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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Napoleon on Religion

THE Emperor Napoleon, that extraordinary military adventurer thrown up to supreme power by the French Revolution, has enjoyed a very equivocal reputation. In his own life-time, public opinion in England tended to regard Napoleon Buonaparte as "the Corsican Ogre," the arch-enemy of public morals and of European liberty, a kind of 19th century Hitler. In religious circles, the sacred Scriptures were ransacked to discover Napoleon's identity, and to many a sturdy British Protestant at the opening of the 19th century, it was almost an article of faith that the French Emperor, the tents of whose "army of England" could be seen on a clear day across the Channel, was none other than that sinister figure in Biblical prophecy, the mysterious Beast of the Apocalypse who carried the mystical figures, "the number of the Beast"—666.

For to many of his Conservative contemporaries, the military dictator who emerged from the shambles of the French Revolution appeared to be none other than that enigmatic Figure of Doom mentioned in the Gospels as "The Abomination of Desolation sitting where he ought not."

More recent and less biased historical research has, however, enabled us to form a more objective estimate of the Emperor Napoleon. That, as and when judged by ethical standards, he was a criminal, is likely enough. Men who come to the top in an age of revolutionary upheavals must be tough to survive in such an atmosphere; our own age has seen many such examples! But, to compare Napoleon with merely successful soldiers of fortune, with nothing but brutality and ambition to recommend them, would be to do Napoleon's memory a grave injustice. For the Imperial Corsican was not only a brilliant soldier and a remarkable administrator, but he was also a singularly penetrating student of human psychology, whose comments ranged over an encyclopedic field.

In his *Napoleonic Anecdotes*, the late Mr. Louis Cohen, a South African student of the great soldier's career has, so to speak, catalogued Napoleon's *obiter dicta* under a series of separate headings, such as politics, the military art, religion, etc., and very interesting reading they make. For Napoleon was not only a singularly penetrating observer, but was, it can hardly be disputed, a master phrase-maker into the bargain.

Some of his military *obiter dicta* are, of course, world famous: "Providence is on the side of the big battalions." The apparently contradictory, but actually complementary, "In war the moral is to the material as three to one"—a remark, no doubt, suggested by the tremendous moral fervour aroused by the French Revolution.

Then there was the famous "every private has a marshal's baton in his knapsack," also a reflection on the social equality established by the Revolution, and "an army marches on its stomach."

Of more general application, but also relating to the profession of arms, of which its author was so brilliant an ornament, are such well known sayings as, "The best general is he who knows what is going on on the other side of the hill," "One bad general is better than two good ones," "There are no bad troops, only bad officers." It is to his honour that he suppressed the brutal but then universal system of flogging in the French army. Then we have that biting comment on human nature, "From the sublime to the ridiculous is only a step"—a remark, incidentally, which is said to have been suggested to General Buonaparte (as he then was) by Thomas Paine, for whom Napoleon at one time professed a great admiration but whom he later persecuted. He once declared to Paine that he slept with the *Age of Reason* under his pillow.

In his religious beliefs, Napoleon seems to have been a Deist, but not to have believed in personal survival. His question to an Atheistic scientist, as he pointed to the starry sky, "Who made all that?" used to be quoted in the older kind of Christian apologetics. But another less-known remark that "A dead man does not differ essentially from a dead stag, in both cases the life giving fluid has ceased to circulate," seems to exclude any belief in personal immortality.

Napoleon's definition of the function of religion is, of course, classical; incidentally, it both anticipates and elaborates the famous saying of Karl Marx that "Religion is the opium of the people."

Compare this with Napoleon's "I regard religion not as the mystery of the Incarnation, but as the mystery of the social order. Unless the poor believed that, somewhere, there is another state of existence where a different distribution of goods takes place, they would rise in revolution and cut the throats of the rich."

One can compare this with the dictum of Napoleon's revolutionary predecessor, Maximilian Robespierre, the great Jacobin orator of the French Revolution. Like Buonaparte, Robespierre was a Deist: "Atheism is aristocratic, the idea of a Supreme Being who watches over outraged innocence and punishes triumphant crime, is essentially, the idea of the people."

As one who himself owed his career to the levelling process set in motion by the French Revolution, Napoleon was, naturally, very interested in revolutions. It is in fact rather ironic to reflect that this military genius, often regarded by experts as the finest soldier in all recorded history, could not have risen above the rank of captain in the old, exclusively aristocratic French army of the pre-revolutionary regime. Napoleon always regarded himself as the embodiment of the great Revolution to which alone he owed his dazzling career. Hence his sayings, "I am the Revolution," "I found power lying in the gutter, and picked it up on the bayonets of my soldiers," and of course, his classic definition of the phenomenon of revolution itself, the finest and most concise on record, "A revolution is an idea which has found bayonets."

Napoleon always recognised that the England of the Industrial Revolution represented his most formidable foe. He had much to say about England and the English. For example, "Whoever holds Antwerp, holds a pistol pointed at the heart of London." Everyone knows his world famous saying, itself based on a remark of the Scottish economist, Adam Smith, "The English are a nation of shopkeepers."

Not so well known but much sharper in its irony, is his gibe at the imperialistic religiosity which then, and for long after, characterised the cynical Whig-Tory oligarchy which then ruled England: "Whenever the English want to take anything, they put themselves in a mystical frame of mind."

Decidedly the author of the above remarks, and many other equally penetrating ones, was no ordinary soldier of fortune.

F. A. RIDLEY.

CHRISTIANITY AND EDUCATION

"CHRISTIANITY gave the world its schools" is a claim shown to be false, says Joseph McCabe, by the histories of Kapps, Denk, Boyd, Paroz, Letourneau, Seeley, Compayré, etc. Compayré's *History of Pedagogy* (translated by W. H. Payne, 3rd edition 1895, XXVI, 598 pp.) starts with education in antiquity—the education of the ancient Hindoos restricted by their religion and by hereditary caste, their thought and will perished in mystic contemplation of the soul; early Jewish instruction, moral and religious, domestic, with no trace of public schools until A.D. 64; education in China, mechanical and formal, but Confucius, 6th century B.C., with ideas of practical utilitarian morality, primary instruction widely diffused; in Egypt, privileged priestly class, and a working knowledge for the workers; in Persia a physical and moral education, upheld by Archdeacon Farrar; in the glorious Greece of artists, poets, philosophers, historians, of men such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, instruction in theory and practice; and in Rome, learning from Greece, such pedagogues as Varro, Seneca, Quintilian, Plutarch and the Stoic Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Pagan Rome gave the world its first complete system of general education. Various works by Mr. McCabe give the details, such as of the schools (1) free elementary, (2) free grammar, (3) free rhetoric, and (4) the great schools. Mommsen in his *History of Rome* protests against the current prejudice that the ancient Republic was far behind our own time in the matter of education; even among slaves a large proportion could read and write.

St. Paul disparaged the learning of the world, and to the Early Christian Fathers philosophical curiosity was a sin and love of letters a heresy: St. Augustine (354-430), the greatest, proclaimed that "the ignorant take possession of heaven" and induced the Council of Carthage to forbid bishops to read the pagan authors. St. Jerome (331-420) proscribed letters and arts (Mr. McCabe corrects Compayré's error re Jerome as a "Ciceronian"). Tertullian (150-230) rejected all pagan education as "a robbery from God" and dangerous to the new faith; "after Jesus Christ all curiosity, after the Gospel all inquiry, are unnecessary." Gregory the Great (Pope, 590-604) condemned the Bishop of Vienne for "the unspeakable crime" of teaching profane letters. St. Basil (326-380) was an exception.

After the fall of Rome, 5th century, every trace of the Roman school system had disappeared before the end of the 6th century. From the 5th to 12th century

education was entirely under priestly control, and Mr. McCabe says: "No writer on education can prove the existence of a single school in Europe" in year 500. Compayré has to say: "But these [pagan] schools once closed, Christianity did not open others, and, after the fourth century, a profound night enveloped humanity. The labour of the Greeks and the Romans was as though it never had been. . . . In the fifth century . . . the young no longer study, the teachers no longer have pupils, and the learning languishes and dies . . . In the early part of the eleventh century the Bishop of Laon, Adalberic, asserts that 'there is more than one bishop who cannot count the letters of the alphabet on his fingers.' In 1291, of all the monks in the convent of Saint Gall, there was not one who could read and write. It was so difficult to find notaries public, that Acts had to be passed verbally. . . . Too many Christians, in a word, confounded ignorance with holiness" (pp. 67-68).

Compayré mentions three Renaissances: (1) that of Charlemagne (742-814) whose desire for civilisation was opposed and soon defeated by clerical opposition; (2) that of the twelfth century, the issue of which was Scholasticism, which taught dogmas but not training of the intelligence; and (3) the great Renaissance of the sixteenth century which still lasts (pp. 71-76). The Middle Age had completely neglected the study of nature" (p. 96). Of the works of Erasmus (1467-1536), Rabelais (1483-1553), and Montaigne (1533-1592), Compayré says, "before pretending to surpass them, even at this day, we should rather attempt to overtake them" (p. 85).

Dr. G. G. Coulton, in his *Medieval Scene* (1930), says: "The assertion that the monks were educators of the general population is now abandoned by the best scholars of all creeds," and Mr. McCabe, referring to Montalembert's *Monks of the West* (1860-67), "the repertory of fairy tales," which is the source of the common Christian erratic claim, quotes the competent Professor Heeren (1796) that the monks "rendered no service whatever in connection with classic literature"—a verdict supported by the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Mr. McCabe writes: "Until Jewish and Moorish translators brought them, the Middle Ages had not one work of Aristotle save his *Dialectics* and not one work of Plato's with the doubtful exception of *Timæus*," and he compares the great libraries of Moorish Spain with the poor results in the rest of Europe. Compayré says no more of the Arabs than this: "As far back as the 9th century, the Arabs had given an example to the rest of Europe by founding at Salamanca, at Cordova, and in other cities of Spain, schools where all the sciences were cultivated" (p. 77). Of the Jesuits, Voltaire said: "The Fathers taught me nothing but Latin and nonsense," and Leibnitz opined: "In the matter of education the Jesuits have remained below mediocrity" (p. 141). "The Jesuits have deliberately and continuously neglected and disdained primary instruction" (p. 142). "The ignorance of the people is the best safeguard of its faith" (p. 143).

Of the 16th century Reformers, who recognised ignorance as an evil, Luther relied on religious teaching, Calvin on Latin, Melancthon, "the preceptor of Germany," on *belles-lettres*, and Zwingli, on primary teaching. In the 17th century, Comenius, producer of the first picture book for children, and in 17th-18th centuries, Malebranche, Fénelon, and Rollin, were noted Christian pedagogues. In the 18th century, the Jesuits, founded by Loyola (1481-1566), whose *teaching congregation* was consecrated by Pope Paul III in 1540, controlled 24 universities, 157 training schools, and 613

colleges. Jesuits stand for dogma, blind obedience, and no right to private opinion.

The 18th century encyclopædists, Diderot, D'Alembert, Marmontel and Helvetius, are in the long list of notable Rationalist educationalists beside Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Kant, Condillac, Mirabeau, Talleyrand, Condorcet, Froebel, Comte, Fournier, Spencer, Abelard.

In England, where Cambridge University was founded in 1109, and Oxford in 1140, general education was bad up to 1870. In the 18th century, the S.P.C.K. founded 2,000 schools, their aim being "to fit the child for its inferior station," care being taken not to "instil pride" by teaching too much (as explained by the Bishop of London, 1714). No better was the aim of Dr. Bell's schools, 1811, under the National School Society, with its religious instruction to keep the poor "patient, humble, and moral, and the hardship of their present lot relieved by the prospect of a bright eternity." Contrast this with Robert Owen's secular school system at New Lanark.

The conclusion of all this, as Mr. McCabe points out, is that the claim that Christianity rendered services which paganism had not rendered, is false; and that the Christian Church has to explain why, in and after 1,400 years of Christian control, some 95 per cent. of the people of Europe were illiterate.

GEORGE ROSS.

STEPS TO SANITY

III

THE armaments which Britain possesses are useless. With them, she is quite unable to defend her people and territory, unless she is prepared to become an aggressor nation. And unless her aggressive attack is completely successful.

For, the militarily victorious side in such war as is now contemplated, can only be that side which is capable of destroying in a single surprise attack, the whole of the effective war-potential of its enemy. And it cannot be done.

The success or failure of such an attack would depend upon the degree of secrecy, skill and efficiency with which the plans were prepared and launched; absolute knowledge of the enemy's defences and the power to immediately overcome them or circumvent them; absolute knowledge of the disposition of his war resources, and an adequacy of hydrogen and atomic bombs, together with their means of delivery.

Guaranteed success of the initial attack would render the possession of a numerical superiority of bombs unimportant. A surgeon has no need of more than that amount of anaesthetic than will paralyse his patient—unless indeed, he has another appointment. It is precisely because such success cannot be guaranteed that each participant in the present arms race seeks to attain both qualitative and quantitative superiority.

In a war between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, with their vast war-potential widely spread over large areas and an "Iron Curtain" effectively preventing the acquisition of the necessary reliable knowledge of armaments-location, the question as to which country could muster more and better bombs than the other would be extremely important, since the inevitable failure to destroy its enemy's power of retaliation at the first blow, would render the aggressor liable to reprisal attacks. The advantage of possessing in these circumstances a larger stock-pile of bombs, would

be that, should reprisal bombings result, the nominal victory would eventually belong to the side which was left with a balance of bombs in hand when its enemy's had been expended. And the "victory" would indeed be nominal since two weeks of retaliatory atomic bombing would result in the destruction of the teeming life and boundless treasure which are the heritage of both communities.

Britain's continued military adherence to the American cause, can contribute nothing towards the desired victory of Western Democracy over Eastern Communism, unless she herself is willing to become an active party to the initial aggressive attack. Upon the success of the attack rests the only possibility of military victory. And complete success is impossible. But upon her willingness to launch the attack rests the only possibility of "Defence."

Britain's massed population, her highly centralised industrial potential and the use of her territory as a necessary launching-base for an attack, render her extremely vulnerable.

The certainty of reprisal bombings is the logical conclusion to be drawn from the impossibility of completely successful attack.

Britain's total destruction as a result, is the logical deduction to be drawn from the certainty of reprisal bombings; considering her vulnerability and the destructive capacity of the bombs.

There is in fact no defence which we, alone or in conjunction with the United States could offer, which could save Britain from total annihilation, once the atomic bombs were rained upon her.

If then, the aim of the British people is the furtherance of the cause of Western Democracy, they are entitled to inform the statesmen as to the maximum price they are prepared to pay for it. For as a partner to our American friend, "Victory" might well be ours—posthumously. No price may be too great for them to pay for it—except perhaps America.

As a military factor in the cause of West versus East, Britain's usefulness would cease with her physical destruction. Her epitaph—"They were expendable." But as a moral force her influence upon the course of world events would be enormous. Divested of her useless armaments and freed from her unwarranted political and military entanglements she would have not an enemy in the world.

Her people, by their leadership and example, can assume a dignity and render service to humanity of incomparable quality.

Through H.M. the King, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, Britain should in all solemnity proclaim to the whole world, her determination to renounce, with due warning to the powers concerned, every single military commitment she has undertaken. That she will never under any circumstances accept the responsibility of endangering civilisation by using the bombs herself, or by willingly allowing her territory or her nationals to become instruments in connection with the use of the hydrogen or atomic bombs.

There is no foreseeable limit to the improvements which Man can make to his way of living. An abundance of scientific knowledge and technical skill are at his disposal. There is not an economic or social problem which he is incapable of solving.

The individualistic character of Man precludes the possibility of there being an ultimate Utopia, of whatever brand. If heaven-on-earth were reached it would be found to have its faults, for human progress is con-

tinuous and finality is never reached. Each new horizon disappears in history and the measure of its worth is the extent of economic and cultural freedom we enjoyed and the harmony in which we lived.

And the route we follow towards the ideology we embrace—the next horizon—is subject to a test. What toll shall we be called upon to pay for the inches gained; and in the paying, shall we gain in human dignity or shall we suffer shame? That route towards our goal which demands of us, in war, a reversion to bestiality, by whatever noble-sounding and self-deluding title, is demonstrably the wrong one, morally and tactically.

C. E. PALMER.

CHRISTIANITY'S EARLY DAYS

IT was T. W. Manson, an eminent theologian, who wrote about the many who have attempted to produce biographies of Jesus, and who said: "By their lives of Jesus ye shall know them." In other words, it is probable that those who write biographies of Jesus tend to demonstrate themselves rather than Jesus in the books which appear. Mr. F. F. Bruce, whose *The Dawn of Christianity* (Paternoster Press; 6s.) has just made its appearance, admits that there may be something in this criticism, and that it may even be applied to those who write of Christian origins and the early days of the Church. In spite of the fact that Mr. Bruce is the Head of the Department of Biblical History and Literature in the University of Sheffield, then, his book may be regarded as in some sense a personal approach to the problems and not necessarily as in any way an authoritative statement.

The surprising thing about the book is that it shows an amazing command of all the general background of Biblical history, and of the writers of almost all schools who have in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries dealt with the problems of the early Church, and yet at the same time has a strangely uncritical approach to the matters dealt with in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles—not to mention the Epistles of Paul. Mr. Bruce is, for instance, deeply read in the works of such writers as the late Dr. C. J. Cadoux and Kirsopp Lake—writers whose approach to Biblical questions has been approved by many thinkers of all liberal schools, from Church of England Modernists and Unitarians to Rationalists. Yet this book by Mr. Bruce appears to accept (for instance) many of the statements in St. John's Gospel as being quite literally true. Those who have suggested that the Gospel of St. John is more in the nature of a theological tract than a direct history of events would not have any appeal to Mr. Bruce, and this will tend to dissuade some thoughtful readers from appreciating his book at its true worth.

And that, I think, is a pity, for much of the volume is attractive and interesting. It presents a lively picture of the background in which the Church grew up, and, even if it does not attempt to portray the figure of Jesus in that background, it does give an idea of the early disciples of Jesus and the way in which their ideas developed.

Now, I know that I shall be annoying some regular readers (and some regular contributors) when I say that the Myth Theory of Christian origins has always seemed to me totally unconvincing and unsatisfactory. I have always thought that, whatever may be said about the beliefs of modern Christians, there must have been a person, an individual, behind the gospel stories. And

I have long been of opinion that where the early Church erred was in allowing the Greek mysticism of St. Paul to oust the sturdy commonsense of St. Peter. And here is Mr. Bruce's comment:—

"There were not two or more divergent accounts of the good news circulating in the apostolic age, but one and the same account, whether propagated by Paul, Peter, James, or anyone else. Whatever differences might or might not arise later between Paul and the others, they were agreed about the basic facts which constituted the gospel."

This is one of the statements which, as I have said, will tend to invalidate much of Mr. Bruce's book in the eyes of many of us. One does not need to be a believer in the Myth Theory to see that the basic message of St. Paul, as it is recorded in the Pauline Epistles, is in many respects different from the basic message in the Gospels. In the words of a leading Unitarian, Dr. Alfred Hall (*The Beliefs of a Unitarian*; Lindsey Press; 1s. 6d.):—

"Every great Movement has its watchword, its battle-cry. The great word of the Reformation was *Faith*, which is Pauline in origin. But Paul is not the greatest name in Christianity. Jesus is greater. Faith is not the noblest word in religion. Love is nobler."

It will be seen that in this critical appreciation of Mr. Bruce's book I have deliberately refrained from quoting from the Freethought and Rationalist philosophers who have discussed the problems of Christian origins. This is because I have tried to consider the book on its own merits, without too deeply questioning all the implications behind it, or the complex of ideas which it more or less takes for granted. *The Dawn of Christianity* seems to me, however, to be a stimulating volume, and one which can be read with pleasure, provided the general background of the author's thought be remembered. It will impress those who have not deeply studied theological matters; those who have tried to think things out for themselves will be less impressed, but will, I think, still find it a worth-while book. I know that in my library it will find a place on the shelf which contains Renan's *Life of Jesus*, Dr. Cockin's *Does Christianity Make Sense?*, Dr. H. E. Fosdick's *The Man from Nazareth*, and Llewelyn Powys's *The Pathetic Fallacy*. That may seem to some readers a strangely assorted bunch of books; but at the same time the fact that I regard Mr. Bruce's volume as not unworthy to rank with them should be an indication of its value in my eyes. And such a personal assessment is really all that a critic can hope to give.

JOHN ROWLAND.

SCARECROWS

I

THE moon shone from a clear spring sky, so Old Tom could see the scarecrow in the middle of Thirty Acres, ghostly under the silvery beams, yet shadowed enough to be substantial, something solid, not a wraith.

Walking a little unsteadily on return from village in Old Tom paused at the gate and looked, saying aloud: "Damn fine scarecrow that."

Slowly and carefully Old Tom climbed over the chained gate and strode toward the scarecrow, treading with cumbrous precision as a countryman does not on the young wheat now in strong growth.

Stopping to face the scarecrow about two yards away, Old Tom raised his head and looked steadily at the figure. Clad in farmer's cast-off clothes and stuffed with straw,

it had outspread fingers, old gloves at the ends of the crossbar holding up the arms. The hard hat was askew on a big, round head whose white face had black eyes and a red gash of a mouth.

"Aye," repeated Old Tom. "Finest scarecrow I've ever made in all me life."

"And you've made many," returned the scarecrow in a deep, steady voice.

Old Tom appeared not surprised at being answered by a scarecrow. As always he was ready for conversation, replying, "I have that. More'n I can count or remember."

"Too many."

"How can that be?"

"You and your class've been making scarecrows times out of memory."

"Aye. I recollect my old feyther saying as how he started scaring crows with a clapper when he were a nipper."

"Before that," pressed the scarecrow.

Pushing his hat sideways Old Tom scratched his head before saying dubiously, "I do recall my old granddam telling how when her were a girlkid her used to mind they geese on the common, and could drive 'em anywhere with a red rag on a stick."

"And sheep dogs," added the scarecrow cryptically.

As Old Tom stared the scarecrow insisted: "Think again of others."

The old labourer continued to stare mystified, indicating his puzzlement by shaking his head.

"You're dull," commented the scarecrow. "But I can't blame you when men who think they're wiser than you are unable to understand. Many of 'em are scarecrow makers, better ones than you. Have you ever thought of that?"

"No, I ain't. How comes it?"

"You and your fellows who do the work are the birds to be scared off lest you take too much of what's your own. You've seen notices "Keep off the Grass" and "Trespassers Will be Prosecuted" and those sort, haven't you?"

"Heaps of 'em. Times out of number and taken precious little notice of 'em," retorted Old Tom contemptuously.

"So you say. In practice you and your kind've been flying away from scarecrows more than birds on the wing do."

"Don't see it," responded Old Tom stoutly.

II

The scarecrow's voice remained bland but grave as he continued: "You don't as millions more don't. The world would be different and better if you did."

"Make yourself clear," protested Old Tom. "You're mothering me fairish."

"Very well, listen. Your governments exist by setting up scarecrows to terrify you masses of common people. Soldiers for the purpose of killing you are put into uniforms with lethal weapons in their hands which they will use on orders from those who dressed them, as you did me.

"Similarly on the seas sailors are sent about the world in gigantic and grotesque ships bristling with guns to frighten populaces of countries bordering the ocean. Under it swim submarines, vessels of no civilian use at all, designed only to create fear in those floating above.

"If those are not scaring enough, through the skies fly travesties of birds to terrify inhabitants of cities on the earth beneath."

"We must defend ourselves against enemies," gasped Old Tom.

"That's one of the biggest scarecrows; so far has been one of the most effective; more effective than I can ever hope to be, for my warning off space and power are limited.

"Yet there are others. Your streets are patrolled by men blue-clad to strike more awe, whose chief purpose is to protect property and wealth—of the minority who possess them.

"If you transgress the sacred rights of property you find yourself in the presence of more elaborately clad scarecrows. Those in black and white with horsehair wigs will devise intricate charges against you till you're astonished at the culpabilities of your actions, however innocent they may seem to yourself.

"While still frightened another scarecrow in red and fur robes and bigger wig will condemn you to incarceration in a horrible building where your condition will be worse than any caged bird or penned animal of which you keep many."

The scarecrow paused, to start again. "There are many of us: Hunger, unemployment, opinion of your neighbours; dozens of us—and religion."

"Religion!" cried Old Tom, awed at the scorn in the tones with which religion was uttered.

"Yes, religion. Your poet Burns, with inkling of what I mean, wrote:—

* The fear o' death's a hangman's whip
To haul the wretch in order."

"So your priests are rigged differently from other people, especially from those like yourself who do the work of the world. They strengthen the fear by buildings which strike chill into your hearts and weaken your manliness. To complete the demoralisation they talk about a deity they never show you or explain to you."

As Old Tom recoiled in dread of the conclusion to which this reasoning was leading, the scarecrow said: "Look at me, and consider."

"A man," stammered Old Tom. "Fixed, arms outstretched on a wooden cross."

"Quite so," corroborated this one. "The greatest scarecrow."

"What'm I to do?" demanded Old Tom, though in his perturbation attaching little meaning to his words.

"Think for yourself. Keep on thinking. Let no one try to stop you or divert your thoughts, as many will do. Continue thinking. Now go, and think."

A. R. WILLIAMS.

APOTHEOSIS OF NOTHING

We hail thee, Lord, as "Prince of Peace,"

But when the world with gunfire rattles,
Then psalms and anthems never cease,
To "Lord of Hosts," and "God of Battles."

The "Great Destroyer" we invoke,
While cities flame and homes are wrecked,
But when the peace bells ring again,
We praise the "Mighty Architect."

"Lord God of This," "Almighty That,"
"Titles" galore, as in the "flicks,"
But when the sum is added up,
The answer's there in one word—"nix"!

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

ACID DROPS

The Rev. Austin Lee—an Anglican—after 21 years in the service of Christ appears to have little love left for the Church. He says:

"The ghastly thing about the Church of England is the way it draws into its net young men of talent bursting with ideals and then throws them on the scrap heap."

Mr. Lee actually thought that the Church of England was "a living force" to fight atheism and Materialism! Well, well. He now knows a little better.

Mr. Lee won't be liked for his plain speaking. Indeed, had it not been for Freethought, his Bishop would have, perhaps, condemned him to a dose of boiling oil but we civilized even our bishops. The way to get on in the Church is, it seems, to lick boots, always say "Yes, my Lord," and never say "No, my Lord." And now, what will his Bishop say to Mr. Lee?

According to the Christian, 100,000 copies of the Gospels had been distributed to the Koreans by April of this year. The Holy Spirit, we are blithely told, got in "first" with a "strategy" enabling individuals and churches to stand. In 26 churches, three evenings a week were given to special meetings. And the net result was—the War! But what would the Korean Bible Society have said if 100,000 copies of the *Freethinker* had been distributed instead?

The Director of the Notts Education Committee has discovered that religious services in our schools are no "empty formality," but "sincere and reverent, and reveal a true sense of worship." And this is said of poor little kids who have about as much sense of worship as a sheep! The truth is most children recite the fatuous Lord's Prayer exactly as they recite the multiplication table—the only difference being that they understand the multiplication table, and haven't the ghost of an idea what the Lord's Prayer is about (nor for that matter has the teacher).

A correspondent to the *Schoolmaster* who believes in religion complains that "as soon as religion has to be taught," it "ceases to be religion." It gets mixed up with politics and "degenerates into warring creeds." This gentleman has got it quite right. Why not plump for Secular Education and let the various religious bodies fight it out in the own churches?

At long last a parson has discovered that "England is a Mission Area"—that is, it is about time some great efforts should be made to convert England. The Rev. J. de Blank wants "a new ministry of working men among working men," and he seems quite certain that England will once again become a green and pleasant Christian land. Well, there are a good many working men who read this journal—why does not Mr. de Blank try and bring some of them over to Christ?

Like many other Christian sects Jehovah's Witnesses aim at being in the limelight, and again like other sects, they prefer to be opposed rather than ignored. Speaking in Brockwell Park recently, one of Jehovah's elect said he did not think much of religion—"it was invented by the Devil in Eden." He should have said that it was religion which invented not only Eden and the Devil but also Jehovah. And—alas—religion invented Jehovah's Witnesses as well. May we add that we prefer Jehovah to his Witnesses? After all Jehovah is a myth.

The Rev. C. E. Woolstenholmes insists that to Atheistic Communism "the Church is public enemy No. 1." The rev. gentleman is, we suspect, much more appalled by the "Atheism" than by the "Communism" for quite a number of his brothers in Christ are fervent Communists and most, if not all, Communists are violently opposed to "mechanistic" Materialism. In any case, he must know that true Freethought, which is quite Atheistic, is also opposed to all Totalitarian systems whether Fascism, Communism or—even the Christian Church.

The World Council of Churches, which recently met in Toronto, and which debated religious liberty—the two words surely rule each other out—go all hot and bothered when it discovered that seven strongly Catholic countries "discriminated" against Protestants. And, of course, Catholics countered by reporting similar discriminations against them. But what can one expect? After all, during the Middle Ages and long afterwards Catholics and Protestants killed, tortured, and imprisoned each other—and both in turn used the same tactics against heretics. Separate Church and State, and something will be done to oust religious terrorism no matter which Church practises it.

In spite of nearly 2,000 years of transubstantiation, the Roman Catholic hierarchy are finding it hard to convince the sheep that a priest, uttering a magical formula, can change a piece of bread and a glass of wine into the veritable flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. The *Univers* admits that even after the magic, the "substances" look and taste like bread and wine, and that after a chemical analysis, they appear exactly the same. Still, we have the assurance of the Church that we must look on it as "substance" in the "scholastic" sense and then all will be well; for it exists "in time and space by reason of and through its accidents." And our distinguished converts, in particular, will now be able to thank heaven at such clarity of exposition.

The Rev. Donald Soper, who has for many years considered himself an infidel slayer, appears to be very disturbed at Communism which, he declares, is "one of the greatest rivals to Christianity." He has been a socialist for 20 years but so far has not been able to accept Communism. But he is quite certain that if only Christians "would talk to the people on a level they can understand," they would all become Christians. To talk like this when all he has to do is to repeat the beautiful simple words of Jesus, is astonishing.

The "people," he declared, "don't understand some of these tremendous things we believe in." And why? Because "Christians are trying to start with the unfamiliar instead of the familiar." For an infidel slayer this is highly amusing. But may we ask Mr. Soper how he proposes to explain to "the people"—the Virgin Birth, the Assumption of Mary, the Resurrection of Jesus and His Jewish saints, the Ascension, the miracles, the angels, and the devils of Christianity? Surely these things are "familiar"?

"The Christian World" has discovered that "the claim to freedom is a Christian claim—man has no 'natural' right to freedom; only his right as a son of God." We should love to hear the Rev. D. Soper expound this remarkable "teaching" to infidels as a prelude to their complete conversion.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C.1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

T. Lucy.—Regret no space at present available for further discussion on the Shakespeare "problem."

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, John Seibert, giving as long notice as possible.

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

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), DON BASILIO (Italy).

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.

Will correspondents please write on one side of the paper, and keep their letters brief. This will give everybody a chance.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

IMPORTANT

A MATTER of importance to all Freethinkers has been received at the offices of the N.S.S. It concerns the death of a life-long Atheist who, during life, expressed his desire for cremation and a Secular Service. The relatives responsible for the disposal of his remains had every intention of carrying out his wishes, but were told by the undertaker that a Secular Service was impossible as it was against the law of the land, and a minister of religion of some denomination would have to conduct a religious service. It was a shocking display of ignorance by the undertaker on the legal aspects involved in his business.

At that time the relatives were not in a position to refute the undertaker's statements and so another Freethinker was cremated, with a Christian Service given by a clergyman.

The same thing might happen to you unless you have taken precautions. There is often a reluctance to discuss funeral arrangements during life, but it is wise and necessary to do so. It seems fairly certain that all Freethinkers will have to die some day, one cannot dodge death by subscribing to *The Freethinker*, or joining the N.S.S.; so if you have not already made the position quite clear to your next of kin, do so as a matter of good sense.

In the *National Secular Society Handbook*, which may be obtained for sixpence, plus one penny postage, from the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1., there is a section giving full particulars of the legality of a Secular Service, and the method of procedure. Every Freethinker should secure a copy; make the contents of that section known to his family and keep the Handbook in a place where it can easily be found when necessary.

A copy of the Handbook has been sent to the relatives in this particular case, but of course it was too late to be useful in correcting the ignorance of the undertaker.

R. H. ROSETTI,
President, N.S.S.

"LABOUR'S LOST LEADER"

WHILE still a schoolboy, I was asked to make a drawing of John Burns for our local newspaper and, curiously enough, it is astonishingly like the design on the wrapper of William Kent's full length biography of perhaps the greatest orator the Labour Movement in this country has produced (*John Burns, Labour's Lost Leader*, Williams & Norgate, Ltd., 25s. net). I did not at the time know anything about John Burns, except that he was a pal of Ben Tillett, who had helped in organising a great strike of which I have vivid recollections as a small boy in Hull; and of course, what he said at the meeting where I made my sketch was so much Greek to me. But John Burns, right up to 1914, was a tremendous force in politics, and from that first introduction, I always kept an eye on his sayings and doings.

Mr. Kent's biography is splendidly done. It is wise, witty, and informative, and particularly so for those who, these days, are apt to forget what had to be done in the early days of the working-class revolt against tyranny and injustice. We are more likely to remember Annie Besant's conversion to Theosophy than her magnificent fight for the poor girls employed by match firms at starvation wages; and when John Burns died a few years ago, we could only recall perhaps how he left politics in 1914 because he did not agree with the war.

Mr. Kent's narrative of his early struggles not only to gain a living for himself but to improve the lot of his fellow workers, carries the reader breathlessly on. It recalls dozens of incidents buried in the files of newspapers or, in some cases, forgotten books. His vivid pen paints those exciting days when pioneers like Cunningham Grahame, Bernard Shaw, William Morris, H. M. Hyndman, Keir Hardie, Tom Mann, and Ben Tillett, were moving heaven and earth to improve work conditions and wages for the unlucky people who were expected to work long hours at scandalously small pay, who were liable to get sacked without redress of any kind, who had no pensions, no holidays (with pay), and whose final plight was often those vile institutions called workhouses.

John Burns was born in 1858 in Lambeth, the son of a Scotsman who gave the world no fewer than 18 children. It is not surprising, in view of this fact, that John, though a Socialist, insisted that he was also a Malthusian. After a fairly rough childhood, John settled down more or less in Battersea. His work as an engineer took him early to the West African Coast and his experiences there served him well in after life. He was married in 1882 and had one son.

Soon his impassioned oratory began to make a stir in the world of labour, and the S.D.F. asked him to stand as an independent Labour candidate in the 1885 election. He polled just under 600 votes—not at all bad for a pioneer. Later, he "harangued" his fellow workers and others day in and day out, eventually clashing with the authorities. Those were the days when men, desperate with need and hunger, marched to Trafalgar Square in thousands. He was brought into court and at first acquitted; but in 1887 there were riots in which men were killed and injured, and Burns and Cunningham Grahame were both sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment.

When the London County Council was born in 1888, Burns stood for Battersea as a Socialist, and was elected top of the poll with 3,071 votes. And in 1889 came the great Dock Strike, when he led huge processions round the City of London. The dockers had a splendid case, and not to be outdone, the Roman Catholic Church came in on their side with Cardinal Manning as a strong supporter. It may interest readers to hear what Sidney

Holland (later Lord Knutsford) wrote about him:—

"The Cardinal came in—a small ascetic looking man with his red cardinal's cap on his head. He made a very eloquent speech, but struck a completely wrong note. He knew nothing about the rights and wrongs of the dispute, he treated us dock directors as if we were a merciless money-grabbing set of men, only caring for the profits of the company, not caring how much we ground down the men, and in spite of his eloquence he failed to make any impression. It would have been better if he had not intervened.

Mr. Kent quotes Lord Knutsford as saying that he thought Burns had more statesmanlike qualities than Tillet, but that "Tom Mann was the greatest force of the three, and had original ideas." Manning did, however, help to bring the strike to an end with the dockers gaining practically all their demands.

It was also a great personal triumph for John Burns; but a railwaymen's strike in Glasgow, to which he went in support, was not so successful, though his reputation grew higher and higher. In fact, as far back as 1892, he urged a Ministry of Labour—not to be accomplished until 1916. He entered Parliament in 1892 as a Radical, though *The Times* described him as a Socialist. It was Keir Hardie who entered as a Socialist under the term Labour, for Burns "never was a Labour member in the same sense," comments his biographer.

Mr. Kent knew Burns personally towards the last years of his life, but he has taken immense pains to get at the facts and "debunks" quite a lot of "mythology," some deliberately fostered by Burns, some merely artistic exaggerations. For example, he once asked Bradlaugh for the loan of legal works on the rights of public meetings, and Mr. Kent was told by Burns that Bradlaugh refused. It was quite untrue, for Bradlaugh replied that "he would be pleased to assist him." Mr. Kent adds, "Burns was no more orthodox religiously than Bradlaugh, but was afraid to be closely associated with him." Perhaps one reason for this was the debate between Bradlaugh and Hyndman, in which—in the opinion of many who heard it—Bradlaugh almost made mincemeat of his Socialist opponent.

Mr. Kent's chapters on Burns as an M.P., during the Boer War, and as a Cabinet Minister, are packed with interest, recalling as they do so many almost forgotten events which, before the world-shattering two wars of this century, shook the complacency of Victorian and Edwardian England to a degree hardly conceivable these days. Burns himself had also moved in many ways, and entered the Government as a Liberal. His picture in court dress was a far cry from the working man of his earlier and livelier days.

Opposing England's entry into a European War in 1914, he resigned from the Cabinet, and Mr. Kent deals fully with this momentous event in Burns's life, for it practically finished his public career.

Thenceforth he spent his time with his hobbies, notably collecting books, and in this was aided by an annuity from millionaire Andrew Carnegie, of £1,000 a year. There are a hundred extracts I would like to give from Mr. Kent's entertaining biography if space allowed, especially the many personal ones recorded by him with the fidelity of a Boswell—which, in a sense, he was to John Burns.

It is interesting to learn that Burns did not think much of Attlee or Morrison, but had an unqualified admiration for William Morris, Fred Henderson, Bernard Shaw, and that fine historian of London, H. B. Wheatley. He also had a great liking for Sir Henry Irving and Robert Blatchford.

Burns was terrifically interested in More's *Utopia*—he

scoured everywhere for its many editions, and collected 600, including the priceless first edition. Booklovers—like myself—will enjoy Mr. Kent's engrossing account of the 59,000 volumes scattered all over his house, acquired by Burns, and which brought more than £25,000 at their sale.

John Burns had no religion, though he never identified himself with the Freethought movement actively. He died in 1943, and needless to add, he was given a religious funeral.

In this well written volume of nearly 400 pages, Mr. Kent has gone into many details little known about Burns, and has corrected many stories and "myths." Readers of this journal will be, I am sure, particularly interested, and should insist on their public libraries putting it on their shelves. It will long be the standard biography of one of England's greatest Labour leaders.

H. CUTNER.

WHAT A MAGISTRATE!

OUTRAGED to the depths of his being, he simply let himself go at the awful example of depravity before him. "That is the dreadful state of things in London to-day," he stormed. "They know no more about religion than the natives of darkest Africa. They are just materialists. That is why we have so much crime."

This outburst, widely reported in the Press, must have evoked sympathetic shudders in Christian homes everywhere. Ugh, 'orrible! Let us glance, therefore, at the occasion which gave rise to it. The court was the one at Clerkenwell. The magistrate was Mr. Frank Powell. Before him was a schoolgirl of thirteen, not accused of any crime, but called as a witness. "Do you know what it means to take an oath?" he asked her. "No," she replied. "Do you go to Sunday School?" he then asked. "No," she replied again. "Do your parents go to church?" was his third question, and once more the child answered "No." Obviously a witness from whom true answers to simple questions might be expected.

She was, be it noted, called as a witness, for the purpose of performing a social duty. A good magistrate will, of course, treat all witnesses with consideration and courtesy, except when their behaviour makes it clear that they are trying to mislead the court. A child witness needs especial kindness to overcome its natural nervousness in what must be awe-inspiring surroundings, and to establish the confidence in which its evidence is likely to be most complete, frank and valuable. When this school-girl said that she did not know the meaning of an oath, it was, in fact, an opportunity for a good magistrate to display his qualities. He would have explained to her that before giving evidence she must repeat a form of words, and that if afterwards she was found to have said untrue things she could be punished by the court.

One could respect a magistrate who acted in this way, even if one considered, as I do, that the oath is an objectionable survival of primitive superstition. Mr. Powell, however, chose to display his complete unfitness for the paid office he occupies. There was no necessity to ask the girl whether she went to Sunday School or her parents went to church. These questions were quite outside the competence of the court, and could serve no purpose beyond giving Mr. Powell his chance to air his nonsense and deliver himself of an insulting reference to a large number of unoffending Londoners and Africans. He appears to hold the opinion that there is something deplorable in the attainment of a level of intelligence that sees in the oath an example of the "magic" that is held

in superstitious awe not only by the denizens of "darkest Africa" but by their cultural counterparts in this country.

Because a more informed attitude towards one's duty to tell the truth as a witness now obtains than in the days when religion held sway over the majority of the people, it is time that the oath was abolished. If it can be an offence to make a false statement in filling up an official form, cannot the same rule be applied to the giving of evidence? Of course it can, and then we shall be saved from the sort of precious rubbish Mr. Frank Powell gives forth from his bench.

For the moment, I can at least retort in kind. "That is the dreadful state of things in the Clerkenwell Court to-day. The magistrate knows no more about modern justice than a primitive witch-doctor. He is just a bigoted ignoramus. That is one of the reasons why the law is not respected." Think that over, Mr. Powell.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

THOMAS PAINE AND THE AMERICAN CRISIS

Dedication address delivered at the unveiling of the Thomas Paine statue in Burnham Park, Morristown, New Jersey, on July 4, in the 174th year of American independence.

UPON this hallowed ground where precious blood was shed for our Freedom, we come to dedicate a statue of Thomas Paine. This event is long overdue—overdue by at least a century and a-half.

This statue is to commemorate the critical Crisis which was to determine the success or failure of the American Revolution.

It was here, perhaps upon this very site in Burnham Park, that the turning point of this struggle for freedom took place.

It was in response to the agonising cry of George Washington, the Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Army, as well as to the groans of despair from the soldiers themselves, in this critical American crisis that one man, AND ONE MAN ALONE—Thomas Paine—rose to the supreme heights of heroic action, and by the eloquence of his inspiring words and by his own unselfish devotion to the cause of Human Freedom, became both the Creator and Saviour of the American Republic.

While the words of COMMON SENSE—Thomas Paine's plea for Independence—were still being eagerly read by the populace, and the stirring words of the Declaration of Independence were being proclaimed throughout the land, and the pealing of the Liberty Bell had not yet subsided, the first shot was fired in the war for Independence.

We were in no position to defend New York, and Washington himself, in referring to the superior forces of the British General said, "Nothing seems to remain but to determine the time of their taking possession."

And possession they took!

New York, New York was gone!

The people began to wonder if they had not made a grievous mistake. Did they let the persuasiveness of COMMON SENSE get the better of their judgment?

While Washington possessed the fortitude of a great general, he was not immune to defeat and discouragement.

When the cause seemed hopeless, and when his avenues of retreat seemed closed, he pondered with deep seriousness the means and methods by which he might escape to the West so as to avoid being captured and shot as a common rebel.

Thomas Paine was with the Army through all its trials and tribulations. He was with the Army during its retreat through the Jerseys. He was with Washington

during the perilous crossing of the Delaware, and he himself was "surprised how they got through; and at a loss to account for those powers of mind, and springs of animation, by which they withstood the forces of accumulated misfortune."

This indeed was the crisis in America's struggle for Freedom.

Legend has it that Thomas Paine sat beside a bivouac fire, immune to the winter's cold, with his musket across his knee, wearing Washington's coat, and with a stroke of genius, just as he had done in Common Sense, penned "The American Crisis" with these flaming words of inspiration:—

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated."

Common Sense was talking and the people listened.

There was no doubt about the honesty, the integrity and the sincerity of Thomas Paine.

Hardly had the words been printed when Washington, realising the power they possessed, had them read and re-read to his few remaining soldiers. The results were like magic.

Washington's army was rejuvenated. New recruits rallied to the General's side. Men flocked to the Standard Bearer and a new army was created. New and stronger, and more determined than ever before.

While the struggle continued, George Washington was encamped here in Morristown, with the burdens of the war weighing heavily upon his shoulders—too heavy for the Commander and Chief of the Revolutionary Army to bear.

But to Thomas Paine there was no "giving up."

Just as at the critical moment he had infused fresh patriotism into Washington's despairing army, so again in a "passion of patriotism," with money instead of words, he met THIS Crisis.

Paine had money due him for his services as Clerk of the Assembly. And what do you think he did?

He took \$500 of his meagre salary, enclosed it with a letter that only a Thomas Paine could write and sent it to a wealthy friend, Mr. Blair M'Clenaghan, and told him that he wanted to start the subscription with his GIFT of \$500 to establish a bank to finance the war, and was ready to give another \$500 if needed.

That very evening, Paine's appeal was read to a group of wealthy men meeting in a coffee house, and within less than six months, the subscriptions, spreading like wild fire, had collected to a sum of over \$1,000,000.

"Washington's sword would have been wielded in vain had it not been supported by the pen of Paine."

John Adams made this statement. He was there. He saw it happen. He knew. He also said: "History is to ascribe the American Revolution to Thomas Paine."

These statements become even more significant when you take into consideration the fact that Adams was not friendly to Paine. He made these statements because of the sheer force of truth behind them.

George Washington, who perhaps better than any other single individual in the world knew the value of Thomas

Paine's services to the cause of American Independence, when he learned of Paine's neglect and poverty, wrote and invited him to come to his headquarters then in Princeton. He said:—

"Your presence may remind Congress of your past service to this country, and if it is in my power to impress them, command my best exertions, by one who entertains a lively sense of the importance of your work."

Why, might you ask, has Paine been so shamefully neglected?

I know the answer. I will tell you why.

After he had freed man from political tyranny, he set about to free him from religious superstition. That is all. That was his "crime." If such a thing can be called a crime—the emancipation of man from the twin enemies of Freedom—Tyranny and Superstition.

He was denied citizenship and the sovereign right to vote in the Republic he created. He was unjustly imprisoned by those whom he had helped to make famous, while others turned a deaf ear to his plea for help, and remained silent as he was condemned to be guillotined!

An ignorant conductor ordered him off a coach in an arrogant and insulting manner as if he had been a dangerous criminal or a moral leper.

He was spat upon and tripped into the gutter. He was burnt in effigy. Nails were made with the initials "T.P." and put into the soles of shoes to symbolise grinding him into the earth. He was humiliated and insulted. He was obscenely caricatured. He was slandered, vilified, and libelled. Every filthy epithet was hurled at him. And many ignorant people even to-day would heap upon him these hateful and slanderous acts. And for what? What did he do? What was his "crime"?

He created the American Republic, suffering every known personal sacrifice so that we might live under a government guaranteeing to every individual, regardless of race, colour or creed, the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Thomas Paine's Idealism in the face of such conduct is heart-breaking.

Thomas Paine lived as exemplary a life as any man who ever walked upon this earth, and if Nature is capable of rendering a service to Mankind, she could not give us a greater gift than another Thomas Paine.

The struggle for American Independence started with the publication of *Common Sense*, on January 10, 1776, followed by the *Declaration of Independence* on July 4, and ended with the publication of the last number of *The American Crisis* on April 19, 1783, on the eighth anniversary of the first shot fired at Lexington.

And nothing could be more appropriate in the observance of this Independence Day than the dedication of a statue to the man who was the author of all three immortal documents.

You cannot separate Thomas Paine from the American Revolution. The one is interwoven into the other.

Common Sense, *The Declaration of Independence*, and *The American Crisis* might very properly be called the Bible of the American Republic, and the Charter and Testament for the Freedom of Mankind.

Only Thomas Paine said that a DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE made it impossible for him to give up the struggle. It made it impossible for him because he had written in this greatest manifesto of Freedom, the pledge of his life, his fortune and his sacred honour, to establish its principles.

While I consider it a great privilege and not an incon-

siderable honour to dedicate this statue to-day, I also feel that I could not perform a greater act of patriotism than by honouring Thomas Paine on this 4th of July.

Without him there would have been no United States of America. There would have been no Independence Day. There would be no waving of the Star Spangled Banner in the breezes above our heads to let us know that Liberty still prevails in our land.

And now to you, Mayor Mills, with a "passion of patriotism" on this glorious 4th of July, in the one hundred and seventy-fourth year of American Independence, I give you this inspiring statue, as a gift to the people of Morristown, which our great sculptor, Mr. Georg Lober, has made of Thomas Paine—the one man who more than any other single individual, was responsible for the establishment of our Great Republic.

JOSEPH LEWIS.

(Reprinted from *Commonsense*.)

SHAKESPEARE—DUCK OR SWAN?

MR. CUTNER has "eaten the leek" at the hands of Mr. Yates. He is much subdued. He takes refuge in a sullen refusal to discuss the matter further with Mr. Yates.

In his onslaught Mr. Yates notices with what glee and amusement Mr. Cutner recounts his easy triumphs over former opponents.

I was one of those opponents and Mr. Cutner refers to my effort thus: "One gentleman pointed out that it was much more likely that William Shakespeare at Stratford wrote the poems of Edward De Vere than vice versa, and I doubt if he changed his mind when I pointed out that it was hard to believe that even his great William at the age of six was quite capable of doing that."

My name was not given, and being a lazy correspondent I was minded to let this travesty go by the board.

Mr. Yates' observations prompt me to give my version of the affair.

A few years ago—I can't say exactly when, not having kept the copy of *The Freethinker*—Mr. Cutner championed the claim of Edward De Vere to the works attributed to William Shakespeare, of Stratford. I had read the poems of De Vere and I marvelled that anyone could conclude that the same hand wrote the great plays and sonnets of Shakespeare. It was like substituting a duck for a swan. After a playful dig that Mr. Cutner appeared to have been bitten by the aristocratic bug, I asked him in effect why De Vere threw away a casket of precious pearls and fondly treasured a mere handful of common beads; and on the grounds that the greater could include the less but not the less the greater, I remarked that it was easier to believe Shakespeare wrote De Vere than otherwise.

Mr. Cutner burked the argument as to-day he does with Mr. Yates.

It was his plain duty to put forth evidence in support of his contention; at least to show us that De Vere was capable of writing the masterpieces.

On this issue he was dumb. Instead, with his over-ruling passion for dates he pounced on a mere aside and made a mouthful of it; and it looks as though he is treasuring this tit-bit for his autobiography.

In his eagerness to score a point at any price, Mr. Cutner over-reached himself.

My letter was concerned solely with the works of De Vere and Shakespeare.

I never made the slightest reference to the identity of Shakespeare. In proof I cite Mr. Cutner himself who said that in fairness to me it should be stated that

I was not one of those who attributed the authorship to Bacon. Where would be the sense of that utterance if I had shown any partisanship for the Stratford Shakespeare? It is plain that I indicated no particular person as the author. Therefore, the jibe about a six-years old Shakespeare and my great William has no point. It is an outrageous non-sequitur.

If Mr. Cutner would be guided by his own great J. M. Robertson he would "avoid forming a habit of quibbling and wanton disputation."

H. IRVING.

FREETHOUGHT DICTIONARY

LEGEND.—A story or myth handed down by tradition, as opposed to historical fact.

An interesting example of legend occurs with one of the Catholic saints, St. Cristobal, who originated in the 15th century in Spain. For the beginning of the story we have to go back to the Inquisition and the famous—or infamous—La Guardia trial, instigated by Torquemada.

The real facts of this case will never now be known, for one of the Church historians, having access to documents, took the precaution of destroying all those which did not support his version of the affair. It is sufficient to say that a number of Jews, both orthodox and converts, were accused of several crimes, of which the principal was the kidnapping and crucifixion with torture of a four-year-old boy. This was supposed to be a ritual murder, committed to obtain possession of the heart, which, together with a stolen wafer of the Host, was to be used for necromancy against Christians.

There were the usual confessions under torture, but, although admissions were made as to the place of the kidnapping and the place of burial, no relative of the deceased was ever found, nor did anyone know anything of a missing four-year-old. Nor could the inquisitors find the body, which would have been a valuable piece of evidence to them. Investigations into this case took over eighteen months, so they must have been pretty thorough. One historian makes out a fairly good case for his suggestion that the whole affair had no more solid basis than imagination.

However, these desperate criminals were duly burnt at an auto-da-fé. This much is historical. Now for the legend.

This unknown child, unsought by relatives, with an unknown burial place, was given the name of Cristobal. It was then said of him that he had carried his cross several miles. At the four places where he halted for a rest, they built four chapels. It was further said that his captors whipped him with some five thousand odd strokes, and after the five-thousandth he started to cry. Asked by the Jews why he cried, he replied that it was because they had given him five more strokes than Jesus Christ was given at his crucifixion.

On being crucified, his side was opened and one of the Jews started to fumble about inside. The boy looked at him and said if they wanted his heart, it was on the other side.

That is the legend of St. Cristobal, and if any reader feels like mocking, it is well to remember that there are living to-day many thousands of sane, supposedly reasoning, intelligent and normal human beings, going about their daily avocations with average success, who not only firmly believe this legend, but would consider it a mortal sin to disbelieve it. Homo Sapiens? Perhaps, but Eliza Doolittle's famous remark seems more to the point.

W. F. RENNIE.

CORRESPONDENCE

JESUS AND ETHICS

SIR,—I read with interest the article in your issue of August 20, "The Moral Perfection of Jesus."

There is one quotation from the Bible which, had it been included, would have given the article still more force; this is, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Luke XIX, 27.

If only Christians and *Freethinkers* would read their Bibles a little more!—Yours, etc.,

V. H. SMITH.

"OFFICIALESE"

SIR,—The following was copied from a library book (I have forgotten the title): the chapter was dealing with "official" language. Here is the "Lord's Prayer" as given therein under the sub-title "British Officialese":—

"O, Parent, at present deemed to be domiciled in the stratosphere,

May your name (to be entered in triplicate in block letters) be established and maintained on the highest level of sacrosanctity.

May your policy be fully executed on a geopolitical basis as well as in the normal stratospherical sphere of influence.

We should be obliged for your attention in providing for our nutritional needs and for so organising distribution that our daily intake of cereal filler be not in short supply.

Further we should be grateful if all sentences recorded against us for misdemeanours and malfeasances be kept under constant review with the possibility of subsequent cancellation.

It would be fair to remember that we are adopting an analogous policy with regard to those who have inflicted injury upon ourselves.

Avert from us all redundant opportunities for delinquency and ethical deviation.

And initiate protective measures to safeguard us against any anti-social activities or tendencies to recidivism."

I thought that the above might be deemed worthy of inclusion in one of your issues.—Yours, etc.,

JOSEPH P. TUCK.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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