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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Bells of God

IT may be taken for granted that the majority of people in this country believe in a god. It may also safely be taken for granted that the majority of this majority do not pretend to know what God is like, what he does, or why he does it. But they believe in God; and those who are interested in getting people to believe in God are content so long as they believe. "Belief" is the great thing, whether what one believes—or professes to believe—is reasonable or not are matters of secondary consideration; in fact, that aspect of the matter need never be considered. The days have gone by when the clergy could adventure a searching inquiry as to what kind of god really is believed in. Nowadays beggars cannot be choosers, and a bald profession of belief is hailed with pleasure. Nowadays gods live on affirmations; they shrink to nothingness under pressure of explanations. Form has to be taken as equivalent to fact, and a uniform which on the stage would indicate a harlequinade, with a clown in the background, stands in a church as a symbol of religious reality.

Let it be understood that I am not writing in this vein to persuade people not to attend church. On the contrary, I am persuading them to go there; but the church should be a real one, not a mere gathering-place for people to sing a few unmusical hymns and listen to a handful of ethical platitudes. We have no official museum of religions, but we can, if we will, turn very many churches to that purpose. In reality, our schools, from the elementary to the higher educational ones, are carefully guarded against even suggesting the truth about religion—how it began, how it developed, and what is its inevitable end.

Those who wish to follow this line of investigation—the only way that can be called "scientific"—might well commence with a reading of that great pioneer work on religious origins, "Primitive Culture," by E. B. Tylor, published in 1871. This does not cover the field as it is to-day; but in the absence of a Tylor our understanding of religion would not be what it is to-day. And Tylor does set forth the main principles of investigation, expresses them without apology or hesitancy, avoids foolish and dishonouring compliments to existing religions—usually written with tongue in cheek. He says, with a boldness that not many possess even to-day, at the close of his first volume, plainly and conclusively, that all religious beliefs in gods and souls and a future life have their origin in the mistaken conclusion of the primitive savage. There is no apology, no rushing about for some term that will hide the truth of Atheism. He says:—

"The animism of savages stands for and by itself; it explains its own origin. The animism of civilised men, while more appropriate to advanced knowledge, is in great measure only explicable as a developed product of the older and ruder system. It is the doctrines and rites of the lower races which are, according to their philosophy, results of point-blank natural evidence. . . . The conception of the soul, as to its most essential nature, continues from the philosophy of the savage thinker to that of the modern professor of theology. . . . The theory of a soul is the principal part of a system of religious philosophy, which unites in an unbroken line of mental connection the savage fetish worshipper and the civilised Christian. The divisions which have separated the great religions of the world into intolerant and hostile sects are for the most part superficial in comparison with the deepest of all religious schisms: that which divides Animism from Materialism. . . ."

How many leading men of to-day have we with the courage to say that the issue is Atheism versus Animism?

Over and over again, Tylor—as though he had in mind the timidity of most people when facing an established lie—returns to this emphatic assertion that religious beliefs have no other or better foundation than the fear-laden ignorance of the primitive savage. Such rites as prayer, sacrifice, fasting, etc., "All have their early place and rudimentary meaning in savage culture, all belong to barbaric ages, all have their representatives within the limits of Christendom." Or take this:—

"Throughout the rituals of Christendom stand an army of supplications unaltered in principle from savage times."

What I have cited will illustrate the gap that lies between scientists such as Tylor and the apologetic, timid manner in which so many, who should know better, approach religion; and then devote their time to finding a label that will take the place of the plain, honest term "Atheism." The apology is often made that "Atheism" would lead to misunderstanding. I do not believe it. What these timid or interested souls fear is that the use of "Atheism" will lead to understanding.

Naturally, since Tylor wrote advances have been made, the phases that led up to Tylor's animism have been unearthed, and, building on Tylor, other stages have been unearthed; but the foundations laid by Tylor remain. The clear, simple language is there, valuable even from the point of view of literature. So, by all means read Tylor. The necessary modifications will come in their place and time, and the reader will be the better for his approach. The student will be the better for having sat at the feet of Edward B. Tylor. And let us hope that he will take unto himself something that belongs to him.

“Hear the Tolling of the Bell”

I really began these notes with the intention of writing about church bells; but a wayward typewriter led me astray, and it was only by an artful move that I regained control. It arose in this manner. The Church of St. Augustine, Leytonstone, little removed from where I reside, has a peal of bells. They are nothing to boast about so far as quality is concerned. They do not behave like Poe's bells:—

“Keeping time—
In a sort of Runic rhyme.”

Nor have they “molten golden notes.” They are just bells, bells, bells; and we—the people—naturally decide that they are bells, mainly because no other institution but a church would be allowed to make such a joyless noise. If cinemas adopted the Church method of asking people to come they would be at once suppressed as a nuisance. Now, some of our good Christians round about have been upset not by the quality of the bells—but from another consideration that ought to have been set aside at once. Actually, some of the Christians in the neighbourhood of St. Augustine's have sent a “round robin” to the priest-in-charge to stop the bells until the war is at an end. This, I must say, is not because they have “guts” where religion is concerned, and as God has allowed this war to keep on, in spite of days of prayer and appeals to him to stop the slaughter, we should solemnly inform God that unless he stops the war at once—of course, in our favour—no prayers will be said until peace exists. And, further, that before the churches are open to prayer again the whole situation should be reconsidered as to whether it is good bargaining for us to do all the work while, apparently, God does nothing worth bothering about.

No, the people complained that the bells made it difficult for many of them to hear the warning that flying bombs are in the air. The priest-in-charge said that many people had told him that during a raid the bells cheered them up. He stopped at that, which leaves one open to the suspicion that if the people can stand those unmelodious metal clangers time after time, facing the flying bomb should begin to lose its terror. They might ask, after listening to the church, hullabaloo, “Oh, death where is thy sting? Have I not listened to the bells of St. Augustine and yet survived!” But, in the circumstances, beggars cannot be choosers; so as church attendance is in question, the Rev. G. Mumby agrees to stop the bells, except that they will be rung only during “the consecration at the communion service.” It should be said that Mr. Mumby sadly confesses that “it is not every one who values the Church carrying on in these times.” And that reads like some lines in the “Ingoldsby Legends,” where the Pope rebukes a man:—

“A soldier of Holy Church to slay,
When they're scarcer and scarcer every day.”

But why do we have bells attached to churches? Replies the innocent believer, “To call pious people to church.” That is simply not the case. Bells—and where metals are not plentiful, drums—have their origin in pure magic.

If anyone will turn to that interesting collection of folklore and magical performances, the Bible, he will find bells ordered by God to be used by the priests. They were to have golden ones “round about their official dress,” so that every time the priest moved the bells would jingle. The reader will find the particulars in Exodus xxviii. and in the book of Zechariah. Bells were even placed upon horses to advertise the greatness of God. The wearing of bells by the priest or the sounding of bells on the horse had exactly the same reason. They were driving away evil spirits.

The indispensable Frazer will provide the reader with numerous examples by peoples belonging to the “lower culture.” Instances are scattered throughout the whole of his eleven volumes; but enough will be found in the ninth book, “The Scape Goat.”

I have left myself but small space, but there is enough to get the main lesson home. So far as Christians are concerned—remembering always that this bell-ringing business was in vogue long before the Christian Church existed—the purpose for ringing was open and avowed. It is to keep away devils. In parts of Germany bells were rung on Midsummer Eve to drive away evil spirits. On St. George's Day church bells were rung for the same reason. Hose and McDougal, in their “Pagan Tribes of Borneo,” refer to the same practice, but with drums instead of bells. In Malta the bishop orders the bells to ring to frighten the evil powers of the air. The church bells in Madrid were rung to prevent evil spirits getting at the dead body of the King. A remarkable set of bells were stolen from Rheims. The bells refused to ring at the new place to which they were taken. A Church canon of the 7th century orders bells to be rung when a man of note dies—to prevent Satan taking his soul. Bells were also credited with the belief that they gave protection from storm and lightning. It was, indeed, the power of bells to protect Christians from all sorts of evil influences that the ringing of church bells became a common picture of Christendom. One of the churches at Lugano has on it the assurance that it can “ward off lightning and malignant demons.”

With so powerful a weapon, it is no wonder that St. Thomas Aquinas—who is praised much by those who have neither read him nor would understand him if they did—said that “church bells, provided they have been duly consecrated and baptised,” kept the devil at bay. This belief in the power of sanctified bells having the power to protect people from evil was plainly held until quite recent times, and we should be surprised if superstition is not now in vogue. When one remembers the unmistakable fraud of the appearance of “Our Lady” in Italy and elsewhere during the past seven years, we are not surprised at these miracles occurring some centuries since.

I have had to rush the end of my notes, but, as is not unusual, what I found was the matter growing under my hand. But I hope that I have helped the vicar to realise how great is the authority for “sacred” bells being able to ward off evil things. I ought to apologise to him for even suggesting that a Christian clergyman should not be aware of the fact that the function of the bells is not to bring people to church, but to prevent demons coming there.

For there really is no hope of converting Satan. If there were the whole Christian scheme would break down and all the clergy be out of work. And if that occurs the last word of the parson on leaving his church will be, "Oh, hell!"

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ANIMAL LIFE IN TROPICAL AFRICA

A DISTINGUISHED evolutionary teacher such as Professor Julian Huxley is naturally gravely concerned with the future of the higher fauna of Africa. The last great land retreat of many of the larger mammals, as well as of two of man's simian relatives, Africa more fully represents the higher vertebrates whose heyday culminated in Tertiary times.

In his "Africa View," already drawn upon, Huxley devotes considerable attention to the need for the preservation of organisms, largely confined to the Dark Continent, not only on behalf of the animals, but for that of posterity. For their extinction is merely a matter of time unless animal reserves are extended and perpetuated. The reckless destruction of rare specimens, and the wholesale slaughter by hunters and trappers of the larger quadrupeds, must be prevented if coming generations are ever to study and admire these wonderful organisms in their native homes.

Bird sanctuaries exist in Britain and elsewhere, and the animal reserves in Africa and America provide sanctuaries in which disappearing mammals and other organisms may increase and multiply without fear of molestation.

Huxley stresses the importance of Africa as the chief habitat of the greater mammals. "Where else," he asks, "can you see a hundred great aquatic beasts like hippo in one glance, find creatures like giraffes, as tall as watch-towers; see herds of a thousand head, zebra, gnu, gazelle, and all the various buck; or hear the roaring of lions so often and so readily? Where else can one discover big animals new to science, like the okapi, the giant forest hog, or the strange hyæna-like form only this year (1931) sent back from Uganda? Africa boasts of the largest of all living animals, the largest freshwater mammal and two of the three lone survivors of man's nearest kin, the higher anthropoid apes."

Change of climate may in some measure account for the wholesale extinction of so many animal types in the South American Pampas during comparatively recent times. Elsewhere man has ever been the relentless enemy of superior animal life. The disappearance of the lion and other animals in Mediterranean lands; of bears and other creatures in Central Europe; and the wolves in Britain, on the other hand, were doubtless necessitated by an advancing civilisation.

The more conspicuous animals are not the only denizens of Africa. Its avifauna and insect life are equally attractive. The inter-relations of flowers and insects have been elaborately explained by Darwin and many other biologists. Dr. Huxley turned his attention to the part played by birds in the fertilisation of plants. He was impressed by the predominance of red flowers in the African landscape, and he now sought to discover the cause. As he interprets the phenomena, birds function as the fertilisers of flowers to a greater degree than insects. It seems that bees are insensitive to red colour, which "is no colour to them at all, but merely blackness." Birds, on the other hand, are sensitive to red; and whether they actually prefer it, or whether the flowers that have set out to attract birds have developed a colour invisible to insects so as to remain unvisited by creatures to which they are not adapted, and by which they cannot be fertilised, it is certainly true that, just as the generality of moth flowers, destined to be visited by night, are white and scented, so the generality of bird flowers are red.

Huxley deprecates the indifference of most Europeans living in tropical surroundings to natural history studies, especially in Africa, where Nature's operations are so important. Some knowledge of the activities of insects is indispensable in agriculture and for the well-being of domestic animals, as well as the preservation of health. As our author very pertinently states, "Here is an area as big as Great Britain which is closed to human settlement because the tsetse flies kill all the cattle; here is another, not quite so big, in which other tsetse flies are giving sleeping sickness to human beings. Some of the best grazing country is unavailable because of ticks which spread deadly disease. Without knowledge of these creatures' life history and habits you will never be able to throw open these areas to cattle and so relieve the pressure on the over-grazed tick-free areas where grass has been browsed away to nothing and the bare earth is showing."

It is gratifying to learn that the Belgian authorities in the Congo have established a nature reserve on sound scientific principles. They have proved that the alleged "untameable" African elephant is non-existent. The zebra and the eland might be domesticated with advantage, for, as Huxley notes, both animals are immune to tsetse poisoning.

An extensively organised body of specialists could breed out certain undesirable qualities these animals are said to possess, as selective methods are almost invariably successful. Many outstanding African problems might be solved if scientific methods were more generally adopted. Some appointments have been made and fair progress reported, but there is far wider scope for further study and research. But Huxley remarks that the existence of fairly remunerated posts for competent biologists in Africa seems so little known that it is essential to broadcast the fact to possible aspirants. He also pleads for the introduction of reliable natural history teaching into the general educational curriculum as a reform long overdue.

Huxley's chapter on the National Park of the Belgian Congo is intensely interesting and instructive. The Parc National Albert is a magnificent nature reserve in which a gorilla sanctuary is provided. In this extensive reserve there are mountains nearly 15,000 feet high, fine forests, pigmy tribes, fisherfolk, apes, a vast array of game animals, countless thousands of aquatic birds and "more hippo than anywhere else in the world."

Huxley spent four days on the gorilla highlands, and saw several groups of these apes' nests—"hollows on the ground, usually between the roots of a big tree lined with vegetation."

Prior to the present war, the Belgians were constructing roads in this splendid reserve to connect the Nile steamers in the north with Lake Tanganyika in the south. A commercial centre, as well as a pleasure city, were planned with all the amenities requisite to prospective visitors. Still, avers Huxley, despite these innovations, "the pygmies will still be leading their immemorial life; from their virgin forest fastness the gorillas will look down on the motor-boats and golf courses by the lakes; the buck will graze within sight of the motorist; and the hippos, although within earshot of the traffic of the great road, will continue to browse and snort and bask in peace. For no shot may be fired in the Parc National; no man may enter without a permit."

There is a multitudinous array of insect life in tropical Africa, yet Huxley deems the ants and termites the most remarkable of the lesser fauna of the country. Countless gall acacias abound in East Africa and each plant possesses hundreds of galls, and most of these are tenanted by scores of ants. This seems an example of co-operation between plant and animal, and Huxley notes that while the thorns safeguard the plant's

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ACID DROPS

THERE is, in Poland and in England, no reasonable doubt that much of the trouble among the Poles is due to the activity of the Roman Church. That much was evident in the anti-Semitic activity of the Poles in England, which was first denied and then, when overwhelming evidence was given, admitted, but with a promise that the scandal should be stopped. How far that promise has been carried out we do not know, but it is quite certain that one cannot change a mental attitude at the command of an official order. Little has been permitted publicity as to the present state of affairs, but we have got so used to having the muzzle put on in the past war years that one suspects that silence does not amount to reform.

Another example is given by the activity of the Roman Catholic Church in its readiness to create ill-will against Russia with regard to the desperate situation of the men in Poland who took open and active steps against the Germans. This rising was not arranged by the Russians, and it is not likely that they would alter their planned moves for the purpose of giving more help to the Poles who have so bravely taken action. But it gave the Roman Church its chance, and as an expert in fishing in muddy water, the Papacy seized the opportunity of creating ill-will against the Soviet.

It must never be forgotten that prior to the assault on Poland by the Germans, Poland was essentially a Fascist State. Not copying, be it noted, the almost unbelievable brutality of Germany, but still a Fascist State in its policy with regard to the masses of the people, its treatment of the Jews, and its land policy. But Poland was a stronghold of the Roman Catholic Church, and it is that fact which accounts for the interest of the Papacy. It recognises that in Russia it has a fact to be dreaded. In the "Universe" for August 4, we have it stated by Fr. Mariano Cordovani, theologian to the Secretary of State (Rome), that Catholics who call themselves "Catholic Communists" (there are groups of these being formed) are working against the interests of the Catholic Church, and to a Roman Catholic no greater sin can be committed. In the same issue of the "Universe" there are the names of Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops following the same line. The "Catholic Herald" of August 18 adds to the matter by talking largely about "the legitimate Polish Government in London," and what it calls "the Moscow sponsored Liberation Committee" in Poland. It calls that committee "a recent upstart." One would think that the people on the spot, who have done so much and suffered so much, deserve better treatment than that.

In the same issue of the "Herald" there is a leading article strongly asserting, by implication when not in set terms, that Poland—as represented by those who follow the Church—should be the acknowledged leader, as it is "the natural leader," of "the small States of Eastern Europe and Southern Europe." To be sure, there is nothing that the Vatican would delight in more than a number of European States banded together—to support the Roman Church. It even suggests that Russia will "want an easy peace with Germany"—probably to join with Germany in dominating Europe. Anything seems to serve so that people's blood may be made to shiver at the picture of Atheist Russia dominating Europe. The "Herald" also falls on Czechoslovakia, and says, "It has already sold the pass," presumably to Russia. It takes a Roman Catholic apologist to picture Russia falling into friendship with Germany.

All this seems to lead up to the question whether it is not time, as there will be a reshuffling of things when the peace arrives, to place the Vatican on its proper level in its relation to other countries. To treat the Roman Church headquarters as though it were a separate State is to make the situation ridiculous and dangerous. A piece of land about the size, or less, of a London park has no claim to be treated as a separate nation when, if a vote were taken, it is doubtful if even the Pope would be chosen to have any civic post in Italy. If we are going to help build up a new Europe, an early step should be to reduce the Vatican to its proper place. There have been too many confabs between English politicians and the heads of the Catholic Church.

We think we may put in another word on the same subject. First, it will be noted that Mr. Churchill always declares it is one of our objects to destroy Nazism. Others use indiscriminately Nazism and Fascism as though they are identical. They are not. Fascism is a social theory that stands alone. Nazism is based on Fascism and indicates the German addition. But the important point is that the Roman Church is a most complete illustration of Fascism in action. There is the Pope who is elected by a conclave of cardinals, and all the rest of the Roman Catholic officials are appointed in the same way. It is thus the very antithesis of a democracy—a real democracy—which theoretically elects officials through the vote of the people. That, of course, is why the Roman Church fights against an honest democracy. The Pope claims to have divine authority to give the last word on Ethics, Marriage, Education and Religion. And that granted, there is nothing of first-rate consequence left. No wonder that the Pope and Mussolini got on so well together, and that the Papacy made such a profitable financial deal with him. That money should be returned to the Italian people.

What simple folk the leading clergy are! Or should we say: What mugs they take the general public to be! Thus, Canon Brown, of Dewsbury, protests against "Reynolds News" pointing out that the blitzed churches will be restored at the public expense, and also that the Church does not pay anything under the War Damage Act, which all householders are compelled to pay. The Canon explains that the churches were built and maintained by the voluntary offerings of people. Somehow or other the Canon forgets the millions per year that comes from land and mines, nor does he remember that large sums of money have been voted by Parliament for the maintenance or building of the churches, and that all churches are free from a taxation which is the equivalent of millions annually. So in all kindness we assume that the Canon is very simple and remarkably uninformed.

It is announced through "Reynolds" that the 23 Jews who asked to be taken into the British Army, in consequence of their treatment by the Poles in England, have volunteered to work in coalmines. Their offer has been accepted. We may also mention that, until the facts were made public, the "Catholic Herald" persisted that there was no basis for the complaints. When it could no longer follow that line, it just dried up. Religious advocates never apologise for lying for the greater glory of God and the Church.

The "Daily Sketch" chronicles the fact that when a number of flying bombs fell on an unnamed town "a number of mothers and young babies and children were wounded or killed." But God was there, for "the gilded altar of a church and a stone figure of Christ stood undamaged." Every good Christian will see in this the hand of God. Others may consider that it would have been better to have smashed the altar and the statue and saved the mothers and their babies, but "God knows best."

In a recent address to a large number of the Army Cadet Force, the Bishop of Ely said that when Christians pray, "Thy will be done," they pray "to be strengthened to do what God wants." That is very considerate; it puts the cadets in the position of giving a helping hand to God. But we always understood that it was us who needed the help. The picture of God calling to humans to give him a helping hand has its attractions. But we have always said that it is man who keeps gods in being, and their daily prayer should run, "We pray that mankind will not omit to send their praise, for without we must sink into oblivion." Sometimes we are inclined to pity the gods; they are having a rather rough time.

The cobbler's cry that "There is nothing like leather" is a form of professionalism that meets us in many forms. But the religious one is the most impudent of all. Here is the Vicar of St. Andrews, Wimbeldon, who informs the world that he has no dislike to Sunday parades, but they must not clash with the Sunday services. Nothing should be permitted to interfere with the interests of religion. The impudence of it all!

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn,
Telephone No.: Holborn 2601. London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. G. PARKER.—We agree with you that the frontal attack on religion is not merely advisable, but of tremendous importance. As a matter of fact, it is a concerted frontal attack that is needed mostly to-day. But it still requires more courage to do this than to ease one's conscience by crediting religion with virtues it does not possess.

J. SEIBERT.—Thanks. Will appear as early as possible.

H. IRVING AND "ALERT."—Next week.

FOR "THE FREETHINKER."—F. R. Wise, 2s. 8d.; E. Drabble, 3s.

HUGH THOMSON (RENFREW).—Thanks for order for bound volume for 1944; have reserved you one. Price will be about £1 1s.

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

WE have received a number of letters dealing with a recent article by Mr. Du Cann. The letters, pro and con., are too numerous, and some too lengthy, for publishing in existing conditions, but we hope to print the main points of some in our next issue, which will contain more pages than this one. Meanwhile, we would have it borne in mind that we are neither defending nor endorsing Mr. Du Cann's views. He is well able to look after himself, and protection would be sheer insolence. But we dislike heresy hunting, whether it is practised in the name of religion or—worse still—in the name of Free thought. The intolerance of Christians causes us to smile, but intolerance under cover of Free thought is an insult to our cause. Two or three of the letters received advise us that such articles may lose subscribers. We have no such fear, and if we thought that possible we should feel that our lifelong work had been a failure. Our chief dislike to religion in all its forms is that it leads to, and ends in, intolerance. Our final remark this week is that not many of the letters received have demanded Mr. Du Cann's head on a dish. That Mr. Du Cann's article was worthy of printing is shown by the interest taken in it.

Mr. Ivor Parry writes in the "Sunday Times" that the saying "Government of the people, by the people, for the people," usually attributed to Abraham Lincoln, was used by Robespierre seventy years earlier. It was a delivery by the French Revolution which, with the Russian Revolution, may be placed as the two greatest human movements in the modern world. What we should like to see is the application of that saying to the modern world generally. At present, a more accurate expression of existing life would run "Government by some people for the pretended benefit of all the people."

The Keighley Branch N.S.S. staged a most successful afternoon with a Brains Trust on Religion and Free thought. For two hours the interest of a large audience was held, and, under the able handling of the question-master, the proceedings were

conducted with toleration and good feeling. The branch is trying to arrange another Brains Trust afternoon, and other branches of the N.S.S. might also consider similar additions to their syllabus of lectures.

Perhaps it was in a moment of forgetfulness that the B.B.C. departed, the other day, from its usual policy and allowed a question on religion coming from the forces to be answered. It was to what extent has Paganism or Pagan rites, customs and ideas permeated Christianity? One of our theological professors from a university, Prof. Dodd, was asked to reply, and in a very apologetic tone of voice he admitted, "Very considerably." He added that lots of Pagan ideas were assimilated by the early Church which, under the circumstances, was not at all surprising. It was a pity he did not specify what were these ideas as, however much he tried to soften the shock of what must be to most Christian listeners a very painful admission, it would have been far more painful to be told that there was nothing, or nearly nothing, in Christianity which was not taken from pre-Christian religions, and often spoiled in the transition. What he said has been a mere commonplace of Free thought for centuries, but there may be a devil of a row for letting pious Christians know it.

An interesting passage reaches the world through the medium of the London "Evening News" concerning the Maquis, who are giving such valuable help to the Allied troops in France. It runs: "Priests take orders from Atheists and Jews, owners from their own servants, men of the Right from men of the Left." That really represents a phase of life worth noting. In one sense it is characteristic of life—when religion is left out. Often have we pointed out that our fighting forces will live together, fight together, and die together. Introduce religion, and we bring to life a separate force that dulls human goodness and comradeship, and sets men against each other with all the ferocity that religious hatred alone can create. Religion is the greatest of all derisive forces.

The feeling against the policy of the B.B.C.—there must have been a large number of protests against it—produced the following in "The Listener" and has just been brought to our notice. The writer, Mr. W. E. Williams, says:—

"Now I contend that if religion is to be taken into the arena of religion, it should submit to every challenge of debate. If you hold that religion is a matter too sacred or too delicate for discussion, well and good. Let it be a matter, on the air and off, for devotional exercise. But if you seem willing to discuss religious faith and practice, then you must do so without reserving any of the issues. I can remember no B.B.C. discussion on religion which has boldly discarded such reservations. What is more serious I can recall several which, while seeming in their preliminary stages to offer full and unfettered scope for debate, soon became apparent as premeditated restatements of the Christian position.

This limitation seems to me a serious matter. While no one denies that a British citizen may hold what views he likes on matters of religion, the B.B.C. does, in fact, deny the discussion of some of those views on the wireless. Many varieties of religious experience continue to be excluded from broadcasting, and none of the reasons I have heard for their exclusion seems to me weighty or convincing."

Thousands of similar letters have been sent direct to the B.B.C. Its cowardice and dishonesty in this matter is such that a marked vice has assumed the character of a virtue.

Canon Barrett, in a letter to the "Church Times," says it is useless to preach to the converted; we must go all out to convert men and women from "the Protestant wilderness into a Catholic garden." But the real thing for men like Canon Barrett is the number of believers in religion—any religion—that steadily decreases. It is this growing mass of unbelievers that the Churches, of whatever brand, must ultimately deal with. Lectures and sermons addressed to believers may prolong the existence of a perfunctory religion for a time, but the army of those who see through the tricks of religion grows larger, stronger and more determined in their attack on the oldest of Roman superstitions.

A writer in the "Catholic Herald" quotes Dr. Langton Brown as saying that in the "pagan Roman Empire physicians were treated as slaves." That is about the neatest way of foisting off a lie that we have come across for some time. The fact is that while slavery was established in ancient Rome, it was not the brutal and degrading thing it became when Christians revived slavery when it had become almost extinct in Europe. Slaves could become doctors, authors, or recognised poets and historians. Under Christian rule the slave was kept degraded, and in some American States it was even punishable at law if people educated their slaves. Rome had slaves, but it did not degrade them in the systematic manner in which Christians degraded theirs up to scarcely a century ago.

"RELIGION IN THE VICTORIAN ERA"

A BOOK with the above title caught my eye the other day, and I thought it might prove interesting to see what the author had to say not only about religion but about irreligion. The author is Dr. L. E. Elliott-Binns, and the book was published in 1936 by the Lutterworth Press. Dr. Elliott-Binns has also written a number of other works mostly dealing with religion in its various aspects, so he is no mere tyro.

What he has to say about the various movements which took place during the reign of Queen Victoria, such as the Oxford Movement, may or may not be absolutely accurate—I have not checked up his details; but what he has to say about the "intrusion" of Freethought into the religious harmony of Victorianism is another matter. It would however, be difficult to find elsewhere so much crass ignorance displayed in so little a space. Dr. Elliott-Binns says just as little as he dare about Freethought. For the most part he completely ignores it. The work of Charles Southwell, George Jacob Holyoake and his brother Austin, John and Charles Watts, Robert Cooper and Charles Bradlaugh, to say nothing of G. W. Foote—all of which acted something like dynamite on the ignorant complacency of the average Victorian believer—is completely ignored. One would never think, reading this book, that there was such a word as "Freethought" in the Victorian vocabulary, and hardly such words as "Atheism," "Agnosticism," or even "Rationalism." "Tom" Paine is mentioned, and so are Huxley, Tyndall and Spencer, but only with a sneer. Paine is an "advanced" thinker, that is all. "For a time Huxley and Tyndall appeared to dominate thought," but only for a time. Thank God, we managed to escape by "a small margin the establishment of a despotism of science." Spencer, of course, is now quite "discredited."

Naturally, the same easy way of abolishing Darwin and evolution was not altogether possible, so we get the "broad-minded" type of discussion about them in which, we are told, in the end "the doctrine of Evolution gave a final blow to the Deism of the 18th century," thus ushering a stronger belief in—what do you think? "By its (evolution's) suggestion of belief in the Divine immanence (it) pointed to a vital element in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation." That is how religious history is written.

All the same, Dr. Elliott-Binns could not leave the clash of science and religion quite alone, and he has to admit that "All regions of thought are now permeated by the scientific outlook, and its methods have been adopted in every department of scholarship, and even in some respects in literature." But the inevitable result of this scientific approach to religion has shown us "that materialism itself finds no real support in natural science." Still, as the question of the supernatural had to be dealt with, Dr. Elliott-Binns very pathetically has to admit that the "new" science "seemed to take away the evidential value of what are called 'miracles'"—a heart-breaking admission, immediately countered by the confident declaration that "the crude appeal to miraculous events to

support spiritual truth was never really Christian, certainly not on the lines of our Lord's methods." Exactly what such a heaving overboard of the wonderful miracles of Jesus—stopping a storm, feeding a multitude of people with a few loaves and fishes, turning water into wine for drunks who had already "well drunk," and flying up to heaven in full view of hundreds of people, to give but a few of the "crude" miracles—shows is not exactly clear. In the end, Dr. Elliott-Binns stands by the Creation story in Genesis—as, indeed, he ought to—and by the "argument from design," which "is stronger than ever." Even the story of the "fall" is historically credible, as we all know that man "is actually a fallen creature." And "when science and religion are at one and working together in harmony"—well, of course, the deep, deep truths of religion will emerge, no doubt, again stronger than ever. Yes, when science and religion are one. They are not yet one, however.

There are two notices in the book which rather staggered me, I must confess. After all, on matters of fact one expects the truth—at least from historians—because facts can be checked up. Opinions are a different matter; there the historian can roam how he likes and the reader must judge for himself whether he is justified. I knew that in any serious history of religion during the Victorian era that iconoclastic work, "Supernatural Religion," would have to be dealt with, but I never expected such a travesty of the truth as Dr. Elliott-Binns gives us. He says:—

"The writer (of 'Supernatural Religion') made an immense parade of learning, using in particular the numerous apocryphal Gospels, which were not so well known as they now are, and going out of his way to accuse so great a scholar as Westcott of intentional deceit. All this made a profound impression. But the pretentious and inadequate nature of the author's scholarship was exposed by Lightfoot in a series of articles in the 'Contemporary Review'—and the bubble was pricked."

It is difficult to deal patiently with this tissue of Christian lies. I would wager almost anything that Dr. Elliott-Binns has never read either "Supernatural Religion" or Lightfoot's articles. Cassels, of course, refers to the apocryphal Gospels, but his authorities are in the main the great "standbys" of Christian theology, as anyone can see if they just look over the book. As for Lightfoot's "reply," all I can say is that, with a close acquaintance of apologetic literature, I know of few works purporting to be an answer to a long and sustained attack on supernatural religion which has so dismally failed. For note: one of the main planks of "Supernatural Religion" was a fine analytical criticism against the reality of miracles, and Lightfoot deliberately ignores this altogether. And another plank was the utter impossibility of the Resurrection to have taken place, to which Cassels devoted nearly 200 pages of closely reasoned argument; and there is not one word in reply from Lightfoot. No wonder that Professor Otto Pfeleiderer wrote in his "Development of Theology in Germany and Britain," says John M. Robertson, in his "Courses of Study," "a forcible vindication of the critical work of 'Supernatural Religion' and a severe reflection on Bishop Lightfoot's weakness as a thinker and a reasoner." The reader can take my word for it, the main positions of "Supernatural Religion" still stand absolutely untouched.

Dr. Elliott-Binns on Charles Bradlaugh is not so much a liar as an ignoramus. Here is his reference to that notable figure in Victorian religion:—

"Bradlaugh himself became notorious for his refusal to take the oath when elected Member of Parliament for Northampton in 1880 on conscientious grounds. This eventually led to his imprisonment."

Bradlaugh never refused to take the oath. He asked at first to be allowed to affirm, but when he found that impossible he

offered to take the usual oath other M.P.s took, and was not allowed to on the grounds that he was an Atheist and an oath for him would not be binding. There was the most ferocious opposition in the House of Commons against his taking a seat, from Liberal and Tory alike, and the most degrading scenes took place in Parliament. So utterly wrong was all this, and so thoroughly ashamed of its action Parliament became, that when Bradlaugh was on his deathbed it was moved that the story be expunged from Parliamentary records—which was done. About the only real gentleman in the whole sorry business was Charles Bradlaugh himself. He took the oath eventually and his seat, and rose to be one of the most respected Members of his day.

As for his being imprisoned because he would not take the oath, I do not know where Dr. Elliott-Binns got this fairy story from. Bradlaugh was never imprisoned—though his Christian enemies did their best to get him sent there; and there is very little doubt that one reason why G. W. Foote was sentenced for "blasphemy" was because Dr. Elliott-Binns' brothers in Christ wanted to hit and hurt Bradlaugh far more than Foote.

Most of us know what "Christian" history has been in the past. I thought that perhaps Christians had learnt their lesson. I am sorry to find I am mistaken.

H. CUTNER.

ANIMAL LIFE IN TROPICAL AFRICA

(Concluded from page 327)

leaves from larger enemies the ants assail lesser enemies, for when a gall is tapped truculent ants emerge from the gall through the aperture they have made, all prepared to attack the intruder.

Termites are essentially tropical organisms. In Uganda, when Huxley was traversing a plain stretching for several miles, he saw what appeared to be shocks of cultivated corn, and the illusion, which naturally aroused astonishment, was only dispelled when he discovered that they were the nests of termites, in numbers beyond computation, standing some five or six feet in height and spread across the plain in every direction.

Such nests, however, are comparatively small, for other termite species construct nests over 15 feet high. One giant nest was opened for Huxley's inspection. "It was exciting to see," he says, "their little underground gardens, chambers filled with the white mass of the special fungus which they cultivate. And most exciting of all was the royal chamber in which lives the bloated queen, repulsive beyond all belief in her flabby pink whitishness. . . . By her side is the king, her spouse, not a hundredth of her bulk, yet bigger than any other of the misshapen specialists that make up the termite nation. The natives call him the "ascari"—the policeman. I took the queen out and placed her in a soap dish for the night. She is so tuned up for egg production that she cannot restrain herself; before morning well over a thousand eggs had been laid by her."

In the keen struggle for existence in tropical Africa, mimicry and protective coloration have reached a deceptiveness almost incredible. Grasshoppers so successfully simulate the appearance of sticks that they deceive the very elect. Some of these insects are indistinguishable from striped grass blades, while others look like dead leaves. Bugs assume the appearance of thorns. Then there are "spiders like bird droppings, spiders mimicking ants with their one pair of legs too many held out to simulate the antennæ they lack—the most casual search reveals wonder after wonder."

Verily, Huxley's "Africa View" is packed with information of the most interesting character, and is a work to be read by all students of social and biological science, as well as by those of the general public who concern themselves with things that really matter.

T. F. PALMER.

CORRESPONDENCE

A QUESTION OF FREEDOM.

SIR,—If it is on the basis of lacking "intellectual stimulation" that Mr. Archibald Robertson would exclude Mr. Du Cann's articles (whether relating to the war or otherwise) from the pages of "The Freethinker," may I say that I think we are more likely to discover "intellectual stimulation" in Mr. Du Cann's wit than in Mr. Robertson's logic? Surely Mr. Robertson is himself a perfect example of the stimulating effect of Mr. Du Cann's mettlesome pen. And if it is our liberties about which we are concerned, do we not stand a better chance of conserving them with the Mr. Du Canns of the world (alas! how few) than with the Mr. Robertsons and the Mr. Woods? Anyone that has followed Mr. Du Cann's writing over a period of time cannot but have recognised behind his rapier thrusts a man of compassionate heart and fearless mind. Is not the essential variance among these able antagonists the fact that Mr. Du Cann has the philosophic mind, a-moral and unctemporaneous, while Mr. Robertson and Mr. Wood are politically minded, and see only in terms of immediate issues at stake?—Yours, etc.,

ALYSE GREGORY.

Chydok, Chaldon Herring,
Dorchester, Dorset.

LOVE

"Love is the only bow on life's dark cloud. Love is the morning and the evening star. It shines upon the child; it sheds its radiance upon the peaceful tomb. Love is the mother of beauty—the mother of melody, for music is its voice. Love is the builder of every hope, the kindler of every fire on every hearth. Love is the enchanter, the magician that changes worthless things to joy, and makes right royal kings and queens out of common clay. It is the perfume of that wond'rous flower, the heart. Without that divine passion, that divine sway, we are less than beasts, and with it earth is heaven and we are gods."—INGERSOLL.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—
Sunday, 12 noon. Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields:
Sunday, 3-30 p.m. Mr. L. EBURY.
West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m.
Messrs. WOOD, PAGE, and other speakers.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Accrington (Market).—Monday, September 4, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.
Cliviger (Lancs.).—Wednesday, September 6, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.
Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., Debate.
Rev. GORDON LIVINGSTONE v. Mr. A. REILLY.
Higham (Lancs.).—Friday, September 1, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.
Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market, Memorial Corner).—Saturday, 7 p.m., Messrs. J. W. BARKER and F. SODEN will lecture.
Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. (Bigg Market).—Sunday 7 p.m.
Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.
Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. T. MOSLEY.
Todmorden (Market).—Thursday, September 7, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON (Burnley): "What are we fighting for?"

A JESUIT ENCYCLOPÆDIST

"THE Encyclopedia Americana" professes to be "A Library of Universal Knowledge," but, like other educational ventures, it has been marred by Roman Catholic influence. Perusal of the articles on "Religion," "Renaissance" and "Resurrection," which occur in the same volume (No. 23), will alone suffice to demonstrate this. It will also prove conclusively that even to-day Roman Catholic *higher* education is hopelessly warped and divorced from reality, for the three contributions are all by Walter Drum, S.J., the late Professor of Scripture at Woodstock College, Maryland, who tells the American public, among other things, that "The Papacy was the main power that brought the revival of learning to the height of its glory," and that "The Old Testament is clear witness to the fact of God's communication with the human race."

Nevertheless, Professor Drum is aware that there are peoples who have not accepted this *fact*, and he deals with them under the heading of "Natural Religion." He will, of course, have nothing to do with "rationalistic" explanations of the origin and development of religious beliefs because "These theories all start from a false assumption. It is assumed that the present state of civilisation and religion has resulted from evolution. . . . Hence, the lower its civilisation the nearer is a race to primitive religion. One must study religion as it is in savage peoples in order to come near to the primitive religion of mankind." "All this," he says, "is groundless assumption and progressive assertion. Fiction is proposed as fact; emphasis takes the place of logical reasoning."

Instead of this "fiction," the Professor dogmatically reiterates the old argument that "These various forms of religious belief are all degenerations from primitive revelation"; while later he says: "There is absolutely no proof that a prehistoric neolithic man ever existed. The Neanderthal man and other abnormalities of such sort have turned out to be nothing more than mere degenerations." This, in the foremost American encyclopædia in the 20th century, is the reply to those misguided people who think that the Roman Catholic Church accepts evolution, and that its "educational" institutions are homes of learning! Yet, though "logical reasoning" may be absent, "emphasis" is certainly not, and Professor Drum insists again: "It is a false start to assume that the savages of Africa, America and Australia are nearer to primitive religion than are cultured races."

Unfortunately (for the Professor), to insist is not sufficient; and I need only point out that all the evidence of physical and cultural anthropology entirely contradicts everything that he says in the last two paragraphs. This would not worry him, however, for he has little or no time for such matters—nor for the men who specialise in them. It seems, in fact, that Professor Drum prefers vitriol to fair play, and, after a complete misrepresentation of Tylor's "Animism," he dispenses with Frazer and Marett together in exactly a dozen lines!

No attempt whatever is made to combine the theories; instead, we are treated to a clever, but valueless, effort to cancel them out, viz. :—

"Tylor assumes an age of animism that preceded religion, Frazer . . . postulates an age of magic that preceded animism."

Or, we have the solitary and totally unsatisfactory reference to Marett, who, says Professor Drum, "starts theorising from a life-force called *mana* in Polynesia and Melanesia. *Mana* conceived as impersonal led to magic; *mana* conceived as personal led to worship."

Now, whether they were right or not, it must be admitted by all *unbiased* students that these three anthropologists did

not "assume," "postulate" or start "theorising" until they had thoroughly digested an immense amount of knowledge on the subject. Furthermore, their differences on comparatively unimportant matters are far outweighed by their unanimous agreement on essentials. There is, for example, no fundamental disagreement between Sir E. B. Tylor and Professor R. R. Marett; nor even between the latter and Sir James G. Frazer. Indeed, Marett tells us: "In regard to Tylor's animism, I am no irreconcilable foe who has a rival theory to put forward concerning the origin of religion"; and in reference to Sir James Frazer that "If he (Frazer) would consent not to press the analogy—for surely it is hardly more—between primitive man's magic and what we know as natural science, I venture to think that his 'magical' and my 'pre-animistic' could be used as well-nigh convertible terms."

Professor Marett acknowledges, too, that animism is a religious stage through which most, if not all, peoples pass; but he considers Tylor's minimum definition of religion—"the belief in spiritual beings"—too narrow because it is "too intellectualistic." He therefore asks: "Before, or at any rate apart from, animism, was early man subject to any experience, whether in the form of feeling, or of thought, or of both combined, that might be termed specifically 'religious'?"

It was the consideration of this question that evoked the famous conception of a "pre-animistic" religion, or "animatism," which may perhaps best be described as a feeling of awe and wonder at strange phenomena, "which drives a man, ere he can think or theorise upon it, into personal relations with the supernatural." "Startling manifestations of nature are treated as powers," says Professor Marett, "without the agency of spirits being necessarily assumed"; and evidence would seem to support this. The distinction, however, is at times very fine, as he himself readily admits; and it is not very long before the savage passes from animatism to animism—principally, no doubt, through misunderstanding of dreams, shadows, reflections, death, etc., along such lines as Tylor perceived.

This at least is scientific and in conformity with the facts. Whilst, therefore—as Marett expresses it—animism is no longer an "all-sufficient account of the essential nature of rudimentary religion," on the great pioneering work of Sir E. B. Tylor there has been constructed—with, of course, some amplifications and adjustments—a scientific study of the evolution of religion which has completely nullified theology. It is true, also, that, in its expounder's words, "Animism is, in fact, the groundwork of the philosophy of religion, from that of savages up to that of civilised men." Should we, then, be surprised to find it denounced by a Jesuit? I think not! C. McCALL.

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