

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Continued from page 14)

### More About the Gods

HOW did man come to believe in gods? The Christian story as given in the Bible is quite plain and sufficient if one believes in the Bible beforehand. But if he recognises that the sacred book of the Christian Churches is mainly made up of folklore, interesting enough as pictures of primitive beliefs, then the question is not so easily settled. It is true that in some way or another, and sooner or later, most groups of people have produced a god of some sort, but that is balanced by the indisputable fact that sooner or later people seem to get rid of them, and are all the better for the parting. But the Biblical age of the world and the origin of man is too ridiculous for anyone except children and uneducated grown-ups.

Science declares to-day that man, as a distinct species, has been upon the earth for about a million years, and that for three-fourths of that period he was without any conception of a god, black or white, good or bad. But that period was a vital one. In some way man developed an upright stature: he developed a language, as distinct from the growls, grunts and shrieks of other animals; he had learned to grow food instead of finding it, and so could have permanent dwelling-places; he made tools and established traditions. Above all, he became a *social* animal instead of a gregarious one; he did not start life where his immediate predecessors did; he commenced where they left off. The experience of his forerunners became his. He could see behind, around, and could foreshadow what might come. His knowledge was, or could be, steadily accumulative.

But he had no god or gods. When history meets man the gods are plentiful, too plentiful. How did they arise? For three-fourths of man's existence he lived godless. Why did he not continue godless? For gods did not make the problems for solution easier or fewer. On the contrary, as the gods became more numerous they became more troublesome. They blinded man to the power and quality of his own nature. Still, they provided a sort of defence weapon, much as people to-day carry about with them quack remedies to protect them from disease or ill-fortune. There are still multitudes of people who carry a "sacred" charm to protect them against ills of various kinds. Thousands of magical medals have been sold or presented to Roman Catholic soldiers during the war to protect them against danger. There is no evidence that those wearing these magic medals are protected from danger, or that those who are without a magic medal suffer more than those who go spiritually clad.

There are various theories to account for the existence of the belief in God, but never yet has there been one that

could stand against informed criticism. That man read his own character into the gods was quite evident, and an old Greek said with absolute truth that if the oxen had gods they would be like oxen. That all gods are mere reflections of man is obvious. The evidence for this is that gods are never better than the best of their worshippers, and on a general run they are worse. E. B. Tylor, the founder of modern scientific anthropology, saw the origin of gods in a universal animism. That helps to simplify the problem, and it is certain, as Tylor says, that all the principal features of Christianity can be traced directly back to the beliefs and practices of primitive peoples. Still, it leaves untouched a deeper question, that of "Why should men so read themselves into nature?"

The most promising theory of the origin of the gods and religion is found in "Mana," which strictly cannot be called a theory since it is the name for a practice or for a fixed conviction concerning processes that are not understood by the primitive mind. Its originator, R. H. Codrington, in his work "Melanesians" published in 1891, says that "Mana" stands for a force, not a personal force, but a force which animates everything in general, and puzzling events in particular. Codrington describes "Mana" as "A force altogether distinct from physical power, which acts in all kinds of ways for good or evil, and which it is of the greatest advantage to possess or control."

To illustrate the wide scope of this "Mana" he says: "If a man has been successful in fighting it has not been his natural strength of arm . . . he has certainly got the 'Mana' of a spirit. If a man's pigs multiply . . . it is not because their owner is industrious and looks after his property, but because of the pigs full of 'Mana.'" There are many other illustrations given, and the same general outlook is found in many parts of Africa. In passing, it may be noted that this "Mana" is not antagonistic to Frazer's theory that the belief in God came after magic had failed those who practised it.

The picture that we get is one that appears as a process, and that was to be expected. We have man gradually increasing his knowledge of things, ruling where he can and how he can, and finally asking the quite illegitimate "Why?"—and failing to find an answer. A long, long time had to pass before the probable questions asked by our early ancestors could be answered. But once the gods appeared they came in droves. The questions must have easily overcome any rational answers that could be given. "God" has always been what Spinoza called it—an asylum for the ignorant.

But it is worthy of note that while the number and the activity of the gods increased, at a comparatively early age, Atheism began to find expression. There is evidence of this in ancient Egypt, and very commonly expressed in Greece, while in Rome it was said that two priests could not pass each other without a smile. The decline of Greece and the

fall of the Roman Empire cleared the way for a revival of the more superstitious of the Eastern religions, and the world settled down for centuries to the supremacy of forms of religious belief that put the intellectual progress of the Western world back for many generations.

### Fiction and Fact

I have given a bird's eye view of a very large subject, but can now come back to the main thesis of my book "Religion and Sex." In that I did not discuss, save incidentally, the truth or falsity of religion. The fact before us was that even the believers in Christianity must have some kind of accepted evidence in favour of their religion. I put the position thus: "Given the religious idea as already existing, in what way and to what end has its development been affected by forces that are not in themselves religious, and which modern thought definitely separates from religion?" I did not suggest that religion in any way found its origin in the facts of sex life. But it was quite clear to me that feeling taken to be due to contact with supernatural forces might easily be explained as due to distorted or repressed sexual feeling. For example, when we find religious characters of strongly marked amorous disposition, but leading an ascetic life, using towards the object of their adoration terms usually associated with strong sexual feeling, it does not seem extravagant to assume that much of this feeling is covered by symbolism. Would the medieval monk, for example, have been tempted by Satan in the form of a beautiful woman had he been happily married? Would Santa Teresa or Catherine of Siena have used the language they did to express their devotion to Jesus had they been wives or mothers? My point, therefore, was not that religion was based on sex, but that it was often the case that both normal and abnormal feeling were often interpreted in terms of religious influences. But as a matter of fact it was a very small part of my book that dealt with sexual matters.

Later I will give some examples of the line of argument taken in "Religion and Sex." For the moment I think it will serve to quote some of the closing passages of the book:—

"Suppose that humanity had started its career in full possession of that knowledge of nature which has been so laboriously accumulated. In that case would the belief in the supernatural have ever existed? Would the thousand and one "spiritual beings" of primitive society have ever had being? And if not called into being then, from what other source could they have been derived? Is there anything in later scientific knowledge that would have suggested the supernatural? . . . Unfortunately, the scientist does not come first but last, and by the time he appears the supernatural has made good its foothold; it has permeated human thought and human institutions, and has bitten deeply into habits of thought as to make eradication the most difficult of all tasks.

Let us carry our imagining yet a step further. Imagine that even after primitive ignorance had created the supernatural it had come to an abrupt stop. Suppose a generation born, not without knowledge of what their progenitors believed, but with a sufficient knowledge of their own to correct the errors of their ancestors. Suppose that generation to be in a position to recognise the nature of hysteria,

hallucination and insanity for what they are. Assume them to be under no delusions concerning the nature of man physically or mentally? . . . Would the religious idea have persisted in the way it has done? Granted that religion would still have continued to exist philosophically under such conditions . . . would it have been the dominating power it has been? What would have been the position of the long array of seers, prophets and illuminants, whose credentials have been found in states of mind that are now known to be pathological in character? For it was very seldom the justice or the reasonableness of the teachings set forth that won support. It was the signs and wonders that were pointed as evidence of the divine commission of the teachers. Assume then that these "signs and wonders" had been wanting, and that for thousands of years people had looked at natural phenomena from the point of view of the educated mind of to-day, what would have been the present position of the religious idea? Would it not have been like a tree divorced from the soil? Well, we know that the course of history has been far different from what I have assumed to be the case. We know that the savage dies out very slowly, and that even in civilised States to-day he is honoured in the existence of a whole army of representatives. Each generation moves along the road marked out by its predecessors and widens or lengthens it to but a small extent. For many, many generations people went on adopting the conclusions of the savage concerning mankind and the universe, and finding proofs of the soundness of these conclusions in exactly the same kind of experiences. The beliefs thus engendered were wild and absurd—admittedly so—and many of such a nature that educated people are now ashamed of them. But such as they were, they served the purpose of perpetuating belief in the supernatural, and so served to strengthen the general religious idea. Of that there can be no reasonable doubt. For the influence of beliefs that have been held long does not end with the intellectual perception of their falsity. A belief such as witchcraft dies out, but by that time it has done its work in familiarising the general mind with the reality of the supernatural and so prepares the ground for other harvests. These long centuries of superstitious beliefs have left behind in society a psychological residuum that is at all times an obstacle, and is sometimes fatal to scientific thinking. We are like men who have obtained freedom after almost a lifetime of slavery. We may be no longer in any real danger of the lash, but fear of the whip has become part of our nature, and we think without cause. So will all those now-admitted delusions that have been described in the foregoing pages, and which for generations were asserted without question. They bit deeply into social institutions; the temper of mind they induced became part of our social heritage. They perpetuated the long reign of supernaturalism, and still interpose a serious obstacle to sane and helpful conceptions of man and the universe."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

**CHALLENGE TO RELIGION** (a re-issue of four lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester), by Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

**WHAT IS RELIGION?** by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

## ISRAEL IN TUDOR TIMES

FROM 1290, in the reign of Edward I, the year of their expulsion, until the Stuart era, no Jews were officially permitted in Britain. But evidently a few resided in England mostly under the cloak of Christianity, after their baptism. Still, it is only in the Tudor period that Hebrews clearly emerge as dwellers in our island.

As the late Sir Sidney Lee intimates in his "Elizabethan England and the Jews," a greatly increased interest in Judaism was one of the bye-products of the Reformation. The Bible was then available for all who could read in their native tongue and people were naturally curious concerning a community whose history and traditions were recorded in the Scriptures. In 1579, a play, "The Jew," was presented in London and in succeeding years several Jewish characters appeared in plays, the most notable being Marlowe's "Jew of Malta" and Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." Day, Dekker, Beaumont and Fletcher and other dramatists responded to the popular demand. Moreover, the study of Hebrew was now occasionally pursued in our seats of learning and among its students were Queen Elizabeth and the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey. Albert M. Hyamson, in his scholarly "Jews of England," notes that Elizabeth before her accession showed great interest in Tromellius, an eminent Hebrew man of letters, and on his second visit to England tried to induce him to remain in our island.

Not only was there a marked revival of learning in the 16th century, but industry and commerce made important advances. Mining, so long abandoned, was resumed and reorganised with the aid of alien ability and experience. Hochstetter who came to us on the invitation of Henry VIII, operated successfully for several years. In Elizabeth's reign, Gaunse of Prague seems to have succeeded Hochstetter in 1581, and his labours in developing England's mineral resources were so successful in Cumberland that he was commissioned to conduct mining work in South Wales. In 1589, Gaunse was in Bristol where a minister informed the authorities that the alien Jew had denied the divinity of Christ. So he was summoned before the Mayor to answer the accusation. As a Jew, he replied, he had no faith whatever in "any article of our Christian belief for that he was not brought up therein."

The case was remitted to London, but no record remains of any later proceedings. Hyamson infers that as one of Elizabeth's chief advisers, Sir Francis Walsingham, was fully cognisant of Gaunse's services to the State that he probably set him at liberty.

Houndsditch was London's foreign settlement where Jews who dealt in second-hand clothing and acted as pawnbrokers were domiciled. They were also in partnership with English traders in the Levant enterprises. Also, as most practising physicians were of foreign extraction, many were Jewish. Hyamson observes that "One, Jacob, was at the request of the Queen admitted to the College of Physicians in 1585 and subsequently sent by her to Russia to attend the Tsar."

The most distinguished doctor of Elizabeth's time was Roderigo Lopez, a Sephardic Jew, who apparently was taken prisoner by the sea dog Drake on one of his anti-Spanish voyages. Arrived in England, he soon obtained pre-eminence as a medical authority. He became the first house physician at St. Bartholomew's Hospital and was admitted as a member of the Royal College of Physicians. As practising physician and anatomical lecturer, he was highly esteemed. Walsingham and the Earl of Leicester requisitioned his services as their medical adviser and in 1536 he was appointed head physician to the Queen.

Thus favoured by the Crown, Lopez became acquainted with the leading statesmen of the day. The demise of Leicester had promoted Essex as prime favourite of Elizabeth and the ambitious Earl sought the intimate acquaintanceship of Lopez

in order to gain an inside knowledge of Spanish affairs. The physician, however, mistrusted the favourite's motives and declined his solicitations, while reporting to Elizabeth the secret communications he had received.

When Antonio Perez, the Pretender to the Portuguese throne, arrived in England he was cordially welcomed as the enemy of the detested Philip II of Spain. As Perez knew no English Lopez acted as his interpreter, while differences occurred between Essex and the physician. Meanwhile, Philip's secret service agents in England suggested the murder of Antonio. The plots and counterplots of the period are difficult to unravel, but presumably Lopez placed himself in a precarious position when he intimated that Antonio would not survive his next illness. This proved the most damaging evidence against him at his subsequent trial.

As Hyamson states: "At the same time a suggestion was made that the death of Elizabeth would also cause considerable pleasure to the Spanish King. This suggestion Lopez refused altogether to entertain and although he did not directly communicate it to the Queen or her advisers, Lopez let hints of the movement drop in Elizabeth's presence."

When the conspiracy became known, Lopez and two of Antonio's servants were arrested and the Jewish physician was sent to the Tower. Essex was bent on Lopez's ruin and searched his private papers, but without discovering any incriminating material. Elizabeth stigmatised Essex's unauthorised proceedings as those "of a rash and temerarious youth to the matter against the poor man which he could not prove." This censure so exasperated Essex that he redoubled his efforts to secure the conviction of Lopez on the charge of high treason.

The search for documentary evidence against the accused proving abortive, he was tortured on the rack into making a confession which he afterwards withdrew. The trial was immediately conducted under the presidency of Essex, Lopez's bitter enemy, while the passions of the people were unrestrained. Lopez was condemned in popular estimation before the trial took place. As Hyamson observes: "Charges of Spanish machination were always pleasing to the populace, who were thus both politically and religiously prejudiced against the prisoner. The prosecution was led by Coke, then Solicitor-General, who referred to the accused as 'that vile Jew,' 'wily and covetous mercenary,' 'corrupt,' etc. As a matter of course Lopez was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged and drawn."

The physician's enemies hoped for his immediate execution, but months rolled by and still Elizabeth failed to sign the death warrant. At last, however, on the appointment of one of Essex's supporters as Chief Justice, she was persuaded to append her signature to the fatal document. So Lopez suffered death at Tyburn in 1594, while his trial and execution aroused so much interest that five official, as well as private, reports of the proceedings appeared. One of these was composed by Francis Bacon, at that time a servitor of Essex. But although the Queen had been ultimately constrained to consent to Lopez's execution "she did not claim her right to the condemned man's property. With the exception of a ring, said to have been given to Lopez by the King of Spain, which Elizabeth wore until her death, she allowed the widow to retain all her husband's estate." This would seem to suggest that she entertained doubts concerning the validity of the trial. Three years prior to the trial of Lopez, Elizabeth manifested her freedom from the relentless religious prejudices of the period. She openly befriended a Jewess named Maria Nunes; appeared with her in public, while she and other Crypto Jews who had escaped from the Inquisition were aided in their departure to Holland, then the most tolerant of European States. Elizabeth also secured the appointment of a Jew as a Government official in Wallachia, and she corresponded with the Jewish secretary of the Turkish Sultana.

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## ACID DROPS

"I BELIEVE," says the Bishop of Chelmsford, "that the Christian faith is the true guide for every man." Quite so; he is a Bishop. He also believes that Christianity is "the only force which can enable humanity to master the difficult art of living happily and peacefully together." Quite so; he is a Christian Bishop, and none but a Christian would have the impudence to make such claims considering that the Churches have never managed to make Christians live happily and peacefully during the many centuries Christianity has been in existence. Most people would wait for others to sing the praises of Christianity. The Christian clergy praises itself—in case others should not quite see where and when Christianity has made for good feeling. For downright impudence, give us a Christian preacher.

Just at the moment the Christian Churches, following the line of others, are in agreement that war is a brutal and "wicked" thing. But that was not discovered until war became very, very dangerous to those who waged it—win or lose. Take a list of military officers, and note the large majority, until very recently, came from Christian families. A couple of centuries ago it was a very widespread practice for the ordinary member of a "family" to join the Army—as an officer—and the more foolish one to enter the Church. And even now the argument against war is not the brutality of it or the foolishness of it, but because applied science has become so dangerous that the cost has become too great to face. The Bishop should bethink himself that if Christianity had made for common sense or a decent conception of humanity, wars would have been a thing of the past. It is the cost and the futility of war as an instrument of social culture that should abolish it.

Nowadays papers from abroad reach us when they will, and we are pleased to get them. But here is an item of news which appeared in the American papers as far back as October. It appears that a woman and a Catholic priest pleaded guilty in a Californian court to being drunk while driving a motor-car. When a newspaper man called on a priest to get the spelling of names correctly he was told that "No one in California ever publishes news of that kind." Later the "News" office was visited and the paper was asked to "lay off." The "News" refused, the report finally appeared, and the priest paid a fine of 250 dollars. Later, at a meeting of a Catholic laymen's club, Monsignor Collins asked all present to boycott the paper and to inform their friends that the paper was hostile to the Catholic Church. That policy was to be kept up until the "News" recognised the power of the Church. The Archbishop also threatened that he would write a letter, to be read from every pulpit in the diocese, urging a boycott. By the end of the week every advertiser in the "News" had withdrawn his advertising.

There is, of course, nothing new in this story. It is a very ancient one, and it is operated by the other Christian Churches as well as the Roman Catholic one. In the U.S.A. it is done more openly. Those who set out to follow a political career usually keep their opinions in the background, and even profess a profound respect for a religion they hold in contempt. In small towns tradesmen are taught that it is to their financial interest to keep their mouths shut where opinions on religion are concerned, and even to attend Church will help trade. The Press arranges for regular doses of religion, but is careful to keep out news concerning the advance of Freethought. Our greatest publicity organ, the B.B.C., openly advertises that it will not broadcast any attack or considered criticism of the Christian faith. In these respects we do not differ from other countries, we are merely more hypocritical over it. Christians sing about *lying* in the arms of Jesus, but they seem adepts at lying for Jesus, whether they are resting in his arms, standing up in church, or contributing to newspapers.

The freeing of France has induced the Catholic Church to make an attempt to bring Lourdes again into the limelight. New miracles are not announced, but they will come when the Church decides that a display will be appreciated. Meanwhile we have to put up with a story of 2,000 workmen who went

to Lourdes, all of them "cynical and loud-speaking mockers." But the priesthood was ready—not with a full-dress miracle, but with some powerful speakers. Then the unbelief of the 2,000 collapsed. They went to Lourdes with "clenched fists," they left it with "joined hands." The priests had spoken and the laymen surrendered. What speakers, and what liars!

The Rev. H. S. O'Neill says he does not anticipate much difficulty in making Anglican children thorough believers in the Holy Trinity, particularly with the opportunities offered by the new Education Act.

We agree. That was one of the principal aims of the promoters of the new Act. Teaching children to believe in something that neither they nor adults understand and they can be brought to believe in anything. But it is a contemptible business, one that is well fitted to the priesthood.

We do hope, however, that the bringing of this new Act into operation will coincide with the determination of parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction. The certainty is that if children are taught from their early years to set on one side the verbal rubbish, the reaction will in most cases give the child a lesson of first, the importance of forming independent opinion, and second, encourage it to recognise the importance of working for independence of speech, without which freedom can never be affixed at its proper value. "Save the children" would not be a bad slogan.

From the beginning of his public career Hitler has said over and over again that he is one of God's chosen agents for the creation of a better world. Time nor disaster does not appear to have weakened this conviction. He repeated the conviction in his recent public speech, and we see no reason for doubting that in this matter at least he is quite sincere. He is the best working model of a religious fanatic that has ever existed since the time of the Crusades.

The Bishop of Chelmsford wants to see the creation of a General H.Q. Staff for the Church. But that is already in existence. We have three Archbishops, each with his particular staff, and we have a crowd of other officials ready to carry out orders. If these do not form a General Headquarter Staff, what does it stand for? Really, it is not a Headquarter Staff that is needed, but an increase in the quantity and quality of the rank and file. If the latter is secured it would create a demand that headquarters should act more honestly with regard to an historic creed. And if headquarters developed in that direction it would soon lose its followers. So we are afraid that Christian leaders will go on declining in quality, and they must rest themselves content with followers that steadily decrease in numbers.

We know nothing of military manoeuvres, and therefore are ready to accept the high opinion of Field Marshal Montgomery as a very able man at his work. The more the pity, therefore, that he should take advantage of his position by letting loose—apparently as Field Marshal—some very stupid remarks on religion. Addressing a number of his troops and reminding them of the successes of the Allied Armies since D-Day, he told his audience: "We must not fail to give praise and honour where it is due. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes . . ."

Now that is really first class rubbish. The victories were not the Lord's doing. They were the outcome of good planning and brave fighting, and it is an insult to both men who planned and the men who fought, to tell them that it was God's work. The Field Marshal should have bethought himself that from the day of landing in Normandy the weather—which is generally received by godites as peculiarly within God's control—has been dead against us and in favour of Germany. If God could do so much, and did so much, could he not have done a little more and brought the war to an early end instead of watching comfortably the slaughter of millions of human beings? When the Field Marshal has the time to sit down and bethink himself, he will probably decide that he would do better to stick to his job and leave theology alone.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

- A. R. LIVINGSTONE.—Good news. Will write on it in next issue.
- M. L. RUPP.—Very pleased to hear from you. It is a breath of old memories which are the more valuable as age increases.
- J. TREARS.—We are expecting more articles from the author of "Winnie Meets God."
- T. MILLAR.—"The Freethinker" has a specific purpose and it must keep to that. The vast majority of its readers are, we should say, greatly interested in political issues.
- J. B. SHIRLEY.—Thanks for compliment. But one must not shut one's eyes to the amount of good that has been done.
- L. LE. PP.—We reciprocate the good wishes expressed. Yes, it is a pity that so many are timid where plain speech on religion is concerned. It is a good comment on the effect of Christianity on character.
- MR. S. HANSON, writing from Plymouth, says there is nothing to equal the weekly dose of "The Freethinker." We are pleased, but there are a large number of people in Plymouth who ought to be taking the medicine.
- R. J. JACKSON.—It is not true that Bradlaugh took the Conservative side. He was a declared Republican and the Conservatives never forgot that. There can be little doubt that if Bernard Shaw had adopted himself as an open and declared Atheist, and had played a prominent part in its propaganda, he would have been boycotted. There have always been plenty of Atheists in the Socialist movement, but in the main they either refrained from acting as a public advocate, or they refrained from advertising the fact. Their Atheism was always kept in the background.
- T. MOSLEY.—Thanks for letter and the note on W. F. Clayton. We note that the newspaper report of the funeral does not mention his anti-Christian opinions. We have a free Press, but it does not shrink from lying by implication.
- H. STUNNACK.—Pleased to find you enjoyed Mr. Corina's article on Atheistic propaganda. It was well timed.
- BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges the following donations to the Benevolent Fund of the Society, Mr. S. Hampton, 6s.; C. Samuels, 5s.
- FOR "THE FREETHINKER."—J. O'CONNOR, £1; M. L. Rupp, 5s.

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## SUGAR PLUMS

A CONTROVERSY in the "Schoolmaster" between the Principal of Trinity College, Carmarthen and a teacher concerns the influence on teachers so long as Christianity is a necessary part of the school's essential feature. The teacher (?) who signs himself "Unbeliever" properly points out the handicap of an unbeliever in such circumstances, and the Principal replies that Christianity must be regarded as of first-class importance in a system of education. There was really no need to make that statement; it is obvious in the situation. And to retort to "Unbeliever," "The principle of greatest value is Faith in

Christ crucified and risen" and that this it is upon which "the future of human welfare depends" is just meaningless or empty gabble. It is mistaking influence for argument. But as in Trinity College, Carmarthen, no one who disavowed Christianity would be permitted to be Principal, one is justified in concluding that no one can be quite certain that the Principal even believes in what he says. When belief runs with the job there is always the possibility that those holding office are merely playing a part. Of course, it may easily be that the Principal means all he says, but no one in the circumstances can be quite sure.

The Principal winds up his letter by saying that if a man has this faith in Jesus all schools will not be closed to him. Of course they will not; they are not. Schools that are dominated with this belief in Christianity may be loaded with humbugs, and even incapables, but all may be well for them so long as they are willing to lie and play the humbug. And that, indeed, is one of the major results of the control of life by Christianity. It has placed a penalty on honesty of thought and speech and a premium upon mental cowardice and falsity. It says, both in speech and action, that if you will live a lie we will place everything at your disposal; but tell the truth, let the world know your real opinions, and you shall be harassed and shut out of the society of your fellows. The writer closes his letter by saying that "to a man without this faith (in Jesus) the schools should be closed." The Principal is at least honest in his opinions, but one pities those who are brought up under his influence.

We rather like the story about the coal merchant who, when approached by the officials of a religious establishment for an extra supply of fuel during the recent coal famine, suggested that the officials concerned should sprinkle some holy water in the empty coal place and then pray for another miracle to happen. Of course, the stock religious answer to this would be that it was just coarse ridicule, unworthy of a serious situation. But is it, really? Could there logically be a finer setting for a minor miracle than in the empty cellar of any church or convent at the present time, when fuel of any kind is holier than holy water? What an opportunity to convince the sceptics—for we are certain that, with coal as scarce as it is, such a miracle would be a super advertisement for any church that could produce it. But perhaps, after all, the little girl was quite right when she complained to her mother that it seemed that all the miracles happened before she was born.

On Sunday, February 4, Mr. F. J. Corina will deliver a lecture under the auspices of the Glasgow Secular Society in the Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street. His subject will be "The Moral Landslide." This is Mr. Corina's first visit to Glasgow and we hope to hear of a good meeting.

It is not, of course, any business of ours who it is becomes Archbishop of Canterbury. We shall have to pay our share towards the very solid salary he will receive, but that is anything but a "freewill" gift so far as the vast majority is concerned. We must not complain, for they are the shepherds of the Lord, and we may smile when they address the general public as mere sheep.

Although the B.B.C. has always protested that its religious policy is so directed as never to clash with the work of the Churches, and especially church attendance, yet it is interesting to note what the Rev. H. Dobson has to say about the matter. "I have not yet met one person," he writes to the "Church Times," "who has been brought to public worship through the radio; I know several adherents who have certainly been drawn away. This may come right in time, but the fact at the moment is as I state it." And Mr. Dobson, who evidently does not like the look of these facts, plaintively asks, "I want to know whether or not we ought to regard this new means of reaching a multitude as a God-given means of grace?" He tries to give an answer himself, but it is so uncertain that he is forced to conclude that "We live in a new age, and the Church of England had better face the truth."

## THE PENGUIN - PORPOISE WAR (With Acknowledgements to Anatole France)

CHRISTIANITY was the object of the great War that broke out recently between the Penguins and the Porpoises. Both were fighting, of course, for the Faith—although later on, heathen joined in on both sides. God was declared to be their Ally by the Penguins—and also by the Porpoises.

Considering that the belligerents were cousins by blood, you may think it remarkable how each side abused the other as being monsters of iniquity outside the pale of created beings. Perhaps the truth was that they were really alike in character and much of a muchness in their war-time behaviour. But the King-Penguin said the King-Porpoise was a gangster, while the King-Porpoise retorted upon his opposite number with the title of criminal. Both of course were fighting and destroying in order to make a better and happier world—death and destruction being, as everybody knows, the best way of improving our short span of life in this curious world. And both sides proclaimed their absolute faith in absolute victory.

The true cause of the Penguin-Porpoise war was obscure. The Penguins owned about a quarter of the land and the Porpoises complained bitterly of "encirclement." On the other hand, the Penguins complained with equal bitterness of "aggression." But both sides used the word "freedom" with greatest emphasis, and said they were fighting for that vague abstraction. The truth was, that as in most wars, greediness and combativeness and quarrelsome natures were the real causes of the war. More food and more fishing-grounds became the real objects of the war although, in sober fact, there was sufficient food in existence for both sides.

Perhaps the most wonderful work in this Great War was done by the challenging propagandists on both sides. Neither side ever "retreated": the defeated used to "withdraw according to plan." Every penguin-general and every porpoise-general declared before surrendering to "vastly superior forces" that he was going to fight "to the last man" or "the last drop of blood." Also in every fight they contested "every inch of the ground." News of casualties was suppressed by both parties, but each always said that the other's casualties were "enormous." The Penguins said that the Porpoises got their advantages by treachery and by getting their blows in first, but said also that they, the Penguins, would muddle through and win "in the end." Penguins said it was the last battle that counted. But the Porpoises boasted of their organisation and said it was their superior plans which gave them early victories and which would end the war ultimately in their favour.

The Penguins had the finest Navy in the world. The Porpoises had the finest Army in the world. Both had the finest Air-Force in the world. The morale of the civil population of the Penguins was magnificent (as every Penguin declared) while the morale of the civil Porpoise population was splendid (as every Porpoise declared). Neither could tell bigger lies than the other. So altogether the belligerents were fairly well matched.

Although both Penguins and Porpoises were entirely convinced that this was "the greatest war in history" and "the most important event that ever happened" and quite different, especially in its modernity, from every other war ever fought, it was exactly the same as all other wars. That is to say, the soldiers, sailors and airmen on both sides performed incredible miracles of heroism against the bloody, barbarous brutes on the other side; the generals, admirals and air-commanders made the usual inept blunders; the profiteers, especially the armament firms, made the usual war profits, while the Governments on both sides pretended to prevent them; and the populace displayed the usual blind partisanship and ignorance of the realities of the situation.

Great captains of the past, looking down from the Seventh Heaven upon the conflict, however, were contemptuous. Julius Cæsar thought the strategy laughable; Alexander the Great was contemptuous of the tactics; Marlborough smiled at the dispositions of the land troops, while Nelson and Drake indignantly demanded why the devil the modern sailor wanted not to be out-numbered and out-gunned, as they had been in their day. Even Queen Boadicea, talking of her war chariots, scoffed at the tank usage as uninspired, while Napoleon was cynical about the lack of speed, initiative, enterprise, displayed by generals who had every mechanical aid. However, as all these people were dead, neither penguin nor porpoise took the least notice of their bitter criticisms. Indeed, what are the dead for except to be ignored and forgotten, like the lessons of history?

The progress of the war was just like the progress of all wars. That is to say, there were deaths, wounds and mutilation; much destruction of property; some of the rich became poorer and some of the poor became richer, while some of the rich became richer and some of the poor became poorer. Finally, more people died from an epidemic due to malnutrition than from all the war operations put together! Then one side—it may have been the porpoise or it may have been the penguin—decided that it would pay better to stop the war by being defeated than by continuing until victory. Whichever side gave in first, was only just in time, for the other side was about to give in and had to have a glorious "Victory" instead of which "Victory" caused the victors to make such a vindictive peace that they nearly ruined themselves by the economic consequences of their folly.

Needless to say, by the time the war was over its object at the beginning—Christianity—was totally forgotten. The Penguins said that their aim had been to smash Porpoisism, that horrid form of militarism, while the Porpoises said they had not really been defeated in their fight for world betterment, but had been betrayed by their old Government and their new Government said so too. This satisfied both sides until they were ready to fight again.

For my part, I can only be thankful that I live not in a war between Penguins and Porpoises, but in one of the wars in which the noble human race involves itself from time to time. That kind of war fought according to true Christian principles and to the greater glory of God, of course, is a very different thing.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

## "POWER WORSHIP" AND A PROFESSOR

SPEAKING at the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society recently, Professor Polanyi, according to "The Manchester Guardian," "contended that scientific materialism had caused a widespread destruction of the sense for justice and truth by substituting for humanism a new worship of power."

While I agree that, judging from the report, there was much of value in the Professor's general appeal for a better understanding of "the humanities," I must question the soundness of his judgment in defining "scientific materialism" as one of the causes producing the present world chaos.

In the first case, the term itself is redundant, and because of its redundancy gives a completely wrong impression. Materialism is the scientific method, and the scientific method is materialism. Such a phrase is apt to confuse the uncritical mind by leading to the idea that "scientific materialism" is in some way or other a philosophy of action or a mode of political thought which has led the world astray, whereas, in fact, the scientific method, or the materialistic method, is simply a groundwork for an approach to life, in my opinion, a far better groundwork than the traditional religious or metaphysical structures upon which our existing society is built, and a groundwork which, in any case, could not be responsible for the present ills of the world.

as it has hardly, as yet, even been recognised, let alone used. I am afraid Professor Polanyi fell into the easily committed error of using a cliché because it sounded good.

But the Professor also failed to relate present events to past events in attempting to build a historical setting for the present world troubles. The "worship of Power" which he described as "new" is, in fact, one of the oldest defects of mankind. Far from being a product of materialism, or the scientific outlook, the "worship of power" has always been co-existent in human affairs with the recognition of weakness. Those who have held power have held it because of their recognition of the weakness of others; those who have respected power have done so because of a recognition of weakness in themselves.

The materialistic approach to life, far from strengthening the power of some humans over others, tends to diminish it by developing an understanding of human beings rather than a reverent and awesome respect. Just as to understand gods is to disbelieve in them, so to understand tyrants and despots is to disbelieve in them. Healthy disbelief in all assumed powers and privileges is the finest way of smashing them, and the people who possess them. That is one of the finest things about Atheism. Its disbelief in "super" creatures, whether they be gods floating in the atmosphere or Hitler's plotting at Berchtesgaden, gives men a greater respect for themselves than they can ever have while they are content to salaam and salute self-appointed dictators or self-imagined gods.

Professor Polanyi must look elsewhere for the factors responsible for "power worship." Perhaps if he examined closely the historical records of some of the world's religions, and especially Christianity, he would find more convincing evidence that "power worship" is no new thing, but is something that has been selected by the priests from the faulty side of human nature as a profitable line to be developed and traded upon. Hitler himself is no "new power worshipper." Rather is he the most recent of a miserable trail of despots who have, throughout human history, and in most branches of the human race, brought suffering to humanity because of humanity's weakness and inability to resist. Such people were never the product of the materialistic outlook. Rather were they the product of the religious outlook. History is full of precedents for this statement, as Professor Polanyi must know or ought to know.

Most of the power drunk villains who have from time to time strutted across the human stage were men either of deep religious convictions or men saturated with a pathological and pitiful religious dementia in which they imagined they had some special mission from one or other of the gods. Hitler is no exception to the general rule if we are to believe his own statements, and those of others close to him, for his "mission from God" is as real (to him) as it was to any of his predecessors.

Even the professed Atheist, Mussolini, had to renounce his early anti-religious views and go crawling to God's Own People at the Vatican before he could embark on his little piece of villainy, blessed by the General Manager at Rome.

No, Professor Polanyi, the charge against "scientific materialism" won't do at all. As a fact it is disproved; as a hypothesis it doesn't fit the facts. If I may suggest a similar redundancy, the phrase, "religious supernaturalism," would be nearer the truth.

F. J. CORINA.

**ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day.** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

**PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS,** by J. M. Wheeler. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

**THE MOTHER OF GOD,** by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.

## OBITUARY

### THE LATE MR. H. H. STEPHENSON.

Mr. Harold H. Stephenson, of Lingwell Avenue, Middleton, Leeds, a member of the National Secular Society for many years, and also of the recently formed Leeds Freethought Society, and a keen supporter of "The Freethinker," died on January 5, at his home. Mr. Stephenson was a very popular figure in Leeds Market trading circles, being head of Harold Stephenson, Ltd., Leeds. It was characteristic of his enthusiasm for the cause he loved that, far from hiding his convictions from his business associates, he often took advantage, when meeting them, to "talk a bit of sense." He was also connected with the Middleton Labour Party. He leaves a widow, and a son and daughter, to whom the sympathy of the movement will be extended. The funeral took place on January 8 at Hunslet, Leeds, a Secular service being conducted by Mr. F. J. Corina, who also represented the N.S.S. Many friends, business associates and representatives of social and civic movements were present.

### MR. FREDERIC HOEY

From the Liverpool "Daily Post" we take the following:—

"The death has taken place of Mr. Frederic Hoey, a well-known Liverpool trade union officer and magistrate. Mr. Hoey, who died at his residence, 26, Mauretania Road, has been an executive officer of the Plumbers' Glaziers' and Domestic Engineers' Union for twenty-five years and was also a member of the National Executive of the National Federation of Building Trade Operatives. He will be remembered for his active association with the Liverpool Labour Party in the days of the Liverpool Labour Representative Committee of which at one time he was secretary. He was appointed a city magistrate in 1924."

### ADDENDUM

To complete the notice it should have been said that there was a number of Liverpool trade unions represented, also a Secular service by Councillor Mrs. Braddock. On our knowledge we may add that Mr. Hoey was a Freethinker and a great admirer of this journal and its editor. We hear that the beauty and simplicity of the Secular service was generally admired. We would not like to say that the British Press is worse than others, but where religion is concerned there is nothing to beat it for implied lying.

C. C.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY.

### LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., JOHN KATZ, B.A.: "Religion, Art and Society."

### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Belfast Secular Society (Old Museum Building, College Square, Belfast).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., lecture and debate.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanic's Institute).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Brains Trust. Bring your questions.

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun, Glasgow).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. W. F. PRESTON: "Three Questions for Freethinkers."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: "Miracles and Medicine."

New Kyo (Miners Hall).—Tuesday, January 23, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: "Spiritualism."

## THE CRADLE OF CHRISTIANITY

### I.

BY what means was Christianity foisted upon the world? How did it become, in the first instance, the adopted religion of the Roman Empire? What were the devices employed in its subsequent development and expansion?

Startling to many must be the replies to these questions as supplied by the British historian, William E. H. Lecky, in his monumental two-volume work, "European Morals," published in the latter half of last century.

Lecky dismisses as groundless the notion that the Roman Empire was converted by "a system of evidences"—by the miraculous proofs of the divinity of Christianity.

Miracles—or, at any rate, the equivalent of miracles—were nothing new to the Romans. They had long permeated the creeds and cults of the Pagan world. Furthermore, there was implicit belief in them.

"Throughout the entire duration of Rome," proceeds Lecky, "it was regarded as an unquestionable truth, established by the most ample experience, that prodigies of various kinds announced every memorable event, and that sacrifices had the power of mitigating or arresting calamity.

"In the Republic, there is not an historian, from Tacitus down to the meanest writer in the Augustan history, who was not convinced that numerous prodigies foreshadowed the accession and death of every sovereign, and every great catastrophe that fell upon the people.

"Cicero could say with truth that there was not a single nation of antiquity, from the polished Greek to the rudest savage, who did not admit the existence of a real art enabling men to foretell the future, and that the splendid temples of the oracles, which for so many centuries commanded the reverence of mankind, sufficiently attested the intensity of the belief."

As bearing on the credulity that prevailed into later years and in other countries, Lecky remarks:—

"The reality of the witch miracles was established by a critical tribunal which, however imperfect, was at least the most searching then existing in the world, and by the judicial decisions of the law courts of every European country, supported by the unanimous voice of public opinion, and corroborated by the investigation of some of the ablest men during several centuries.

"The belief that the King's touch could cure scrofula flourished in the most brilliant periods of English history.

"It was unshaken by the most numerous and public experiments. It was asserted by the Privy Council, by the bishops of two religions, by the general voice of the clergy in the palmiest days of the English Church, and by the enthusiastic assent of the people. It survived the ages of the Reformation, of Bacon, of Milton, and of Hobbes. It was by no means extinct in the age of Locke, and would probably have lasted still longer had not the change of dynasty at the Revolution assisted the tardy spirit of scepticism.

"Yet there is now scarcely an educated man who will defend these miracles.

"It is extremely difficult for an ordinary man, who is little conversant with the writings of the past, and who unconsciously transfers to other ages the critical spirit of his own, to realise the fact that histories of the most grotesquely extravagant nature could, during the space of many centuries, be continually propounded without either evoking the smallest question or possessing the smallest truth."

These facts are recalled by Lecky—among the many examples he gives—in the course of his showing how fully the Roman soil was prepared for "the reception of miraculous histories," and in support of his statement that "Christianity floated into the Roman Empire on a wave of credulity."

But there was one respect in the matter of miracles in which the Roman converts differed from the Pagans. Lecky considers it is extremely doubtful whether the existence of evil spirits was known either to the Greeks or Romans till about the time of the advent of Christ. The belief was introduced with the Oriental superstitions which then poured into Rome and brought with it the notions of possession and exorcism.

"By the simple sign of the Cross or by repeating the name of their Master," says Lecky, "the Christians professed to be able to cast out devils which had resisted all the enchantments of Pagan exorcists—to compel the demons to express the truth of the Christian faith.

"Sometimes their power extended still further.

"Demons, we are told, were accustomed to enter into animals, and these also were expelled by the Christian adjuration.

"St. Jerome, in his 'Life of St. Hilarion,' has given us a graphic account of the courage with which that saint confronted, and the success with which he relieved, a possessed camel."

But the effect even of these powers, declares Lecky, may be regarded as altogether subsidiary, and the main causes of the conversion must be looked for in another and a wider sphere.

On all sides, and to a degree unparalleled in history, there were men who were no longer satisfied with their old local religion—men thirsting for belief, passionately and restlessly seeking for a new faith—and it was in the midst of this movement that Christianity gained its ascendancy.

"Above all," adds Lecky, "the doctrine of salvation by belief, which then for the first time flashed upon the world—the persuasion, realised with all the vividness of novelty, that Christianity opened out to its votaries eternal happiness, while all beyond its pale were doomed to an eternity of torture—supplied a motive of action as powerful as it is possible to conceive. The polytheist, admitting that Christianity might possibly be true, was led by a mere calculation of prudence to embrace it, and the fervent Christian would shrink from suffering to draw those whom he loved within its pale. Nor were other inducements wanting." J. Y. ANDERONEY.

### PRINCIPLES AND PREJUDICES

His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge ("Umbrella George") Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, proclaimed that: "Any change, at any time, anywhere, for any purpose is highly to be deprecated."

His Royal Highness had bestowed upon him the title of "Umbrella George" on account of the fact that at a Military Review he appeared on horseback with an umbrella as it was raining. The Royal Duke's intention and purpose appear to have been entirely misunderstood. The use of the umbrella was to protect the horse. Such High Royal Purpose is rare.

R.S.P.C.A.

### ISRAEL IN TUDOR TIMES

(Concluded from Page 23)

Among many eminent Jews of Tudor times was the Director of Prince Henry of Portugal's School of Navigation. Zacuto, another Hebrew, constructed the astronomical tables used by Columbus and a Jew financed that famous navigator's first voyage. Columbus's map was drawn by a Jew; his ship's doctor and superintendent and his interpreter were also Jewish. English explorers, however, were little indebted to Jews, but in the earliest expedition of the East India Company a Jew officiated as interpreter.

During the Stuart period, Jews played their part in the evolution of industry and commerce and Charles I availed himself of their services in financing his Government. Also, a Jew in 1650 established a coffee house in Oxford and he seems to have been the first to introduce that estimable beverage into our island home.

T. F. PALMER.