

Faith and Modern Living

CHAOS AND A CREED. By JAMES PRICEMAN. New York: Harper & Bros. 1925. \$2.50.

Reviewed by MARY AUSTIN

IN "Chaos and a Creed" we are face to face with the clearest, the most sincere, and the most betraying statement which has yet appeared of the average man of today, in respect to man's need of a formal faith. Beginning honestly by admitting that James Priceman is a pseudonym adopted to secure the necessary detachment, the author has explored the faith of millions of men, based, like his, on orthodox Christianity, informed by modern education, and emptied of its earlier validity by the adventure of modern living. With an honesty that engages the reader's attention in excess of the interest of the subject matter—for he offers no new material either of scholarship or interpretation—Mr. Priceman attacks the general problems of the historicity of Jesus, the supernormal elements of his life story, and the doctrinal residue. Accepting an evolutionary creation, he dismisses the legend of the Virgin Birth as unimportant, chiefly because of Jesus's own silence on that point, accepts the miracles in general, and relegates their detail to a secondary consideration.

The resurrection he accepts primarily for the reason that gives every student pause, the tremendous events that sprang from it, too revolutionary to have arisen in anything but facts otherwise inexplicable to contemporary observation. But in the very act of accepting the Gospel account of the death and reappearance of Jesus, Priceman rejects the Pauline dogma of salvation by Blood, sees in Jesus' own statements as to the forgiveness of sins something much more akin to modern psychoanalysis than to the orthodox scheme of salvation.

Finally, the book closes with a statement of personal faith which, while it refutes most of the concepts on which such a conclusion has formerly been established, definitely reasserts a belief that Jesus was God. He is presented as God the Creator, thought of as distinct and apart from his creation, who deliberately, and at "one actual historic date" and as "one consummate revelation" assumes human form and lives the life of a rejected Jewish rabbi in an inconsiderable corner of the world. Altogether a modern American exposition!



It is modern in its easy acceptance of as much scholarship and "higher criticism" as its author happens in a not narrowly informed career to have come across. Thoroughly American in its invincible natural prepossession in favor of Godness in man, accessible to man; this book is even more American in its profound ignorance of the whole science of mysticism by which such an inheritance can be accounted for and handled. So completely is this side of the subject, which so evidently engages the writer's whole subconscious approach, divorced from his intellectual consciousness of it, that it is more than likely Mr. Priceman would reject the idea that mysticism is, or could be, scientific. So ignorant does he remain of the history and meaning of the mystical approach to God, that his nearest touch is to reject for Jesus any sort of "monkishness," though as a matter of fact the picture of Jesus drawn in "Chaos and a Creed," as a man of great spiritual simplicity, renouncing all attachment to the things of this world, unmarried, given to both physical and spiritual healing, practicing long sessions of retirement in prayer and fasting, going about preaching, and finally suffering death with quietness for his Revelation, is like nothing so much as the great monks of the Middle Ages. Here speaks the average American Protestant prejudice in which both mysticism and monks stand—ignorantly—for the most disliked expression of religiosity.

One cannot help but feel that had the eminent American lurking behind the not too thick disguise of James Priceman, understood that mysticism is a way of life as definitely described as any other phase of human psychology, more soundly based and more extensively annotated by experience than psychoanalysis, and much more copiously documented, he might have found a way out of his chaos even more satisfactory to himself. "It is easier for me to believe," he says, "that Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb, than to believe that any merely human man . . . could have conceived of asserting 'I am the resurrection and the life.'" But any student of mysticism could have told him that this form of expression, this speaking in the person of the Indwell-

ing Spirit, is the usual practice of mystics in what is called primary meditation, all over the world, and is used today by healers and other practitioners of spiritual therapeutics. He could, indeed, within ten minutes walk of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second have discovered several of them who use the mystical methods of Jesus for the same purposes that Jesus used them.

Missing this item, Mr. Priceman misses the not unimportant fact that Jesus nowhere asserted that he was the sole, or chief, or in any respect peculiar, incarnation of God in Man. Nevertheless, that a layman should have gone to such earnest lengths to deliver his faith that, however it came about, God is in man and with man, is of heartening significance.

The Mediterranean Age

THE MEDITERRANEAN LANDS: AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY. By MARION I. NEWBIGIN. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1924. \$2.75.

Reviewed by HARRY ELMER BARNES
Smith College

SOME seventy years ago Arnold Guyot delivered his famous Lowell Lectures on "Earth and Man," in which he presented his suggestive theory of the "geographic march of history." By this he meant that the great historic civilizations had rarely repeated themselves or replaced each other in the same geographic environment, but had passed on to other areas. Specifically, civilization had originated in the Orient, developed still further in the Mediterranean basin, and had opened a new and revolutionary epoch with the conquest of the Atlantic by the nations of northwestern Europe. A generation ago the brilliant young Russian geographer and anarchist, Léon Metchnikoff, died leaving a manuscript entitled "Les Grands Fleuves Historiques," which was later published under the editorship of the distinguished French geographer, Elisée Reclus. In this he sketched a geographical interpretation of the history of civilization through three stages: the fluvial, the thalassic, and the oceanic. He had planned to complete this survey, but his early death prevented him from finishing more than the first part. Subsequently, Huntington, Gilfillan, and others have offered more complete and technical confirmation of this thesis.

In this volume by Miss Newbigin, the erudite and original Scottish geographer already well known through her studies of Balkan geography and history, we have the only serious effort which has yet been made in English to present in complete and succinct form the historical geography of the Mediterranean area from the rise of Egyptian civilization to the discovery of the oversea routes to the East at the close of the fifteenth century. She thus unfolds the panorama of history which enlists her attention:

As the dawn breaks we see Egypt and Babylonia struggling. . . . Out of a period of world disturbance the cities of Phœnicia emerge, . . . bringing the new west into touch with the older east. . . . Then comes the rise of Classical Greece, the growth of the free cities in mountain-girt but sea-fringed plains. . . . Next Rome begins to expand in ever-widening circles, and makes the Mediterranean area a unit. . . . But the peoples of Europe react, and under the impact of the Goths and Vandals, with the Arabs advancing along the southern shore, Rome goes down and the Mediterranean world is once more filled with strife. . . . Next we see the rise of the great mediæval trading cities. . . . Amalfi, Venice, Pisa, Genoa and many other towns. . . . Then new armies appear, menacing the Levantine coast, the area from which the trading cities derive their wealth. From Asia Minor the Turks advance into Europe, cutting off the eastern from the western world, once more shattering the concept of Mediterranean unity. The ships of Venice return empty to port; but Vasco da Gama has already reached India. . . . The Mediterranean Sea is now but a pocket; the ships of commerce have left it for the wider oceans beyond.



The first third of Miss Newbigin's book is devoted to a brief survey of the geographic setting of the Mediterranean basin and adjoining lands, based obviously on the monumental work of Philippon. The last two-thirds treats of the geographical elements involved in the sequence of historic cultures from the days of Menes to those of Columbus. It is rather to be deplored that this distribution of space was chosen, as the material on geography is much more competently and impressively presented than that on history. Fortunately, even the historical geography is more geography than history. As a general judgment on the work it may be safely stated that it performs more satisfactorily than any other

brief book in English the highly valuable service of presenting in a compact, readable, and suggestive fashion the physical basis of the history of civilization during the ancient and mediæval periods. The book should be most useful to historians and classicists alike, and should help to introduce a more dynamic and realistic element into the study of the life and cultures of these areas and periods. It should be particularly serviceable to the teachers of ancient and mediæval history in the schools, who are usually tragically innocent of the environmental background of their subject, and to whom historical geography is primarily a tracing of the shifts of political boundaries indicated on maps by ingenious chromatic designations.

While freely granting its general usefulness and many specific excellencies, it must also be pointed out that the book strikingly illustrates the dangers of venturing unchaperoned out of one's own specialty. The geographer in history is always faced with the difficult problem of being in thorough command of the historical facts for which he desires to find some geographical foundation and explanation. In no field is this so hazardous an undertaking as in regard to ancient and mediæval history, particularly the former. In most modern problems one can feel reasonably sure of himself when he has mastered the monographic secondary literature, but in ancient history the mass of papyri which are gradually being digested change our views and enrich our information weekly. In the light of this, what can be said for the reliability of the historical data of an author who seriously tells us that "alike for Egypt and for the Tigris-Euphrates area Herodotus and the Old Testament are invaluable," and whose chief sources of historical information are such books as Gibbon, Rawlinson, Freeman, and Reclus, even though there is reference to the existence of the first volume of the "Cambridge Ancient History"! It is not surprising to note that the author has missed a prize detail for her story in Walter Leaf's ingenious geographical explanation of the rise of the Mycenaean civilization and the causes of the Trojan War, or repeats solemnly the venerable myth punctured ten years ago by Professor Lybyer to the effect that oversea explorations and discoveries were produced by the advance of the Turks which intercepted and excluded the Christian merchants from contact with the Orient. If, however, the historian will need to exploit rather gingerly her strictly historical data, he will find here assembled a large body of pertinent geographical facts of undoubted validity with which to enrich his knowledge and interpretation of the history of western civilization to the modern era.

Five Scenes from a History

THE DARK HOURS. By DON MARQUIS. New York: Doubleday Page & Co. 1925. \$1.75.

Reviewed by HENRY LONGAN STUART

ANY attempt to rewrite the gospels in whole or in part has strong prejudice to overcome before it can be accepted as anything but overweening and misguided ambition. This sentiment is not altogether derived from a fear that the hands laid upon the fabric will be unworthy of irreverent ones. Indeed, from the nature of the case, it is far more likely that unfamiliarity and reluctance to offend will breed a new and intenser respect. Nor does it arise from a conviction that everything has been said and that nothing remains to be added. Mr. Middleton Murry, who is said to be busy on his own Life of Christ, has told us that an intelligent modern policeman, from the mere point of view of fact, could write a better Gospel story than either Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. And, to pass from the ridiculous to the sublime, many of the great mystics have experienced a sort of sacred exasperation at the exiguity of Gospel narrative, and have tried to supplement it by meditations and visions often startling in the wealth and plausibility of their detail. The reluctance of many pious souls to see the Gospels exploited is due rather to the feeling that they are sacred ground, *hortus conclusus*, and that to go botanizing thereon with anything but the purest spiritual intention is to take unfair and unlawful advantage of the solemnity and authority with which long association invests every word and incident of Holy Script.

It did not need the author's note appended by Mr. Don Marquis to "The Dark Hours" to feel sure that, in his case, the great drama of the Redemption fell into singularly worthy and reverent

hands. His task was a modest one, and in itself disarms criticism. It had no other end in view than the presentation, in handily dramatic form, of the incidents of the Passion, during which the person of the Redeemer would be kept off-stage and the sacred text closely adhered to. Catholics, indeed, familiar with the liturgy of Holy Week, will see in his play a very natural elaboration of their own services on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, during which the sanctuary becomes, in a certain sense, a stage, and the story of the Passion is chanted with special parts for rulers, people, narrator, and "Christus," allotted to choir and celebrants.

The closing drama of the Gospels bristles with mysteries which are full of suggestion for the reverently conjectural mind. There is the inexplicable treason and despair of Judas, the brief flash of courage on Peter's part, followed so swiftly by cowardice and denial, the long fight for mercy by Pilate and the dramatic intervention of his wife, the utter prostration in the Garden and the cry of desolation, contrasting so strangely with the perfect poise before Sanhedrim and Hall of Judgment. The story is filled, not only with incident whose truth bites home, but with the clash of human temperaments. Inherently its authenticity becomes more and more amazing as it is studied.

Mr. Marquis's own conjectures, while always illuminating, never go outside the traditional *cadre*. This alone is no mean feat. He gives us a Judas who is a gloomy fatalist, driven to his vile deed by the exquisite perceptions of his Master, and throwing the blame for his treachery on its Victim.

Aye! He betrayed me! What else? These many weeks, yea, these months past, he has persecuted and driven me! He has persecuted me with his knowledge of my dreams and speculations; he has taken from me my power to be myself. . . . Am I a devil? If so, it is he that hath thought me a devil and made me a devil and shown me a devil to myself.

The Peter he gives us, is, after all, the Peter we knew—brave, choleric, headstrong, and a little undependable, his courage oozing from him as he finds his brave gesture with the sword a blow in the void.

When I would have stood beside him he would not let me. . . . He would not let me fight for him. . . . I must fight, or I feel myself a coward. But he told me not to fight, and that has broken my will for dying.

And, as a contrast for Peter, he invents for us a Malchus, who, we feel, might very easily be an authentic and living figure—a Malchus who perishes, sword in hand, in a wild attempt to rescue the man who healed his ear in the Garden, and beside whose dead body poor irresolute Peter communes a moment, overwhelmed in self-contempt.

That should have been I! That should have been I!

For the dialogue and choruses of his play, Mr. Marquis has only had to delve into the narrative of the three years' ministry preceding Calvary. The venom of the priests, the cries of the crowd, tossed this way and that as their fears or their gratitude are worked upon, the witness given by the men and women whom Christ has cured or raised from the dead, and whose evidence is perverted into charges of witchcraft and deviltry, can nearly all be referred to their authentic source in one text or another of the four evangelists. But the skill in marshalling all this material and fusing it to a white heat of dramatic climax is Mr. Marquis's own. Whether the play will ever be presented on the stage the future alone can tell. At first sight there seem to be inherent difficulties, the chief of which is the author's device of keeping the great Protagonist "a Voice" throughout. But for the reader, at least, a rarely moving and wholly reverent Passion Play has been the result of Mr. Marquis's meditation upon the greatest tragedy in history.

With reference to the picture of Shelley published in the last issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, the following information may prove of interest. The portrait, a water-color, bears the signature of R. Hancock, a painter of china who in his old age took to portrait painting. He was living at the time at Clifton, the name of which place appears upon the picture. While Hancock was painting there Mary Shelley was at Clifton, and a letter is in existence from her asking Shelley to come and spend her birthday with her. There is therefore excellent presumptive evidence, though no certainty, that the portrait was painted from the life, which is the more interesting since the only portrait known to be from the life was considered unsatisfactory by Shelley's family.

The BOWLING GREEN

It Cuts

"It cuts—easily—a half hour." The words, spoken behind me in the smoker, might have meant very little to some. But to me, and particularly that morning, how naturally they flowed into the channel of my own thinking. If you are interested in the theatre, and particularly if you are a not-yet-produced playwright, there are no trains so pleasant as those on the Great Neck line of the L. I. R. R. There, at almost any hour of night or day, you will overhear someone in the smoker discussing the quaint minutiae of the stage world. And as I had spent the evening before in some final and ruthless cutting of a drama of my own, and had the very script in my lap—on my way to hand it over to the well-wishing adventurer who has agreed to undertake it—I should have liked to turn round and study the faces of the unknown surgeons.

"It cuts—easily—a half hour." I had spent the night before looking over a great mass of discarded MS, rough drafts and so on, all that debris of writing and rewriting familiar to everyone who has attempted anything in this most exacting of all forms of composition. I had looked, with faintly melancholy resignation, upon pleasing lines (that seemed such sure laughter or such moving pathos!) discarded as being unnecessary baggage, and now never to be uttered anywhere by anyone. Unless indeed one could some day put together a one-act fantasy composed of lines abandoned from other plays. What a queer farrago it would be; it might even prove to have some unexpected meaning or analogy. I know that in lecturing one always forgets the things one most wants to say, so that I have thought the best possible lecture would be one made up of the things forgotten in all other lectures. And the best kind of *Future Life*, if there should prove to be one, would give us a chance to "live-in" portions of our own text that were excised for the drastic requirements of this mundane stage.

After tackling a job of playwriting, with its multitude of competing considerations, a thing like a novel seems almost cravenly simple. Mr. Galsworthy is of course quite right when he speaks (in his introduction of two short plays by Conrad) of the crippling limitation the stage imposes upon those who have experienced "the wider freedom and the more exquisite savor" of the novel. Yet still the drama remains the most exciting and tempting, and perhaps the most influential, of all forms of penmanship; and we live happily in a day when it has become experimental once more and alive with the thrill of new effects and gustos. Even those "capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows" (Hamlet's phrase for the baser sort of movies, that tear passion to titters, has never been surpassed) are still ready to be troubled by genuine anxieties if we can medicine them with the bright stab of laughter.

The playwright, who enters so completely into the movements of his phantoms, must also be courageous enough to participate in his own, and scan them with the clear eye of self-raillery. I suppose there are documents on record that give a sort of clinical history of the absurdities of people's conduct while writing plays. If not, I could supply data. Nor does it matter very much, from the scientific standpoint, whether the play is genuine or mere fustian. The author's symptoms are much the same in either case. I remember coming into the newspaper office with the script of one scene in my arms, like a new-born baby, and shouting out to a patient colleague (who still calmly endures my ridiculous behaviors) "of course there's only one word for this."—What the word was I am loth to avow; it was the same word that Conrad and Hueffer exclaimed of a passage in "Youth" (see Hueffer's appendix to "The Nature of a Crime," where you will hunt in vain for anything startling enough in that passage to warrant their glorious outcry). The point is that in the joy and frenzy of the seizure you do really feel that way; anything can be endured as long as life can occasionally offer such moments. Afterwards, of course, you find out that you were wrong. The very scene I was so

happy about proved, on subsequent cooling, to be the least effective of the whole piece, and now, eighteen months later, I have just managed to get it into more viable form. But not to reckon with these comedies of hallucination is to know nothing of the whole creative process.

I wonder if there is not a certain moral discipline in writing a play that an author can acquire in no other way. I believe that one who has spent a number of months in conning and computing the technical dexterities of the job, the positive necessities of arranging his material so that the audience will not be bored, the requirements of physical incarnation of his dream, such a one will be less hasty to condemn any of the pragmatic sanctions of life. He will be, or ought to be, less drastic in sneering at the errors of churches, governments, universities, capitalist systems—any form of organization that works with queer human material and has to approximate. For the dramatist, relish it or not, faces what may be called a parliamentary problem. All his broodings and all the producer's effort are vain unless his ardently meditated lines are gathered together into one poised stroke, measured and fluent enough so that a handful of spectators, on one critical occasion, can apprehend his intention and transmit their pleasure, if any, to the amusable world on which he depends. A man who has had a successful play produced (I speak, of course, only by theory) has gone through Heaven knows how many telephone calls, inconclusive conferences, luncheon engagements where the producer did not arrive, midnight readings, for this single ordeal. If he has been skilful enough to compose all these elements into successful result, then I venture (subject to prompt refutation from the lives of playwrights) that he is, essentially, a moral man. He understands the strange emulsion of concession and compromise of which human morality consists. Henry James, for example, could not write a successful play. He was too intellectually selfish.

I would have liked to ask the men from Great Neck if they knew that C. E. Montague's "Dramatic Values," out of print for fourteen years, is about to be republished. What they said about cutting made me think they ought to enjoy this fine little book of theatre talk. I don't know that the playwright's problem has been much better stated than in Montague's chapter on Ibsen:

He knew precisely what a play was. He learned—central fact of all—that a play has only one-tenth the length of a novel; he learnt that a playgoer, unlike a reader, cannot skip, and that therefore he must never be let fall into the state of mind in which, if he were reading, he would skip; he learnt that dialogue is effective in a theatre only when every speech produces a distinct change in the relations of the speakers, that it must carry the hearer on over a rippled surface of small surprises to a foreseen goal, piquing curiosity in detail while meeting expectation on the whole; he learned how the characters of a play are mobilized; how their exits and entrances are brought into vital relation with the general purpose of the piece; how utterances, trivial and inexpressive in a poem or a novel, may take value and significance from the visible contact of their speakers with other persons or with a painted scene; how, on the other hand, telling effects characteristic of other forms of imaginative writing may be marred on the stage by the fact that the playgoer cannot turn back and look things up, that the pace is fixed for him . . . or by the equally imperious fact that we may read in solitude, but must usually hear a play in a crowd . . . face to face not merely with a work of art but the judgment of a public opinion upon it.

"It cuts—easily—a half hour." There was something in the confident way the words were said that led me to believe that the unknown speakers knew what they were talking about. They had the instinct, the finger-tip sensibility of those who have, by long training, learned to feel their way about in a crafty calling. Probably they could not express, with the wit, the irony, the charming shrewdness of Mr. Montague, the theories of their art; but I had a notion that they too understood *Dramatic Values*. I didn't even turn to look at them; but I paid them a more sincere tribute. Instead of delivering the script that day, I took it home again to see if there was still anything that absolutely must be cut.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

The 1925 revised edition of "Who's Who in Literature," edited by Mark Meredith in England and distributed in the United States by the *Publishers' Weekly*, is just published in completely revised form. The last issue was in 1922. The new edition contains nearly 5,000 names of authors of England, Canada and the United States.