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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Man and Gods

IT IS an old observation that deposed kings make poor subjects. A man who has held the position of supreme power by divine right cannot be expected to sink gracefully into the position of a mere subject—of no greater importance than the people around him. He will never realise that the people were justified in their revolution, and so long as he is in the country he formerly ruled, he will remain a centre of dissatisfaction. For this reason, dethroned monarchs have nearly always been banished the country—or existence. This course was usually safest for the people, and it may well be the most difficult for the ex-monarch. It would spare him even the appearance of passive acquiescence in his own degradation.

If people were as logical with their gods as with their dethroned kings, religion would cause little trouble in a civilised country. The policy pursued, however, is of quite another order. The gods are dethroned in fact, but they are perpetuated in theory. Their civil list remains a colossal charge on the nation, although few pretend that they now discharge the functions for which they were originally subsidised. The control of physical nature has been taken completely out of their hands, and only ignorance or mendacity attributes anything to their agency. Religious leaders spend part of their time proving to their fellows how little God does. They point out the absurdity of expecting God to give a direct answer to prayer, or to interfere with the settled order of nature. Christians imprison men whose only offence is to believe that God will cure disease without the assistance of a doctor. In a score of different ways they admit that God does nothing—except

exist. There's the rub: God apparently does nothing but exist, although his existence being in any case an inference, it is hard to see how the conclusion is reached. Still, God they say, exists and although believers submit to his dethronement in the natural world, they tax their ingenuity to the utmost for reasons why he should go on existing. Having adopted the Lucretian conclusion that "Nature does all things of herself and without the aid of the gods," one would imagine that the concern of sensible men with them would end; for between a god who does nothing and a god who does not exist, the practical difference is nil. A god who speaks to mankind through health and disease, through sunshine and storm, and on whose activity the course of nature and human welfare depends, is a god whom no man can afford to ignore. But a god who does nothing, who *may* have created nature, but having created it does nothing else, is not a fruitful subject for speculation. Whenever things happen, they do so because it is in the nature of things that they should

happen. On this, educated believers and unbelievers are at one. But admitting this, why all the bother about "God's will" or "God's plan." All we can know must be known by a study of natural forces. These affect all alike, and the Atheist not unreasonably concludes that in that case our practical interest stops altogether this side of deity. God may have some interest in finding out about Man, but Man can have no vital interest in finding God. As a mere matter of fact, large numbers of gods have dropped into nothingness because Man has lost all interest concerning them.

Now I suggest that we should do with our gods as people have done with their kings. To state fact instead of metaphor; having decided that events may be explained as due to the operation of natural forces, we should put the idea of God on one side, as we have already done with the *fact* of God. Unfortunately, instead of this logical course being followed, we find people devoting their energies to discovering means and ways in which the idea of God can still be put to an apparently useful purpose. Today, believers of the cruder kind have ceased to attribute earthquakes, or comets, or the development of worlds, as due to God, but they seem inclined to find a use for him—or it—in the department of meteorology. As though a deity that once lorded over the birth and death of planetary systems could ever be content with the trivial control of the weather. Others, with a more philosophical air, dismiss God from the known universe altogether, and rediscover him in some utterly unknown and incomprehensible beyond. Really, these declared defenders of God appear to desire to act with God as we should if we dethroned the reigning King of England, and, by way of compensation, offered him the post of door keeper to the House of Commons.

There are others, much beloved by the B.B.C., who solemnly declare that we cannot rest unless something in the nature of a deity is forthcoming. On analysis, this turns out to be no more than that our knowledge is inadequate to tell us all we should like to know, and that our wildest generalisations leave us face to face with an unexplained residuum. No one is more conscious of this than they who have dismissed the idea of God from their minds as a mere stream of words, but they decline to admit that ignorance is a safe basis on which to build an assertion. That we cannot explain is an excellent reason for further search; it is an unanswerable argument in favour of silence; it is no argument in favour of belief. Besides, people are not, in a practical world, conscious of any such perplexity. The difficulty is a metaphysical one. In practical life, people see that scientific research works in a quite dependable manner. They also see that even though it were theologically true, the assumption of a god is of no practical value. Belief in God without a knowledge of natural forces is of no use to anyone. Given a knowledge of natural forces, a man loses nothing by being without a belief in



God. The belief in a deity neither adds to or detracts from our capacity for knowing, or even the value of our knowledge. At most, belief in a god is just a decoration.

This truth is hidden from many because of the vague talk current about gods and the like. Belief in god is psychologically interesting, but so, for that matter, are the visions of a drunkard, or the ravings of a lunatic. In fact, all states of mind are interesting and instructive. The visions that are seen by overaged saints also have their value, but nothing more.

This truth is hidden from many because of the constant use of "God" and the like. It is psychologically interesting to notice the change in people's demeanour and voice when "God" is mentioned. The face lengthens and the voice drops. The critical powers are put to sleep, the common sense that is allowed to rule in other directions is held in abeyance. Consider the once famous stories of defying God to strike a man dead in a few minutes. It was cheap heroism. The Atheist knew there was no God to kill him. He risked nothing at all. The old Greek story, from which the Christian tale was taken, had dignity. The Christian version was just childlike nonsense. It had neither dignity nor reason.

If the subject of deity were of first-rate importance, it would still be unnecessary to approach it in a spirit of mental abnegation. The more important the topic, the greater the need to keep our faculties on the alert for error, and to be on our guard against self-deception. But in sober truth the question of God has no great importance in itself. In science, an Atheist does not come to his conclusions because he does not believe in a God, and a Theist does not find himself helped by his superstition. The commercial man, the man of letters, the man of the world—other things being equal—finds himself not at all incommoded by not having a belief in God. Belief has never prevented a fool exercising his folly, it has only advertised his want of clear thinking. Newton, the mathematician, gained no help from the Newton who wrote in defence of Prophecies. Darwin, the Agnostic, would not have written a better account of the origin of species had he been a devout visitor to a church.

A despairing attempt to find some use for a God is made by those who seek to identify belief with faith in an ideal. Well, we suppose all of us have ideals of some kind. Even the habitual drunkard waiting for a big "swig," has his ideal. Is that what any man has ever meant by "God"? Does anyone mean that today? When people talk about God creating, or helping, do they mean no more than the realising of an ideal? The absurdity of the plea seems to be an apology by men who have enough brains to see the weakness of the belief in God but have not enough strength to cut themselves free from this very ancient superstition. At its very lowest the belief in God means the belief in a person. It means that also at its highest. The fashionable theological talk about the "Immanence" of God is really no more than a fog of words which some people raise to prevent themselves seeing the outlines of their own position. The only intelligible God, the only possible God, is a personal God; and a personal God is precisely the kind of Deity that modern thought pronounces an impossibility.

Years ago, Emerson called theological doctrines the "Soul's" mumps and measles and whooping cough. Emerson had a medical training and therefore knew more

about human nature than most persons. He said that a simple mind, one that had not been distorted by training, would know nothing of these diseases. Unfortunately, few of us are permitted to grow up the possessors of a simple mind. Our training from infancy to maturity and the power of social forces from maturity to the grave, lead us to place things first that should come last, and emphasise as of the greatest importance things that are of very small consequence indeed.

Apart from these inculcated notions, I am convinced that no one would imagine today that the question of God had any value whatever. Atheists certainly get on without any such belief, and most believers act as though God has no real value to them. Yet neither Atheist nor professional Theist could go on in this way without being penalised—not, of course, by law—if the belief in God carried any real individual or social value. If you live over bad drains, or breathe impure air, or practise vicious habits of living, you are reminded of your faults by the price you have to pay. Real facts cannot be ignored. They must be reckoned with sooner or later. But we can, and do, ignore the belief in God; and no one can show that we are the worse for so doing. Belief in God is only necessary to those who persuade themselves that they will suffer without God, and in keeping on good terms with "whatever gods there be." Gods are really like kings—they are what they are because of the fancies of one group of people. Those who put either or both aside are none the worse for doing so. Dis-

believe in a god and you have signed his death warrant.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## ENGLAND'S OLDEST TEXTILE INDUSTRY

RIGHT down to the eighteenth century the woollen industry retained its renown as our realm's leading trade, until it was superseded by its competitor, cotton, during the Industrial Revolution. During the struggle for supremacy, the woollen workers insisted on the superiority of goods manufactured from the wool of English sheep, when compared with cotton fabrics whose raw material was imported from abroad. But the woollen interests fought a losing battle with their rapidly growing rival. Yet, the many commodities still dependent on wool retain for that industry a prominent position in the textile domain even now.

For long centuries the export of wool was forbidden, but in 1780 the wool growers agitated for the repeal of the legislation prohibiting exportation, as the home market could not absorb all the fleeces of their flocks. This, the manufacturers opposed, and they succeeded in inducing Parliament to impose even stricter penalties on exporters of home-grown wool. But in 1823 a duty of sixpence per pound was imposed on foreign wool, the Government offering to repeal the tax on foreign wool if restrictions on export of native wool were removed. Consequently, over the Hammonds in their work, "The Skilled Labourer," 1760-1832: "Thanks to divisions in the ranks of the manufacturers . . . an Act was passed in 1824 which allowed the export of British and the import of foreign wool for a duty of 1d. a pound in each case: a measure which ended the long conflict, and, contrary to expectations, had no evil effects on the worsted trade."

During the period under discussion, the centre of the woollen industry drifted from the clothing districts of Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, and from the worsted regions of East Anglia and Essex, to the West Riding of Yorkshire. Thus, Yorks waxed while her South-Western and South-Eastern rivals waned.



These, however, were the leading centres of the woollen trade only, for woollen fabrics were manufactured in almost every county in the kingdom. For in days when inter-communication was difficult and the interchange of commodities costly, each district was largely dependent on home-made goods, which included clothing.

The woollen commodities consisted of cloth and worsted materials. For the production of cloth, a wool of short staple was utilised, while long wool served in the worsted trade. Both fabrics "were spun and then woven, but after woollen cloth was woven it passed through additional processes unnecessary in the case of worsted goods."

To this day much of the finest quality cloth is made in the South-Western counties, but more than a century since, the Yorkshire towns of Huddersfield and Leeds became the leading centres of the woollen industry.

The apex of prosperity of the South-Western clothiers was reached about 1817, when it commenced to decline. The inferior fabrics then became more and more centred in the West Riding, and with the later introduction of steam power in the factories, Yorks firmly established its priority in manufacture.

Not that the woollen industry was new in Yorks, for that great county had possessed a prosperous cloth trade for centuries. Unlike the opulent cloth-makers in the South-West, the Yorkshire cloth producer was usually a domestic manufacturer on a small scale and, for some time, despite the greater use of machinery and the growth of the factory system, these small men increased in number. Indeed, this minor domestic system lingered long, but finally succumbed to the employment of power looms on an extensive scale in the nineteenth century. But while it lasted, Baines assures us in his "Yorkshire Past and Present" that the minor manufacturers "combined to establish joint stock mills, where each shareholder takes his own wool, and has it cleaned, carded, dyed and spun: then, taking the warp or weft to his own house or workshop, he has it woven by the handloom, often by members of his own family."

Norwich was the centre of the worsted trade until the middle of the eighteenth century when her prosperity reached its zenith. Her merchant manufacturers were the wealthiest men in the city and it is stated that, "Their travellers penetrated through Europe, and their pattern cards were exhibited in every principal town, from the frozen plains of Moscow to the milder climes of Lisbon, Seville and Naples."

But while between 1750-60 the trade in Norwich was flourishing, the worsted industry was fast increasing in Yorkshire where husbandmen either carried on their farming side by side with the new employment or abandoned agriculture altogether in the interests of the textile industry.

The American War of Independence created a deep depression in the woollen trades and, when it ended, Norwich never regained her old position, while in Yorkshire the worsted and woollens became more prosperous than before. Yet, "till 1818, Norwich retained the monopoly of fine stuffs, and still employed about 10,000 looms."

It is noteworthy that Yorkshire possessed overwhelming advantages when capturing the trade of Norwich. As the Hammonds indicate: "The streams of numerous small valleys supplied water power for machinery, and when the age of the steam engine came, coal and iron were close at hand. The rivers and streams helped also the creation of a canal system for the transit of goods. Hence it is more than doubtful whether Norfolk could have held her own however eagerly she had adopted every new invention. As it was, her merchant manufacturers would not take the risk of introducing machinery among a hostile population who feared that their livelihood would be taken from them." Instead, Norwich, turning her attention to the production of novel mixtures of silk and wool such as crepe and poplin, found new markets, but no sooner had these novelties become profitable than Yorkshire proceeded to produce them

and by underselling their originators compelled them to enter into other enterprises.

Also, Yorks had long sent her worsteds to Norwich, Coventry, London, and other cities to be dyed, and her commodities were shipped from London to the Continent. Now, woollens and worsteds were dyed in Yorkshire, and Hull and Liverpool largely succeeded London as her shipping ports.

Although every branch of the cotton and woollen industries was revolutionised by the invention and installation of machinery in the mills and factories during the Industrial developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, perhaps the spinner's art underwent the most striking transformation. This commenced as cottage labour conducted by women and children working their distaff or spinning wheel, while it ends as a factory occupation driven by power with men and children to attend to the machine's requirements. Usually, the family spun its own wool and conveyed it to the rural weaver to be woven. In some places this method survived until the close of the 18th century. But by 1760, spinning was mainly the speciality of women and children in districts adjoining the chief centres of commerce.

James in his "History of the Worsted Manufacture" tells us that, "The wool after being combed was sent out by travellers in tilted carts who left it with the spinners on one journey, and took back the yarn, paying the amount of spinning, at the next."

The introduction of machinery, whatever its ultimate benefits, at the time led to widespread misery among the poor. It is true that the evils arising were not universal, but the riots and strikes of the period sufficiently testify to the sufferings endured in all departments of the industry. Eden, a reliable witness, presents a mournful picture of the consequences of the use of machinery in a Wiltshire village near the clothing town of Melksham. "As the chapelry," he avers, "consists almost entirely of dairy farms, and therefore affords little employment in husbandry, except during the hay-harvest, the labouring poor are very dependent on the neighbouring towns, where the cloth manufacture is carried on; but, unfortunately, since the introduction of machinery . . . hand-spinning has fallen into disuse, and for these two reasons the clothier no longer depends on the poor for the yarn which they formerly spun for him at their own homes, as he finds that 50 persons (to speak within compass), with the help of machines, will do as much work as 500 without them; and the poor, from the great reduction in the price of spinning, scarcely have the heart to earn the little that is obtained by it."

That the endless disputes between masters and men antedated the Industrial Revolution is instanced by a ballad dating from the 17th century, one verse of which runs as follows:—

We'll make the poor Weavers work at a low rate;  
We'll find fault where there's no fault, and so will we bate;  
If trading goes dead, we will presently show it;  
But if it grows good, they shall never know it:  
We'll tell them that cloth beyond sea will not go,  
We care not whether we keep clothing or no.  
Chorus: And this is the way to fill up our purse,  
Although we do get it with many a curse.

T. F. PALMER.

## "THE FIFTH MONARCHY"—THE THEOCENTRIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

(Continued from page 91)

IN the Old Testament "Book of Daniel" we find this statement:—

"Four great beasts came up from the sea," (cp. Daniel, chap. 7, v. 3.)

A terrifying description follows, and an angel informs the inquiring prophet:—

"These great beasts, which are four, are four Kingdoms, which shall arise out of the earth." (cp. Daniel, chap. 7, v. 17.)



That is to say, the four empires which prior to the time when Daniel was written (from internal evidence, about 164 B.C.), had dominated the Oriental world with which the writer was alone acquainted: successively, the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Macedonian empires. (N.B.: Biblical quotations from Latin Vulgate.)

The "Book of Daniel" had a profound influence upon later Jewish and early Christian thought. It became axiomatic that the history of the world was to be divided into four successive epochs corresponding to the four "universal" monarchies mentioned above. With the rise of the Roman Empire subsequent to "Daniel," some modification had to be made in this scheme in order to preserve the traditional number. Early Christian exegesis got round this numerical difficulty by the obvious device of, so to speak, amalgamating the two Mesopotamian empires, Assyria and Babylon. Thus amended, the historic sequence ran as follows:—

1. Assyria-Babylon.
2. Persia.
3. Macedonia.
4. Rome.

These four dominant empires in their totality make up the eras of world-history as known to the Jews and to their early Christian successors. (N.B.: The "Holy Roman Empire"—A.D. 800-1806—was supposed to be the continuation of the Roman Empire down to the 17th century.)

Thus far the "inspired" chronology of "Daniel." But except for some rather vague visions at the end of his prophecy, "Daniel" does not afford much information about the future: his chronology, making allowance for the elaborate symbolism in which he clothed his visions, is sufficiently precise. But his eschatology is vague and inconclusive. He does not tell us whether his "four Monarchies" will, in time, be succeeded by a "Fifth Monarchy."

This last information is given in terrifying detail by a later "inspired" writer; this time, a Jewish-Christian writer, traditionally identified with the Apostle John, who in the New Testament "Apocalypse" ("Book of Revelations"), written under the early Roman Empire soon after the death of Nero (A.D. 68), took up the sequence where "Daniel" had left it. We may add that, for Christianity, "John" as an apostle of the Messiah, had an even greater authority than "Daniel."

In Chapter 20 of "John's" mysterious work we are told:—

"And I saw an angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the Dragon, that great Serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him unto the Bottomless Pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw Thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the worship of God, and which had not worshipped the Beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark on their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." (cp. Rev. 20, vv. 1-5.)

To the logical Christian, to whom both Old and New Testaments were equally inspired, including both the apocalyptic writers, "John" and "Daniel," the chronology of world-history was now authoritatively established by divine revelation. There were now Five Universal Monarchies, which themselves corresponded to the Five Ages of the World; four already enumerated—in the Past—and one in the Future: the monarchy of the Messiah, which would endure for a thousand years, and which constituted the era of "The First Resurrection." (cp. Rev.,

chap. 20, vv. 5-7): "This is the First Resurrection. Blessed is he who has part in this first resurrection; over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and shall reign with him for a thousand years."

Such was the doctrine of Millenarianism or Chiliasm (from the Greek for 1,000), a theocentric interpretation of history, by no means lacking in cosmic sweep and imaginative grandeur, which the Christian Church has never officially disowned—how, indeed, could it when the Bible teaches it so clearly? But which—in deference to its own longevity!—it has tended to ignore in practice. Here, as so often, it was among the heretical sects that this authentic primitive Christian belief was retained. In particular, by the millenarian sects of the Protestant Reformation, to whom, having discarded the traditions of the Church as an authoritative source, the Bible, verbally inspired and literally interpreted, represented the sole authoritative source of religious belief.

And, we may add, it cannot be disputed that the doctrine of the "Fifth Monarchy," of the physical "Second Coming" of the Messiah and his millennial reign, was far nearer to both the spirit and letter of primitive Christianity than was either the Catholic or Protestant orthodoxy. It is not the only example in history of a doctrine that becomes "heretical" merely by standing still!

One can add that the millenarian doctrine was social no less than eschatological in its effects. For in the Kingdom of the Messiah communism is taken for granted: the heaven revealed in the Apocalypse is a classless equalitarian heaven. It is, indeed, for this reason that the Apocalypse has always played such a tremendous role in the social movements of the pre-scientific age (i.e. prior to the French Revolution), from the 4th century Donatists up to the English partisans of the "Fifth Monarchy" in the mid-17th century. So much so, in fact, that one can accurately describe the "Revelation" of John as a Communist Manifesto of the Utopian Age.

The Doctrine of the "Fifth Monarchy" of "King Christ" was thus both an eschatological and a social gospel. And it was also a revolutionary gospel. For what would happen if its devotees attempted to accelerate its coming by the destruction of the powers that be? For the Messiah, who, in the days of the Apocalypse, had overthrown the Roman Empire on the mystic field of "Armageddon" (cp. Rev., chap. 16, v. 16), would similarly have to contend with the new powers now released by the dawning capitalist age.

It was precisely this that the "Fifth Monarchy Men" attempted to achieve under the leadership of Harrison and Vaneer in, respectively, 1657 and 1661. And it was this social role that accordingly, constituted them as the "extreme left" of the English Revolution.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(To be continued)

## MY WORD

### I

AMONG sceptics it is a matter of scoffing comment how un-Christian these Christians are. A read through the four gospels noting the injunctions of Jesus Christ confirms this gibe.

One is reminded of the anecdote in "Obiter Dicta" of Augustine Birrell. A sea captain presented a savage chief with a dress suit. Next time he went ashore the captain beheld an amazing spectacle. Not thinking it possible for one man to carry so much clothing the dusky warriors had shared. One wore a shirt, another a collar, a third the trousers, and so on with each article of apparel, the chief crowned with dignity in a silk hat.

So the christians with their Lord's commands. Consider a few of them separately.



Starting at the fifth chapter of Matthew, the popularly called sermon on the mount, all the beatitudes seem reversed in practice. The poor in spirit are trodden underfoot, mourners have only the consolation which comes with the deadening effects of time passing; the weak have taken from them what little they had; the righteous suffer injustice; the merciful receive ingratitude; the pure are bespattered with dirt; the persecuted have but the satisfaction of pain and torment.

Peacemakers especially are cursed; individual ones suppressed. The Anglican Church goes so far as to say in Article thirty-seven "It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the magistrates, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars."

This regardless of Christ's statement: For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

The beatitudes are promises—unfulfilled. Equally remarkable are the direct commands of Christ disobeyed.

II

In the same code we are ordered: Swear not at all. So the oath is administered in every law court, and on many other occasions.

Farther on we are told: Resist not evil. Contrary to that all Christian countries have huge organisations of law and police specialised to resist evil. Further, we are informed that the many wars in which we have engaged were for the purpose of resisting evil; the League of Nations was created for that, and the resisting of evil is to be the main aim of the naval, military and air forces of the great Powers in the future, presumably through U.N.O.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. So benefactions are published in newspapers and in reports and balance sheets of charitable societies. One suspects the amount given would be much less were Christ's enjoinder of secrecy observed.

Similarly with praying. It is to be as secret as alms-giving, practised in the solitude of a closed room. All the religious bodies gather in crowds to pray; do so aloud and publicly, often advertising such assemblies. Wherever possible they introduce prayers into secular meetings for more publicity. A development of secret prayer is the 1944 Education Act compelling prayers to be said at the opening of all state schools. Thus is when ye pray, pray in secret, honoured.

Also: Use not vain repetitions. To see how much this is obeyed one has only to read Church services, particularly litanies, which are turgid with repetition.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. Wordsworth may protest

"Getting and spending we lay waste our powers,"

but that is the chief occupation of most men, especially the getting. For that we have banks and savings movements, stock exchanges and all the vast complex paraphernalia of a financial and economic system whose basis is accumulation of wealth.

Linked with it is: Take no thought for your life. Take no thought for the morrow. In pursuance of that we have huge Insurance and Friendly and Co-operative Societies, pension schemes and ever-expanding plans for social security, built upon detailed accountancy, whose aim is to guard against future eventualities. If we stopped taking thought for the morrow we should soon cease to live.

Judge not that ye be not judged: cuts right across all practices of civilised life. Few are the individuals who do not feel justified in criticising or censuring their fellows. Publicly we have a legal system based upon judgment of those who depart from the accepted norm of conduct. Never is there a lack of men and women to fill the offices of judges and magistrates and other posts in the intricate processes of judging.

That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven is openly disregarded. Not only by laity but nearly as much by priesthood. Benefices and other high positions in churches are

eagerly sought by priests and presbyters, parsons and pastors. one one of whom will cheerfully flout Christ's teaching of the virtues of poverty to take a bishopric at thousands a year.

Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another she committeth adultery.

Nevertheless in nearly every country there are divorce laws enabling husband or wife to put away the other and marry again.

A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another. For the greater part of the last two millenniums hate has been the distinguishing feature in the attitude of European nations and communities toward each other and the remainder of the world. Hatred persists as one of the most potent driving forces in human affairs.

III

These are some of the outstanding examples. There are many others. Those who take the trouble to read the Gospels will find them declared unconditionally. The full passages do nothing to soften them. Rather, many are emphasised by the context, often repeated in varying forms but the same meaning to give them greater solemnity and weight.

To present its full noteworthy I have left one of the most striking till last. In Matthew, chapter twenty-three, verse nine, Jesus Christ is reported as saying: Call no man your father upon the earth.

The two largest Christian Churches, the Roman and Greek, call their priests Fathers. The Anglican has a hankering that way. Chaplains love it in its Spanish form Padre.

Call no man your father upon the earth: One may leave it to the Churches and their members calling themselves Christians to escape or gloss over the implications of that.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

THE AGNOSTIC'S REPLY

The man who says there is no God, declares  
With great contempt: "You haven't got the guts  
To own there's nothing for you after death,  
Religion's just a superstitious farce."

What is this knowledge that he claims to have?  
Let him explain the mystery of life  
Or this vast universe with final proof!  
The least a man can have are sceptic views.

The man who has a God to whom he prays,  
With pitying eyes tells of my empty life;  
He trusts, adores, explains why things are so,  
And puts the thoughts of God in carnal words.

A phantom instinct tells him all these things;  
For what he cannot understand he finds  
The explanation that most satisfies.  
All other creeds but his he knows are wrong.

An empty life! Untouched by narrow creed  
I have the stars, the seas, the birds and flowers,  
Accept their glory, marvel that they are,  
Without the hopeless search of knowing why.

F. L. MAYELL.

TWO CAMPS

There are now but two camps: the camp of reaction and anarchy, which acknowledges more or less distinctly the direction of God: the camp of construction and progress, which is wholly devoted to Humanity.—COMTE.



## ACID DROPS

If one wishes to play a really despicable part, the best way is to get hold of a Christian priest and account for the failures of himself and his Church. Here is the Archdeacon of Halifax, who is reported in the "Yorkshire Observer" as saying that to-day children fall into three categories. Those from the Christian home, those from the broken home, and those from the house that can never be called a home.

That is the most contemptible, the most obvious mass of villainous lying that we have come across. There is, of course, nothing in eminent Christian preachers telling a lie about those who are not supporters of the Church, and to lie for the greater glory has been a Christian practice since the days Christianity was born. But we hardly expected to find an Archdeacon stoop to the low level reached by the Archdeacon of Halifax. Freethinkers are so common to-day that a lie of the kind quoted does not need a set disproof. We would only say that while the Archdeacon is what he is, he is following one of the oldest plans of the Christian Churches. Really we are tempted to open a class on "How to become a plausible liar for the greater glory of God and the security of highly-placed preachers." It would, we are sure, catch on.

Another preacher who deserves a rap on the knuckles is Dr. Donald Soper, Minister of the Methodist Central Hall. He is quite as wrong as the other preacher, but he is rather more careful in his language. He is content to say that things are not as they should be, people do stay away from Church, etc., and therefore we hear of all sorts of ill-dealings consequent upon non-attendance at Church and the growth of Freethinking. But he must have great faith in the readiness of his fellows to swallow anything, or he would reflect that for many generations the churches ruled the roost, and controlled what there was of education, and there has been a perfect army of ordained preachers to develop a decent body of people. Naturally, a war such as we have gone through will account for much. But it is also obvious that when tested the churches of all denominations were not merely unable to prevent the war, but have been quite unable to check the evil things that wars always develop. Now we have given a very polite judgment on the Christian. We wonder whether he would have the honesty and courage to explain the situation. If he has courage enough, these pages are open to him. He will be talking to people that matter.

A writer in the Sheffield "Weekly Telegraph" is very much upset by the small church attendance. We quite appreciate the feelings of this man, but the clergy feel it more. To them it is a matter of life or death, to the layman he is only short of what one may call a method of intellectual dissipation. The real position is, in an open field the Church was seldom able to hold its own in any society that could claim to be developing on its own value. Christianity came originally because it suited the pagan ruler of Rome to use the church as a bulwark against his pagan enemies. Ultimately the church gained the upper hand, and history knows the eight centuries of the Christian rule as the "Dark Ages." The science and culture of the ancient world almost died out, and culture was developed by a return to civilisation by the revival of the old pagan culture, backed by the intellectual contributions of Mohammedan science. The eleventh century marked the beginnings of a new world, to which Christianity gave, substantially, nothing.

And now a disappointed friend of the Church—Mr. Lesley Richards, thinks that the Church would regain power if it were to provide a new prayer book. He says that girls of fifteen laugh at what is presented to them in the Prayer Book, and that, with planning to catch the children a revival might follow. But the Prayer Book as it stands is so far honest that in its present form it does give us a glimpse of what Christians did really believe up to the end of the sixteenth century. But Mr. Richards must have but a poor idea of the situation if he believes that Christianity can be restored by changing the language and the speech of the Prayer Book. Elementary science is now within reach of the young. It is indeed part of their instruction,

and they are not likely to be fooled in the way Mr. Richards suggests. Again to quote, "You may fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time." The modern youth, if not a genius, is wide awake.

The "Daily Express," with an eye to religious news to be envied, reported the other day that at Melbourne recently 1,200 people packed the Pentecostal Church to hear six-year-old Renee Martz preach an hour's sermon, sing in several languages (all perfect, of course!), and lead the hymn-singing with a trumpet. We are not surprised. Most of the stuff which pours from pulpits just reaches the intelligence of a six-year-old—though we must confess the spectacle of a child imploring grown-ups never to "sin" again, but repent before making peace with God, must have been particularly impressive. Still, the only way to swallow the Christian tale is to come before it humbly as a little babe.

Twenty-two thousand pounds was recently paid for a copy of the famous Gutenberg Bible—a record price! It is not surprising to find that some people imagine that its value lies in its contents from a religious point of view. Alas! we must disabuse these good folk. The volume is a marvellous product of the earliest printing from movable type, and its great value lies in its art as an example of the rare beauty of a printed page. From the theological point of view its value is—just nil.

Mr. Collie Knox writes the following in the "Daily Mail":  
"We like to know how the rest of the world lives. Radio tells us. We like to know what the rest of the world believes. Radio apparently dare not tell us. I am, I hope, a Christian, but I found during my years in the East much that was good and helpful. Is the Christian Church so unsure of itself that it fears to throw open the radio to discussions and views on all beliefs?"

The answer to this is that soon after the B.B.C. was established it fell into the hands of a few leading bigots who said distinctly that it would not permit any discussions of the Christian religion, and they took the more ignorant and cowardly of Christian leaders and said they should set the pace wherever the Christian religion was brought forward. It is one of the disgraceful methods that can live only when freedom of speech is kept out of sight.

The following is not in its nature American, for America is not specifically American where religion is made as ridiculous by speech as it is by act. Thus, a ship was in great trouble off an English coast. The ship appeared to be sinking and the skipper signalled good-bye to his wife. But the American paper tells the world that the ship did not sink, but it was God's grace that saved the skipper and his crew. All we can say is that God must be a rare showman to arrange everything as it happened so as to get more worshipping. The moral is that the Christian God has a rare taste for advertising.

From a special article in the "Yorkshire Evening Post" we gather that "Atheism is hateful in that it deprives human nature of the means to exert itself against human frailty." That is the kind of unmistakable idiocy that passes for religion as a celestial wisdom and fatherhood. It is a mixture of lying, stupidity and sheer cowardice. We have a heavenly father and his chief concern is to see that his children grovel before him and praise him for his greatness. Why, if a parent on earth neglected his children and permitted them to contract diseases, lack sufficient food and injure others he would be pulled before a Court and properly sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The writer of the passage given is Mr. Frank Martin. We have the slightest doubt that Mr. Martin is a much better man than this heavenly father.

The Rev. J. S. Clarke, Plymouth, has, in his Parish Magazine, provided tips for the Grand National. He says the three that will be Lovely Cottage, Jack Finlay and Prince Regent. That is excellent; and if the preacher's tips come off, and if he can keep up his God-sent instruction, no Church in existence will be able to accommodate the pious and the impious.



# "THE FREETHINKER"

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London, W.C. 1.

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**W. THURGOOD.**—Thanks for paper. It will serve well as an opening discussion.

**C. R. MULLER.**—Thanks for article. It shall appear as soon as possible. We appreciate your high opinion of "The Freethinker." May we say, without being impudent, that "The Freethinker" has always stood distinctively alone. We have been contributing to its columns for over fifty years. We are not looking for some wildeat development, but the growth of Atheism looks like being more rapid.

**R.W.**—Places of worship are, in given circumstances, freed from rates and taxes. That, of course, covers the Church of England. Take the value of all Churches and chapels, if they were taxed, and you have some idea of the gifts to all religious buildings.

**M. PINNUS.**—Quite well done, but not in our line. We think that human qualities are good enough by themselves, without appeals to gods of any kind.

**WILMOT, Hastings.**—We aim at being liberal and so must allow some things with which we are *not* in agreement.

For "The Freethinker": Mr. Helps (Hants.), £9; Mr. H. Lupton (Greenford), £1.

**Benevolent Fund N.S.S.**—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of £1 from Mr. H. A. Lupton.

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.*

*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.*

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

*Lecture notices must reach 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.*

## SUGAR PLUMS

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held at Newcastle-on-Tyne during the Whitsun week-end. There will be a reception of delegates and friends on the Saturday evening, May 24, and business sessions on Sunday morning and afternoon, with a public demonstration in the evening. Members only can attend the business meetings and the current card of membership will be necessary for admission. They can speak, vote, and remit resolutions for the agenda, but the resolutions must reach the head office by April 5. Details for hotel accommodation required should also be sent in as soon as possible. The local arrangements are being carried out by the Newcastle Branch N.S.S., under the capable and energetic leadership of Mr. J. T. Brighton, and we can rely upon that part being satisfactory. Further information next week.

Our readers will be interested to know that Mr. Chapman Cohen has received an invitation to debate with the Rev. Gordon Rupp of Cambridge on "Is Christianity a Social Necessity?" The discussion is connected with the Christian Commandoes and will take place in the Church Hall of the Grange Park Congregational Church, Grange Park Road, Leyton, London, E., on Wednesday, April 16, at 7-30 p.m.

We have always insisted from the first moment that Hitler came to the world that he was profoundly religious, with a strong belief that he was an agent of God. That is fully proved by the book "Der Fuehrer," published by Victor Gollancz in 1944, and also that he was accepted by large bodies of people as such. Nothing has occurred to induce us to change our opinion. Cruelty to those who offend the representative of God's agent is very old, and by a glance at Christian history the reader will always find that the greatest sin that one could commit was to attack or otherwise injure the representative of the deity. The desecration of "sacred" is a sin that brought dire punishment, and in some way it is an offence to-day. Of course Hitler was a nuisance, but religious people are often that, and when they speak with the voice of God the sin is great. And in support of what we have said we commend a broadcast from the B.B.C. on March 16 that made that quite plain. We hope to see that broadcast printed. Its total truthfulness does not matter. The religiousness of Hitler and some of his chief followers was quite obvious. As to cruelty—well, that has followed most religions, and particularly Christianity.

Mr. J. Clayton will address the Women's Guild at Enfield, Lanes., on Wednesday, April 2, at 7-30 p.m. We might repeat that the Executive of the N.S.S. is always ready to send a speaker to outside organisations for the purpose of putting the Free-thought point of view to their members.

Rather late in the day, after openly avowing that it would never permit a plain and honest attack on Christianity, we see that something is to be said, and perhaps done, that will enable generally honest men and women to say what they believe about the Christian religion without what they say being "cut" by the B.B.C. and then presented to the country as the speakers' real opinions. If prominent men and women had from the outset declined to have their lips muzzled the B.B.C. might have been compelled to act honestly to the public where religion is concerned. We shall deal with the matter fully next week.

## ARE THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS RELIABLE

### IV.

NEEDLESS to say, Mr. F. F. Bruce in his little book, "Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?" tries to rope in "evidence" from Archeology as well as from Jewish and Gentile "witnesses." And needless to say also, he utterly fails in producing any proof whatever for even one miracle from these sources. But it is worth while recording a "proof" from Archeology given by Mr. Bruce, if only to show the nonsense these people can give vent to when searching for "evidence."

It appears that Paul in Romans sends greetings from some of his companions and also from "Erastus the City Treasurer." In 1929, Prof. Shear found a pavement with the word "Erastus" inscribed thereon. This proves, according to Mr. Woodward, that the pavement existed in the first century, and "it is most probable," he adds, that "the donor is identical with the friend of Paul." So what? Well, of course, the miracles of Jesus must have taken place exactly as described, and Jesus is not only the Son of God but God Almighty himself.

It appears also that some "Sayings" of Jesus were discovered at Oxyrhynchus "strongly Johannine in substance," says Dr. Temple. Therefore, comments Mr. Bruce, "This evidence, for what it may be worth, supports our other arguments for accepting the picture of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel as authentic." I find it difficult to comment on this farrago of sheer balderdash.

A famous Free-thought writer, hiding his identity under the name of Julian (he was, I think, the Rev. E. Cobham Brewer, so well known for his "Dictionary of Phrase and Fable" and for his "Dictionary of Miracles"), said long ago in his "The Pillars of the Church" that "no one can read the Fourth Gospel



without seeing at once that it is quite another Gospel to the other three. It is no longer 'the man Christ Jesus' but a divine being that is presented to us; no longer the carpenter's son, whose brethren were well known, but a mysterious Logos, the creator of heaven and earth. The discourses put into the mouth of this Logos . . . are but a polemic controversy with 'heretics' who denied the proper divinity of Christ and the personality of the Holy Ghost." But, of course, anyone who maintains that the picture of "Christ" in the Fourth Gospel is "authentic," as "authentic" as the representations in the Synoptics must be given up as hopeless.

The great Jewish "witness" for Mr. Bruce is Josephus. Knowing perfectly well that, even for most Christian apologists, the famous passage about "Christ" is a rank forgery, and knowing perfectly well that he simply dare not give it up, he drags in the late Dr. St. John Thackeray, describing him as the "leading British authority on Josephus in recent years." Now why do so many Christian apologists claim this gentleman as a "leading" authority? The answer is very simple. Dr. Thackeray is one of the very few Christians with some claim to authority who maintains that the passage in Josephus is mostly, if not quite, genuine. Had Dr. Thackeray maintained that it was a rank forgery—as it is—he would certainly not have been cited as "a leading British authority." He would have been quietly ignored. The truth is that the silence of Josephus on Christianity is so palpable and so very difficult to explain that Christian apologists are almost beside themselves with anger about it. How could any historian, especially one like Josephus devoting himself to a thousand and one petty contemporary incidents fail to note such tremendous events as are described for us in Acts—the sayings and doings of Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Stephen, Ananias, the rows and squabbles they all had in Jerusalem and in its synagogues, the quarrels between the Jewish and Pagan converts—all of which and more kept Palestine in a turmoil, and yet utterly ignored by such a conscientious historian as the Jewish one? Perhaps the only reasonable answer is that they never took place—or if they did, it was not at that period but much later.

The great fault of many of our Christian apologists is that they never, if they can help it, read the closely reasoned works of Freethinkers—though they almost always make a parade of having done so. When Mr. Bruce comes to the "myth theory" about Jesus, for example, he thinks it is quite enough just to mention that he knows all about it. It is, however, easy to see that he literally knows nothing whatever about it.

He says the "Christ myth" theory would hardly be worth mentioning were it not for "the cheap reprints of the works of the late J. M. Robertson and others." It would indeed be interesting to know which of the "cheap reprints" of Robertson he has read—or which of the works which were really reprinted cheaply he thinks he could answer. Just as the good Christian in the past could hardly ever refer to Paine without calling him "Tom" Paine as if abbreviating his name lessened the value of the Biblical criticism of the "Age of Reason," so the modern Christian apologist imagines he is replying effectively to their arguments when he sneeringly calls the books "cheap reprints." I have the "cheap reprint" of Newman's "Apologia," but whatever I may think about that famous religious autobiography, it is not due to it costing me only sixpence. The truth is that as soon as these Christians come across effective argument they scurry away with silly yapping instead of boldly facing the enemy. If Mr. Bruce thinks he could answer Robertson let him have a try—and not think all that is necessary is to send readers to a naive and childish "answer" like Dr. H. G. Wood's "Did Christ really live?"—a work in which the author imagines that he has proved that a God called Jesus really lived because he thinks a mistake or two has got into Robertson's presentation of the Myth theory.

Apart altogether from this, anyone who wishes to prove the New Testament Documents reliable should take in detail such

works as "Supernatural Religion" or "The Four Gospels in Historical Records." This last book is anonymous but I think it is by the Rev. Sir G. W. Cox—an expansion of Thomas Scott's "English Life of Jesus" of which he was part author. It was published in 1895 by Williams and Norgate and it is a great pity that it is not better known. Here we get a thorough examination of the Gospels from the point of view of history and it is in my opinion—quite unanswerable. But, of course, no Christian apologist would dare hint to his all-believing dupes that there were large numbers of Freethought works which proved Christianity to be just a primitive superstition based on fear and ignorance. I have dwelt lengthily on Mr. Bruce's tract because it deserves any criticism these days, but because it was published in 1946, and is therefore one of the latest rehashes of conventional and mostly quite out of date apologetics. The points raised have been answered time and again but unfortunately the Christians for whom he writes are most unlikely to know this. He seems to be in the same predicament himself—and all I can hope is that with increasing age he will gain in wisdom. Certainly he will come to see one day that the "opinions" of men like Burkitt, Peake, Eisler, Ramsay, and other "authorities" are merely opinions, and do not prove the reality of miracles. And unless miracles are proven the New Testament Documents are certainly *not* reliable.

H. CUTNER.

## HE NOTHING OF RELIGION KNOWS WHO ONLY KNOWS HIS OWN

Some of the Older Faiths Very Briefly Examined

### MITHRAISM

MITHRA is one of the gods of Light, associated in the sacred poem *Mihir Yasht* with the Zoroastrian Sun god; the sun, for obvious reasons, being worshipped by all primitive peoples under various names and aspects. Much of the original, more or less prehistoric, mythology has been lost or so transformed as to be unrecognisable, but a certain amount of information has been collected from inscriptions, monuments and sculptures. We know he was born on December 25, as this is astronomically recorded, and is a date popular with very many gods, for reasons that cannot be gone into here, but the time is open to conjecture except that it is known to be pre-Zoroastrian, and could be anything from 2000 to 5000 B.C.

Some ancient monuments show him being miraculously born from a rock, which is not uncommon among the older gods, the birth being witnessed and vouched for, as usual, by shepherds who arrive to greet and worship him. Other records show him being miraculously conceived and born of a virgin.

After eating of a forbidden fruit he becomes sex-conscious and conceals the wicked area under a fig leaf. When Ahriman, the god of Hell, sends a terrible drought upon the earth, Mithra struck a rock and caused water to come gushing out. Next Ahriman sent a deluge of rain, from which only one man is saved together with his cattle, in an ark, etc., etc. The god eventually ascends into Heaven and sits upon the right hand of God the Father, Mazda, the supreme Sun god.

In Christian mythology the same events are differently arranged.

This Persian divinity, whose symbol is Light overcoming Darkness, is depicted as being specially concerned with the virtues of truth and kindness and with obedience and justice. He is also the special protector of the poor and needy, and assists the souls of men on their way back to Paradise, whence all souls originate in the Mazda soul. He is sometimes spoken of as the Redeemer or Mediator between man and the Sun god.



The Holy Scriptures, Vedas, Avesta et alii, call for animal sacrifices (cf. the Christian ditto) Holy oblations and penances, as in Hinduism and Roman Catholicism, but the real human appeal, as in all religious cults, lies in its mysticism and magic rites, for which untutored human nature seems to have an almost incurable passion.

Symbolic human sacrifice is also practised, their Holy Communion resembling the Christian rite so closely that the inference cannot be escaped that the newer was borrowed from the very much older superstition.

To understand the meaning and prehistoric origins of the symbolic partaking of the flesh and blood of a god the student is referred to those great classics Sir J. Frazer's "Golden Bough" and Robertson's "Pagan Christs" and many lesser works on the subject of religious myths and superstitions to be found in any good public library whose Board is not hampered by priestly authority.

There are indications of a Caste system, something like that of the Hindus (q.v.) but of mystics, and based on religious, not social, qualifications, only those of the highest Caste being entitled to partake of the Blessed Sacrament. Being a Sun god, his worship is inevitably connected with astro-theology, and this has produced Fatalism, but of an optimistic variety, and the sum total has been described as an intensely practical religion, full of incentive to individual effort (Hasting's "Encyclopedia of Religion"), which in the early centuries of Christianity, i.e., after a thousand years or so of slow spreading, suddenly began (following the mass movements of Persian troops) to bid fair to become a world religion.

However, it was persecuted almost to extinction by the votaries of the "Love-thy-neighbour" cult, the new Faith, to which it bore too many dangerous similarities, and gave rise to too many awkward questions.

*Knowledge is a great shatterer of illusions: the great iconoclast.*

M. C. BROTHERTON, COMDR., R.N.

### MYTH OR HISTORY

ALL men are liars, history is lies, bunk, bias. History is past, the past is dead, history is what we make it. History is documentary evidence, the living witness. History repeats itself. History is the living present, we make and live history. History is—?

The characteristic of myth still clings to history. The masquerade of biographical histrionics loses sight of its historical character. The heroics of the great man theory is no substitute for comprehension of the variety of matters and motives involved. Myth arises in personal limitations, and there is a psychological aspect of cultural development. In both fable and legend, the oral and written word is an extension of both memory and of the unconscious. Delusive personal memory and dream phantasy wish-fulfilment continue in the personal interpretation of legend. The question of the historicity of, say, Jesus, loses sight of the evolutionary character of both the Bible and of Biblical criticism. It is the development of script and the accumulation of documentary evidence that has given us an historical perspective. There is a connection between the development of script and Scriptural development.

In the development of Biblical criticism, comparison of documents disclosed differences in translation and interpretation. The comparison of mythology and of religions, involving archæology and philology, showed the astro-mythological content. The hero-worship and phallic elements followed, and expansion of animistic misunderstanding of dreams. The psychological aspect of sympathetic magic came with the inclusion of folklore, together with that of totem and taboo. Meanwhile, the continuation of documentary analysis and the comparison of idiom disclosed

gradual accretion and persistent re-interpretation and interpolation; gives a line of evolution and something of a chronological sequence.

Scriptural evolution is continuous, and the period covered is roughly that of Greco-roman philosophy. Derived from Egyptian and Babylonian geometry and astronomy, and alphabetic script, this became less physical and more involved in social and psychological considerations, showing a continuous change in sentiment and feeling. The Greek *physis*, translated into the Latin *natura*, involving the question of origins, was retranslated into the Greek *psyche*, as cause or motive. Philosophy became more mystical as ethical and political considerations gave place to eclecticism, rhetoric and metaphysics. From the time when Epicureans, with Cicero, laughed at old wives tales, the scene changes. The Stoic emperor, with the slave Epictetus, was a little soul imprisoned in a corpse. Frustration was expressed in the Neo-platonic search, in meditation, for mystical oblivion; as also in the Gnostic mysteries. This was an age of Mystics.

Mystic genetics is characteristic of the Scriptures, e.g. Mythical origin of the world, of man, races and tribes. It also concerns the mythical origin of social facts, e.g., Law, ceremonial, kings and prophets. In the same way we have the origin of the Christian God in the Gospels, the origin of the Church in Acts and Epistles, the source of its power in Revelations, and of shrines and relics in the Lives of the Saints. We can trace a development from the more simple myth to the more involved legend. Connecting Hebrew hieroglyphics with alphabetic script, we can trace a development of idiom from simple imagery, through the crude ideographical visualisations of Ezekiel, the poetic allusion of the Wisdom or Odes of Solomon, to the verbal expression in the Epistles or Gospels, on to the literal statement of the Lives.

With the temporary expansion of analogy into allegory and the ultimate literalism, the alphabet loses its pictographical character, but retains its sacred tradition. Derived from totemic animals and phallic emblems, through hieroglyphics, the written or spoken word symbolises both the concept and the incentive. It was the esoteric power and mystic symbol of rhetoric and theological invective, in declamation in the name of righteousness. Through the medium of the Scriptures, Egyptian and Babylonian eschatology passes through Greco-Roman theology into Christian hagiology. At the same time, with the emergence of concepts such as righteousness, law, wisdom, in the Scriptures, and of reason, justice, truth, in philosophy; and the identification of the Platonic idea with the visions of Ezekiel, and dreams, visions of the bed, in Daniel; metaphysics arises as a literalising of mythopoetic metaphor and of ideographic vision, expressing human aspirations and sentiments.

The dream phantasy characteristic is seen in the inversion and substitution of animal for human sacrifice; of astromythological symbols for stone images; of dream visions for phallic symbols; of human for animal form of the spirits; and in the inhibition and wish-fulfilment in the denunciation of idolatry and fornication, in which divine prophecy, the wrath of heaven and theological anathema is successively substituted for the magic curse. The allergic projection of demonism, seen in the theological content of rhetorical word magic, was also expressed in the mass hysteria of Christian accession to power; in the Arian and Athanasian conflict; and homoousian and homoousian controversy; the riots at the games; and in the conflict between the African, Eastern, and Western churches. We have a psychological development which covers roughly the same period as that of the rise of the Roman empire. Christianity was not a fully fledged religion which spread into, but a syneretion within, the empire.

The documents betray the pre-existence of the basic facts. Both the God and the Church arise in the metaphysics in which philosophy and religion met, in the literalising of a Pantheistic world soul, in which one and all are members. With the personification of the name and the word, the god is a literalised analogue; which, like the vision in Ezekiel, speaks through the



mouth of the Elect; expressing the will of the congregation. Use the Greek word *ecclesia* in place of church, and we see the development of ecclesiology and ecclesiolatry, eventuating in ecclesiasticism; see also the literalising of the gatherings of the city states into an edifice or institution. In connecting the *ecclesia* with the *polis* or *civitas*, we see its political importance, but personification involved personal feelings. The outlook was not economic but ecumenical. Sublimated cravings and emotions found egocentric expression. The voice of the people was the voice of god.

The sanctity of the spoken word lies deeper than that of the Book. Amid the babble of tongues, the downfall of the Empire was the triumph of barbarism and religion. The Bible did not become the Word of God until the invention of printing; that was a Protestant heresy. The Catholic church is still an ecclesiastical organisation; the only authentic voice is that of the Councils. With the clerical reinterpretation of tradition the process was one of accretion. The development of doctrine and dogma, the evolution of the mass, and the building up of more elaborate organisation and ritual, is a matter of ecclesiastical history.

The process of reinterpretation did not stop, it still goes on. The men who wrote the scriptures were no more concerned with history than those who reinterpretate it. Only inhibition and wish fulfilment can explain how any of it ever came to be conceived as history. Yet these are historical documents and they have an historical value. This persistent intellectual acrobatics is evidence of man's psychological evolution.

H. H. PREECE.

## IMPRESSIONS OF 1946

(Continued from page 96)

NOW that the "I Am" Society are all wound up—the Leader dead (he told the Court he was a reincarnation of Jesus Christ and the Count St. Germain . . . one a myth and the other a swindler) most of the rest in jail—no use describing one of the biggest swindling layouts in the U.S.A. During the court testimony here the various defendants admitted offices in five large cities and several million dollars "take"—to say nothing of offices in dozens of cities of second-class status.

I saw some "literature" not long ago of the "Go Ye" Society. They want suckers to go to Guatamala or some such fever-haunted forest and lagoon for the altogether lovely Christ. Want to join? Royal Institute of International Affairs, New York City. Society for the Propagation of the Faith, San Francisco. These are only a few of the hundreds seen in the mails.

Los Angeles has a flourishing "Free Tract" Society that releases some of the most ridiculous drivel ever seen in print. Most any day you wake up and find the Damites have visited you in the night, poking a leaflet under the door, "Jesus is Coming!"

EVIL SPIRITS—MAY BE INTERNATIONAL.—Loss of books and magazines from England continue. Valentine Smith, Secretary, Bacon Soc., says, "You're no worse off with vandals than we are, what with the strikes and your unions and all, it's just your own cussedness."

John Seibert, of "The Freethinker," advises, "Apparently there's Evil Spirits about—maybe you's better buy a St. Christopher Medal." About as much sympathy as I would get from Charles Smith, of the New York "Truth Seeker"—who would likely say, "You haven't enough Faith, that's the trouble with you." The only Faith we have is that 20 shillings make a £ sterling, for the time being, and Faith in the International Money Order.

## II

Speaking of Books and Labour Unions in the same breath August Derleth of Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin, advises all patrons of the situation now confronting Book Publishers Briefly; "The rise in production costs so great . . . problems are mounting . . . typographical union demands are such that many Publishers may have to suspend long enough to bring union leaders and members to their senses. If union demands were met the usual \$3 book would have to sell for \$5. And the oversized \$5 omnibus for \$8.50 to retail trade. Rather than ask our patrons to pay such prices Arkham House would prefer to suspend publication until wage-price muddle comes down to Earth."

Sad News. Arkham House, publishers of Howard P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, Donald Wandrei, Frank Belknap Long and others . . . at 10 shilling, 12 shilling, 15 shilling . . . English literature in the macabre to be sure . . . but concerning that strange world no orthodoxy can prove—and no science disprove. And by the same token, a headline in to-day's papers: "Union Leader John L. Lewis Defies U.S. Government! Coal stocks short all over the country." And winter is coming around the corner (Nov. 15) except in Sunny California.

BRITAIN AND LIBERTY.—I suppose I'm a little old-fashioned . . . reading at this day Green's *History of English People* and Baring-Gould's *Family Names and Their History* (and this last is more of a national chronicle than S.B.G. intended likely). But it does seem to me and some close acquaintances that the English are everlastingly fighting for some Freedom at home. You know, out Church Parades, and you won the cinema on Sundays for Leeds, etc. You have the B.B.C. half whipped and now you haven't a place to lay your Squatters' heads. Somebody ought to have a brainstorm about now and suggest rebuilding or restoring Stonehenge, which would take enough material to build an apartment house 29 blocks long.

You're supposed to be civilised. It would seem to an outsider that a nation as top class as the British, who began revealing 1400, ought by now to be blessed with the best of laws and the best treatment for its people. Things here are different. We admit we're half savage.

Then comes that dear old pal, Joad, the People's Friend. He has a new book, which seems bigger and dizzier than his others. He has a right to change his mind. So much that even a respectable hypocrite wouldn't take any stock in his sincerity at this late hour. We know where British Guiana is located. And if Mr. Joad wants to strain at a gnostic and swallow a menagerie of Spiritual Monstrosities right out of H. P. Lovecraft, that's his business. Why don't you let him alone! He's still SNAFF.

A CHRISTIAN'S BELLY-ACHE IN EVERY ISSUE.—*Time Magazine*, July 29, publishes a letter from a moron in Monon, Indiana, who evidently reads the world's news backwards. No one on the outside can understand why *Time* gives six inches of valuable space to such muck. I quote: "Senator Bilbo seems assured of re-election in November because his constituents believe in the 'master race' theory." (Bilbo, of Miss: two Negroes to one white, knows very well the negroes are a hundred years behind whites—R.R.)

"There is danger of war in Palestine." (With whom, we may imagine. This talk sounds like "Jewish toleration."—R.R.)

"Hungary is hungry and gripped by inflation." (They always are. Even a child in school knew they were hungry—and it's only normal nowadays to gripe or grip, whether the bowch is on the one hand, or Catholic Church on the other. Grip, grip, LaGrippe—what does it matter.—R.R.)

"China remains a house divided." (That worries the Morons from Monon, Indiana. Our friend can't get over there to see for his," because Soong & Co. divide China and take the Big End and visitors from Indiana are not Welcome—R.R.)



"Dr. Einstein believes in God . . . and considers Him impotent." (Einstein has denied belief in God, any and all gods, repeatedly. If he has suddenly gone religious or bughouse I haven't seen it anywhere.—R.R.)

"The Church of England actually has more applicants for religious training that vacancies." (Regular pay? Soft berths? Bah! he said NOTHING about those Empty Churches and the Great Wail about Where Have Our Congregations Gone?—R.R.)

"Japanese Christians predict a tenfold increase in their ranks." (He quotes "predicts" notice. Because the Predictor knows all about those Rice Christians . . . for rice they believe anything . . . and so would you, brother, if you lived like the Japs.—R.R.)

"In a world gone mad, religion provides the only haven . . . the only ultimate source of sanity, hope and peace."  
This is the final blow that kills father.  
Peace, it's wonderful! Long live the Moron family!!

RICHARD ROE, U.S.A.

(To be continued)

### A SURPRISING THEORY OF THE BRUTE CREATION

THE Encyclopaedia Britannica, Edinburgh, 1797, has a brief notice of William Hyacinth Bougeant, a famous Jesuit professor, who died in 1741. Later on, in the article entitled "Brutes," a trifle over three columns of space is devoted to the exposition and discussion of certain views held by "Father Bougeant" respecting those creatures. From the summary and the quotations it is evident that the good man took great interest in his subject. He describes accurately and impressively the appalling suffering endured by the brute creation from nature's severity and man's cruelty. Certainly man himself suffers many of the evils that the brutes suffer, but his suffering is due to him as a punishment for his sin, whereas theirs is not a punishment because they never had the capacity of sinning. After those observations he remarks that the case of the brutes causes some men to impugn the character of God by charging him with injustice. But to this charge there is a triumphant answer. The creatures called brutes, they are devils to whom their present form and fate have been given as a punishment for their rebellion against God under the leadership of Satan before the creation of the world. In support of his contention Bougeant adduces various fiendish traits which he says that brutes display:

"Beasts even by nature are extremely jealous. . . . The voracious beasts of prey are very cruel. Many insects of one and the same species devour one another. Cats are perfidious and ungrateful; monkeys are mischievous, and envious. All beasts in general are jealous and revengeful in excess, not to mention many other vices that we observe in them. . . . Do men love beasts for their own sake? No. They are altogether strangers to human society. They can have no other appointment but of being useful and amusing. And what care we whether it be a devil, or any other creature that amuses us? The thought of it, so far from shocking, pleases me mightily. I with gratitude admire the goodness of the Creator who gave me so many little devils to serve and amuse me. If I am told that these poor devils are damned to suffer eternal torment, I admire God's decrees, but I have no matter of share in that dreadful sentence. I leave the execution of it to the sovereign judge; and, notwithstanding this I live with my little devils as I do with a multitude of people of whom religion informs me that a great number will be damned."

It is evident that the purpose of Bougeant, like that of Milton, was "to justify the ways of God to men." but it would seem that he did believe in the natural rights of brutes. For, unless he

had believed that brutes were in reality what they were in appearance, to wit, sentient beings devoid of moral obligation, he would never have taken the trouble to prove that the creatures under review were not brutes but devils; and that, therefore, God could not be regarded as treating them unjustly. For the rest, the case of Bougeant shows what a perverted influence a bad creed can have upon an intelligent man with a kindly disposition. The thing is shocking to think of.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

### OBITUARY

W. J. McMURRAY

It is with great regret that we report the death of W. J. McMurray at the age of 75. From his youth he was an ardent propagandist of Freethought, and he never tired of doing what was of use to the good cause. He was also an ardent student of politics and social life, but his great work was Freethought. He also formed a branch of the N.S.S., and his ardour in its service never flagged. He was generous, enthusiastic and loyal to our Movement. Freethought has lost a valuable and lovable character.

J. G. BURDON.

### 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.: "Early Christianity and Modern Socialism," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (The National Trade Union Club, Great Newport St., W.C. 1).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Discussion: "Morality, Religious or Secular?" Messrs. WOOD and SAPHIN.

#### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Room 13).—Sunday, 3-30 p.m.: "Scientific Study of Character," Mr. H. LENNARD. (Tea at 5 p.m.)

Enfield, Lanes., Women's Guild.—Wednesday, April 2, 7-30 p.m., a lecture, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, St. James Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Godism v. Atheism," Mr. H. DAY (Bradford).

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Christian Morality," Mr. C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Nottingham Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m., a lecture, Mr. T. O'BRIEN, M.P. (West Birmingham).

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