan of seizing the Ruhr, the Birmingham-Ruhr-Lorraine axis, and the whole "West European Federation" built around it, had become a stronghold of resistance to American competition.

But should Germany's heavy industry potential fall into the hands of the Morgans and their Vatican allies, the fate of Birmingham and Sheffield were sealed. So were the fate of the steel magnates of Lorraine, the de Wendels and company, who are also stretching out their hands to the Ruhr. The de Wendels themselves are closely linked with the Vatican, through their Paris bank of Demachy et Cie. Yet, in World War II, the Comité des Forges had become a branch of the Nazi administration of Germany's war industry and after the collapse of their masters only dollar loans can restore the power of the Lorraine trusts. It is not without reason that the American imperialists have of late been increasing their pressure on France as well as on Great Britain.

The outcome of this covert struggle—behind a façade of closest friendship—was a mutual deal that goes under the name of the "Western Europe Bloc." In this cartel arrangement between the competing parties for the German spoil, the lion's share, of course, goes to America for the prospect of financial "Marshall Aid."* The most disgusting thing in this new combined syndicate for the exploitation of Europe (including, to a certain degree, this country) is that it is palmed off as a

* American politicians are notoriously fond of enveloping the crudest business transactions in a halo of lofty motives. And they are submerging the Marshall Aid in a torrent of unctuous talk about their disinterested desire to relieve their hungry fellow-mortals in Europe.

feat of altruism; under the pretension of saving her democratic unity and centralization, Germany is being partitioned and shared out.

These are the bare facts behind all the warmongering that is going on. Communist plots all over the world are being invented whilst the self-styled guardians of Democracy are interfering in the home affairs of all countries where their inglorious agents have been unmasked. Particularly shameful was the unprecedented political brooding of the Italian voters.

As far back as last May, De Gasperi,** in obedience to instructions from Washington, ousted the Social Democrats and Communists from his Cabinet, thereby grossly violating the will of the people, 40 per cent. of whom cast their votes for these parties in the 1946 elections. Under the patronage of the Christian Democrats not only have the Italian fascists come out openly into the political arena, but are threatening the democrats with bloody revenge.

The Vatican and the Catholic clergy were taking an active part in the bullying of the voters and Washington's intrigues. Archbishop Schuster of Milan, who under Mussolini sprinkled the standards of fascist battalions with holy water, had circulated a letter to all the priests in his diocese urging them actively to prepare for the elections, not to stint money on the elections, instead of "acquiring statues of saints or church banners." In spite of the fact that the electoral law forbids clergymen, under pain of imprisonment, to deter religious people from the free exercise of the franchise, Schuster forbids priests

"to grant remission of sins to supporters of Communism or other trends hostile to Catholicism should they assist these trends, especially by voting for them in the elections."

And the Pope himself not only issued a special message urging Catholics to vote for the Christian "Democratic" Party, but characterising abstention from voting as a "mortal sin."

Speculation, graft and corruption are rife. Sordid affairs have recently come to light, incriminating high placed government officials and princes of the Church in charge of distributing American "gifts." In a book entitled "Secret Documents of Vatican Diplomacy" the publisher's imprint, significantly enough, is Lugano, Switzerland—it is disclosed that, on February 18, two high-ranking prelates presented a project to the Pope for financing newspapers supporting the Christian Democrats by distributing 355 million lire among 41 Italian dailies and 217 weeklies.

TOM HILL.

** He holds Vatican nationality after 20 years' papal employment.

Just Published**"Christianity and Ethics"**

By CHAPMAN COHEN

No. 18. Pamphlets for the People

Price 2d.

Postage 1d.

From PIONEER PRESS, 41, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1