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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Concluded from page 182)

BUT there remains one aspect of Christian influence that is not sufficiently appreciated. Remember that we are not dealing with a passing phase of brutalisation such as Europe is at present threatened with, but a phase of teaching and control which existed, scarcely checked, for many generations.

Of these evil influences I will name only two. The first is that of celibacy. In the New Testament, there is a striking absence of teaching concerning family life. The alleged Founder of Christianity was a celibate. In Heaven, there was to be no marriage nor giving in marriage. The great moulder of Christianity, Paul, was a celibate and permitted marriage only because its absence would lead to something worse—"Better to marry than to burn"; and the early Church was saturated with the exaltation of celibacy. The oldest and still the largest branch of the Christian Church has a celibate priesthood.

Consider the consequences of this glorification of celibacy. It is characteristic with all teaching that it appeals, for good or evil, to the most thoughtful. The thoughtless—if they ever bother to read or listen—are little affected by it. So it happened, as Galton, the founder of the science of Eugenics, pointed out many years ago (1869), that the Christian campaign in favour of the superiority of the celibacy appealed mostly to those who were better fitted to become the parents of the next generation. To quote Galton:—

Whenever a man or woman was possessed of a gentle nature that fitted him or her to deeds of charity, to mediation, to literature, or to art, the social condition of the time was such that they had no refuge elsewhere than in the bosom of the Church. But the Church chose to preach and exact celibacy . . . The consequence was that these gentle natures had no continuance, and thus, by a policy so singularly unwise and suicidal that I am hardly able to speak about it without impatience, the Church brutalised the breed of our forefathers. She acted precisely as if she had aimed at selecting the rudest portion of the community to be, alone, the parents of future generations. She practised the arts which breeders would use who aimed at creating ferocious, curish and stupid natures.

We cannot forbear noting how closely this policy of the Catholic Church corresponds with totalitarianism. This is not the only instance in which dictatorship has followed the policy of the Christian Church before a revival of civilisation compelled a halt. "The evil that men do lives after them."

We have said little about the vast numbers of men and women who were tortured or killed. Numbers are impressive to the average historian, and also to most individuals. And there is no denying the evil of a state of terrorism created by the threat to freedom of thought

and speech. But we must never overlook the consideration that the greatest evils of persecution do not come by way of punishment or even death. As in the case of celibacy, it is with the type of character that is likely to survive under such conditions that the historian must deal.

Let it be remembered that in all cases of persecution for freedom, it is the better, the more independent characters, who suffer; the poorest ones that survive. Knavery can exist under the severest threat to honesty.

Nor can we congratulate ourselves with the thought that this process of the survival of the mentally unfit is ended. It is still with us in every country in the world in which the Christian Church exercises power. In politics and in the various phases of public life in this country—as well as in others—the politician who avows himself to be an Atheist, or even without any definite religion, knows full well that he will have to fight harder for recognition, and may never reach the end at which he is aiming so long as he openly proclaims he is without belief in Christianity, or some other religion. Hundreds of our men in public life pay this lip homage to a lie, and the saddest feature of it all is that far from bringing reproof it is counted to him for righteousness.

It is the same in the business world. The small shop-keeper finds it to his interest at least to pretend to believe in some sort of a religion. The man in a larger way of business follows suit, also finds it to his interest to pretend at least to be on friendly terms with some kind of a religion and with some kind of a God. We may trace the same kind of selection of the least mentally fit through every branch of life. When the Church was strong, it used as arguments in favour of its teachings, the prison, the torture chamber and the stake. Now it tries by bribery and threats to do what it can no longer achieve by open violence. It says, as plainly as it can, that if you do not believe in our teachings then you shall, so far as our influence extends, be kept out of public life, shall be hampered in your business, restricted in your social freedom. You will be followed by insinuations, curtailed in your friends. Do what we say and all things you desire may be given to you. But decline to call a lie a probable truth, place your heretical opinions before the world, not with timidity and apologies for disturbing another's opinions about religion, but with courage and uncompromising clarity, then you shall be abused, boycotted, shut off from the public ear, kept out of public office, libelled and misrepresented until you consent to lie and hide from the public your real beliefs.

I trust now, readers will understand why we take the crowning crime of the Christian Church to be its ingrained intolerance; it is not the number of people it put to death, but the type of character it preserved and perpetuated. A man could go to the stake with his own self-respect untouched, and even with some degree of pity for his persecutors. Death never harmed any man;

only life can do that. All the lies, the cruelties, the brutalities, all the acts of meanness, belong to life. The only charge that can be brought against death is that it *is*.

The offence of the Christian Church was the crime it committed against life. It did what it could, generation after generation, century after century, to rob life of its best and to breed from the worst. And if it has happened that the better type survived here and there within the Church, that is both an indication that in the end that stream of living continuity which we call life cannot be altogether denied. But it remains true that the crowning crime of Christianity is that it did what it could to lower the level of life. It is never completely true that brave men and women conquer tyranny, for beyond their defiance there are large numbers who bow before the storm of intolerance. Tyranny, bigotry, intolerance are not beaten so long as they require the uncommon man or woman to sacrifice himself or herself because they could not be terrified into submission. Intolerance will only have been beaten when the average man looks upon it with disgust and feels that he would be sinking in his neighbour's estimation if he encouraged the vile thing.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

OLIVER } CROMWELL'S TOLERANT POLICY

THE Anglo-Catholics, led by Archbishop Laud in the reign of Charles I, so bitterly persecuted all Dissenters that the Puritans at last arose in rebellion. It is demonstrable that religion exercised an enormous influence in the conflict between Crown and Parliament. Yet, many historians have treated the struggle as one occasioned by political and economic considerations alone. Indeed, a legal authority so eminent as the late Sir William Holdsworth in his standard *History of English Law*, interprets the conflict as one dominated by the resentment of the taxpayer against illegal exploitation. But as Dr. W. K. Jordan declares in his discriminating *Development of Religious Toleration in England* (Unwin, Vol. iii, 1938): "The Civil War would hardly have occurred had it not been for the harsh intolerance of Laud and the amazing inability of the Stuarts to gauge the strength and meaning of the religious forces which they had resolved to destroy. The system of enforced conformity which they had striven to rear, lacking the broad base of the Elizabethan structure, was to collapse ignominiously with the first rude impact of rebellion."

Still, despite the recently rapid increase of Independent opinion, when once the strict Presbyterians had climbed to power over the prostrate bodies of their Anglican assailants, they promptly set to work to establish a Calvinist theocracy as cruel and oppressive as that of their predecessors. Laud was beheaded and the Catholics were severely penalised. Nevertheless, the secular and sectarian spirit increased in influence, especially in the Army. Cromwell's victories and his powerful personality made him conspicuous under the Commonwealth, and chief Minister of the State during the Protectorate.

A man of bright intellect, Cromwell was unconcerned with popular prejudices and superstitions, and he strove to establish a system of toleration which would, had his will prevailed, have included Unitarians or Socinians, as they were then termed, as well as Catholics and Jews. But the obstacles he encountered were legion.

The Anglo-Catholics and Romanists had supported the Crown in the Civil War and their loyalty to the Commonwealth was therefore suspected. Then, the extreme sectaries and even the early Quakers constantly confounded liberty with license and proved almost as intolerant as the orthodox Presbyterians. It was, therefore, no easy task to compose these differences. Yet Cromwell, who appears to have persuaded himself that he acted under divine inspiration, was undismayed. A convinced believer in private judgment and free inquiry, no single sect could claim him. As Jordan conceives the Protector's spiritualist outlook: "He held that all men are competent to find God's truth and must be permitted to walk undisturbed in the pursuit of that way which God has ordained they must find. The clerical mind, he consistently maintained, had complicated and distorted the means and nature of faith, and had sought to impose upon men the tyranny of prescription. His solution of the problem of religious freedom was completely lay. While he did not minimise the spiritual capacity of the clergy, he barred them from a position of influence in his government and found in the sovereignty of the State the firm guarantee of religious liberty." Thus only could the mental and moral freedom of the community be sustained against the arrogant restrictions of clericalism.

Cromwell became the leader of all the sects that had perforce united to lessen the pressure of Presbyterian intolerance but, when once the Calvinists had been overcome, the Protector was deeply distressed to discover that the sectarian coalition which had been formed against Presbyterian despotism disintegrated after its victory, and that each of the discordant sects was bent on the restoration of intolerance for itself alone and forgot its reprobation of the religious tyranny of its Presbyterian predecessors. Fanatical writers and preachers reviled both the political and religious policy of the Government in scurrilous terms and did not spare the Protector himself. Nevertheless, he grimly attempted "to preserve sectarianism against its own inherent anarchism and thrust England into the mould of a comprehensive religious settlement which be preserved by military power and which he contemplated buttressing by the assumption of the Crown."

Cromwell was far in advance of his time, although he was not alone in his conviction that a broad based toleration was imperative to assure the State's stability. But he was embarrassed by the bigotry of the rigid Presbyterians on the one hand and the uncertain loyalty of the Anglicans on the other. Moreover, repressive measures were necessitated by the abortive rising of the Anglo-Catholics in 1655, and the shameful conduct of the Levellers and Fifth Monarchy fanatics. Still, even then, Roman Catholics were much more generously treated, although the Protector was unable to free them completely from legal disabilities.

Oliver vainly entreated the Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists to assent to a concordant guaranteeing religious liberty to all. The Baptists were open to reason, but narrow-minded Independents denounced the authorities for its leniency towards heretics and blasphemers. But Cromwell clung to his convictions while many petitions were presented demanding further reformation. For instance, Salop petitioners required "the immediate suppression of wakes, morris dancing, profane sports, adultery, idleness, and an effective restraint of blasphemy and error."

As ever, religious zeal, when uncontrolled, ran riot and Cromwell was urged by the more conservative members of his Council to check the violence of the

THE PROBLEM OF PERSONALITY

III

THE symbolism of *persona* and of *dramatis personæ* is seen in all the Arts, in poetry, in rhetoric. We "live" the play, in novels, in books, in words, in memory. In this world of illusion, we cultivate our feelings, our aptitudes, personal idiosyncrasies. The personal appeal is as false as personality is artificial. Aesthetic delight, moral virtue and personal satisfaction are excuses. To say that people like these things ignores both social and individual consequences. At one time people "liked" public executions, they "liked" tales of heaven and hell, and got a kick out of condemnation of sex and sin.

In this technique of illusion we see the tragedy of our daily lives. We enjoy the tragedy in novels, on stage, screen and radio. We have no stomach for the tragedy of everyday life. In personal satisfaction of repressed feelings our world of makebelieve is like a land of unfulfilled desire. Psycho-analysis has thrown light on the Psychopathology of everyday life; the abnormal on the normal. The dreams of childhood are simple, of the adult more complex, and there is close resemblance between the social and the dream symbolism. C. G. Jung considers the images in dreams the *persona persona* with which the dreamer identifies himself. So we see personal identification in the ecstatic wish-fulfilment of the dream.

Undoubtedly our dream world of symbolism has values, shown by Marett in folklore, and seen in fairy tales told to children; giving habits in memory, constraint and aspiration. But the folklore enshrines folk law, the taboo, adding to the restraint of social life. The repression and inhibition gives rise to the habit of forgetting; which is just as positive as memory; the desire to forget the painful truths of cold, hard facts; to escape the pains and penalties; to avoid difficulties and dangers. Such oblivion is a fool's paradise.

The hypnosis of auto-suggestion is a common fact of everyday life. By continuous repetition we build up defence mechanisms. We see what we want to see and we do not see what we do not want to see, forgetting the circumstances under which our likes and wants were cultivated. Our tastes are not only acquired, they are cultivated socially, and consequent feelings of the individual, expressed in personal idiosyncrasies may become delusion or obsession.

There is danger in this striving to forget. We know the defence mechanisms, escape mechanisms, and their consequences. We might succeed in forgetting and then be unable to remember; in which case, we would need the hypnotism and suggestion of the alienist or psycho-analyst to stimulate our memory. Such is the so-called unconscious mind; it is the result of forgetting, of the habit of escapism. Although modern psychology is practical, its "unconscious" is just as transcendental as the self and is equally concerned with the "Old Adam."

Striving to square ancient and modern; seeking personal motives in Ids, Libidos, Egos and Super-egos, instead of considering these as criteria by which to judge the psychological aspect of our behaviour. Instead of saying plainly that we are unconscious of any reason, cause or motive; that our behaviour is habitual and customary; the saying is that our motives lie deep in the unconscious; as if there were a premeditated motive.

If dreams are the expression of deep unconscious cravings, so are the ecstatic joy and sustaining inspiration of "the one true faith." The priesthood insists

Fifth Monarchy eccentrics in the interest of public security. Harrison, Lilburne and other incendiaries were openly preaching rebellion. The Protector himself was calumniated by Powell, Freake and other religious lunatics, while London was so agitated by zealotry that Cromwell was gravely concerned and completely disgusted. He was accused of betraying the Army and persecuting the saints. As Jordan testifies: "The tolerance and patience of few governments have ever been so sorely tested, and certainly few governments have ever shown greater restraint and tenderness in the handling of fanatical and seditious abuse. Cromwell's devotion to the principle of religious liberty had been tested and proved under conditions of great stress." Still, the excesses of the zealots greatly changed the general outlook, and the authorities became free to establish their scheme for instituting a State Church designed to embrace all those who adhered to the fundamental principles of Protestantism. This body would thus include Presbyterians, Baptists, Independents, and even Anglicans. In this ideal communion, no unanimity concerning doctrine or ritual was required. Comprehension and religious toleration were the State's objectives. No State restrictions were to be imposed and each parish was to be at liberty to exercise its own moral conscience.

But Cromwell's humanitarian efforts were nullified by the obscurantism of his Parliaments. The alleged heresies and blasphemies which he was willing to tolerate aroused the horror of Puritan politicians. Yet the liberty of thought and expression gained proved important in coming generations, despite the reaction which disgraced the Restoration after 1660.

From 1655 to 1657, Cromwell's progressive policy was vindicated. England was not overwhelmed with heresy which the pious predicted. Fanaticism died down and former critics of the Protector's policy testified to the calm that followed the earlier years of sectarian strife, while the principle of general toleration became widely accepted.

After their long banishment, a small Jewish colony was established in England, despite Christian prejudice and commercial jealousy. Cromwell was aware of the value of Jewish traders and financiers for increasing our exports and shipping, through loans raised on comparatively easy terms by the Amsterdam banking houses. Not only did Cromwell rise superior to the anti-Semitism of his time, but it is also to his credit that he demanded and obtained important religious concessions for English subjects domiciled in Catholic lands. Also, the Protectorate had granted religious rights to all law-abiding Quakers, but, after Cromwell's death, and the Restoration under Charles, a wild outburst of persecution was endured by what is now universally acknowledged to be a highly respected and philanthropic sectarian group.

T. F. PALMER.

TRUTH

In our small personal affairs there is such a thing as righteous suppression of the truth—even such a thing as commendable lying. Under certain circumstances avowal of convictions is as hateful and mischievous as under most circumstances dissimulation is. But in all the large matters of the mind—in philosophy, religion, science, art, and the like—a lesser service to the race than utterance of the truth as he thinks he sees it, leaving the result to whatever powers may be, no man has a right to be content with having performed, for it is only so that truth is established.—

AMAROSE BIERCE

upon the personal character of God. There is nothing more intimate than God. As man is, so is his god. The "true believer" knows the feelings and intentions of God. God is a magnified self reflected back in personal identification. With sublimated cravings expressed in restless missionary zeal, he "feels it in his heart," in his "very bones."

Sure in his conviction, sincere in his passion, dangerous in his sincerity; his feelings are the reason, the cause, the motive; his feelings are his very life. In this realm of personal feelings, we see the falsity of the criterion of personality, and of personal identification. For here, we are, ourselves, our own criteria. We are judge, jury, counsel, and, prisoner in the dock. For, as personality is a reflection of the self, self-justification is countered by casuistical condemnation of selfishness, in self condemnation.

The complexity of social life involves differences of personal feeling; childhood, adolescence, maturity, age; even with the same individual, and under different circumstances. Past and present, old and new, youth and age, as well as sectional interests, give diversity of feelings. The assumption of a common humanity, of a common basis of sympathy, is false, for we also have common antipathies. Indeed, the feelings that humanity has in common range through the whole gamut of emotions.

It is said that we should try to put ourselves in the other fellow's position, to see from his point of view. But that is what we do. We put ourselves in his place, still seeing through our own eyes, reading our feelings into him. As Chapman Cohen says, we can no more get outside ourselves than we can lift ourselves up by our own boot tags. In our feelings towards the other fellow, we lose sight of our own position; of our own self-interest; of the social relationships in personal experience.

The "religious experience" is personal, but personal experience is social; arising in social relationship. The problem of personality involves the difference between the religious and the scientific approach. The religious personal appeal centres upon feeling. The scientific approach is one of comparative relationship, an appreciation of social conditions and consequences. If an animal shows intelligence in adaptation to its environment, man will show his in adaptation to his social environment.

H. H. PREECE.

IS IT LIKELY !

LOOKING the thing fairly and squarely in the face, the greatest argument against Christianity is its improbability.

It is extremely unlikely that an omnipotent Deity would make but a single revelation, in Jesus Christ, as late in the world's history as 2,000 years ago, and then manifest himself no more, in all the years since, during which years humanity has suffered wars, and the rumours and aftermaths of wars, oppression and slavish toil, famine and pestilence, poverty and pain and, in the name of the Church itself, some of the most fiendish torture on record. It is estimated that from 1483 to 1809 the "Holy Inquisition" in Spain imprisoned and subjected to various degrees of torture 291,450 persons, and actually burned alive 31,900.

It is improbable—accepting, if we can, the reasonableness of a single revelation—that an omnipotent God would permit this revelation to hang on but a slender thread of evidence, outside the Bible; indeed, we must admit outside the four Gospels, which are very contradictory in themselves. These are our only direct sources of information about the life and teaching of Jesus. The

epistles are the writings of his immediate followers, and it must be remembered that St. Paul, who was mainly responsible for formulating Christian belief, never saw Jesus, nor heard him preach.

It is unlikely, we repeat, that this single revelation would be made in such an uncertain manner, that the very existence of Christ, as an historical fact, could be reasonably questioned. It is remarkable that all the evidence is in its nature second-hand, and that there have been preserved no actual writings of Jesus. It is strange that the histories of his time should have been so silent about him. If he went abroad, proclaiming himself the Son of God, this would surely have been recorded. Yet in point of fact, two passages from the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian (there is evidence that these were added at a later date); a reference in an introduction to a history by Tacitus (he himself makes no mention of Jesus) and a passing notice in the Jewish Talmud, exhaust the flimsy evidence we have of him, apart from the Bible.

And just how reliable is the Bible! It is not one book but many, and it is very inconsistent within its own pages. In addition it has been subjected to so many revisions that little can remain of the original writings. The Authorised Version, which is still the Bible most readily recognised to-day, is excellent literature. By comparison, versions and paraphrases which have been made since, seem to be "writ in water." The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century translators, who produced the Authorised Version, made the Bible largely their own, in much the same way as Edward Fitzgerald was responsible for the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, as we know it to-day.

It should be realised that the Old Testament—the Hebrew Bible—is of a purely legendary character. The original writings were founded on the beliefs of primitive people and the Story of Creation, the Fall of Man and the Deluge were borrowed from previously-existing religions. The Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament are largely legendary too, and earlier religions have their story of the Virgin Birth, the Cross and the Resurrection. The writings of the New Testament are not reliable with respect to dates and places and were not written by the persons whose names they bear; in fact, they were written years after the lifetime of the reputed writers. At the end of the fourth century there were no less than two hundred Gospel manuscripts in existence, but only four are regarded as genuine to-day. One wonders why precisely these four!

Is the Bible conception of God really tenable? Can the mind conceive a God who is jealous and demands worship, self-abasement and flattery? His alleged omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence present endless difficulties, too. As H. G. Wells has put it, "a God who knows everything must be entirely stagnant mentally. How can he think since everything is there in his mind already. And if he fills all space then he is fixed for ever. How can he move? He cannot think; he has thought it all; he cannot move; he is there already. And since he is incapable of mental and physical change, then so far from being omnipotent he is powerless."

How can we reconcile pain and suffering with the idea of a loving Father? We have heard a great deal about the compensations of suffering which has not been very convincing; of how suffering has goaded men to their highest achievements. But surely it is true to say they accomplished what they did in spite of ill-health, rather than because of it. "Pain and evil exist," C. E. M. Joad has written, "and either God acquiesces

ATHEISM AND SPIRITUALISM

AS Mr. T. D. Smith, in his article "Our Radio Spirits," continues to question me I feel I should oblige him with a reply, even at the risk of boring everybody else by unduly prolonging this controversy.

Without offence I would suggest there must be something wrong with Mr. Smith's eyesight, or his spectacles, as he seems to delight in accusing me of saying things I never said at all. He starts off by saying that he is quietly amused by my statement that the spirits "are a little annoyed by cheap jibes and ridicule" and then asks me to tell him how I know this.

Perhaps if he will get someone else to read my statement for him he will discover that I said no such thing. What I said was this, "perhaps they are a little annoyed by the cheap jibes and ridicule of those who seem to think they know all there is to know." This is rather different from saying they *are* annoyed. Surely only a person entirely lacking any sense of humour would dream of taking the remark seriously.

Mr. Smith next denies the right of an atheist, like myself, to "sit on the fence." I take it that by this expression he means "taking observation." Is there any reason why an atheist should not take observation or try to find out if there is any truth in survival or not? Anyway, I would rather sit on the fence with an open mind than arbitrarily condemn without taking the trouble to inquire. And why should I conclude that because he has read "The Freethinker" for over 40 years that he has read lots of books about the occult—especially as he admits that he does not know what the occult is? I suggest he reads the books I mentioned (which he says he does not want to read) in order to find out.

Mr. Smith ridicules the ability of the Yogi and says he wants deeds and not words. But why should the Yogis come over here to ride bicycles (as he suggests) for his benefit or swim the Atlantic? Why doesn't he go to India and see for himself what Yogis can *do*—I can assure him the last thing they do is *talk*.

Finally, Mr. Smith says that the best proof that I have not shed my religion is that I object to humour. Well, really, Mr. Smith! If you have read "The Freethinker" for so many years you must be acquainted with some of my contributions in the last few years, and if you have failed to see any humour in a number of my verses and articles then you must be strangely lacking in that commodity yourself.

But perhaps I have already guessed as much.

W. H. WOOD.

THE ALMIGHTY

If instead of the "glad tidings" that there exists a being in whom all the excellences which the highest human mind can conceive exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a being whose attributes are infinite, but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the principles of his government, except that "the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving" does not sanction them, convince me of it, and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality, I say, in plain terms, that I *will not*. Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do—he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.

J. S. MILL.

in their existence, or he does not; either, that is to say, he could remove them and does not, in which case he is not benevolent, or he would like to, but cannot, in which case he is not omnipotent."

It does not seem at all probable that a loving Father would make approach to him so difficult. Nor is it easy to see virtue in simple faith, which may be quite impossible to an honest man, but quite acceptable to a scoundrel. *Belief should not be more important than virtue.* It does not seem a square deal that matters of tremendous importance should have to be decided on such limited and even doubtful evidence. And it is inconceivable that we should be damned eternally for rejecting what seems to be frankly unreasonable. As Maurice Maeterlinck so eloquently put it: "If God punishes us for not having blindly followed a faith that does not force itself irresistibly upon the intelligence which he gave us; if he chastises us for not having made in the presence of the great enigma with which he confronts us, a choice which he has placed in us—we have nothing left to reply; we are the dupes of a cruel and incomprehensible sport, we are the victims of a terrible snare and immense injustice; and whatever the torments wherewith the latter loads us they will be less intolerable than the eternal presence of its Author."

Do professing Christians really believe what they profess? They have certainly "broadened out" since the days when the Bible was accepted literally, even to its story of the creation. Bishop Barnes of Birmingham has not only turned down the miracles, but has frankly admitted that the narratives of the New Testament are unreliable and the discourses of Christ and his disciples are the work of writers who lived long after the reported events. Hardly anything in the recorded life of Christ is acknowledged by the Bishop to be true. Joseph McCabe, himself once a Roman Catholic priest, has stated "I say very positively that half the priests in the Catholic Church are themselves in greater or less degree sceptical, and that only a small minority are deeply convinced and devout."

The Archbishop of York recently put the case for the laity in a nutshell: "We can no longer say that the people of England are convinced Christians." The Rev. Donald Soper of Broadcasting fame, admits: "It is lamentable, but quite true to say that for most people to-day religion in an articulate or organised form simply does not count."

Yet nearly all our institutions still have a religious background. The Crown, Lords and Commons, invoke the name of the Deity. At all crises in our history we call upon God's name, and for most of us this doesn't mean a thing. In our private lives, births, marriages and deaths are occasions when it is still considered the rule to remember the name of the Lord, which we then proceed very effectively to forget.

To a visitor from another planet, this would certainly seem to be a strange complex. We cannot be mentally and morally healthy while such a state of things persists. In the opinion of the writer it is a matter of the highest significance that we should not profess what we do not believe. Worn-out creeds, fundamentally unsupported by truth, cannot avail us; but on the contrary will only clutter up and obstruct our efforts. It is difficult to assess the conceivable effect of stubbornly professing a body of belief which is not supported by indisputed evidence; of basing our laws and moral codes on this; of accepting it as the background of all aspects of our public and private life. Unless we become genuine human beings what hope have we for the future!

E. F. ELMES.

ACID DROPS

A delightful controversy is taking place among the Jesuits in Boston, Mass. The question is whether anybody can be "saved" outside the Catholic Church, Fr. Keleher saying that it was possible, and Fr. Feeney saying it was not possible. The latter in defence could call in Boniface VIII and Pius IX for support, but Catholics these days are not too keen to say that everybody would burn in the lake of fire for eternity unless they joined the Catholic Salvation Army. There will be a pretty philosophical dispute of course, and nobody will be any better or worse. These disputes are mostly balderdash.

Dr. Waud is rolling up his sleeves and bringing his big artillery into play for the coming battle for the soul of London, which is due on May 14. Advance guards have already been sent out—to be precise, in one case 15,000 volunteers have called on a million householders—but we are not told the number of converts made. We hate prophecy but we venture to predict that the only converts will be those staunch Christians who have been only a little lax in grovelling. Does Dr. Waud, and particularly his helpers, think that there is the slightest chance of converting any Freethinkers?

Transubstantiation has always been a thorny subject with Christians and the squabble is as keen as ever. Catholics say that when a magical formula is pronounced by a priest over a wafer, it immediately changes into Jesus Christ, though this can only be seen through the eyes of Faith. Protestants (including some Anglo-Catholics) say that the change is purely "symbolical." So the *Church Times* has opened its columns to a discussion as to what really happens, and a very pretty war of meaningless words is the result. Will it convince any unbeliever? Not on your life. The wafer can be seen to remain a wafer—but then if the magical formula used by the priest was known to be as valueless as a music hall chorus, what would become of the power of the Holy Church? Without this resort to magic—nowhere.

Catholics in Cleveland, Ohio, after attacking "immodest" dancing frocks are now turning their attention to two-piece bathing suits and shorts—though they admit that their efforts seem to make no impression on "rich corporations." However, they are consoling themselves with "prayer and Christ-like lives." We wonder sometimes what is a Christ-like life? Does it mean going about preaching parables and doing no work? Does it mean letting other people look after you with food and washing? Or does it mean cursing everybody who disagrees with you, not stopping even at cursing fig trees? We do not expect an answer from a Christian.

We are now to be blessed with a Fatima Rosary Crusade, the members of which have to say a daily Rosary "one decade at a time if you cannot say all five at once." They have to do a daily penance—surely saying a Rosary is penance enough—and they have to "meditate" on five special Saturdays. The reason of this is given as "reparation for the sufferings of the Immaculate Heart of Mary." We suspect that if all this is accompanied with the usual saintly grovelling before a priest or a statue, all will be well with Mary's Immaculate Heart.

A lot of crocodile tears are being shed by various speakers of the Roman Church about Jerusalem—which

is called a "Christian" Holy City. In sober fact, Christians "pinched" the Old Testament from the Jews and they have tried ever since to take Jerusalem. During the years before the first World War when the Turks were in possession of the "Holy" city, they had to have half a regiment of soldiers in readiness to prevent one sect of Christians from slaughtering another at the "tomb" of the Prince of Peace. These things are so conveniently forgotten these days.

It seems incredible, but a Mr. Egerton Sykes, a member of the Royal Geographical Society and of the Royal Central Asian Society, is quite convinced that the genuine Noah's Ark is still on Mt. Ararat. He is heading one of three expeditions to the mountain all by believers in a real Noah and a real Flood. Mr. Sykes is going to cut off a piece of the Ark to send to London, and he hopes scientists will prove that its age is exactly as given in the Bible. And yet we are still told, in the presence of this religious nonsense, that our work in Freethought is no longer necessary!

A State investigation is to be made of the causes of the explosion that demolished St. Mary's Church (R.C.) in Marion, South Dakota, U.S.A., which killed six people and injured 47 others. We hope those composing the investigation committee will not forget to arraign God at the bar of justice and it will be no use God pleading that he did not know, for not a sparrow shall fall to the ground that He knows not of; even the hair of our heads are numbered. We could understand it if it had happened to a meeting of Freethinkers, but not to one of his own houses, and amongst some of his most enthusiastic followers. Verily, He moves in mysterious ways . . .

We get a little tired of continually hearing parsons' "hard luck" stories and their meagre salaries—sorry, stipends—they are receiving. The Church of Scotland minimum stipend of £400 per annum is considered inadequate. Personally, we consider £8 a week for a non-productive job is not bad pay, but there is always a way out, and we suggest a spare-time job of useful work would be in order.

Princess Margaret is to visit the Pope during her present Italian tour and this appears to be the signal for Mr. Kensit of the Protestant Truth Society and members of the National Union of Protestants to get all excited and petition the King to forbid her to visit the Holy Father. Members of the Royal family do set certain fashions; is Mr. Kensit worried that there is a likelihood that the Princess is likely to start a rush to kiss the Pope's toe? Or is he just furious at the advertisement the Catholic Church will get to the exclusion of the Protestant? How these Christians love one another!

There seems to be a spot of bother amongst God's chosen people, for at this year's election of the Jewish Board of Deputies was the signal for a breakaway of some sections of the Jewish Community. The Spanish and Portuguese group have seceded because of the apparently Zionist sympathies of the Board, and the Liberal Jewish Group do not see eye to eye with the Board's insistence on the traditional system of ritual weddings. The "closed shop" attitude of orthodox Jewry does not help the world problem, and is a glaring instance of the harm that religion can do in human relationships. There is yet hope that Liberal Jews will come to regard marriage as a secular ceremony.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2801.

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C.1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

For "The Freethinker."—W. T. Hawks, S.A., £1.

R. P.—Mr. Ridley's "The Evolution of the Papacy" will be on sale in about a month's time.

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.

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 should reach the Office by Friday morning.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), THE FREETHINKER (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A. German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), LA RAISON (France), DON BASILIO (Italy).

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

SUGAR PLUMS

The proceedings at the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society in Nottingham during the Whit week-end will be as follows: Saturday evening at 7-30. a reception of delegates and friends at the Victoria Station Hotel. Sunday, June 5, morning and afternoon business sessions for delegates and members only. Sunday evening, a Public Demonstration in the Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street, Nottingham, at 7 p.m. Admission free, with some reserved seats at 1s. each. Those attending the Conference not having already booked any hotel accommodation required run the risk of disappointment unless their requirements are sent without delay to the General Secretary, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

The Rationalist Press Association will celebrate its Jubilee this year (1899-1949) with a series of interesting events. On Thursday, May 19, a coach trip to the home of Charles Darwin, in Farnborough, Kent, has been arranged. On Friday, May 20, there will be a Dinner and Dance at the Connaught Rooms, Kingsway, and on Saturday, May 21, Mr. William Kent will conduct a coach tour through London, concluding the day with a lecture in the Conway Hall on "London after the Blitz." Further information and details can be had from the R.P.A., 4/6, Johnson's Court, E.C.4.

Recently we gave a quotation from Brig.-Gen. P. Crozier's *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land* and it has elicited a protest from the War Office. Its Public Relations Officer points out that the book related to the 1914-1918 war and had nothing to do with the last one—and it was most unfair to give readers the impression that it had. We sincerely hope that we led no readers wrong in the matter and that most of them at least, were aware that Brig.-Gen. Crozier held no command in the Second

World War. In any case, were conditions much better in the latter? We quoted from the *Church Times* the conditions in Germany our young soldiers had to face last Christmas and they were pretty awful—though it is only fair to add that they were denied. If, instead of protesting at our quotation, the P.R.O. could produce evidence that Crozier was—to say the least—unreliable, we will gladly insert this disclaimer.

In *The Popes and Social Problems* by J. W. Poynter (Watts, 7s. 6d.), the author has extracted from many Encyclical Letters what various Popes have had to say on politics and social problems. Freethinkers, as a rule, have no time for these pronouncements, and in any case they are not always easy to obtain. Whatever one may think of the Pope, the fact remains that he is the head of a vast organisation, and he is generally not such a fool as to say publicly many foolish things. As Mr. Poynter shows, "the ideal of the Popes seems clearly to be that of a return to what may be called the 'pre-Reformation' system, in so far as Catholicism was supreme—though without the evils which also existed, by reason, as the Popes would say, of sin." Mr. Poynter, when he compiled this book thought such an ideal almost "impossible indeed."

Since its publication, however, Mr. Poynter has returned to the bosom of the Church, and no doubt he is ardently working for it now. And perhaps he is sorry that he ever thought of this work. For some of us, looking at what the Popes have said with what must be a prejudiced eye, a good deal seems superfluous and boring. Leo XIII no doubt was forced to say "how needful it is that the principles of Christian wisdom should be always borne in mind and that the life, the moral, and the institutions of nations, should be wholly confirmed to them." But of what interest is this to us? Our object is to put Christian Wisdom out of action—especially Catholic Christian Wisdom. And why should we care if the laws of the State "violate the person of the Supreme Pontiff the authority of Jesus Christ"? However, as a work of reference the book must have a useful place in one's library.

One chapter of the book deals with a Maltese prosecution which shows what will happen in a purely Catholic country. A man named Farrugia was sentenced to 15 days imprisonment for sending "blasphemous" articles and books through the post. Although later the Appeal Court made it a fine, he was still guilty, as "Rex v. Woolston" said Christianity was parcel of the Common Law of England. This judgment was given in the 18th century and one would have thought quite a lot of water has flowed in the Thames since. In any case, all the members of the Labour Government in power in Malta are Catholics, and so "Malta definitely upholds Catholicism by law." It is interesting to note that Mr. Poynter pathetically renounced this book in Catholic journals.

On Sunday, May 22, the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. are running a coach trip to Northampton including a visit to the Charles Bradlaugh statue. Any readers wishing to take part should write for particulars to the Social Secretary, Mr. T. G. Millington, 6, Heskett Avenue, Pottery Road, Birmingham, 32. Seating capacity is limited, so early booking is essential.

THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION

I

HOW many books have been written on the origins of religion I have never discovered, but they must run into thousands. Most of them take "God" for granted, and by God their authors almost always meant the Jewish God Jehovah or Elohim. A few of the more cultured writers took refuge in such words as the "Absolute" (capital A) or the "Unknowable" (capital U). These capitals have always tickled me—but then I am very irreverent. One of the great progenitors of the Absolute was F. H. Bradley, who died 25 years ago. He is generally considered as having given British philosophy "a new life in our time" by which I understand that he made some kind of Theism possible through philosophy. He claimed that "there is but one reality," that it was "spiritual" but not "the God of religion." "God" for him was "the Supreme Will for good which is experienced within finite minds." The capitals "S" and "W" indicate, I take it, the same reverence as the capital "A" in Absolute. However, only those with a penchant for philosophy and philosophical problems will read Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* and unless his Absolute created the Universe and gave man religion, it is no use going to him and those who think like him for the origin of religion.

To get to the rock bottom of the beginnings of religion one must go to history and anthropology, something concrete, and not to the verbiage and futile speculations of metaphysics. The God of the metaphysicians under whatever name they call him gets us nowhere; even the study of historical documents—where when and by whom they were written—cannot take us back far enough. The intensive study of the origin of Christianity through Christian writings made by thousands of scholars during the past 200 years has still left us almost completely mystified. We simply do not know exactly how the belief in Jesus Christ arose though, of course, we recognise that he is one of the last of a long series of similar Gods born of a virgin and ritually put to death. By "ritually" I mean not the actual fact, but that he is said in a religious document to have died for mankind. There is no evidence whatever of such an occurrence.

It appears to me that no examination of current documents can lead us to the origin of religion—using the word "religion" in its broadest sense. We have to go to our anthropologists and see what they have discovered about the early history of man through their studies of native and savage tribes all over the world. Tylor was one of the first to do this and was in consequence considered by Sir G. Elliot Smith as "one of the most significant figures of the Victorian Age." He emerged when quite a number of eminent men began to realise that the last word on the origin of man and his universe had not been settled in the Pentateuch, when the Bible was at long last seen to be a collection of myths, legends and fairy tales, written in a credulous age by superstitious believers in magic.

The belief in magic is so widespread that those of us who have been emancipated sometimes despair of ever eradicating it. All over the world from the lowest tribes to the most intellectual nations magical ceremonies are performed to placate the Gods; and in case there is any slackness in this delectable work, missions and revivals are constantly being planned. The Bishop of London at this moment is planning an intensive campaign to bring slackers and unbelievers back to the fold—the fold being the unquestioned belief in magic and special magicians. Needless to add here that in neither the

magic nor the magicians is there any unanimity of belief. Petty tribes or big organisations each believe that they and they alone have the Truth (capital "T").

All these people are quite certain that they have the true origin of their own religions revealed to them by God Almighty or His Son or the Absolute or even the Unknowable. So it remains for a small band of earnest seekers to delve for themselves and pursue their own quest for the solution of the mysteries of religion. They no longer discuss the question—"Is there a God?" either in historical documents or in philosophy or in the labyrinth of more or less unmeaning words; but they investigate the customs, the beliefs, the legends and myths, of peoples all over the world, to find out *why* they believe at all. The problem has changed, and the anthropologist has left the Theists and their metaphysical friends stranded or drowned in their flood of words.

And among the modern anthropologists Lord Raglan is already taking a high place for vigorous investigation unhampered by previous prejudices or reverent following of earlier investigators. The question for him is not what Tylor or Frazer or even Elliot Smith has said; he asks for evidence as far as possible for any conclusions, and if evidence is in the nature of things impossible, he wants speculation or theories based on common sense or reason.

The reader can now get his three works *Jacosta's Crime*, *The Hero*, and *The Origins of Religion*, in that splendid series, the Thinker's Library, and I can fancy no better introduction into the subjects he covers.

Anthropology is of course a science, and it is science in its various aspects which has done more to disintegrate religion than the many earnest disquisitions as to the date of the Gospels or learned literary attacks in general on the Bible. Science has made it possible to say that miracles—that is, the special miracles associated with religion—are quite impossible, just as it has made it possible to say without equivocation that "God" does not exist. And anthropology has contributed a big share to this end.

At the very outset Lord Raglan insists on the accurate meaning of words and does not hesitate to cross swords with earlier anthropologists where he thinks they have been wrongly led. By giving special meaning to words, Lord Raglan shows "people too often frame theories of origins which sound plausible enough but are really no more than verbal juggleries."

He himself puts forward a number of theories—and of course these will be heartily disliked by believers and perhaps even by Agnostics who so love to fall back on "We don't know." And I am quite sure that even reverent Rationalists will heartily dislike his work.

Lord Raglan looks upon religion as "not a natural growth but a social institution." It could only arise in "a well-organized community," it is "symbolic," and as "thought always proceeds from the concrete to the abstract," therefore belief in the concrete or "human" gods "must have come before the belief in abstract—that is invisible—gods and spirits."

The Origins of Religion attempts to prove all this and I can only express the highest admiration for Lord Raglan's lucidity, his simple language, and his determination to express the truth as he sees it irrespective as to whether he disagrees with great authorities like Sir James Frazer or Sir E. B. Tylor.

He does, indeed, give Frazer every credit for the way he marshalled facts and fancies about savages all over the world but as Frazer "liked adding items from old and obscure writers to his collection he often used

unreliable material when better was available." Raglan considers that the resulting picture of "the savage world which he paints is misleading in the extreme." He adds, "The savage of Frazer and his disciples is a creature of fiction." The truth really is that "real savages show many differences, both racially and individually, but, in general, they are kindly and pleasant people, with plenty of common sense which they apply whenever they are not inhibited by their traditional beliefs."

In fact, Lord Raglan, who has met and lived with savages and has studied their folk-lore and beliefs, comes to anthropology with a fresh mind and it must prove of vital interest to Freethought to see how he deals with the problem. A new approach to the subject backed by science and observation must make fascinating reading.

H. CUTNER.

KING WHO COULD NOT TALK

RADIO is so ancient that its invention has become mystery rather than matter of history. Explanations are largely legendary. The following fable is as much accredited as any:—

There was once a King who could not talk. This would be deprivation to private citizens, but in a King it came near tragedy, threatening to defeat the purpose of his existence, which was to be a popular King, as his father and grandfather were before him; as a succession of his monarchic ancestors had been for generations previously.

Making matters worse this King was not dumb. He could talk intelligibly in a low voice and slowly, well enough to be understood by all who were near enough to hear him. To his wife and daughters, to other kindred and to those who were privileged to be intimate with him the King could make himself clear, provided they were patient and attentive. As he was King of a great country he was accorded the fullest consideration when words faltered slowly and softly from his lips.

Granted listeners did not look at him too much. To be stared at checked the King's halting utterance, while a crowd reduced him to silence.

This was his great misfortune. He was a democratic King, a constitutional Monarch governing in accordance with the will of the people as expressed through elected representatives who controlled the ministers of State.

Thus at opening and closing of Parliament, at great festivals, events, celebrations, all manner of public ceremonies important enough to merit the King's presence he was expected to deliver speeches, listened to by hundreds, often thousands of people.

He could not do it. The Queen was a fine speaker in public. The two Princesses grew up following her example successfully. So the three royal ladies were increasingly popular, overshadowing their regnant male who should have been dominant. Without envy the King saw their growing accomplishment, longed and tried to emulate them, but uselessly.

Contrastingly he ruled over a nation of talkers. Not so much orators, debaters, preachers, advocates, expositors, though there was a high ratio of those; but ready speakers on all occasions. Often witty, occasionally profound, sometimes weighty, normally quick to speak on whatever was going forward, the population of this King's country regulated their affairs privately and ruled the country publicly by aptness of speech in which none attempted to outvie others. All participated in general conversation.

Workers, those in professions, arts, sciences, trades, all manner of business and occupation, at sport and leisure people talked, conducting the operations of life by interchange of ideas. It was a successful mode of society. More and more the King felt pained that he was out of it; one man in millions who could not talk freely to his fellows.

Despair began to settle upon him. The melancholy prospect of being so unable to approach his subjects; that he would have to abdicate; they would expect it of him because of his failure to expound himself to them; this burden weighed more and more on his mind. His Ministers could not persuade him otherwise. The sprightliness of his daughters brought no smile to his face. The Queen herself feared she would soon be unable to comfort or console him.

At this crisis the Queen was inspired to action. Her royal husband was getting to the stage when he refused to leave the Palace to attend any public function. He consulted neurologists and they found no nerve trouble causing his vocal deficiency; surgeons who could see no hope by operation; teachers and actors and orators who failed to impart to His Majesty the skill which came so readily to themselves and millions more.

So the Queen went instead to a big meeting of celebration and congratulation over work done among all manners of defective people.

As she listened the Queen grew interested to the degree of excitement. Acoustic aids fitted to deaf people till all could hear; glasses so only the fully blind remained unable to see; wigs, artificial teeth, eyes, and limbs barely distinguishable from live ones, often nearly as efficient in action; travel facilities for lame and disabled persons: there seemed no human incapacity which experts could not remedy, assisting the sufferers to take place among normal beings.

The Queen's speech was brief but eloquent and sincere, concealing impatience she felt to get going on one defective who most concerned her.

Next day she summoned to the Palace engineers and other technicians whose specialities were applied to relieving human frailties and impotencies. Result was enormous activity among these mechanics, devisers and inventors.

Some months later, after many private tests had been satisfactorily made people were thrilled and delighted to hear their King talking, his voice sounding strong and firm when amplified, his slowness of delivery serving the purpose of allowing hearers to collect his statements and collate them instead of seeing them. While he was at ease, for none could stare at him as he read his script into the microphone.

Henceforth he was a popular and happy King, because he could speak freely to his speech-loving people. So old report hath it.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

(Concluded from page 187)

WHEN an alien race invades a country and settles in it, its intrusion is accompanied by changes in the nomenclature. The Anglo-Saxon conquest may be taken as an illustration. The Romano-British names of places have almost disappeared. Aquæ Solis has become Bath; Eboracum has become York; Camulodunum has become Colchester; Durovernum has become Canterbury; and so on. In Palestine, at the present time, the nomenclature varies greatly from the ancient appellations; although, in this case, the country is regarded as

a holy land, and both natives and visitors endeavour to preserve the older landmarks. El Khulil has replaced Hebron; Sebustiyeh, Samaria; Nablous, Shechem, etc. It may, therefore, be asked what change the invasion of the Israelites made upon the map of Palestine? To this we can only answer that, as far as we can judge, it made no change whatever. At an early period the kings of Egypt endeavoured to extend their sway into Asia Minor; and they engraved lists of their conquests upon their buildings. The names in these lists have been repeatedly studied, and have been shown to be the same as those employed in the days of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Further than that, a large number of cuneiform documents originating from Palestine were discovered a few years ago at Tell-el-Amarna, and these, again, still more clearly demonstrated that the towns of Canaan bore the same names before the alleged times of Moses as they did under the Hebrew monarchies. They even proved that the Israelitish "tradition" was wrong in asserting that the names of some places had varied. Thus, the Hebrew legends give the name of *Jebus* to the city afterwards known as Jerusalem; but the latter name is the only one known to the Tell-el-Amarna tablets written long before there was any king in Israel. It is, therefore, impossible to suppose that there was any violent revolution, or any great displacement of the native population in the interval.

When the Assyrians pushed their conquests towards the Mediterranean in the ninth century B.C., they found in Palestine two monarchies, one of which they styled Beth-Khumri, or Samarina, and the other Yehudah. The royal names, and other circumstances, show that these were what we call the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Thus there is historical evidence of the existence of these two Jewish kingdoms in 853 B.C.; as to the period before this date we know little or nothing. The Jewish traditions embodied in the Books of Samuel and Kings give lists of monarchs which are probably authentic, going back to Rehoboam, King of Judah, and Jeroboam, King of Israel, with whose names is connected the invasion of "Shishak," King of Egypt. This latter is no doubt a reminiscence of the Egyptian King, Sheshonk, who conquered Palestine somewhere about 950 B.C., but whose inscriptions give us no information as to the political divisions of the country, or the names of its chiefs. Previous to Rehoboam and Jeroboam, it is alleged that Israel and Judah formed a united kingdom, ruled by a monarch bearing the divine name Solomon (which appears in the Assyrian pantheon as *Sulmannu*), who was preceded by David. This "David" is not improbably the same name as appears on the Moabite Stone as the Israelitish deity, *Dodah*. David was preceded by "Saul" (the Assyrian God, *Shaul*), who was the first Jewish monarch. It is the rule for all royal genealogies to lose themselves in the deities. The genealogies of the Saxon kings all go back to Odin, who figures only three or four generations before the conquest of Britain. So that, although there is no reason why there should not have been actual kings bearing the names of Saul, David, and Solomon, yet the mere fact of these being divine names warrants us in regarding them with suspicion. According to the Hebrew tradition, the Jews, after invading Canaan, lived for a long period in a state of anarchy, until a celebrated prophet, called Samuel, "the name of El," anointed Saul as King of the Israelites. Samuel is a legendary personage, but, prior to his time, we have pure, unmitigated myth, which cannot be accepted as giving us any clue to the origin of the Israelites.

When we leave myths and legends, therefore, and ascend to solid fact, we can only confess our ignorance of the origin of the Jewish kingdoms — an ignorance shared by the ancient Jews themselves. Light first breaks upon them in the period of the Assyrian invasions, and about a century later we have the oldest-known Hebrew books, the prophets Hosea, Micah, and Amos (which, however, are not above the suspicion of having been largely augmented at later periods), to which may be added some few parts of Isaiah. In these we find in full force the idea that the Israelites came from Egypt under the leadership of some unnamed prophet. It has already been shown, however, that this legend is totally at variance with the known facts; but it is not surprising that such a theory grew up in Palestine, because the Egyptian kings of the eighteenth century B.C. had conquered that country, and the Egyptians remained rulers for many hundreds of years. It was, therefore, perfectly natural for Palestinian tribes to consider that a real or pretended Egyptian origin ennobled them. The next development is the forgery of the Book of Deuteronomy in the reign of Josiah. This work introduces us to the prophet Moses by name; and from henceforth the legend is rapidly developed, until, in the course of time, the full narrative appears, and receives its final form in the Priestly Code some time after the Babylonian captivity. It is well recognised that the object of Deuteronomy was to centralise Jewish religion and government at Jerusalem; and, in fact, the whole tradition points in this direction. It was obviously the policy of the later kings to persuade their subjects that they were a solid and peculiar people, bound together by some past historic event; and this theory of their origin would be even more useful to the later princely high-priests who ruled over Jerusalem, and who culminated in the family of the Maccabees.

Therefore, the theory of the Egyptian bondage and the conquest of Canaan was eminently useful to the Jewish rulers and priesthood; but, though the theory was useful, it was not true, because the Jews were so closely allied in language, customs, and ritual with their immediate neighbours that they could not have come from anywhere, but must have grown up on the spot, and the permanence of the geographical names is sufficient proof that the land of Canaan had never been overrun and alienated in the style of the Hexateuchal legends.

(The late) CHILPERIC.

CORRESPONDENCE

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

SIR.—Referring to the "Sugar Plum" on the remarks in "Light" on a recent article in your paper, I appreciate the attitude of "The Freethinker" in the matter.

It seems to me, however, that while Freethinkers may differ on minor issues, the article by Mr. Wood strikes at the foundation of Secularism. He is a fairly regular contributor, in prose and verse, to "The Freethinker," and it is therefore somewhat difficult to understand why he wrote the article unless he really believes that man survives death. It may be that he contends that a person can be a Freethinker and a Spiritualist. If so, I am unable to follow him. It appears to me to be a case of wishful thinking, hardly in harmony with Secularism. I note that he stresses the point that his spiritualism is of a refined character and that his idea of life after death is superior to that of a Christian.

During Easter Week the Press and B.B.C. have once again "plugged" the Resurrection story with Easter hymns and appropriate Bible readings. Any person who agrees with the Aims and Objects of The National Secular Society should not have any doubt on the matter, and for Mr. Wood to invite Freethinkers to join him in a search for that elusive life force "when released from its physical container" is not very

logical. As I pointed out in my short letter to "The Freethinker" of March 6, there is a similarity in the soul of the Christian being released from its vile body at death.

In my opinion, any regular contributors to "The Freethinker" who support these views, however vaguely, are doing ill service to the cause of Secularism. Many readers of "The Freethinker" have passed through the Christian ranks (myself included), and to ask them now to retrace their steps is not very complimentary to their intelligence. There is no point in exchanging one silliness for another.

It seems to me that at the present time we are living in a "cloud-land" of words and phrases, which when analysed mean very little, and I contend that Freethinkers, at all times, should write in a clear and logical manner.

In the last few weeks I have written two letters to the Press, on widely different subjects. They were not published, although written in very moderate language, presumably because they differed from the popular views.—Yours, etc.,
FREDERICK C. WYKES.

VACCINATION

Sir,—Might I be allowed to point out that the history of recent smallpox cases in this country shows that no amount of vaccination will prevent the very occasional introduction of smallpox.

On April 5, 1944, the War Secretary admitted that the soldier who brought smallpox from Gibraltar to Mount Vernon Hospital, Northwood, Middlesex, in February that year, had been successfully vaccinated two years previously. During the first six months of 1946 seven large ships carrying troops to this country brought smallpox from India, all the cases being recently re-vaccinated men. The officer from the R.A.M.C. who infected his wife and little daughter early in 1946 had been vaccinated five times in his life, as he himself admitted in a letter in a medical paper, the last time on January 2, 1946. He had flown to England from India and was taken ill on January 18. It was assumed that he was suffering from influenza and it was not until his wife and child developed a rash on February 8 that it was realised that he had been suffering from smallpox. An army sergeant at Bilston, home from India, who had been vaccinated in infancy and again on November 3, 1944, and February 5, 1946, developed smallpox on March 1, 1946 (rash March 6). It was not until his grandmother developed haemorrhagic smallpox and died of it a month later that it was realised that the young man, his mother, his two cousins and his aunt had all been suffering from smallpox and not from chickenpox as had been diagnosed by competent clinical opinion. By that time the first two cases had recovered. Thus it was a man who had been successfully re-vaccinated only a year previously who brought smallpox to Bilston.

Recent experience of smallpox in this country suggests that there is little danger of it spreading when it is introduced accidentally. The Mount Vernon case was nursed in the general ward of a hospital for three weeks without anyone knowing it was a case of smallpox, yet the total number of cases arising was only ten. While one unvaccinated nurse developed smallpox and died, seven other unvaccinated nurses remained unaffected although they were not vaccinated until three weeks after contact with the original case.

A case of smallpox was in the infectious diseases hospital at Seunthorpe from March 22, 1947, until April 2, i.e., 11 days, before being recognised as smallpox. Only the nurse and the doctor who attended the man contracted the disease, the other four cases being men from the common lodging-house from which the original case had come.

Although the Bilston case was not recognised as smallpox for a month after the man's illness started, only seven cases were officially attributed to it. There were 30 cases in all, spread over four months, an infinitesimal number.

On June 26, 1942, a Swindon man was found to be suffering from severe smallpox. He had worked in a large factory five days before being seen by a doctor, and had travelled about the town two days before, visiting shops and a doctor's surgery. Yet there was not another case infected by him.

All the above information has been taken from reports by medical officials.

It should be remembered that in recent years vaccination has caused far more deaths than have been caused by smallpox. During the Edinburgh smallpox outbreak of 1942 eight people died of smallpox (six of them vaccinated) and ten died of the effects of vaccination. Last year not one person died of smallpox in England and Wales, but seven died of the effects of vaccination. Six of these were babies. During the 16 years 1933 to 1948, according to answers in Parliament, vaccination killed or helped to kill 66 babies in England and smallpox did not kill one. With regard to deaths at all ages, 55 smallpox deaths were recorded in the period 1931-1948 and 137 deaths from vaccination.

What justification can there be for the imposition of an operation that will not keep smallpox out of the country and may itself cause death?—Yours, etc.

L. LOAT,
Secretary, National Anti-Vaccination League.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held May 5, 1939

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. A. C. Rosetti, Bryant, Seibert, Griffiths, Ebury, Woodley, Page, Morris, Taylor, Barker. Mrs. Quinton, Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly financial statement presented.

New members were admitted to Bradford, Birmingham, Halifax, Manchester, South London Branches, and to the Parent Society.

Branch votes for North West, and Yorkshire areas Executive nominations were noted and acted upon. Matter concerning the North London and Birmingham Branches was dealt with. Future lecture arrangements were discussed, and a decision on dates reached.

The Annual Balance Sheet to be presented at the Conference was before the meeting and accepted. Bradford Branch Balance Sheet was submitted, showing a healthy financial position.

A legacy of £100 from the late J. H. Reeve was reported. The General Secretary reported proceedings of the latest meeting of the London Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers. Mr. R. H. Rosetti was elected as delegate to the International Congress in Rome.

The Executive's Annual Report was read and discussed, after which it was accepted to be read at the Annual Conference.

The proceedings then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY (Highbury Corner, Islington): 7 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m. Messrs. E. BRYANT, F. WOOD and E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Use of History," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. H. DAY.

Burnley Market.—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Crawshawbooth.—Friday, May 13, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Great Harwood.—Saturday, May 14, 6 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Hapton.—Wednesday, May 18, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: MESSRS. WINTER, WHITAKER and BARKER.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS and others.

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