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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Man and His Gods

TRUTH, says one of our lawgivers—not a professional one—will out. It may be suppressed for a time and poorly recognised even then, but sooner or later it will be heard. It is, in fact, difficult for even the most practised liar to avoid dropping into truth occasionally. This may be because constant lying involves an expenditure of energy that is in itself a strain and a great weight on one's memory. Even a goat in time has to admit the strength of the wall against which he has been butting. Truth may not be all powerful, but it is eternally insistent.

Consider that it is less than a century ago—call it three generations—since the clergy were insisting that the whole of the Bible, every word, every letter, was a direct product of "He who is sitting upon the Throne." To-day there is scarcely a Christian of any standing at all who would take up that position. Our religious leaders have learned their lesson and they have turned from miracle to development. They do not say the Bible is a record of facts; they put in a plea for utility. They tell us that the Bible contains the story of man's struggle "upward." But why he should struggle upward in order to go downward has never yet been explained. And as to the clergy, if we take the better educated ones, there is probably not ten-per cent. of them who would, in plain language, support the religious views held a century ago. They no longer even pay lip homage to what was accepted as solid truth. Certainly truth will out even though we are given a less glaring untruth in the place of the one that has been discarded.

Not entirely, but largely, the approach to truth concerning religion was often made public as a consequence of the "non-truthers" falling out with one another. The great historic example of this was the breakaway from the Church of Rome. Protestants struck for "liberty"—after a kind. Broadly they were as intolerant as the older Church and sometimes as brutal. But the break did provide something like freedom, although one had to be wide awake to catch it. Mainly it was freedom to do as the leaders of each group believed advisable. But the prison and the stake were well wielded. Civic rights were denied to heretics and Jews. The Roman Catholic Church was banned, and some of these bans have never been legally abolished. They are simply ignored. For many years the Protestant-established Church claimed many of the privileges enjoyed by the Catholics, and it made a Church monopoly of marriage and also took rents and taxes that had been enjoyed by the older Church. Many of these were done so neatly and so quietly that a great number of people—educated ones—appear to be quite unaware of it. On the other hand there has been going on for many years now a secularising of life, quietly, probably because

it was felt that calling attention to it might lead to greater dangers.

It should be remembered with regard to the marriage question that in Scotland there is greater liberty and more common sense than in England. The probable cause of this is that a great deal of Scotch law is based on Roman law.

Taking the position of the Roman Catholic and the other Churches, the difference where freedom is concerned is one of accident rather than of choice. Thus, broadly, there has been greater freedom with the Protestant Churches than with the Catholic. That is not because the one loves liberty and freedom of belief more than does the Catholic Church, but because the splitting of the Christian Churches led to a greater number of opinions on many subjects. And once a people have tasted freedom of speech and thought it is a meal that invites "more." In the secular world we have that well illustrated in the growth of the trade unions and the greater freedom of opinion concerning royalty, the priesthood, and so forth. Liberty is something that usually creates a fondness for more. The only way to prevent people asking for more is to see that they never get more than the bare necessities of life.

Kidnappers at Work

I have been a long way coming to the matter that led me to what I have already said. It happened thus. The Bishop of Chelmsford writes in his "Diocesan Chronicle" that he is shocked at the Catholic practice of insisting that its members if they marry a Protestant the parents shall agree that the children of that marriage shall be brought up as Roman Catholics. On this Bishop Wilson writes:—

"It is a weak and sinful act for a potential parent to promise that his or her children shall be brought up in a religion which he or she believes to be not wholly true. . . . A promise under duress—for that in practice is the case—to commit a sin cannot be defended on moral grounds. In a word we are pretty far advanced in a new Papal aggression in this country. There is an old saying—that when the Roman Church is in a minority she is a lamb, when in an equality she is a fox, when in a majority she is a tigress. We are opposed to the second stage largely thanks to the steady annual recruitment the Roman Church receives from Ireland.

"When we read on the fly-leaf of Monseigneur Knox's translation of the New Testament that it is approved by all Archbishops and Bishops in England and Wales—meaning the Roman hierarchy—we touch a level of insolence and bad taste which is symptomatic of the confident aggression which distinguishes the Roman Church in England."

On a strict review of the Bishop of Chelmsford's attack on the Roman Church, what he says is indisputable. It is

a most monstrous thing that parents should quietly permit their children to have forced upon them as infallible truth what every adult knows is held in some doubt by some of the best Christian thinkers and teachers. Put it at its best; assume that the Christian religion is merely doubted. Still religious parents are doing what they can, not to enlighten their children on the matter of religion, but to prevent them becoming aware that there is reasonable doubt of the truth of Christianity. The Bishop counts it as a "weak and sinful act" for a parent to bring up children in a religion in which he himself does not believe. But is that very much more scandalous than for a parent to bring up a child to accept as indisputable truth a religion which has become to-day a mere matter of speculation, and a very large number of intelligent men and women will have nothing to do with it except on the level of folk law? The Bishop of Chelmsford is, I expect, quite familiar with the fact that every phase of the religious side of Christianity can be traced, step by step, back to the life and thought of primitive mankind? The Roman Catholic says, first we will do our best to prevent our children knowing that multitudes of educated men regard Christianity as sheer superstition, and that all the religions of the world rest on nothing better than ignorance and fear. We should like to hear from the Bishop in what respect his attitude towards children is superior to that of the Church which he attacks. Catholic and Protestant surely move on the same level where the education of children is concerned.

I think that the answer for which I ask is really given by the Bishop denouncing, with a shiver of disgust, the Catholic priest who wishes to save people from purgatory by force or by sheer terrorism? Each of these representatives of God do their best to see that children are not acquainted with what is known concerning the origin and nature of the Christian religion. And even to-day the clergy as a body—Catholic or other—fight with might and main to keep children and adults from realising how the belief in gods and a future life came into existence. The Roman Church publishes a list of books which may not be read without the permission of the priest. I have only to raise my head to see a couple of fat volumes filled with the titles of books that are prohibited reading so far as Catholicism is concerned. That is bad, very bad, and I am sure that the Bishop of Chelmsford would strongly denounce this Roman Catholic tyranny.

But it is hard to believe that the Bishop is so completely out of touch, so innocent regarding the tactics of the Protestant clergy to prevent children and adults becoming acquainted with criticisms of their creed. Let him, in all his innocence, inquire how many newsagents—with the sanction of the clergy—refuse to display Freethinking books and papers. Let him also inquire how many people shrink from letting their real opinions about religion be known for fear of losing their situations or their social status. Let him also make acquaintance with the number of teachers who profess faith in Christianity, or in some religion, for fear their "career" may be jeopardised. Surely the Bishop of Chelmsford has not forgotten that the late Archbishop of Canterbury openly declared that the aim of the Churches was to saturate the schools with a special form of religion that the pupils will never be able to shake off. Nor is it easy to believe that our Bishop is unaware that in all directions from the highest Christian dignity down

to members of the "common" people, the attack on intellectual honesty goes on. The whole aim of the official supporters of Christianity is the strangulation of independent thinking.

I agree with what the Bishop says with regard to the intolerance of the Roman Church. That is written too plainly in the history of Christianity for it to be denied, and it was inevitable that the revolts against the papacy should lead to a greater degree of liberty. But I would have the Bishop remember that what he has said concerning the policy of the Roman Church is true of all forms of Christianity from the time that Christianity first dominated social life. The crushing out of independent thought has been the outstanding quality of all the important Christian churches. I really think the Bishop of Chelmsford is too fanciful when he shudders at the Roman Church not sanctioning a marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant unless a promise is given that children of the marriage shall be brought up as Roman Catholics. In this matter the Roman priest is more emphatic in his dealing than is the Protestant Bishop. The Bishop might also regret that he himself gloated over the Education Act that gives more religion to children irrespective of the opinions of parents. The Roman Church is doing openly what the Protestant is doing by trickery.

For these days when religion is losing its grip on the people the Bishop is too timid. He should be made of stouter stuff. A good priest cannot afford to be so fanciful. He reminds us of Newman's confession that when he looked at nature for God he found only the reflection of his own face. Perhaps if the Bishop of Chelmsford will look carefully at the facts before him he will realise that the difference of action between the Roman and the Protestant is merely that of opportunity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A BRILLIANT VICTORIAN SCIENTIST

I.

ONE of the most eminent thinkers of the past century, John Tyndall, F.R.S., has at last been accorded his biography. One reason of the long delay was the prolonged life of Mrs. Tyndall who survived her husband for nearly half a century and died in her 95th year. Owing to her reluctance in permitting the removal of the many documents indispensable to a biography she only reduced the gap by composing the brief notice of Tyndall's career published in the Dictionary of National Biography.

This omission has now been rectified and all available materials have been utilised in the "Life and Work of John Tyndall," by Professor A. S. Eve and Mr. C. H. Crease (Macmillan, 1945). There is an instructive preface by Granville Proby; Lord Schuster's account of Tyndall as an Alpinist; while the volume contains many fine portraits and other illustrations.

Had Mrs. Tyndall undertaken the task she could have relied on the help of Spencer, Frederick Pollock, Leslie Stephen and other celebrities. But this was not to be, and the error which occasioned her husband's death was largely responsible.

Tyndall was born in 1820 and was by birth an Irishman and very early in life, was engaged in the struggle for existence. Mrs. Tyndall notes that: "Although denied facilities for education, he taught himself in various subjects and became an able student of history. Limited as were his means, he contrived to possess himself of a number of standard works. From his

father and forefathers he inherited a taste for religious controversy. An ardent politician, he was a member of the Brunswick Club, and he cherished among his possessions a fragment of a flag that had fluttered at the Battle of the Boyne."

Tyndall began as a surveyor and, despite disappointments in that age of railway construction, he was soon successful in his vocation. But as the boom subsided he was advised to approach Edmondson, a Quaker who had converted Robert Owen's Harmony Hall in Hampshire into Queenwood College. Tyndall entered this seminary as mathematical master and acted as its secretary. With the little money he had saved, Tyndall later went to Marburg where he studied under Bunsen. He also experimented with Knoiblauch and others until his funds were exhausted, when he returned to London and gained his first payments for Press articles. He re-entered Queenwood for a time, but if he was unsuccessful in seeking scientific appointments, he was elected F.R.S. in 1852. The following year, "decided Tyndall's fate. He gave a lecture before the Royal Institution, Albemarle Street, which took his audience by storm. He was recognised at once as one of the very first lecturers of his day. He was, and remains, in the class of men like Faraday, Robert Ball and W. H. Bragg."

Although Tyndall dissented in his lecture from some of Faraday's views, his criticism, he assures us, "was very far from producing in Faraday either enmity or anger. At the conclusion of the lecture . . . he crossed to the corner into which I had shrunk, shook me by the hand, and brought me back to the table." Moreover, later differences of opinion never lessened the affection of Faraday for his colleague and successor.

Tyndall now lectured extensively, with experimental illustrations which captivated his ever-increasing audiences. His Queenwood experiences as preceptor helped him as an expositor. At the conclusion of his famous address on "Physics as a Means of Education," some of his auditors remarked that, "I was two centuries in advance of my time," states Tyndall, "and I replied that Galileo was the same."

Tyndall received many tempting offers, which he declined. He was also invited to edit a Bridgewater treatise, and this aroused his fighting instincts. He said: "I should have thought more highly of Dr. Prout had I not read his book. Certainly if no better Deity than this can be purchased for the £8,000 of the Earl of Bridgewater, it is a dear bargain. It is very evident that Dr. Prout would never have written such a book through the spontaneous promptings of his own spirit; it was written for money, and lacks even common scientific depth, not to speak of religious inspiration."

Tyndall had no respect for red tape and flouted the pedantic rules of the Circumlocution Office. Still, his protest against the neglect of science in Governmental circles served to shake the somnolence of the authorities. But by 1855 the ill-health that tortured him throughout the rest of his life compelled him to seek relaxation among the Alps, and he became one of the leading mountaineers of his time.

When Tyndall first met Carlyle, the Sage of Chelsea mistook him for an Oxford cleric. This proved the opening of a lifelong friendship, although Tyndall had to carefully cultivate "the old brute" before he gained his good graces.

Tyndall varied his lectures before the Royal Society by lecturing to working men at the School of Mines and, although he was very busy with original investigations, he wrote for the magazines, read Spencer's "First Principles," the heretical "Essays and Reviews," but thought Jowett's "Interpretation of Scripture" "very mild for a heretic like me."

When Bishop Colenso was charged with heresy Tyndall sympathised with him as a brave pioneer. "The Bishop of Natal is a brave man and true," he wrote, "but he sees many

things with his spirit's eyes that are not to be seen. . . . He little knows what is in advance of him. If he augments our liberty he will do good service, whatever be the fate of his own reasonings."

While engaged in the preparation of his lectures on "Heat as a Mode of Motion," Tyndall wrote to Helmholtz and Clausius for information concerning the contributions of Mayer of Heilbronn to that important question. Clausius first intimated that there was little of consequence in Mayer's writings. Before forwarding them, however, he perused them and then admitted: "I am astonished at the multitude of beautiful and correct thoughts which they contain." For, as a matter of fact, Mayer had clearly enunciated the far-reaching principles of the Conservation of Energy and the Mechanical Equivalent of Heat. Yet Mayer's priority had been completely disregarded both in Germany and elsewhere. The knightly Tyndall became his vindicator, for Mayer had been shabbily treated by Liebig and others. As a result of Tyndall's championship, Mayer's achievement was acknowledged in Paris and Turin, and he was awarded the Poncelet Prize and the Copley Medal of the Royal Society. Thomson, later Lord Kelvin, and Prof. Tait regarded Tyndall's intervention as a reflection on themselves, but the tardy recognition of Mayer's researches amply justified Tyndall's action.

Tyndall attended a gathering at Hanley in 1866, where the North Staffordshire Protestant Association deplored the spread of Romanism in the Church of England. "The potato famine in Ireland and the cattle plague were attributed to Divine displeasure at the favour alleged to have been shown by the Government to Roman Catholics." But, naturally anti-Romanist as he was, Tyndall was poorly impressed.

Tyndall's essay, "Miracles and Special Providences" was so unequivocal that even Huxley queried some of its conclusions. Its author's rejoinder to his critic is characteristic: "If I stated to-morrow that I could cause a stone to fall upwards, he would feel bound to suspend his judgment until such time as the matter could be fully investigated. It is not often that I find myself unable to reciprocate the sentiments of my eminent friend, but on the present occasion I feel bound to say that were he to confide to me the statement of his ability to reverse by a word the action of gravity, my judgment regarding him would find most mournful expression in the line— 'O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown.'"

Tyndall claimed that his positive assertions concerning the unbroken course of natural causation were the logical outcome of the experiences of countless generations of the persistence of natural law, and any individual, or even collective averment to the contrary, is of no account whatever.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded)

THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES

IT has been asserted that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would sooner give up the Thirty-nine Articles than a thirty-ninth of their slum property. I was reminded of this by the following in "Clinical Excerpts":—

A GASTRONOMIC ANECDOTE

Sir John Bland-Sutton who, in the early days of his versatile career performed all the post-mortems at the London Zoo, was fond of relating how on one occasion he discovered in the stomach of a dead ostrich a prayer book completely digested except for the Thirty-nine Articles, which even an ostrich found indigestible.

A. HANSON.

From: "Clinical Excerpts," a Journal of Modern Therapeutics, of Jan.-Mar., 1946.

1945 REMEMBRANCES

FOR the first time in many years the writer of these lines spent a pleasant two months, November and December, at home with his Better Self (hereinafter referred to as "Blotto")—and I don't mean the gude wyfe. We've done nothing but read, write, check and double check, Blotto and I; and we have five scrap-books (18 in. x 2 ft.) full of interesting articles from "Freethinker," "Literary Guide" and "Truth Seeker," to say nothing of pithy, pertinent paragraphs pasted in the fly-leaves of 400 books. Not that we could ever find anything, without considerable search; but they're there, for my own pleasure and for posterity. The latter is my son, who was a sceptic at 15. (He had his Sunday School days, too, but he got good doses of comparative religion from his father. It was no trouble to keep up with the parson's humbuggery, or even get a little ahead of it. Anyhow, no home was broken up and surely disillusion didn't sour the boy's mind).

Herewith my respects to "Freethinker." I might echo the pleasures and profits, the mental contentment found by other readers of "Freethinker." Mr. Cohen's "talks" are little sermons right down our alley; Mr. Cutner's "special articles" well worth collecting and publishing; and all other regular contributors right up to top drawer.

Blotto and I have agreed on one thing, at least. We wish "Freethinker" was thicker, more pages; and we believe it would go better (in several ways) if it were in magazine format instead of the pamphlet form.

We agree on another thing—that phrase, "Because religion has never been TRIED." Every time this unadulterated insanity shows up I scream, and Blotto barks like a walrus; which scares the gude wyfe. The more that phrase is repeated the more the uninformed public believe it.

A considerable cessation of the use of this stupid phrase would seem in order.

The man says, "Look where we get the word Good, from God (by an extra 'o'); and Devil from Evil (by an extra 'd')"; Blotto adds man plus a womb (wombman); simple as abracadabra!

By the way, it is interesting to learn the British churches are going to pot . . . the pews are empty . . . the ministers running around in circles. Here, in Los Angeles, California, there are two neighbourhood churches a few blocks from my home. Each could seat 100 people. But each has less than 20 practically any Sunday. (Mass observation.)

However, out along the Wilshire strip, where land is valued at \$1,000 a square foot, there are half a dozen million dollar churches. These are pretty well attended by Los Angeles "400"—sort of an impromptu fashion show; stylish autos, clothes-horses, actors, ladies (?), hats, etc.

Not long ago I took my friend Luke McGlook, a militant atheist, to the First Congregational (one of the million dollar affairs) for the Sunday morning service. He had promised not to argue with anyone (for Luke is like Luther. He can't think unless he's mad—and it makes him mad if anyone thinks).

Well, we went to the big church. Luke sat quiet and soured throughout the service, or what passed for one, while the minister read a very short sermon. Luke's face got redder and redder, so during a hymn I led the way out.

In the vestibule I visited with an usher, gave him a cigarette, and asked him questions. He seemed very proud of his edifice, which, among other things, has individual rooms for parties and balls, societies, musical celebrations, motion pictures, auditorium and stage, cafeteria and dining room, with five grand pianos scattered about—and th' devil knows what else! Only Heaven knows the answer to these "temples."

On the way home Luke said, "The best you can say for that church is the spire points heavenward."

So I'll close, as time draws nigh for trying to catch the B.B.C. It's a long ways from California, but occasionally we do get and hold the British Bunk Center for half an hour.

Always we have the feeling that some day we will hear Prof. Joad leading the B.B.C. chorus in "Jesus is tenderly, tenderly calling!" Can't afford to miss that!

EARLE CORNWALL (Los Angeles, Calif.)

A REVOLT OF INDIVIDUALS?

THE review of the relative values of Freethinkers and Rebels as against Godists and Conformists has been somewhat spasmodic, perhaps unavoidably, because it is an attempt to relate forces and conditions in the human world now to points in previous periods of which the one now ending was the outcome. "Everyone" says we are at the end of one period and the beginning of another. Surely every Freethinker is interested in an evolutionary sociology which analyses the past evolving of our social existence in all its component factors? In that way, Secularism can contribute, as it has and should, to the new

The periods in question are particularly the last c. 6,000 years; more particularly the last c. 400 years; and most particularly the last c. 60 years, when the people of the "democratic lands" drifted to Fascism and war. The review of points in the periods is actually an attempted synthesis of two analytic processes—Economic and Ideologic—which have been worked in separate channels for some 60 years with disastrous results. A big job for a Freethought team, for a long time after the present writer shall have reached the school anatomy!

In tracing that development one can see the value of dialectic—in the original and correct sense. In that sense, dialectic is simply scientific analytic reasoning, or analytic reasoning in theory and practice, checked and tested at every step. The final test is the extent to which it enables those concerned to predict what "must" happen, and so enable them to deal with the emergent result as required. This is so in astronomy, physics, chemistry, etc.; it is so with every military commander and political leader, etc., either godist or humanist; it is so in evolutionary biology, and it is equally, or more, so in evolutionary sociology based upon evolutionary economics. Naturally, in the concrete sciences it is, relatively, easy to apply the final test, but in social science—or lack of it—it has required two world wars to prove which was the correct analysis. Even now, efforts are made to obscure the issue in many ways. While U.N.O. is facing immense difficulties to build a Supreme Council for world democracy, "confusionists" of many brands try to hide their chagrin or to save sectional and sectarian interests by putting into dialectic currency all the disruptive "values" they can find or verbally coin "smashers"? Still, if at last, a Supreme World Council be established in which all disputes can be settled in full, free, open debate, none will rejoice more than Freethinkers, for that is victory for Secularism and another defeat for Godism. Secularism is the only philosophy compatible with world democracy.

The N.S.S. and "The Freethinker" are non-Party-Political. That is, they are intellectually—and materially—independent from all parties in their criticism, analytic and/or constructive of national and world affairs. Still, it is in "politics," military war or peace, that all the antagonistic "interests" of Economic and Ideologic—struggle to hold what they have and gain what they want. Further, for more than many a long year "progressive politics" has been largely a struggle to break up, at least, modify the political power of some Godism—particularly

Christian Godism. Even to-day, every Church—Christian, Hindu, Mohammedan, Jewish, etc.—from the largest to the smallest sect is in “politics.” Thus it is difficult to discuss world affairs without some apparent bias one way or another, especially for the Freethinker whose “first loyalty” is to the principle, “La Verité Oblige.” It is even more difficult in critical times, e.g., an impending large-scale strike or military war or world-important Parliamentary Election, etc. Then a Freethinker has to decide, definitely in place and time, whether the “first loyalty” is to the social existence (Trade Union, Nation, Party, etc.), which is involved, or to his/her individual existence as a person. It is an estimating of relative values which Freethinkers—above all others—have to make by analytic reasoning, i.e., by “dialectics,” and for which they must be prepared to pay the price as individual humans. ’Tis an old problem, none the more easy now, when we are just emerging from some 400 years of increasing economic cum ideologic individualism, culminating in “almost anarchy,” nationally and internationally, and with every sectional interest shrouded in “mystery” and mental confusion.

“S. H.” wrote (October 7, 1945) on the “Philosophy of Free-thought.” To understand where we are, one may suggest that Freethought, in itself is not a “philosophy.” It is rather a “mental” condition or attitude to the universe, which is a necessary basis for any theoretic or practical work in any specific science, and still more so for a scientific philosophy. That is, the scientist in any particular science must be “free” from all arbitrary external authority, and he must try to be equally “free” internally from any bias, belief or prejudice of any kind. Outside his “own” science he/she may be as far from Freethought as any “parson” of any Godism. Many of them have been and are; and every active Freethinker has often dealt with this fact. The need for Freethought as a basis is many times more important in the social sciences, for there the beliefs, practices, prejudices, etc., are, in themselves, phenomena to be analysed. “Freethought” is a necessary basis for evolutionary sociology as for human progress. The second and third parts in our “Principles and Objects” state that clearly and distinctly, as does no form of Godism.

This prospectus of a new conspectus in the social sciences should suffice to expose the fallacy of much from “S. H.” recently—especially in his review of Burnham’s “Managerial Revolution” (January 6, 1946). In that there is the “error of temperament” which results in the “rationalising” of exploding beliefs with present discontents; and there are also many serious fallacies in inductive logic. To “S. H.” Burnham is “a disappointed Trotskyite,” who does no “wishful thinking.” (Or do they both?) While lauding Anarchists, “S. H.” never tries to estimate the relative sociological values of several types of Anarchism, nor does he give any guidance towards the “unity” necessary for the great majority against minorities of privilege. He sees now “the first stirrings of the revolt which will sometime be successful”; so he yearns, backward for Bakunin and forward for some spontaneous revolt of individuals—sometime. To adapt “C. C.s” words: “Quite so; the painful feelings evoked by an intellectual failure have thrown . . . ‘S. H.’ . . . back on revolt.”

The will to act is as necessary as “love” (“sympathy”); but both “will” and “sympathy” are likely to fail if not guided and controlled by reason, i.e., by a scientific method based on an analysis of all the forces operating in the social process. In “S. H.” as in Bakunin, the emotional revolt predominates; just as his feeling of “sympathy” for Susan Stebbing against some physicists blinded him to her own fallacy (May 13, 1945).

After the fallacies of temperament, those of logical fallacy are so numerous that criticism in detail is impossible. To begin, “S. H.” like Burnham, entirely ignores the imperative need to define, accurately, all terms used. By 1902, at least,

“Socialism” was as utterly meaningless as “Christianity,” “Christianism,” “Christism” or “Godism” (Theism). Similarly, for many years, “Capitalism” has had no definite meaning. Therefore, the statement that “Socialism may fail to take over when Capitalism dies” is, logically, just meaningless. Then the phrase, “to an Anarchist or Freethinker,” is logically misleading, because the two terms belong to different categories. The next fallacy is one of temperament as much as logic: temperamentally, it is “wishful thinking”; logically, it is “begging the question.” He assumes that the sociological phenomenon, “the expert managerial force” in U.S.A. is the same as in U.S.S.R. because he wishes to believe it. Even Simple Simon to-day knows that U.S.A. is a social existence based on economic individualism fiercer and more ruthless even than in U.K., early in the nineteenth century; while in the U.S.S.R. it is based on economic socialism.

Of many other errors there is space for only one, and that is in a question that always looms large in the argument of every variety of Anarchist. That is the relation of a Centralised Administrating Authority to local autonomy and the liberty of the individual human. Has the balance between the two been achieved in the U.S.S.R.ian lands? Analysing this, not as a Rebel, nor as a member of a Political Party, nor as a blind admirer of Communist Party or U.S.S.R., but as a Freethinker, I answer, “Yes, very effectively.” In the system of a council in every factory, village, etc., linked up with each council of wider extent up to the Supreme Council, they have achieved a—or the—most effective C.A.A., balanced with liberty of expression and unity of work at the bottom. True, it had to be modified to meet the exigencies of the war to save democracy from Fascism, but we are justified in a faith that that democratic system will again “save” the U.S.S.R.ian people as it did before.

“S. H.” called for a “priority job” (December 16, 1945) but proposed an “anti” one—leading nowhere. True, Freethinkers as Secularists must consider “priorities,” but in relation to place and time. Bradlaugh fought the whole organised power of Christian intolerance and carried political democracy to its height of equal liberty for all with privilege for none. Since then the enormous vested interests of discredited Christian Godism have spread deceit and hypocrisy in public affairs—ending in two world wars. Now we have to regain democracy at home and establish it for the human world. In doing that, Godism shall have to be fought at every step, and there is our first priority, as always, of Science against Religion—Godism. Humanity against Divinity. The world for humankind by humanism.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

THOMAS PATERSON.

Born near Lanark. After the imprisonment of Southwell and Holyoake he edited the “Oracle of Reason.” For exhibiting profane placards he was arrested, and sentenced 27th January, 1843, to three months’ imprisonment. His trial was reported under the title “God v. Paterson.” He insisted on considering God as the plaintiff, and in quoting from the Bible to show the plaintiff’s bad character. When released he went to Scotland to uphold the right of free publication, and was sentenced 8th November, 1843, to fifteen months’ imprisonment for selling “blasphemous” publications at Edinburgh. On his release he was presented with a testimonial, 6th April, 1845, H. Hetherington presiding. Paterson went to America.

THOMAS RILEY PERRY.

One of Carlyle’s shopmen, sentenced 1824 to three years’ imprisonment in Newgate for selling Palmer’s “Principles of Nature.” He became a chemist at Leicester and in 1844 petitioned Parliament for the prisoners for blasphemy, Paterson and Roalfe, stating that his own imprisonment had not fulfilled the judge’s hope of his recantation.—RENKLUF.

ACID DROPS

We know very little concerning Canon Baker, and our slight acquaintance with him does not incite to an eagerness for more. His vagaries are very common and recall ideas and language that carries us back to the old form of the Christian Evidence Society. But we did note in a London paper that in the course of a Lent sermon he remarked:—

"Of all brutish opinions, that is the most foolish, wildest and the most pestilent which holds that there is no life after this."

As a specimen of blackguardism, Canon Baker does very well indeed; it is a very fine exhibit. No one outside a pulpit could equal it. But it was not artistic. We would like to know by what method an idea becomes brutal or vile? An idea may be wrong or right, it may lead to good or to evil, but how does it become brutal? Canon Baker, knowing the listeners for whom he caters, evidently thinks that explanation is not needed. It might, in fact, confuse his followers. He has called to our mind one of our great writers who declared that there was not one man in a hundred of sufficient quality of heart or brain to be an Atheist. He was himself not an Atheist.

It is worth noting that the Roman Catholic journals in this country have raised no strong objection to the abolition of compulsory church attendance among the soldiers and airmen. But what would happen if the country was dominated by Roman Catholics and the same liberty was claimed? There would be a perfect uproar at once against such a move. Double-dealing is historical with the "great lying Church."

The Reverend Bradford, of St. Luke's, Barrow, writing in the "North-Western Mail," says that "the Bible has done more harm to Christianity than even the wickedness of Christians." He thinks that Jesus acted with great wisdom by not putting his message into writing. We quite see the point. A written statement pins a writer down to some definite opinion, whereas a verbal statement enables one to plead misrepresentation. The trick is simple and old. If what is said passes, well and good. If it does not pass, the originator may plead misrepresentation, or it may be so defended by his followers. Mr. Bradford is very, very artful. Jesus wrote nothing; therefore he can be blamed for nothing. If anything may be claimed as sensible, Jesus will appear with full marks. It is the very old game of "heads I win, tails you lose."

Apropos of Jesus, we received recently a document issued by the London Mosque of Mohammedans which should settle the question whether Jesus ever existed. It seems that there are "irrefutable arguments" that Jesus did not die on the cross. Having come out of the grave, Jesus went to India, died there, and his tomb "lies in the Kan Yar Street, Srinagar, Kashmir." The Leader of the London Mosque, J. D. Shams, is sure that if the tomb was opened documents would be found that the real Jesus lies there. That seems quite clear—but why has not the tomb been opened? At any rate, the Indian story is quite as good as the Jerusalem one, and one piece of nonsense more or less will not seriously matter.

The cure for all the diseases that man is heir to is given in the New Testament. If anyone is sick, the "elders" are called in; the sick man is to be rubbed with oil; the elders will pray and God will heal the sufferer. Nothing could be better arranged. But, in addition to the New Testament, we have in this country a group of people who not merely read the Bible, they believe it; and every now and again some of these people are summoned because they have taken God seriously. They have not called in a doctor to a child suffering from disease; the child dies, and the people are rebuked, fined or sent to prison for obeying the New Testament.

In Southend the other day there was a case of serious disease from which a man died. There was a scamper, and many who appeared up to that point to believe that God will cure them by faith took care to be inoculated. Perhaps they think they are giving God a helping hand. The deputy leader of the sect informed a "Sunday Chronicle" reporter that, while they were

a faith-healing sect, "some of us are open-minded about medical aid"—which means "trust in God while you are well, but rush for the doctor when you are ill." It appears that God will be with you when the situation is easy, but when it is not call in a doctor. The English law does not care a brass button what people believe concerning sickness, but it does say that anyone having a child in his care and does not seek medical help when necessary has committed a crime, with the possibility of imprisonment.

Mr. Edwin White, officiating Chaplain to the Forces, writes in "The Times" for April 3 that it is not the fault of the Army or the Church that so many recruits put themselves down as Church of England. Mr. White must know many men who join are not aware of their rights in this matter, while others are subjected to an examination before they are written down as not having any religion and shrink from the ordeal; and having got through the ordeal they get the lesson that declining church attendance means some disagreeable duty, and a longer one than is required of a religious soldier. Mr. White, quite unconsciously, gives us light when he says:—

"What is required is not the abolition of church parade so much as an increased realism in the recruit's declaration. What is that but saying that the declaration of Church of England is adopted because the recruits are persuaded not to be honourable where religion is concerned."

We don't know who the Count Perovsky is, where he comes from, what he does, or where he is going to, but he writes in a very frantic manner to the "Catholic Herald" that he will have nothing to do with Soviet Russia because they are Atheists. He also writes that the Russian leaders, if Atheists, should not interfere with religious questions. Well and good; but if that policy were adopted there should be no interference with Atheism. Of the two, the religious one is most dependent on interference. Take all the lies that the Churches have circulated, and still circulate, and Russia would be very stupid if it did not keep an eye on the Roman and other Churches.

Our readers will remember the articles which appeared in these columns criticising the attitude taken up by Mr. R. O'Sullivan with regard to his statement that, with the abolition of the religious marriage and the decision of the House of Lords with regard to the legality of the Secular Society Limited, England had ceased to be a Christian country. We agreed upon that point, but upon little else. His history was very shaky and his conclusions were ditto. He assumed that a non-Christian country was a calamity; but we had only Mr. Sullivan's word for it. He saw in the advance the destruction of our civilisation and we saw its development. Mr. O'Sullivan paid us the compliment of not venturing on a reply to our criticism.

But Mr. O'Sullivan is still lamenting. This time because certain divorced people show no sense of guilt. There might, of course, be reason for shame. But why should divorce cause shame to both parties? Why, in the name of common sense, if a man cannot live with his wife, or the woman with her husband, should either of necessity be ashamed? If they are both guilty, the sooner separated the better. If it is only one of the two who has broken the implied contract, then again the sooner the separation. And to punish one who is not guilty by forbidding remarriage is a stupid act; it deliberately punishes one for the fault of the other. There is neither sense nor justice to go out of our way to punish the innocent because the woman, or the man, has broken the contract. From report we gather that Mr. O'Sullivan stands out much better as a lawyer than he does as either an historian, a sociologist or a humanitarian.

One of the Roman Catholic papers announces a convert—a Jew. It is explained that the said Jew couldn't love God, who terrified him. But one day, standing on Waterloo Station watching the crowd, he saw that it was not "a mass, but persons. This blinding flash was a moment of grace." He turned to the Gospel and found that Christ had come. This is very interesting, it might be due to brainstorm, too much work, over-indulging in drugs, or other causes. But under stress of this abnormal condition he became a Catholic. These cases are interesting, not uncommon with and without religion.

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SUGAR PLUMS

Last week we mentioned our indebtedness to Mr. T. Driberg, M.P., for having brought before the House the undesirability of church parades, which the majority of soldiers do not like. About 200 Members backed the suggestion, and many more would have voted for it if it had been carried to the vote. It was not a plea preventing those who wished to have a religious service to have them. It simply meant that if a man did not wish to go to church, whether he believed in religion or not, he should not be compelled to go. It should be remembered, that every day that Parliament sits prayers are said by an appointed preacher who prays that God will endow Members with wisdom. That is a deadly test and one that can hardly be justified by the results. So far as results go, God and his angels come out very poorly. We do not know how far the raising of the question of freedom among soldiers as well as among civilians will be carried into the Armed Forces, but we shall see.

We are also indebted to Mr. Driberg for calling attention to the way in which the "Tablet" (Roman Catholic) takes what should be adopted at once—if the talks of Catholic leaders in this country represented facts as presented to non-Catholics. Here is the quotation:—

"It is supposed to be a matter of indifference to society, and one to be left to personal choice, whether the individual goes to church or not, but all who look around upon their neighbours can see easily the marks of degradation on the faces of those who never go to church. And indeed the more sensible argument would have been to congratulate the soldiers on the good fortune of belonging to a profession where churchgoing was compulsory. But at the same time it is true that the advantages of such habits are very greatly diminished once the habit itself comes under challenge. Much the best plan would have been to have gone on in challenge to it."

It is not often that we get such plain and damnable a mixture of impudence and Christian ferocity stated so plainly. Mr. Driberg says that when he read that passage he had to read it twice before he could believe that he read the outburst correctly. We do not think that Mr. Driberg is quite so lacking in knowledge of the real influence of the Catholic Church. There is no greater threat to honesty of expression and independence of thought than that offered by the Catholic Church.

While we are on the subject of freedom of thought in the Army, it would be a good thing if some Member raised the question in Parliament of the fitness or the advisability of

Field Marshal Montgomery turning himself into what is suspiciously like a preacher to the men under his control. He has instructed his subordinates to send him a periodical account of how many men attend church service. Being what he is—knowing that he is saturated with a very primitive form of religion—it is quite plain that he is taking advantage of his position and using almost a threat to honest opinion where religion is concerned. To work to get honesty of speech and action from his men is one thing, but to act in such a way that numbers will play the hypocrite to gain praise from superior officers is quite another thing. A question on the subject might well be asked in the Commons.

We are pleased to learn that a new Branch of the N.S.S. is under formation in Halifax. Some meetings have been held and Mr. Corina has also lectured there. It should be a good field for propagandists. Freethinkers should make the best of present opportunities.

What a lot of nonsense even sensible people let go when they begin to champion religion! There is, of course, a passage in the Bible that a man cannot touch pitch without being defiled, and the everyday version of this is that when a man or woman starts to defend foolishness they cannot avoid talking nonsense. The performance that reminded us of the old saying happened at one of those lunch-hour talks which are very common nowadays. The Rev. Gordon Wheeler (Roman Catholic) presided and Miss Pamela Frankau provided the nonsense—and that was indeed plentiful. Given her subject—that she always believed in Christianity—there was nothing striking in her moving from Protestant nonsense to Roman Catholic absurdities. One was a preparation for the other. Now she may enlarge her nonsense, but the quality will remain solid.

Miss Frankau says that, among other adventures, she "tried to become an Atheist." Bless the woman, she had not sufficient perception to realise that you cannot try to become an Atheist; you either develop enough intelligence to become one or you remain a Godite—and in that sphere there is enough foolishness to satisfy even a weekly talk over the dining-table. But Miss Frankau explains that she found "sin" pleasant. If "sin" stands for robbery or general misbehaviour, we see no reason why she should have found it pleasant. Perhaps her religious environment was responsible. Then she withdrew her patronage of the Protestant Church and "looked round" for something else. Bless her, she was determined to make a fool of herself, so she exchanged the absurdities of Protestantism for those of the Roman Church. She must have been a rare bargain-hunter and could really get more for her money. But it was not until 1940 that Miss Frankau decided to join the Catholic Church. She had been to New York, and it occurred to her to pray to St. Anthony. Evidently St. Anthony took a liking to Miss Frankau, or she became such a nuisance that the saint roped her in. She had prayed very hard and constantly. The Church "took her in," and none know better how to do this than "the great lying Church." We suggest that now she should read Flaubert's "Temptation of Saint Anthony." She will understand the significance of such people better than bowing and scraping before the Catholic Church. But to a psychologist Miss Frankau's confession is pitiful—the more so because she does not realise it.

The Anglican, like the Roman, rejects contemptuously the idea of a female ministry, and in a leading article on the "unity" problem between Nonconformists and the Church of England the "Church Times" makes it quite clear that the Nonconformists are making it all the more difficult if they insist on the ordination of women to the priesthood. "All hope of reunion is sabotaged," it concludes, with something like a note of triumph that a real concrete argument can be urged against any reunion. One argument or another, what does it matter? The Christian Churches have always been split asunder ever since Paul and Peter had their first row. There is far more chance that Freethought will triumph long before the Churches will unite for their own protection.

OTHER PEOPLE'S GODS

II.

The God of Samuel Butler

ORIGINALITY is the rarest of human qualities. And in speculations about a God it is indeed seldom displayed. But Samuel Butler—the Victorian not the Carolean—had more originality than most men; and Samuel Butler's God is certainly less unworthy of his creator than most Gods are.

You find him in a book called: "God the Known and God the Unknown," probably the only exciting book on the subject written in modern times. For modern books about God are apt to be fifth-rate, dull, repetitive, plagiaristic and unreadable. In a word—stale rubbish. But Butler's God is worth meeting. I am surprised no church has adopted him, for if I wanted a god I would rather adopt this god than most others.

Perhaps I should really speak of Butler's Gods rather than his god, although after his first god who is vivid enough, the rest appeared to me shadowy like the ghosts of Banquo's heirs seen by Macbeth.

Butler boldly says that he can show that there is a single Spirit or Animator of all living things possessing a person, mask, body or mouthpiece. He is an Infinity in unity, not a mere Trinity like the Christian god. Butler declares that he will exhibit this god not as a phantom but with the same ease and flesh and blood clarity as you and I see each other.

A bold claim! Let us see how Butler carries it out.

Rejecting Pantheism and Orthodox Christianity as self-contradictory, incomprehensible and meaningless, for neither means a living person when they speak of that which is according to all our ideas, of a Living Person, no Living Person at all, Butler comes to his own concept. He sees the whole varied congeries of Living Things as a single ancient vast Being, animated by one Spirit. The Body of God is the multitudinous forms of Life upon the earth (as multitudinous and varied as the parts and cells of our own bodies) all evolved of protoplasmic substances. The Spirit of God is the energy or force resident in all life. The old teleological Darwinism of Erasmus Darwin (not of Charles) gripped the truth—the one-ness and purposiveness of Life.

Readers of Bernard Shaw will be on familiar ground here. The soul of Butler's God is Shaw's Life-Force. To parody the Mahomedan creed: There is one Butler and Shaw in his Prophet.

But to go on. This panzoistic conception of God (the idea of his single Person including all living units) is "God the Known." From this, it follows that many orthodox religious concepts are valid; many invalid. The Athanasian Creed concept of "a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting" is right. So is the "Life Everlasting" but not Resurrection, for this life is immortal though ever-changing. God can and does become man incarnate; but also he becomes the beasts and the fruits and vegetables, through which run his same fundamental laws of nutrition, development, reproduction, memory, birth and death. (These strike one as likelier laws of God than the artificial and totally inadequate Ten Commandments, by the way). Quasi-omnipotence and quasi-omniscience and quasi-omnipresence are the obvious attributes of this Known God.

This is no idea-God in the clouds among the (imagined) cherubim and seraphim. This is a tangible, present, real, everyday, here-and-now God whom we can understand, love and caress in all that delights us upon earth. Instead of pretending an artificial belief and a lip-love, we really can believe, understand, see, touch and love this Known God of Butler's. So Butler says. God governs, not directly, but through us his ministers (the democrat!).

(Christians would say, of course, that Butler is heretically confusing God with his creations, which is equal to saying that I am this article which I am writing.)

Such is the known God. Now for God, or Gods, the Unknown. God the Known is plainly designed, and since there is evidence of Design, there must be a Designer, so behind God the Known there must be a vaster God the Unknown, who stands to God the First as he to us, and behind God the Second, God the Third and Fourth, and so *ad infinitum* perhaps. The impregnator of this Earth prepared it for his offspring (Query: God the Father and God the Son?) as a hen makes an egg shell or as a peach makes a stone, for the protection of the life-germ within. Eggs make themselves into hens by unconscious racial memory infinitely repeated, and so with us in the womb and so with God, recollecting of his passing through the same stages before in worlds and universes.

(You perceive now how original, provocative and stimulating Butler's ideas upon God are, and how far advanced upon those of the present Pope or the late St. Athanasius.)

There are three known great concentric phases of life. There may be more. The three are: our cells, ourselves, and the God of this-World, the Known. Our cells know us not; but through the microscopy we know them as living with a life of their own (as when a dead man's cells go on living). We are like our cells, mere constituents of the body of God. By analogy we can see that this God is begotten of one more or less like himself and that his growth follows the laws of all other growths.

This is, to borrow Shavian language, "as far as thought can reach" at present. Butler claims that this is enough, as being true as far as it goes, throwing light on old problems and opening up a vista of hope of further addition to our knowledge.

Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is not, I fear, for human minds. It is beyond our ken, as certain bacilli beyond our eyes, spectacles and microscopes. But there are grains of truth in Butler as in most false faiths, and in Butler's case they are not smothered in such mountains of falsehood as hardly to be worth the toil of excavating them. This book is 23,000 words only—about a quarter of the modern novel—and it is written so clearly, cleanly and straightforwardly that it is a pleasure to read. Published in 1879, of course it failed, for it was too good to succeed. Indeed, out of his 16 books, Butler made a loss of £1,065 5s. 3d., as a punishment for his genius. To-day the loss would have been greater—if he could get published at all in these times of paper shortage and high standards!

By the way, Butler on Atheism is interesting. Pantheism is a disguised atheism. So is Christianity, professing to offer us a God which is not a God inasmuch as we can conceive no being nor anything like it, and talking of a personal God who has no material person. The queer God of Christianity is interesting enough but incredible to an adult modern mind capable of independent thought and of regarding the world and universe as far as we know them to-day. But the god of Samuel Butler, perhaps, is more credible to sane modern minds.

Those in search of a pleasant (and profitable) Sunday afternoon might do worse than spend it with this god of the prophet Samuel. There are worse gods, I assure you; such as that Arch-War Criminal, the Christian God of Loving your Enemies by Atomic-Bomb Obliteration, who functioned so admirably at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to convert the heathen Japanese into a belief in Christianity, that Gospel of Love.

C. G. L. DU CANN

The Church of St. Peter, in Rome, is the grand symbol of the exploitation of human imbecility by the cunning of priestcraft.
—YVES GUYOT.

CONCERNING COPERNICUS

THE second impression is now available of a very nicely printed and decorated book which is of especial interest to Freethinkers. Unfortunately it costs a guinea, and most readers will have to be content with borrowing it from a public library. They should not hesitate to do this, however, for it is both readable and informative. "Copernicus and His World" is by Hermann Kesten, and the author has certainly done his job well, for, though it contains slightly over four hundred pages and is packed with historical facts, it never becomes boring. Not for me, at any rate. I regret only one thing, the absence of an index, which seems to be a major omission.

Mr. Kesten is, of course, primarily concerned with showing the greatness of Copernicus, but the larger title is well justified, for this book conveys a very vivid impression of the European background against which the central figure is set, and inside which he must be considered. Here we have astrology and astronomy, holiness and heresy, ignorance and wisdom, intermingled as it surely must have been, not only in society in general but often in the same person. A world which is changing, advancing, but which yet labours under that worst of all burdens on the intellect—Christianity. Science has arrived and is making itself felt, but superstition holds the fort. And the bastions are still strong.

Mr. Kesten commences with a claim that it is difficult to dispute: "The mightiest human in a thousand years was a Polish astronomer. Being fond of order, he began the fiercest revolution—that of science. Although he wrote about the moon and the stars, no author has dealt mankind and its false pride a heavier blow." Immediately we are acquainted with the times: "For four hundred years our world system has borne his name. Every child learns to-day that the earth turns, and moves around the sun, yet Copernicus hesitated for thirty-six years before daring to print this observation. In his time it was dangerous to say aloud that the earth moves. Indeed it was the most impudent statement ever printed."

It was on February 19, 1473, at Torun, that Nicolaus Copernicus was born, and the astrologers noted the exact time: 4.42 p.m. We do not know, says Mr. Kesten, when he first saw the earth moving. Thanks, however, to the work of his predecessors, the great astronomer was provided with sufficient data to form the basis of his epoch-marking "Book of Revolutions." The way was prepared by men like Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) who wrote: "We know already that our earth moves, even though this motion is not visible, but becomes clear only when we compare it with the fixed stars." "It is true," says Mr. Kesten, "that sometimes everything is prepared for the prophet—but he does not come. This time he did come! The man who had enough knowledge, boldness and luck to inaugurate the greatest of all world revolutions. . ."

He showed the infinite greatness of the heavens in relation to the earth and the enormous distances of the stars. He proved that the earth moved and that it could not be the centre of the motions of the planets. Accepting the view of Martianus Capella that Mercury and Venus revolved around the sun, the former in the smaller circle, and postulating that Saturn, Jupiter and Mars revolved likewise, Copernicus explained—to quote Mr. Kesten—"Why these planets seem further away from us when they rise with the sun than when they rise while the sun is setting." Then, considering the great space between the convex side of the Venus orbit and the concave side of the orbit of Mars, Copernicus announced in stronger terms that he had used previously, that he was not ashamed "to place the orbit of the earth with her companion in this space, and to set the motionless sun, centre of the planets, at the centre of the whole, although the apparent positions of the fixed stars are not changed by the motion of the earth in its orbit." The length of the year, the motions of the moon and its eclipses and many other

problems are dealt with in "The Book of Revolutions" also, and though it contains many errors and false assumptions, a lot of silly reasons for sound conclusions, it is unquestionably one of the greatest works of man. Naturally, a large number of the ideas contained therein were held by others before Copernicus, but it was in him—or through him—that they really fructified, and we do not discredit his forerunners when we refer to the Copernican system. They were an essential part of the process, the evolution, of that astronomical system, but he was the master figure—the genius—the right man at the right time, just as Shakespeare was in English Renaissance literature.

Let us not forget the pathfinders, nor the followers. For there was much still to be done after Copernicus's death in 1543. His books were condemned by the Church and they were later put on the Index, where they remained until 1835, along with the works of Galileo, Foscarini, Didacus a Stunica and Kepler. Mr. Kesten tells us that Kepler was: "Persecuted by many churches, left in the lurch by emperors . . . fell from one private misery into the other . . . never bathed in his life and begot thirteen children." But he called astrology "this bastard of science" and destroyed its foundations, was "one of the world's keenest calculators," and "in the name of the old canon of Torun (Copernicus) this stubborn Lutheran wrote the laws of modern astronomy."

Of Galileo, we read that he was "the greatest master of Italian prose between Machiavelli and Manzoni, told the open secrets of the sky and of physics to the people in the language of the people. In addition, he supplied tangible popular arguments for his scientific theories. This last creative mind of the Renaissance was a forerunner of the eighteenth-century enlighteners and friends of the people. This champion of the autonomy of science fought against the authority of Aristotle and of the Church in every one of his writings. He fought against all authority."

The treatment of the aged, infirm and blind Galileo, is one of the worst crimes of the Church of Rome, but on February 17, 1600, the fires had burned one of the noblest of men—Giordano Bruno.

Bruno had entered a Dominican monastery at the age of fourteen, but he began to doubt, and was soon threatened with persecution. "At the age of twenty-eight he left his cowl, his monastery and the whole order of the Inquisitors behind him, fled to Rome, and became a wandering humanist, following the profession of an itinerant and unordained preacher of the truth." How the great Pantheist was lured to Venice and delivered into the hands of the Inquisition is well known. His refusal to recant has remained a superlative example for all Freethinkers. He was defrocked and excommunicated, and then the clergy handed him over to the secular arm with the dastardly ironical request "so to mitigate the severity of your sentence with respect to his body that there may be no danger of death or of the shedding of blood." His last reported words were: "Perchance your fear in passing judgment on me is greater than mine in receiving it." Mr. Kesten writes: "Bruno's highest goal was: to know the truth and declare it!" His writings are still on the Index.

I have little doubt that Mr. Kesten's own book will be considered unfit for the faithful. For "Copernicus and His World" is an enlightening book about men who did much to enlighten mankind. Here they are with their struggles, their idiosyncrasies, and their background. We can forgive their lapses, for they gave us so much. Our debt to them is colossal, and there is but one way that we can repay it. By carrying on their work and overthrowing completely the religion which persecuted, tortured and condemned them. By searching always for truth.

C. Mc CALL.

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THE THEORY OF PERSECUTION

WHEN religion was considered a matter of public rather than private concern, the motives of persecution were naturally found in the order of considerations which we have called tribal or political. The wrath of the gods must be averted by the destruction of the blasphemers who provoked it; and the popular impulse to cast out the abominable thing was reinforced by the more astute reflection that whether the gods cared about it or not, persons who renounced the accustomed gods of the city could not be otherwise than bad citizens. Persecution on grounds of this kind is essentially a measure of public safety. . .

If the authority of princes and rulers is divine, and if salvation is more important than any temporal interest, and the duty of saving one's soul paramount to all others, it is the manifest duty of princes and rulers to do what they can to ensure the salvation of their subjects. Further, if holding the true faith is essential to salvation, and the one true faith is known to be in the custody of the Church, it follows that the prince must support the Church at all hazards in preventing his subjects holding any other faiths. . . It is easy to say that opinion cannot be coerced. But this, in the first place, is true only of the small minority of mankind who are in the habit of thinking for themselves; and, secondly, if it were true, it would only show that in some cases persecution is too late to be effectual. Not cure, but prevention is the main object. . . If heretical opinions are damnable, and the infection of them dangerous to the soul, the best thing that the prince can do is to contrive that his faithful subjects shall have no opportunity of hearing them. The readiest way of doing this is to make heresy a crime, and inflict penalties on all persons who either publish or willingly listen to anything contrary to the Catholic faith. And if heresy be a crime, it is plainly a crime of the most heinous kind. Every heretic is a centre of infection and corruption infinitely more deadly than any physical pestilence. Even if his own soul is stubborn beyond saving, the souls of his innocent neighbours are in constant danger because of him. And if temporal welfare is indeed of no account in comparison to spiritual, no limit whatever can be assigned to the measures of repression to which an orthodox ruler should commit himself. Better a depopulated wilderness than a garden cultivated by heretical hands; better a poverty-stricken remnant of the faithful than an outwardly prosperous multitude sitting in the darkness of mortal error and under an eternal ban. The case for theological persecution is unanswerable if we admit the fundamental supposition that one faith is necessary to salvation. . . Spain is the one country in which the policy of extermination has been consistently applied for a time long enough to produce its full results. For once the Church and the Inquisition had unbounded scope. The Moors and the Jews were expelled; even the suspicion of Judaising or heresy was more dangerous than treason; the Catholic faith reigned without the shadow of a rival from the Pyrenees to the Atlantic, and Spain was intellectually and morally ruined. . .

The Inquisitors doubtless thought that in burning heretics they were vindicating the honour of God as well as preserving the souls of the people; and this is only a refinement of the old tribal feeling that the heretic is a curse to the land, which is by no means extinct even now in Catholic countries. The periodical massacres of Jews which disgraced every country in Europe in the Middle Ages were partly due to this feeling; and it is notable that they were mostly not official but popular. . . The position of the Jews in Catholic Europe was very like that of the Christians in the first two centuries of the Church. But the Jews were victims not merely of superstition, but of the commonest kind of jealousy. They added to the crime of infidelity that of being, in spite of vexatious and oppressive laws, richer and more clever than their neighbours.

Superstition engendered hatred; envy inflamed it; and envy, hatred and the lust of plunder fell back on superstition for an excuse.

In modern times religious and ecclesiastical controversies have become inextricably mixed up with political ones, and so long as theological persecution was esteemed a respectable motive, it was even found convenient to put it forward as a disguise or justification for animosities which were in truth merely political. It is barely needful to mention, as instances, the association of Anglicanism with the cause of the Crown, and Puritanism with that of the Parliament, or the conjunction in the following century of the Pope with the Pretender. And if Protestant supremacy had been doubtful at the end of the sixteenth century, the Spanish Armada, a gigantic hybrid of theological and political ambition, would have sufficed to make it certain. . .

The same experience which shows petty persecution to be ineffectual has also shown its purpose to be misconceived. Heterodoxy has had by this time a scope quite sufficient to display the mischievous results of toleration. Where are these results? The foundations of morality have not been weakened; the practice of it has not ceased; respect for the law has not diminished; society is not on the brink of dissolution. The civilised commonwealths of the world are not on the whole less orderly, less prosperous, or less flourishing in any way than they were two centuries ago. The disturbances and discontents that have arisen from time to time are traceable to natural political causes. Orthodoxy can allege with confidence only one evil consequence—namely, that heterodoxy and unbelief have increased. To an orthodox believer that is, of course, the greatest of evils; but whether it should be an evil in the eyes of the civil authority, which by the hypothesis is to judge of beliefs only by their fruits in action, is the very matter in question.—From "Essays in Jurisprudence and Ethics" by Sir F. Pollock pp. 151-64.

FOR WHO . . . ?

Dulcens et decorum est pro patria mori?

A LITTLE cross in a village churchyard marks the spot. The spot where a young airman lies buried. On the cross I read this:

Flt./Lt. John B—,

Born October, 1915; died October, 1940.

"For God, For King, For Country!"

I made a few enquiries and learnt something about the dead man.

He was 25 when he died, and left a wife and two children. Not being a member of a wealthy family, he went to the village school, and gained a scholarship to the County High School at the age of eleven. In 1938 he joined the R.A.F., and he was a pilot-officer at the outbreak of war. In 1940 he was killed in a dog-fight over Southern England.

When I had learned all this, I returned to the churchyard and looked at the grave. It was well kept, with several vases of fresh flowers, and a faded wreath which had been given by his fellow-officers. I looked at the cross and I knew that the inscription was, to put it very mildly, unsuitable.

"This man," I thought, "was not thinking of 'England, home and beauty' when he died; he was thinking only of 'home'. He was thinking of a young wife and his two children, thinking that the more Germans he shot down, the sooner he'd be back with them. And I have a strong suspicion that the German who killed him was thinking the same thing in terms of Englishmen. I walked away saying to myself, 'He was not thinking of God, King, or Country when he died, he was thinking of his family'."

That young man personifies the answer to the "personal" talk of men having died for God and England. And it is unanswerable.

FRANCIS I. GOULD

FOOD — FOR THOUGHT !

Give us more food!—the people cry.
We've *won* the War. (You'd never guess!)
Instead of *more* we're getting *less*—
So curses on the Ministry!

Fat politicians sitting snug,
The angry housewife's plea ignore:
Forgetting promises of *more*
When out to catch her vote—poor mug!

But why the bother? Why the fuss?
Why all the clamour in the Press?
To grumble at this shocking mess—
It really quite surprises us.

For all Believers must agree
That "Seek and ye shall find" is true:
The Bible tells you what to do—
"Ask—and it shall be given thee!"

Come, all you Bishops, do your stuff!
It's your big opportunity
To prove that Christian Unity
Is something more than blah and bluff.

So *pray* till ev'ry face is blue:
Don't mourn the loss of poor Lease-Lend.
Just see what food your God will send—
And if his promises are true!

I'll bet my only pair of pants
You will not get a sausage-skin—
And well you know it! Yet you din
The same old dirge, you sycophants!

But when your prayers are proved in vain
Please shut up shop and fade away.
For telling lies and taking pay
Is bare-faced cheating for self-gain.

If men and women, seeming sane,
Can swallow dope like yours it's plain
Their minds are just wide open spaces—
Same as we've got—in other places!

W. H. WOOD.

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THE CHALLENGE OF HUMANISM

THE following is the programme of the Conference, convened by the World Union of Freethinkers (British Section), to be held in Conway Hall from April 30 to May 5:—

TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 6-30 p.m.: Opening of the Conference by the acting President, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner.

7 p.m.: The First Session, on "Rationalism." Speakers: Profs. A. E. Heath and H. Levy. Chairman: Mr. Joseph McCabe.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 7 p.m.: The Second Session, on "Naturalism." Speakers: Mr. J. S. D. Bacon and Mr. Edward Conze.

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 7 p.m.: The Third Session, on "Man." Speakers: Dr. Stark Murray and Mr. John Katz. Chairman: Mr. H. L. Beales.

FRIDAY, MAY 3, 7 p.m.: The Fourth Session, on "Nature." Speaker: Professor J. B. S. Haldane. Chairman: Mr. Joseph Reeves, M.P.

SATURDAY, MAY 4, 3 p.m.: The Fifth Session, on "Civilisation." Speakers: Mr. Archibald Robertson and Mr. Charles Duff. Chairman: Mr. E. M. Forster.

7 p.m.: The Sixth Session, on "Religion." Speakers: Dr. Olaf Stapledon, Dr. P. L. Couchoud and Mr. H. J. Blackham.

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 7 p.m.: Protest Meeting against the R.B.C. policy of excluding representative exposition of Freethought, Humanist, or Rationalist views. Speakers: Miss Marjorie Bowen, Mr. Chapman Cohen, Mr. F. A. Ridley, and others.

Course tickets (price 5s.), admitting to front seats, may be obtained from Mr. H. J. Blackham, 4a, Inverness Place, Queensway, W. 2, who will also endeavour to obtain hotel accommodation for those who apply early. Admission to individual meetings, 1s., payable at the door. Those willing to act as stewards should please write immediately to Mr. Blackham.

The British Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers is drawn from the R.P.A., the National Secular Society, the Ethical Union, South Place Ethical Society, the Positivist Society, Grand Orient Lodges of French, Belgian, Spanish and Czech Freethinkers domiciled in this country, and has the co-operation of the American societies. The Conference will endeavour to set out and clarify the meaning, significance and compass of Humanism as a sufficient and universal guide to human living.

In addition to the speakers announced the Conference has the support of M. Edouard Herriot, Dr. Bourne, Mr. Ivor Brown, Prof. V. Gordon Childe, Prof. F. A. E. Crew, Prof. E. J. Dent, Dr. R. Firth, Prof. J. C. Flugel, Dr. Haden Guest, M.P., Lord Horder, Mr. Hsiung, Dr. Julian Huxley, Prof. H. F. Jolowicz, Dr. Ernest Jones, Sir Arthur Keith, Prof. Kirsopp Lake, Prof. Laski, Mr. Joseph Lewis, Mr. Kingsley Martin, Dr. Joseph Needham, Mr. Ernest Newman, Prof. C. J. Patton, Mr. Eden Phillpotts, Mr. Charles Smith, Mr. E. Thurtle M.P., Mr. H. G. Wells and Mr. Edwin Wilson.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

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

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