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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Atheism and the B.B.C.

THE readers of the "The Listener," an organ of the B.B.C., will have been surprised, even startled, when they read that the B.B.C. was considering the possibility—or the inevitability—of discussing religion in a way that would cover Atheism. What was meant exactly we must wait to see. If there is to be a genuine discussion of Atheism alongside of religion, the discussion would be a valuable one, but we are certain that the B.B.C. would have to fight the Churches. Up to date, the policy has been to keep alive what the B.B.C. calls "The Christian Tradition." I could never get a clear explanation of that phrase, but it evidently sounded well, and to good Christians that counts for much. Anyway, it pleased "Religious talk" has meant a talk by two believers in religion. Very timidly, questions of religious forms were discussed, and there the matter ended. Each "talker" was satisfied that Christianity is essential to good living and after a sham discussion all things went as they should—for Christians. No one was permitted to attack religion, or to give it a scientific explanation. Everybody remained where they were. Evidently you may discuss religion, but you must not attack it, for fear it should shock believers.

There was nothing new in this policy. It can be found in every Church. Quarrels there might be with each group of believers, but in every case people were told what to believe, the clarity of the belief was a question that "common" folk should not bother themselves about. Of all the worshippers heard doctrines laid down in a foreign language without understanding them. And even when it was in the home tongue it carried just about the same measure of intelligence. The great task was to believe. The story of the thief on the cross showed that it was not by understanding that men were saved, but by belief. The ignorance of Man went well with the Glory of God.

It is only fair to say of the men who worked hard to make broadcasting a success that they were not really concerned with the Churches. Many of them were without belief in any religion. Their interest rested with the wireless developments. Some of them I knew to be Freethinkers, but they were keen on the business before them and they worked like the proverbial horse for success.

The B.B.C. was, at the time I have in mind, in Savoy Hill. The greatness of wireless was not yet. But the men were great things ahead, and their very keenness in their work led them to a fatal action. Broadcasting on Sunday was advisable, but to have that one would have to get on good terms with the Churches. To leave the Churches out meant trouble. But to broadcast sermons on Sunday was

another thing, talks on the value of religion were still more serviceable. It would disarm numbers of preachers, it might even bring some people to more regular visits to Church.

Some of the clergy fell for it, others were afraid it might weaken the power of the churches; people would stay at home to listen, instead of going to Church or chapel. In the end the Churches secured a commanding power over the B.B.C. Morning sermons were secured, closing slabs of religion appeared in the evening, and finally the B.B.C. became a mere tool of the Churches where religion was concerned. On Sundays at present we may find half-a-dozen slabs of religion. It was a great victory for Christianity, but it was disgraceful to those who wished fair play all round.

I have been, four times, one of a representative body that tried to induce fair play in connection with broadcasting religious doctrines. Of course, we failed. It is only fair to say that in the early stage of broadcasting and on the first occasion the men—three in number, I think—said quite plainly that they had no great interest in religion, and in time they hoped to shake off the religious influence. I retorted by reminding them of the story of the man who sold his soul to Satan, and tried to outwit Satan when the day of reckoning came. But it was useless. Satan won every time. Apparently God could be outwitted, but the devil never. The inside story of the manoeuvring of the Churches to secure control would be very interesting.

The definite control of the Churches came with the narrow-minded John Reith—afterwards Lord Reith—as controller of the B.B.C. He belonged to the Middle Ages, and his rule was that when a man applied for a post he inquired "Do you accept the fundamental teaching of Jesus Christ?" The successful person naturally did. He knew the ropes beforehand. The conversions were very large—so were the grins. A French monarch of the Middle Ages changed his religion to Roman Catholicism, and explained that Paris was worth it. So thought most of the successful men before John Reith.

Now comes a new development with regard to the B.B.C. playing the part of a defender of Christianity, not by honest argument and an admission of "the other side," but with a public declaration that it will—or may—in the future admit criticisms of Christianity and a plain statement of something approaching Atheism.

The following appeared in "The Listener" for March 20. It is headed "Controversy in Religious Broadcasting."

"The Governors of the B.B.C. have had under review the question of controversy in religious broadcasting and have made the following statement. The broadcast envisaged in this statement will take place outside the normal religious broadcasting hours.

"It is the view of the B.B.C. that broadcasting has a responsibility to do what it can to meet the needs of

the millions of people who are today hungering after information on spiritual issues. The Corporation's highest duty in this, as in other fields, is towards the search for truth.

"The Governors recognise that this must involve the broadcasting of conflicting views, but they are of the opinion that the affirmation of widely differing beliefs and unbelief can be made constructively, and discussions conducted on such a plane that the controversy which is bound to be an incidental to the primary purpose, shall not wound reasonable people, or transgress the bounds of courtesy and good taste. The B.B.C. will exercise its editorial responsibility to this end. Such a broadening of policy will be gradual or experimental. It must move within the public opinion. But the B.B.C. seeks the freest possible expression of serious and responsible thought. All broadcasting in the field of religion, philosophy and ethics must be imbued with a deep seriousness and high purpose, and truth must be sought in such a manner that it will be prized and respected wherever it is found."

Now that might, in theory, mean something; in practice it may mean nothing, and it is worth noting that the suggestion that broadcasting should take a wider view of life and ideas came, primarily, from the outside world, and ultimately to a veiled threat from the House of Commons, that if the B.B.C. insisted on its narrow-minded methods, it may lose its Charter. What has been published in "The Listener" holds no promise of any real improvement, but it does show that the B.B.C. is at its old game—certainly where religion is concerned—of *telling* people what they must believe, instead of teaching them to do their own thinking and use their own language.

Consider the opening: "The B.B.C. has a responsibility to do what it can to meet the needs of the millions of people who are hungering after information on spiritual issues." That is a double-barrelled inaccuracy. In the first place, it is very difficult indeed to get people into any place of worship, while the numbers of those who are miserable because they cannot find a God are very few indeed. But even if it were otherwise, it is no more the duty of the B.B.C. to hunt people down to Church attendance, than it is to drive them to a particular football match.

The next choice item is that the Corporation's highest duty is "the search for truth." We object to that emphatically. The search of the Corporation has been to form plans to prevent the scientific truth about the origin of religious ideas becoming known to listeners. The plain statement given to me when face to face with B.B.C. officials, is that it will not publish anything that was against the "Christian tradition," which usually means the most ignorant form of the Christian religion. The B.B.C. emphatically does not search for the truth about religion; it is avowedly concerned with the perpetuation of the cruder forms of the Christian creed. Let anyone listen to two or three of those childish talks every morning, and they will hear something that reeks with either childish intelligence or deliberate misdirection. The B.B.C. has never yet given a plain, honest, and up-to-date broadcast concerning the origin of religion. Yet the literature on the subject is vast: it is also simple. There is no longer mystery concerning origins, there are only differences in detail.

Christianity is rapidly reaching the stage when it cannot live with dignity or die with courage.

It is quite in line with B.B.C. policy for one of the Governors to say that in the controversy with Atheism it "shall not wound reasonable people or transgress the bounds of courtesy and good taste." That is a direct insult to decent men and women who need no such reminder. It is an assumption that the Atheist must be on his best behaviour when talking to the friends of God. None but a Christian would have said it, and few but B.B.C. Christians would deserve the warning. There are moments when, as a very famous preacher said, a man may swear or burst, and the B.B.C. Governors appear to belong to that irritating class of "good" Christians. I think there is often more manhood with a man who swears, than there is in the writer of the lines I have just cited.

The B.B.C. notice concludes with all the bombast that might come from a fussy headmaster at school when he finds himself in the presence of a king. We are told that:

"All broadcasts in the field of religion, philosophy and ethics must be imbued with a deep seriousness and high purpose, and truth must be sought in such a manner that it will be prized and respected wherever it is found."

So our self-appointed teacher ends his task, although his tender soul is not yet clear as to whether—say Atheists—can shake off the roughness and lack of politeness that a body of believers in some kind of God would naturally display. We must, as Atheists—even as an agnostic—does not know whether something that he has never seen a God, and would not know a God if he came across one. All of these naturally people might well be warned that they must be on their best behaviour and will not say anything that would shock the Governors of the B.B.C. It is probably that the Governors of the B.B.C. are so careful as to the characters of those who tread the floors—blasphemy the pressure of holy men for so long! I think, of course, that Atheists and Agnostics might rise to the level of the holy men who have preached the gospel of God. On the other hand, they might have a sense of the ridiculous and laugh when they should be solemn. After all, bishops do not look serious when done up with their pantomimic full dress. Cannot Atheists rise to the occasion?

CHAPMAN COHEN

THE "FIFTH MONARCHY" MEN AND THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

(Continued from page 100)

THE English Revolution of the mid 17th century followed, in its social aspect, the previous course of the continental Reformation. The Stuart monarchy and the Established (semi-Catholic) Church of Charles the First and Archbishop Laud were swept away between 1642 and 1649 by the united efforts of the rising (commercial) class, which in England centred around the City of London; and of the Calvinist Church, the "Independents," as they styled themselves; the "Puritans," as their critics termed them.

By 1649, when the King was executed at Whitehall (January 30), and the "Commonwealth" was duly installed, the old order had given place to the new. And it soon became evident that the effective supersession of the absolute monarchy of the Stuarts by the capitalist regime, first of the Calvinist (Presbyterian)

"Long Parliament," then (after 1653) by the military dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell, had merely meant for the English masses the substitution of one master for another. A substitution classically summarised by the greatest writer of the contemporary British "Left" (John Milton) as, "new presbyter is but old priest writ large"! i.e., the new capitalist-Calvinist class and class-state was as far removed from the apocalyptic dreams of the English poor as the old feudal one had been.

From 1649 onwards, more and more, the "left-wing" sects were forced into opposition to the government of Cromwell, as formerly to that of Charles. And the opposition did not lack either vigour or variety. For the English Revolution had released that sectarian tendency, the subsequent history of which in England and America, has induced some historians to describe as a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon complex. It was precisely at this time that an Italian diplomatist wrote from London to his government that there were 194 religions in London, all of whom agreed in nothing except in their hostility to the Pope!

The sects whose peculiar tenet was the apocalyptic Second Coming of the Messiah are thus described, as they were in 1644, by an eminent historian of the period:—

In fact, however, the Chiliasts or Millenarians were hardly a new sect. The expectation of a Millennium near at hand was very prevalent among the Divines even of the (Presbyterian--F.A.R.) Assembly The purport of their doctrine was that in the year 1650, or, at the farthest, 1695, Christ was to reappear in human form at Jerusalem, destroy the existing fabric of things in a conflagration, collect the scattered Jews, raise martyrs and saints from their graves, and begin his glorious reign of a thousand years." (cp. David Masson—Life of Milton—vol 3, pp. 16-17.)

Thus, as we observe from the above, millenarianism, in 1644, was a tendency rather than a positive doctrine. In point of fact, in the "left-wing" opposition to the victorious revolutionary government which grew up after 1649, when the very inequalitarian outlines of the new capitalist society began to reveal the deep social cleavages in the revolutionary ranks, the leadership was, at first, taken by the "Levellers" and "Diggers," whose peculiar tenets did not include any special belief in the proximate Millennium (e.g., in the copious extant works of the "Digger," Winstanley, this doctrine does not appear).

It was not until the new bourgeois regime had "liquidated" its ultra-left critics by means of the military dictatorship of Cromwell (1653-8) that the vague millenarianism of the earlier period hardened and crystallised into the doctrine of the "Fifth Monarchy." In fact, we can say that there was no difference at all in doctrine between the earlier Chiliasm and the fully-fledged sect of the "Fifth Monarchy Men." Indeed, it is probable that there never was a special sect of "Fifth Monarchy Men" as such. What passed for such were those ardent and logical holders of millenarian beliefs who sought to assist the realisation of their beliefs by positive action: in short, those who sought, in the excellent phrase of Professor Masson, to "accelerate the Fifth Monarchy" by the political overthrow of the existing regime. Hence, whilst Millenarianism was a doctrine, the "Fifth Monarchy" was a programme!

That eminent historian thus describes the new actively subversive movement which grew up in 1654-5 after the consolidation of the new regime in the thinly veiled monarchy of Cromwell.

"Fifth Monarchy Men—At first sight this does not appear a new sect, but merely a continuation of the old Millenarians or Chiliasts (referred to in Volume three), who believed that the personal reign of Christ for a thousand years was approaching. The change of name, however, indicates greater precision in the belief, and also greater intensity . . . This doctrine (i.e., that of the Millennium) had seized on many of the more fervid English Independents and sectaries, so that they had begun to see, in the great events of their own time and land, the dazzling edge

of the near Millennium. The doctrine had caught the souls of Harrison and other men of action, hitherto classed as Anabaptists. Now, so far, there was no harm in it, nor could any of the orthodox who rejected it themselves dare to treat it as one of the heresies to be restrained by the civil magistrate. Evidently, however, there was a root of danger. What if the Fifth Monarchy Men should make it part of their faith that the saints could *accelerate* (italics in original) the 'Fifth Monarchy,' and that it was their duty to do so? Then their tenets might have strange practical effects upon English politics. Already, in the times of the 'Barebones' Parliament, there had been warnings of this, the 'Fifth Monarchy Men' there, or outside Parliament, having distinguished themselves by an ultra-republicanism which verged on Communism, and also by their zeal for pure voluntarism in religion and the abolition of a paid ministry and all express Church machinery. The fact had not escaped Cromwell, and in his speech at the opening of the present Parliament he had taken notice of it. In that very speech he had singled out for remark 'the mistaken notion of the Fifth Monarchy,'" (cp. David Masson—Life of Milton—vol 5, p. 17.)

In 1654 the Millenarian preachers had given the government considerable trouble by their furious denunciations of Cromwell's "usurpation." Some of the best known and most seditious preachers, Feake, Powell, and Simpson were arrested, and Harrison, the military chief of the sect, was deprived of his commission. The plot, or projected coup d'état of 1657, which was detected in the nick of time by Cromwell's unrivalled secret police, so efficiently organised by Thurloe, the "Fouché" of the Protectorate, indicated what effect, but for Cromwell's political police who baffled a host of conspiracies against him, the determination of the "Fifth Monarchy Men" to "accelerate the Fifth Monarchy" would have had on practical English politics. Similar plots were discovered in the country. For led by their one nationally known leader, Major-General Thomas Harrison, next to Cromwell himself the most daring and brilliant cavalry leader in the revolutionary army, the adherents of "King Christ" attempted to create, at least, an interregnum in the English State before the arrival of their Master.

In a confidential despatch, dated April 27, 1657, the Venetian Resident in England, the representative of the most subtle, experienced, and observant diplomatic service in Europe—whose contemporary despatches, incidentally, are often far superior in perspicacity and political insight to the English historians of that age, or, indeed of later ages—reported the discovery of this coup d'état to his government.

"It is," he writes, "a very extraordinary thing that all the plots contrived against the present government are found out at the very moment when they are to take effect. I have already reported one which was miraculously discovered and now have to inform the Senate of another, discovered a week ago to-day, which aimed not only at the destruction of Cromwell but of all the people and was the work of the Millenarians, one of their diabolical sects, with whom are joined the Anabaptists, the Quakers, and some others who are possessed of such detestable opinions. Over 60 of these conspirators assembled in a house on the outskirts of this City (i.e., London—at Shoreditch and Mile End.—F.A.R.) were discovered discussing how to fire a mine which they had made, and to settle the date of their rising, which was to be two days later, i.e., Monday last. They had bought arms to equip 25,000 combatants, whom they hoped to assemble in a moment. They proposed to seize all the horses in the City, to cut the throats of the Protector and all the nobility scattered about the country. They proposed to remove the taxes laid on the people and to maintain the army from the goods of the slaughtered nobility. The tenets of these folk, which are derived from a passage in the Apocalypse which they interpret in their own fashion, consist in demolishing every sort of dominion to establish the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. They call them-

(Continued on page 115)

ACID DROPS

If he cannot be other, Canon Baker can be, and is, generous to those with whom he disagrees. Thus he is a firm believer in the Virgin birth, but declares he is aware many find it difficult to believe. That is what we would call generous towards those who have not seen the light. They simply find the virgin birth difficult. So even did Joseph. Difficulties will occur in the best of families. But Canon Baker is content to say that when it is viewed as an act of God the difficulties are gone. Still, to-day there would be a great big smile with the neighbours if a girl came home with an infant *direct* from God. Mary had a wonderful, the only experience—at least, in the Christian record. Besides, it is not really difficult to believe the impossible; it is just hard to swallow it. The Canon says that the miraculous birth shows God's love for man, but we still believe there would be a devil of a row if God displayed his love frequently. Even Joseph could not believe it at first, and it was only an angel coming in the night that made things clear. But we doubt that another gift from God in the same place would make trouble. There are limits.

The "Church Times" has never got over the shock Admiral Layton gave to that journal with the news of the "appalling ignorance of Christian fundamental exhibited by the conscript recruits in the services." We really have a suspicion that it was not ignorance, but wide-awakeness, that was in operation. It is not as easy to plant Bible yarns as it used to be.

The miracle department in heaven needs brushing up. For instance, we noticed that one Prebendary with his wife were marooned near Hereford in the recent floods. There he would have remained, but a common police officer sent men to their rescue. Heaven neglects things very much nowadays. Even some part of the Papal buildings in Rome have been knocked about. Heaven managed these things better a few centuries ago.

We are not very sanguine as to the results of the notice given that the B.B.C. will consider permitting genuine Freethought broadcasts. Up to date it has not permitted the truth to be told about religion, and if that is not permitted it is to be hoped that anything short of free expression will be opposed. And we must remember that the Roman Church will probably be doing all it can to prevent fair play where criticisms of religion are concerned. We note that the leading two Catholic papers, "The Universe" and "The Catholic Times," have already voiced their antipathy and their opposition, and we must not forget that the Romans wield an influence quite above their numbers. Moreover, the Roman Church has many underhandways of getting their way. Underhands are playthings when the Holy Church is concerned.

Most people will remember that on the opening of the world war there was the usual recourse to the usual religious practice. A day of prayer was ordered, and the King, who is theoretically an incarnate God, so made in the Westminster Abbey, took part. But nothing happened—save disasters. Then other prayers were tried—with the same result. Things got worse instead of getting better, and the clergy were artful enough to drop it, and trust to men and women.

But now it has struck the Union of Lay Churchmen that it is time that God did something, or as they meant, the time has come when God did something to earn his salt. Of course, the Union does not put it that way; it prefers to say we must show penitence and send us better times and opportunity. These lay churchmen are as artful as the full blown preachers, but prayers are of no great demand in the market just now.

There is an old German story of a ghost that had for long haunted a village. No one ever waited to see this terrible

creature, the people deserted their homes, and the evidence of the existence of the ghost was there in the fact that he robbed them of goods. Nothing of the ghost was ever seen, but a fearful shaped head appeared. Then a few dare-devils resolved that they would attack the ghost when it next appeared. Terrified they seized the skull—only to find that the head was empty. So was the belief in gods. People for many, many centuries have bowed to their gods for the ill they inflicted and also the good they were believed to give. Then daring men—and women—threw off the fear of the gods, and discovered that good and bad things come from ignorance or weakness, but nothing else. And avowedly, weakness and goodness are products of Men. That is the lesson that we have to learn.

Once upon a time man took God as he found him. He had to. God was there—uninvited—and man had to make the best of it. His chief concern was how to make the best terms with a rather troublesome character. Then very gradually things began to alter. Man found that he could do things, and get things, without bothering God or wishing God to bother him. He found that in some respects some things happened without God. He realised that whether he wished it or not certain things did happen—and they happened just as they did generations before. The whole situation underwent a radical change. Instead of man justifying God, God had to justify God before man. And then the days of the gods began to decline. They followed the step that promised the disappearance of gods altogether. For he had to make his character to man, and that was not an easy task. Instead of God judging man, man began to judge God, and the judgements were not always in God's favour. That is really where we are staged to-day. God no longer threaten, his agents dare not threaten—both of them are beginning to "wheedle," and wheedling is a bad practice for either gods or their angels.

A lot has been said both for and against the clergy, and one often wonders what would happen if the whole of the clergy—young and old, good and bad—were suddenly stricken with an epidemic of clear thinking and honest speaking. There would be a course, already a number—a growing number—who are leaving the pulpit and turning to some other form of industry. The exodus is greater than the general public know. We may point on one side the number of eminent men who were intended for the Church, and who began the task, but in the end turned their hand to better work. And above the number belong to the higher classes we come to the number of men who had joined the Churches and now find it impossible to gain a living for wife and children if they turn from the pulpit. We are not here speaking in the dark. We have had conversations and even letters from men whom I have come to know, and who have given their feelings regarding a Church they once worshipped. These men give as little religion as they give in their sermons, and come as near to Secularism as they can.

It is a truth of psychology that men see things in terms of their knowledge and inclinations. A Roman Catholic watching a priest performing the Mass believes he is being brought into touch with God. An anthropologist sees the repetition of a savage mystery decked out with a queer dress and practice that carries him back to the methods of an ancient "medicine man" who fools himself to fool others. An ordinary man walks through a London fog and catches nothing but a red light. An artistic painter follows the same fog and catches an inspiration for a great picture. One man attends a Spiritualist meeting and sees nothing but common trickery; another sees himself surrounded with "Spirit friends" whose continued existence is with dead friends. Everywhere a man tends to get out of the world what he puts into it. Even one of our leading religious papers, "The Church Times," can say that "Anyone who deliberately sets out to exploit human credulity has unlimited opportunities." That comes from "The Church Times," and its judgment deserves recognition. It might have come direct from the "Freethinker."

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601. 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. E. NICHOLSON.—We note your statement that in Russia the marriage between a Russian and a foreigner may be forbidden, and so equals the power of our King to forbid a marriage in the royal family without the permission of the reigning monarch. But we do not see the point, save so far as interference with marriages is concerned.

C. WILLIAMS.—You are misinformed. No judge has the power to compel a witness to take the religious oath when it has been made clear that the ground of objection is based on either no religious belief or contrary to religious belief. If the judge insists on the religious oath, which is not very likely, "respectfully decline" should be enough.

E. W. JAMES.—Thanks for cuttings, they are useful, but the item you speak about was not in the envelope.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 13s. from the Oxford Branch N.S.S. to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

K. TACCH.—Will appear as soon as possible.

To "The Freethinker."—"Four Tynesiders," 10s.

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

We again repeat our notice that the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. will take place in Newcastle-on-Tyne on Whit Sunday. It is to be hoped that all who can will be present. The Conference may have special importance. There will be a reception on the evening before the Conference, and there will be a public meeting on the Sunday evening. The speakers will be named later. All members must bring membership cards with them, and if they have gone astray, a new one will be issued on application to the Secretary. Those who desire to have hotel accommodation should write the Secretary at once, making quite clear their needs. The question of a day's outing on the Whit Sunday is under consideration. All members are at liberty to take part in the discussions, and may send any legitimate matter to the Agenda. The Annual Conference offers a fine opportunity for meeting old friends and making new ones.

It is a long time since champions of Christianity offered, or been accepted, discussion with well known Freethinkers. But the new "Christian Commandoes" seem of a different kind. Mr. Chapman Cohen has agreed to meet the Rev. Gordon Rupp in Cambridge and discuss "Is Christianity a Social Necessity?" The meeting place will be the Church Hall, Grange Park Road, Leyton (eight minutes walk from Leyton Town Hall). There is a good service of buses from all quarters. The chair will be taken at 7.30 p.m., on Wednesday, April 16. The debate should be interesting. Following that discussion, two others are being arranged, one by our Secretary, the other by Mr. Archibald Robertson, M.A. Full particulars later.

We note again that the current interest in Thomas Paine grows. We have lately secured two books, both of good quality: Joseph Lewis produces "Thomas Paine, author of the Declaration of Independence." He gives a facsimile of the "Declaration of Independence," and with other items it gives very much of Paine. Certainly Paine was the influential man in bringing the revolution to a head, and did much to inspire the military during the course of the revolution. It is a book that was needed, and the price is three dollars.

The other book is larger, and the title is "Tom Paine: America's Godfather." Again comes the homage to Paine which Christian lying in this country did so much to prevent. Their hatred was justified, for, but for preventing people reading and understanding Paine, we should have had our revolution in 1820 instead of waiting for 1947. Mr. Woodward's book was originally published in the U.S.A. It has now been taken over by an English publisher, price 18s.; high price, but it is a big and good book. The section on the "Age of Reason," which sent the English clergy raving and lying, might have been more expanded, but the book is now English, and one must not expect too much. Still, more should have been said. Paine was a very, very great man. He was born before his time, to use a common phrase, and he paid the price.

We may also say now that it is only the paper shortage that has prevented our printing our "Bible Handbook," which has passed through about ten editions. We have now every prospect of putting that book on the market in about a month's time. That should, with the revival of Paine, make Christian leaders think the devil is really at large.

In the Socialist Hall, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, Mr. J. Shortt will speak to-day on "Jesus Christ and Horoscopes." The lecture begins at 7 p.m.

The following from the "Daily Telegraph" is worth noting:

Sir,—Letters are continually being published from the Lord's Day Observance minority's point of view, although, of course, everybody is perfectly familiar with it, and we can respect them for acting on what they sincerely believe, much as it may, and undoubtedly does, annoy the rest of the population.

The whole Sabbatarian case rests on one thing, and one only—the six-day Creation legend, although most educated people know that the earth was not created but evolved, and not in six days but in hundreds of millions of years.

Since modern scientific knowledge has completely demolished this old Babylonian myth, why do civilised people still have to suffer under it?—Yours, etc.,

Bournemouth.

M. C. BROMMEROS, Cmdr., R.N.

IMPRESSIONS OF 1946

III.

PROGRESS, OR WHAT HAVE YOU.—Quote N.Y. "Freethinker," November, 1946; "The Archbishop of York said in London 'adultery should not be considered an unforgivable wrong; that adultery is not inflicting a wrong which can never be forgiven'. . . now we have a church sanction of adultery, added to war, torture, rape and murder." And perhaps before long the other 61 Reasons why Ingersoll Doubted the Bible.

OTHER ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE U.S.A.—A young man steals \$500.00 worth (£125) of silk stockings; tells the Judge he was studying for the ministry; some "Reverend" friend comes to his aid and gives the Judge a line of malarky, finally inducing Judge to suspend sentence; after which triumph of justice, His Lordship admonished, "That's right, son . . . go back to the Lord's work. You'll have no more trouble." (Our jails are full anyway.)

A Reverend Frank Siple in New York City kills his daughter, after she accused him of murdering the mother. Later on this man of God attacks with an iron pipe some member of the church. (And later on he will likely tell the jury he "can't explain it all—must have been an unwilling instrument of unseen Forces or something" and the jails are crowded.)

Filthiest mess of all was the case of Wallace Ellis, a former minister of the Gospel, his wife, Easter, and a 16 year-old daughter. (This is really Exhibit A for 1946.) This animal Ellis, who was once human, sold a national distributor of obscene photos a lot of family scatology of such a vulgar nature that even the Judge fainted; and that is *really* something!

Other "Reverends" are divorced, charged with adultery and neglect of the plaintiffs . . . one is caught living at the Beach with a strange woman . . . several are fined on "morals charges." (Meaning *Immoral*.)

Five of the Snake Cult in Tennessee now dead from rattlesnake bites, including the Preacher, Harry Skelton. The law wants to stop it, but claim they "don't know what to do." And "the law" is wise not to bother these particular people, in this particular section. The Martins and the Coys originated in these yare parts; they were killers even unto the second generation thereof; even after the causes of the Great Feud were forgotten!

YOU WILL, WILL YOU! (No Bacon cryptogram intended.) Archbishop of Canterbury produced the usual disaster; greatest rains, floods, hurricane and loss of crops throughout England in past 40 years. The Power of Prayer reported by Eric Russell, a Fortean friend, of Liverpool. Also in the newspapers here; yet no newspaper or weekly news journal connected the National Day of Prayer for fine weather *with the results*. Why this visitation of Jehovah's wrath? Either one of two non-sensible answer-might be it. National prayers cause such a drumming in old nobodaddy's ears, etc. . . . or, too many of you Britons are going back on old Gawd the Fraud and he takes this way to show the minority Group of alleged "Christians" (70 per cent. Frauds) what he thinks of the whole caboodle. (Same sort of argument you see in "Church Times.")

Appropos, and according to Sir Douglas Young in "Literary Guide" (November, 1946), after your First Day of Prayer, 1940, the Belgians quit; after Second Day of Prayer the French flopped; after your recent experience, what a mess! And Britain needing crops so muchly.

Are you, or are you not going to stop "National Calamity Prayer Days," or try it again sometime, *and maybe have the Island sink?*

AND KANSAS PRAYED FOR RAIN!—In July, the crops in Kansas looked doubtful, as well as parts of Oklahoma and Texas. A furnace heat lay over the prairies for days and weeks. Kansas and Texas sky pilots joined up in prayer for rain, just a nice rain or two, O Lord! And after a time, "a time of hesitation and of doubt," came the whole water works! And in certain sections o'er the land the people were sore, and were they sore!

It was the Over-answer.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE.—November 19: "Hollywood Dry of Ideas," says Sam Goldwyn. Indeed a "news" headline. Readers began thinking . . . the cinema actually the greatest of potential educational factors in the world to-day. In 30 years' moviedom—Dry of Ideas! And no wonder. For what the Jews don't control, the Catholics do; and there's the Alliance for the Advancement of the Negro Race, who have just broken loose (December 31) with a Protest against a film play having a character "Topsy" (Uncle Tom's Cabin). Will there be a law eventually to prevent publication of certain world classics? Didn't "Topsy" have considerable sound common sense? What's wrong or unkind to the negro race in portrayals of characters from the Past, like "Uncle Remus," teller of tales the whole world loves?

Considering further pressure on "the Movies" and pressing Hollywood "Dry of Ideas," we noted some months back a small

weak voice from the Protestant minister's gallery calling Cinema producers to account, "why should all these church scenes always be a Roman Catholic scene, always a gaudy, luxurious altar with Prelate Bishop, Archbishop, always at the Apex? Why not a (gaudy) Protestant picture occasionally?" (Answer: Because the Catholics got there fustest.)

Then there's other groups, representatives from Foreign countries, and the Esquimaux. The screws pinch from many angles. This is the reason why the heart of many a good book has been torn out leaving the play a corpse.

It's too bad, but Hollywood sold themselves down the River in the beginning. In my personal opinion art, so represented by the books of brilliant thinkers, was never prostituted to a lower level than the castration received in "Follywood."

With the field limited as it now is, there's a world of casus in Sam Goldwyn's remark.

One can't blame Joe Doakes, My militant Fortean friend, who snorts, "How could anyone be *dry of ideas* who never had any

"Hush!" I retort, "you never had many ideas yourself."

"That's a lie!" and Joe puts himself on the defence, "I was once gonna be a Movie King. . . ."

"Hash slinger to-day—Glamour Star to-morrow—well, go with the pallid data."

"Listen, rat. There was only one thing, only one, y'unnastan that prevented me from bein' a movie king, y'unnastan?"

"Tough, God it was tuff!" I mock, which pleases my friend.

"I couldn't help my envoinment, could I?"

"No, but what you need is an armload of His loving gran here's the cigarette you're about to ask for, you blackguard."

ATROCITIES AT HOME.—Our fight to keep religion out of the Public Schools goes on. The state of North Dakota has Catholic sisters teaching in 17 public schools, according to State records; the rawest deal citizens ever heard of. At Selma, North Dakota, the Principal of the school was a Catholic Priest. Catholic Parochial Schools are one thing, and American Public Schools another. In the writer's 56 years he never heard of a nun or a priest connected with a public school. Looks like the Catholics *own* North Dakota. Slowly but surely the Catholic Church buys real estate property, big buildings, private estate mansion homes which appear for sale. In California, the Church holdings are several millions of dollars in actual value in Los Angeles City alone. Very likely in California State several billions. In the U.S.A. the figures would stagger the Saints—all non-taxable. The taxes lost by our Government are made up by suckers like the Church's adherents and outsiders like myself. The clergy, particularly the Catholic, wallow in luxury—big homes, housekeepers, wine, liquors, cigars, good food, judgments from their full-bodied, fat-faced, red-necked appearances are denied nothing.

This seems the pay-off. They learn to speak an ambiguous language, which is the epitome of deceit. The more we read and meditate on this colossal Hoax, the more we ponder the question: How many individuals, in a lifetime, ever glimpse the bottom of this well of Iniquity called Religion?

THE GLOVED HAND ON THE REACH.—Roman Catholic slick little racket of late is "The Retreat" idea. Following is a copy of a circular card mailed by thousands to the faithful in Los Angeles:—

"Franciscan Fathers of Serra "Retreat" cordially invite you to attend Dedication of new wing of "Retreat House" Sunday, 3 p.m. (date). His Excellency Archbishop John Cantwell, D.D., presiding. God Bless you, may we see you there?"

In any group of employees there is always a Catholic "house-keeper" working for the Church. This person makes friends with the goyim, plays golf with him, goes out to see the goyim's wife and kiddies, and the next thing you know the "Victim" (who tags himself a Protestant) is telling other friends what a

time he had at the "Retreat" last Sunday with Joe McGargle and his friends . . . how quiet it was . . . what a perfect rest he had . . . and (with additional drooling), "Gosh, it was swell out there. Better come out with us next week."

Priests are there, somewhere in the background. Sort of back. So the visitors won't smell the smoke of the faggots; they knew how to alleviate the fear and disgust of a black robe: "Bring a friend to your 'Retreat'" is a clever ruse; maybe a minor incident to you, brother, but beware of the Gloved Hands!

RICHARD ROE (U.S.A.)

(To be continued)

THE OLD HULK

"Religion" is a ship without a rudder,
And Heaven isn't marked on any map.
The Captain can't be seen—but do not shudder—
You must believe he's there, you silly sap!

The parson grabs your fare—it keeps him going;
He warns you there are reefs and rocks ahead.
Though seas run high and stormy winds are blowing
Safe harbour will be reached—when you are dead!

So "All aboard!" The darned old tub is creaking;
But that won't stop a lot of crazy mutts—
Though all the seams and planks are badly leaking
And bolts and rivets missing. Who said *Nuts*?

The whistle blows; the engines snort and grumble;
And then stop dead. The ship's not moved a foot—
And never will—for we've begun to rumble:
Befouled with barnacles—it just stays put!

W. H. WOOD.

Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.—ROBERT BURNS.

THE "FIFTH MONARCHY" MEN AND THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

(Continued from page 111)

... soldiers of the Fifth Monarchy, and as the empires of the Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, and Romans have passed away, they entertain the belief that Christ will come down to earth to emperor of the whole world, continuing his rule over men the space of 1,000 years. With this expectation they detest and despise every kind of dominion in order to dispose the world to receive what they say is to come, and so that when it arrives they may find none to compete with it. (Our italics—F.A.R.)

... this faction is very numerous in England and its professors are fanatics in their behaviour, there is good reason for fearing that in the end they will break out in some cruel and bloody way and carry out their execrable designs regardless of the method they had already raised their standard which bore a red lion couchant on a white ground, with a device taken from Genesis, reading 'Who shall rouse him up,' the lion being intended for that of the tribe of Judah . . . Amongst the persons arrested are many of rank and standing including Major-General Arson (i.e., Harrison—F.A.R.) and other men of mark." (ep. 1657-59, pp. 46-47.)

F. A. RIDLEY.

(To be Continued)

OBITUARY

JAMES THOMPSON

With deep regret we announce the death of a sturdy Freethinker, James Thompson, of Rawdon, Leeds, in his 71st year. From 18 years of age to the end of his life, he followed Freethought principles. He was a member of the National Secular Society until his retirement from active life. One of the finest aspects of his character was his toleration, and his influence upon others was always to the good. In accordance with his wish his remains were cremated, and a Secular Service was read at the Lawnswood Crematorium, Leeds.

R. H. R.

ELIZA MARIA MAPP

With great regret we announce the death of Mrs. Mapp, 74 years old, of Manchester, who took such an active interest in the social affairs of the local society some years ago. She had been in variable health over a long period and her life drew to a close on March 21.

On March 25, Mr. I. Bayford made a few apposite remarks at the Crematorium when a tribute was paid to her work and character.

C. M.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR.

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Blackburn Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Manchester Branch (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 3 p.m., a lecture.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stock Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Value of Freethought," Mr. G. THOMPSON.

Newcastle Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Jesus Christ and Horoscopes," Mr. J. V. SHORTT (Preston).

AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY. A Survey of Positions. By Chapman Cohen Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST. By C. G. L. Du Cann. (Second Edition.) Price 4d.; postage 1d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. By Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

MISTAKES OF MOSES. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

Pamphlets for the People

By CHAPMAN COHEN

What is the Use of Prayer? Did Jesus Christ Exist? Thou shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live. The Devil. Deity and Design. Agnosticism or . . . ? Atheism. What is Freethought? Must we have a Religion? The Church's Fight for the Child. Giving 'em Hell. Freethought and the Child. Morality without God. Christianity and Slavery. Gods and their Makers. Woman and Christianity. What is the use of a Future Life?

Price 2d. each.

Postage 1d. each.

HE NOTHING OF RELIGION KNOWS WHO ONLY KNOWS HIS OWN

Some of the older Faiths very briefly examined

III

EGYPT

THE religion of Egypt, of which written records extend back to 5000 B.C., except for a brief period of near-monotheism (Sun) under one king (who was eventually branded as a criminal heretic and deposed) has always been polytheism, the natural concept of primitive man who could only account for all the incomprehensible phenomena of nature by which he found himself surrounded by supposing them to be actuated and controlled by unseen, man-like agencies such as spirits, gods and devils. These could only be kept in the desirable state of benevolence, or at least neutrality, by means of more or less complicated systems of Magic.

Without magic and mysteries it is doubtful if any religion could ever become popular; the less they understand the more they are thrilled. Accumulating from time immemorial, all these spells, incantations, rites and every conceivable sort of religious superstition and priestly humping into an almost limitless jungle of mumbo jumbo, even the priesthood had to specialise in its numberless departments.

The gods we know best are Osiris, Isis and the son Horus, the Holy Trinity best loved of the masses naturally unable to make head nor tail of the hopelessly tangled and often self-contradictory pantheon.

Many scholars believe these gods to have come originally, and independently of one another, from Syria. During the later stages of development other gods infiltrated from Semite sources.

Vast numbers of drawings of these divine, semi-divine, sacred and semi-sacred beings have been found by archaeologists, of which perhaps the most striking characteristic is the fact of many of them having animal or bird heads. Another thing which the student will notice is the frequency with which the looped cross, or Ankh, appears, invariably shown held in a human hand. This is the Egyptian version of the cross which had been worshipped from prehistoric times as the symbol of fertility, increase of man, beast and corn, the sign of the male piercing the female and the consequent reproduction. Without such increase a tribe or a nation would be in danger of extinction.

The feasts of fertilisation, of man, beast and crop, are by far the most important feasts in old Egypt, and for obvious reasons. Some scholars believe that the animal-headed gods were the original Nile gods, the anthropomorphic having found their way in from outside, and yet some of the early Egyptian gods started life as more or less mummified kings, with no associations with sacred animals.

Other religions worshipped or venerated sacred animals, or course, and it was quite an ordinary occurrence for a god to be carried into another area or country where, under another name perhaps, it might be amalgamated with a local god of the same "department." The Christian Scriptures do not mention any sacred animals but lists are given of animals described as "abominable" in the sight of their creator.

Examples of animal-headed gods are, for instance, Ra, a hawk-headed Sun god, Thoth, the ibis-headed god of Learning, or the male, human-headed lion called a Sphinx, which is used to represent some king looking like, or even as being, an incarnation of the god Horus.

Speaking of mummified kings, it is a curious fact that mummification was practised by some sects of early Christians, which helps to illustrate how at practically no time during the (sometimes radically changing) evolution of any religion can its adherents agree as to what they do and what they do not want to believe. Vide the 400, often bitterly opposed, sects of present-day Christianity. These same people do not fight over the multiplication table. Why not? Because its truth is self-evident.

Religious belief is almost entirely governed—after geography, of course—by what one *wants* to believe, and quite irrespective of mere evidence or facts; which is one reason for the impossibility of compiling a short summary of any religion which will satisfy everyone, whether believer or atheist, scholar or proletarian.

Burnt offerings were no Egyptian invention but the offering of gifts to the gods (i.e., their attendant priests), was, of course, an essential part of the religion. The partaking of a Holy Sacrament, symbolic flesh and blood of a god, was practised.

Now, since the human animal first began to think coherently the mystery of death must have puzzled and worried him ceaselessly. Life—whatever he may have called it—had apparently gone out of a body and therefore must have gone elsewhere. He had ocular proof that although the life went out of his old crop yet it is resurrected every year. A flame is, obviously, a piece of the sun; it dies, and again obviously, goes back to the sun. Where else could it be hidden? The god Sun himself died every day and came to life again. Where his life had been in the interval was the witch-doctor's business to explain. Hence the endless superstitions about the spirits of the dead among scientifically ignorant people. This cult of the dead reached its highest development in ancient Egypt and Babylon, records of it have been handed down to us in various "Books of the Dead," a sort of guide book for departed souls; in pyramid texts and elsewhere, but the subject cannot be enlarged upon here. The student will get the impression that by far the major portion of this religion is made up of concern for, and magic procedures concerning the dead. The motive behind this activity being, presumably fear, rather than love.

In later times the Semitic idea of "sin" and grovelling confession appears to have been introduced here and there, though this is foreign to the Egyptian outlook, which was that as everything was controlled by some god or other it merely imported that the god's co-operation be obtained by the orthodox spells, enchantments and assorted magics, and this having been done he had nothing to reproach himself with *religiously*. It did not occur to him that there was any need for an apology for being alive, as in the Christian Faith.

Long lists of prayers never take the form of apology to some god but always run: "I have not robbed the poor or widowed"; "I have not slandered my neighbour"; "I have not dishonoured my father or my mother"; and so on. The whole indicates an ethical code that has never since been improved upon, even in the comparatively modern Christian code.

The best—perhaps the only way to get an understanding of the age-old cult of magic, its origin, meanings, rites and ceremonies which reached its peak in old Egypt, and which forms the basis of all evolved (i.e., not as originally preached) religions, would be to study Sir J. Frazer's "The Golden Bough," the best known treatise on the subject. There he will find his Holy Communion being practised by Polynesian savages thousands of years after the birth of a god being celebrated in the wilds of Asia on the 25th of December by contemporaries of the first Pharaoh, etc. This book is now obtainable in one volume, and a very fair idea of the subject can be obtained without necessarily a long study of every case illustrated. The present writer read all its 13 volumes through, as a young man, in his spare time at sea.

Reading without thought is sterile. Thought without reading is futile.

M. C. BROTHERTON, Comdr., R.N.

Pepys in his diary notes that he went to Rochester Cathedral . . . observing the great doors of the church, as they were "covered with the skin of Danes." Punishment of this kind appears to have had the sanction of the law in the Anglo-Saxon period, when money was often paid out by the offender to get his skin (hide gild) a ransom for one's hide.