possibly a very large number of right-minded men (in the political sense—for otherwise they have no "mind") are among these. We have then to ask whether the Church is adequately putting her own message forth, that is, in a way intelligible to the ordinary Catholic and non-Catholic alike. Dom Aelred speaks of "lengthy and formidable encyclicals." They have become, indeed, veritable treatises, and it is expected that the Bishops shall expound them, no doubt by the voice of their clergy, to their flock. But does that happen? We can hardly think so. The voice of the Holy See does *not* reach even the educated laity. The Vatican provides "inspiring leadership," but before those unversed in the *stylus curiae* can be led, they require to have what is taught, *interpreted*: that is, put into their own idiom. Similarly, the flow of information sent to the Holy See from all over the world will need to be imaginatively interpreted when it arrives. This affair of reciprocal interpretation is of primary importance; and even in the secular domain how often our representatives seem to make no attempt to understand the psychology of the lands to which they are accredited. And religiously, how often we meet men who not only consider we are wrong (if we talked the same language, we could make progress with those!) but who simply cannot grasp the fundamental Catholic ideas. Perhaps they have never been properly put to them. This book forms an urgent plea that they should be.

In Sara's Tents, by Walter Starkie (John Murray 25s).

THIS VOLUME combining reminiscence and scholarship ranges from a study of the history and character of the gypsies to a rich harvest of personal experience. Dr. Starkie visits Granada, the home of Manuel de Falla and Garcia Lorca (the author's spiritual mentor), both of whom championed the gypsies of the Sacro Monte, and he expatiates on the local music, with its echoes of Byzantine liturgy. Equally authoritative on Hungarian gypsy music, he joins Bartok and Kodaly in refuting Liszt.

The Hungarian Puszta, with its cattlemen and its *Fata Morgana*, is strangely paralleled in the salty wastes of the Camargue in Provence. The Mithraistic cult persists in both places, and in the latter, at Les-Saintes-Maries, the gypsies venerate Sara the Egyptian, the priestess of Mithra before she became the handmaiden of the Marys. The May pilgrimage here assumes the proportions of a vast nomadic migration, and this phenomenon forms the climax—and indeed the crux—of Dr. Starkie's book.

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THE MEASURE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN[1]

By

RUSSELL KIRK

"WHATEVER THE RESULT of the convulsion whose first shocks were beginning to be felt, there would still be enough square miles of earth for elbow-room; but that ineffable sentiment made up of memory and hope, of instinct and tradition, which swells every man's heart and shapes his thought, though perhaps never present to his consciousness, would be gone from it, leaving it common earth and nothing more. Men might gather rich crops from it, but that ideal harvest of priceless associations would be reaped no longer; that fine virtue which sent up messages of courage and security from every sod of it would have evaporated beyond recall. We should be irrevocably cut off from our past, and be forced to splice the ragged ends of our lives upon whatever new conditions chance might leave dangling for us."

So James Russell Lowell wrote in his essay on Lincoln. In truth, Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency of the United States is the great line of demarcation in the history of America; for the triumph of the North during the four terrible years that followed swept away the American society from which Lincoln arose, and Reconstruction, the Gilded Age, and material aggrandizement made it certain that the United States would not look upon his like again. A man very unlike Lincoln in his origins, but markedly like him in heart—Nathaniel Hawthorne—wrote, in the last year of his life (the year of Gettysburg), of "the hurricane that is sweeping us all along with it, possibly into a Limbo where our nation and its polity may be as literally the fragments of a shattered dream as my unwritten Romance." Both the New England of Hawthorne and the backwoods Illinois of Lincoln were effaced by the whirlwind of fanaticism which had first stirred in their youth, had wailed onward to

[1] *Abraham Lincoln*, by Benjamin Thomas (Eyre & Spottiswoode 25*s*).
The Ethics of Rhetoric, by Richard Weaver (Henry Regnery, Chicago $3.50).

Sumter, and then had raved triumphant from Manassas to Appomattox. From that hurricane-fanned conflagration of reforming enthusiasm and sinful appetite which became Civil War and Reconstruction, American moral and political conservatism has not yet recovered, and perhaps never can. With Lincoln dead, the obligations of conservative restoration lay with the mind of the victorious North; but the Northern intellect, which practically was the New England intellect, faltered before this tremendous task, being ill-equipped for it. The crabbed conservative strain which wound through New England character, reaching its most humane expression in Hawthorne, was in essence a conservatism of negation; after 1865, burdened with the necessity for affirmation and reconstruction, the New England mind shied and groaned and cursed at these perplexities. For years earlier, the masters of New England—not the State Street men, but leaders like Charles Francis Adams and Sumner and Everett and Parker and Emerson, the men of speculation and statecraft—had been engaged in a perilous, self-righteous flirtation with radicalism, political abstraction, and that kind of fanatic equalitarianism which Garrison represented. Their conservative instincts were bewildered by the passion of this moral crusade, the Civil War, and by the influence of Transcendentalism; they scarcely remembered where to look for the foundations of a conservative order; and power slipped from their grasp during the administration of Ulysses S. Grant. The ruined South, in that age, could not afford the luxury of any species of thought—there, every nerve was strained, for decades, to deal hastily with exigencies, somehow to make a dismembered economy stir again, in some fashion to reconcile negro emancipation with social stability; her disfranchised leaders were employed, half dazed, in writing apologia, like Davis and Stephens, or in mending resignedly the fabric of civilization, like Lee. Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, had neither the mind nor the temper to save his country from the rapacity and the folly of the age of Reconstruction, though he did all he could to realize the wise and moderate policies which Lincoln had outlined. American conservatism never has recovered wholly from that blight. To-day, however, the United States, wakening to the vastness of its moral responsibilities throughout the world, seeks with increasing earnestness for conservative principles and

examples. This present conservative yearning of the American nation gives a renewed interest to study of the mind and policies of Abraham Lincoln.

Two recent books contribute something toward this subject. Mr. Thomas' one-volume life of Lincoln, the best short biography since Lord Charnwood's, has no power of style; but it is a plain, sound, honest, impartial account of one of the strangest and most appealing figures ever to rise to great political authority. Mr. Weaver's long essay is a closely-reasoned exercise in criticism, designed to prove Seneca's observation that "As a man speaks, so is he"; for our present purpose, the most significant chapters are those on Burke and Lincoln, in which Mr. Weaver comes to the conclusion that Lincoln was a sounder conservative than was Burke. "What is conservatism?" Lincoln himself asked, before he was president. "Is it not adherence to the old and tried, against the new and untried?" Conservatism is that, but it is also a great deal more, as these two books suggest. Mr. J. G. Randall, Lincoln's most scholarly biographer, thinks of his subject as a liberal. But as Mr. Stanley Pargellis, in 1945, pointed out with cogency, in his cast of mind, his policies, and his empiricism, Lincoln was strongly conservative; and Mr. Weaver, for rather different reasons, holds the same opinion. Moreover, Lincoln's original allegiance was to the Whigs, then the conservative party of the United States; and, says Mr. Weaver, "It is no accident that Lincoln became the founder of the greatest American conservative party, even if that party was debauched soon after his career ended. He did so because his method was that of the conservative." There are some stirrings of true conservatism in the Republican party nowadays; and it is time, probably, that Republican leaders began to understand their founder, as well as to praise him.

> Among the lessons taught by the French Revolution there is none sadder or more striking than this, that you may make everything else out of the passions of men except a political system that will work, and that there is nothing so pitilessly and unconsciously cruel as sincerity formulated into dogma. It is always demoralizing to extend the domain of sentiment over questions where it has no legitimate jurisdiction; and perhaps the severest strain upon Mr. Lincoln was in resisting a tendency of his own supporters which chimed with his own private desires, while wholly opposed to his convictions of what would be wise policy.

This is Lowell again, writing with high truth and justice. Lincoln never was a doctrinaire; he rose from very low estate to very high estate, and he knew the savagery which lies so close beneath the skin of man, and he knew that most men are good only out of obedience to routine and convention. The Fire-eater and the Abolitionist were abhorrent to him; yet he took the middle path between them not out of any misapplication of the doctrine of the golden mean, but because he held by the principle that the unity and security of the United States transcended any fanatic scheme of uniformity. As Mr. Weaver observes, "he is astonishingly free from tendency to assume that 'the truth lies somewhere in between.' " Here he was very like Burke; yet it is improbable that he ever read Burke, or any other political philosopher except Blackstone; his wisdom came from the close observation of human nature, and from the Bible and Shakespeare. The Radical Republicans detested him as much as the Southern zealots did. In his great conservative end, the preservation of the Union, he succeeded; and he might have succeeded in a conservative labour equally vast, the restoration of order and honesty, had not Booth's pistol put an end to the charity and fortitude of this uncouth, homely, melancholy, lovable man.

Sentimental adulation has done much harm to the memory of the real Lincoln; and the man who reads Carl Sandburg's biography may do well to balance it with the bitter criticisms of Donald Davidson in *The Attack on Leviathan*. Mr. Thomas, however, writes with a painstaking seriousness, sedulous to clear away the cobwebs of legend even at the expense of every shred of the picturesque.

There emerges the form of a man who, until late in his life, seemed thoroughly unlikely ever to be a leader of opinion or of party, let alone a statesman—a man who entered politics simply with the modest hope of making a tolerable living out of political office, clumsy always, often feckless, declaring in his debates with Douglas that it is "better to be a live dog than a dead lion," defeated for years in every endeavour to influence politics on a national scale, a self-taught back-country lawyer, sunk in melancholy, married to a neurotic woman, eclipsed in his own party by men whose talents seemed to outshine his immeasurably. We see him (through the eyes of his partner Herndon) enduring the excesses of his disorderly children, who "soon gutted the room—

gutted the shelves of books—rifled the drawers and riddled boxes—battered the points of gold pens against the stove—turned over the ink-stands on the papers—scattered letters over the office and danced over them." We see him apparently unfit for regular business of any description, his office all higgledy-piggledy, amid its confusion an envelope marked, in Lincoln's hand, "When you can't find *it* anywhere else, look into this." We see him, only three years before he won the presidential election, still an obscure and gawky Western attorney, attending court in Cincinnati, in his rumpled clothes, a blue cotton umbrella in his hand, snubbed by Stanton and the other distinguished lawyers. The man still seemed pathetic at best, if not downright ludicrous; all the majesty and loneliness of his tragedy was yet to come.

So Lincoln seemed to the casual observer, at least. For all that, ever since his boyhood his friends had perceived in this curious being some element of greatness. Lincoln possessed the incongruous dignity that was Samuel Johnson's, too. Here was a man of sorrows. It has always been true that melancholy men are the wittiest; and Lincoln's off-colour yarns, told behind a log barn or in some dingy Springfield office, were part and parcel of his consciousness that this is a world of vanities. The attempts of Herndon and other biographers to find the source of this brooding sorrowfulness in some early blighted love are puerile, and Mr. Thomas shows what slight foundation those notions have. "What? Would you cry for a little girl?" Epictetus asks. So it was with Lincoln. He was no woman's man, of course, and his marriage was made tolerable only by his own vast charity and tenderness; but he never was the man to weep over his own blemishes or errors. The vanity of human wishes: Lincoln's awareness of this unalterable reality, combining with his knowledge of all the weaknesses of poor sinning mortality, made the man noble in his sadness, and gave him the strength to endure with humility and generosity the terrible burdens of his office. When Chief Justice Taney, "old, shrunken, and shrivelled like 'a galvanized corpse'," administered the inaugural oath to the first Republican President, *sic transit gloria mundi* was stamped across the face of the strange giant in the new black suit, whose lacklustre eyes stared down upon the crowd, the soldiers, and the cannon from a rough platform built against the unfinished Capitol.

Once I heard a popular speaker declare that what modern America needs is "old-fashioned religion, the sort of religion that Washington and Lincoln had." Now that would be a most imperfect sort of religion: for Washington's eighteenth-century conformity was scarcely more than moralism, and Lincoln was a Christian only in the vaguest of senses, if a Christian at all. Every American president employs the phrases of Christian piety; but very few presidents have been conspicuously devout. Lincoln began as a naïve sceptic; he received next to no religious instruction of any description; solitary reading of the Bible gave majesty to his mind and his style, but never brought to him any faith less cloudy and austere than a solemn theism. Yet there have been few Americans more thoroughly graced with the theological virtues, charity most of all. The New Testament shines out from his acts of mercy, and the Old from his direction of the war. We all know the high piety of his Gettysburg Address; and in some of his letters there looms up a great and stern Christian justice, as in his order appointing Hooker to the command of the Army of the Potomac:

> I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons. And yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier, which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm. But I think that during Gen. Burnside's command of the Army, you have taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country, and to a most meritorious and honourable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the Army and the Government needed a Dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes, can set up dictators. What I now ask you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done, and will do, for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the Army, of criticizing their commander, and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you, as far as I can, to put it down. Neither you, nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army, while such a spirit prevails in it.
>
> And now, beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy, and sleepless vigilance, go forward, and give us victories.

This prophetic majesty was not Lincoln's constant mood, nor did it predominate in his character until the War called forth the latent greatness in the back-country politician. When, at the beginning of his administration, Lincoln called Charles Francis Adams to Washington to appoint him minister to England, the dignified and nearly humourless son of John Quincy Adams was confounded by the boorish and almost inane manner of the head of the Republic. The President, lounging heavily in his office, addressed a few brusque and inconsequential remarks to the representative of the greatest family in America, about to assume the most important diplomatic post in the world; then, as if forgetting Adams' very existence, he turned aside to discuss some obscure postmastership with a member of his Cabinet. Lincoln was, indeed, a puzzle. Nearly all the leaders of his own party hated him, or despised him, or thought he would be the ruin of the Republicans. "We asked for a rail-splitter, and we have got one." It was a surprise to nearly everyone that he was nominated for the presidency, and a surprise that he was elected. He won only by a plurality of the popular vote—nothing like a majority. But here, unknown to almost everyone, was a man for the ages. The war made Lincoln great—not by chance, but by summoning forth the noble fortitude and gravity that had no more than peeked out timidly from him in his Illinois years. How far Lincoln himself was conscious that a Providential purpose worked through him, we cannot be sure; yet some such apprehension rings from the phrases of his speeches and letters between 1861 and 1865. Here was a man; and as the best of life is tragic, and as the highest reward of virtuous life is a noble end, so this man was fortunate in the hour of his death.

Lincoln was struck down at the height of his powers, having endured with meekness and resignation all the agony of the war years; he died at the moment all his hopes were rewarded and all his acts justified. He passed from life unblemished by the rancour and corruption of the Reconstruction era, so that the

intended evil of Booth's bullet was in reality, for Lincoln, a great relief and blessing.

Misunderstood in life, Lincoln the statesman has been generally misunderstood during the eighty-nine years which have elapsed since his death. He never was an Abolitionist, and the act for which he is most celebrated, the Emancipation Proclamation, he undertook simply as a measure of military expediency, not as a moral judgment. If he could have preserved the Union, short of war, by tolerating slavery forever, he would have done so. He was no fanatic reformer of society. Acton, in his essay on "The Causes of the American Revolution" (1861), touches upon the perplexed nature of the slavery question in America—or rather of the negro question, which the Civil War and Reconstruction did not solve, and which is nowhere near solution to-day; Acton writes of the abstractions of modern revolutionaries, and adds:

> Very different is the mode in which the Church labours to reform mankind by assimilating realities with ideals, and accommodating herself to times and circumstances. Her system of Christian liberty is essentially incompatible with slavery and the power of masters over their slaves was one of the bulwarks of corruption and vice which most seriously impeded her progress. Yet the Apostles never condemned slavery even within the Christian fold. The sort of civil liberty which came with Christianity into the world, and was one of her postulates, did not require the abolition of slavery. If men were free by virtue of their being formed after the image of God, the proportion in which they realized that image would be the measure of their freedom. Accordingly, St. Paul prescribed to the Christian slave to remain content with his condition. . . .
>
> The Secession movement was not provoked merely by the alarm of the slave-owners for their property, when the election of Lincoln sent down the price of slaves from twenty-five to fifty per cent, but by the political danger of Northern preponderance; and the mean whites of the Southern States are just as eager for separation as those who have property in slaves. For they fear lest the republicans, in carrying emancipation, should abolish the barriers which separate the negroes from their own caste. At the same time, the slaves show no disposition to help the republicans, and be raised to the level of the whites. There is a just reason for this fear, which lies in the simple fact that the United States are a republic. The population of a republic must be homogeneous. Civil equality must be founded on social equality, and on national and physiological unity. This has been the strength of the American republic. Pure democracy is that

> form of government in which the community is sovereign, in which, therefore, the State is most nearly identified with society. But society exists for the protection of interests; the State for the realization of right—"concilia coetusque hominum *jure* sociati, quae civitates appellantur." The State sets up a moral, objective law, and pursues a common object distinct from the ends and purposes of society. This is essentially repugnant to democracy, which recognizes only the interests and rights of the community, and is therefore inconsistent with the consolidation of authority which is implied in the notion of the State. It resists the development of the social into the moral community, If, therefore, a democracy includes persons with separate interests or an inferior nature, it tyrannizes over them. There is no mediator between the part and the whole; there is no room, therefore, for differences of class, of wealth, of race; equality is necessary to the liberty which is sought by a pure democracy.

Lincoln, by birth a Southern poor-white, perceived distinctly the complexity of this problem, as Acton suggests it; while Senator Sumner, for instance, eminent among the New England illuminati, remained oblivious to all the gargoyle faces that huddled slyly behind fanatic Abolition. For a long time, Lincoln resisted the importunities of the Radicals in favour of negro emancipation; he yielded, at length, out of the desperate necessities of the Union cause; and once the thing was done, he engaged in a number of unsuccessful endeavours to settle the freed negroes in the West Indies or in Latin America. He tried to persuade the members of his Cabinet to agree to a monetary compensation of former slaveholders out of the federal treasury, and was profoundly saddened at their refusal to support him in this. His proposals for Reconstruction in the South—carried out by Johnson so far as Johnson had the power to enforce them—saved the Southern states from much of the ignominy, and some of the material ruin, which the Radicals would have inflicted upon them; and had his moderate projects for the gradual improvement of the freedmen been made effectual, the whole present problem of race in America might be a good deal less distressing.

In this, for the most part, as in much else, Abraham Lincoln was a conservative statesman of a high order. Lincoln himself remarked of the founders of American independence (as Mr. Weaver reminds us),

> They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly laboured for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colours everywhere.

To this ideal of liberty under law, Lincoln added his own example, which has worked incalculable good in the altered America which has followed 1865. His greatness came from his recognition of enduring moral principle. I cannot do better than to conclude in the words of Mr. Weaver:

> Let it be offered as a parting counsel that parties bethink themselves of how their chieftains speak. This is a world in which one often gets what one asks for more directly or more literally than one expects. If a leader asks only consequences, he will find himself involved in naked competition of forces. If he asks only circumstance, he will find himself intimidated against all vision. But if he asks for principle, he may get that, all tied up and complete, and though purchased at a price, paid for. Therefore it is of first importance whether a leader has the courage to define. Nowhere does a man's rhetoric catch up with him more completely than in the topics he chooses to win other men's assent.

Abraham Lincoln, knowing that there is a Truth above the advantage of the hour, argued from definition, on most occasions.

> In the present civil war [he wrote in 1862], it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party. . . . The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time.

This is a long way from the big battalions; it is also a long way from Jacobin abstraction. Lincoln's strength, and his conservatism, did not arise from an affection for the excluded middle, which he called a "sophistical contrivance." He knew that what moved him was a power from without himself; and, having served God's will according to the light that was given him, he received the reward of the last full measure of devotion.

VICTORIAN AGNOSTICS AND WORDSWORTH

By

KATHARINE CHORLEY

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING and perhaps surprising characteristics of nineteenth-century agnosticism in England is the profound feeling, almost of veneration, which, throughout the century, so many of the Victorian agnostics had for the poetry of Wordsworth. His appeal went deeper than the response which their own love for wild nature gave to his portrayal of natural beauty. They probe below this and feed from him at the level where his own contact with nature transcends itself and becomes a profound spiritual experience of life. Reflecting on his poetry and his influence, they often use language bordering on the language of religion.

Matthew Arnold, who finished by reducing God to a "stream of tendency" or a "power not ourselves making for righteousness," but whose disillusioned gaze was not tricked, at any rate until well after the turn of the century, by any mirage of assured "progress," wrote some significant memorial verses at the time of Wordsworth's death in 1850. In this poem, he contrasts him with Goethe, who knew how to diagnose human suffering and weakness and evil but had no constructive plan for happiness except—if this, says Arnold sadly, be happiness—to stand apart from the flux and escape into the truth of art, and also with Byron who, he says, taught little but held spectators spell-bound by the exhibition of passion struggling with eternal law; whereas Wordsworth:

> Found us when the age had bound
> Our souls in its benumbing round;
> He spoke and loosed our hearts in tears
> . . . . . .