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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

It Might Have Been

QUIETLY but steadily our country is undergoing a revolution. A peaceful one but yet a revolution. There is no chopping of heads, even if there may be a certain clearing of pockets. In what we may fairly call the English style the majority protest against the change and then settle down to make the best of it. It has been well said that if we put a skein of silk round the neck of Englishmen and call it a chain we must look out for trouble. But load him with chains and call them symptoms of freedom and he will settle down to it contentedly. The result is that we manage to bring about a revolution with comparative ease and a minimum of disturbance, and it is left for the historian to indicate when and where the revolution occurred. Contradictory as it may seem, I think that is partly, perhaps largely, a consequence of the over-painting of the terrors of revolutions by our upper classes.

The two examples of this are the French and the Russian revolutions. It has been well said by one historian that the French revolution was a European one that took place in France. In the same way we may speak of the Russian outbreak as a world revolution that took place in Russia. Thanks to these two world revolutions we are now passing through another one with considerable ease if we consider the difficulties that have to be overcome. Whatever the outcome of this revolution of ours may lead to, it is not likely that we can go back to things as they were. At present the air is full of Government inquiries in almost every branch of our lives. I feel that disagreeable as cardinal changes must be to many, particularly to the older section of the community, changes will come, and when they do come we shall wonder why they did not come before.

I had got thus far when I must have fallen into a doze, for I seemed to see before me a Governmental report concerning what was once that most flourishing occupation in the country. Moreover, it dealt with a subject that was the most delicate of all subjects, namely the present position of religion, and with suggestions of what might be done by way of reform. And there seemed to be unrolled before me a manuscript which professed to be a part of a report from a Commission that had been formed to consider the future of certain religious bodies and was concerned with the status and quality of the clergy in this country. It ran thus, after a kind of preamble, which will not interest readers:—

"The subject of the appended inquiry deals with what was once unquestionably—if we exclude the armed forces—the largest and the most flourishing occupation in the British Isles. Although of foreign

origin its growth in these islands was very rapid, and for many generations it gave employment to a large number of people—how large we can offer no exact information. For many years, however, owing to the competition of an increasing number of new occupations, there has probably been an absolute, but certainly a relative decrease in the number employed. New occupations do not, however, account for all, since it appears the home industry has suffered severely through importations from Italy, in an early period, and later from Germany and France. These importations, consisting of ideas totally at variance with the best interests of the clerical professions, have worked irreparable havoc among those on whom the clerical industry depended for support; and your Commissioners are convinced that, could a more rigid system of controls be established, what is now a decaying history might again flourish. On this we have the assurance of the heads of the industry in question."

Under the head of "Occupation" the Commissioners report:—

"Considerable difficulty has been experienced by your Commissioners in arriving at an exact estimate of the number of persons engaged in this industry. Although those engaged are banded together on the usual trade union lines, owing to these being split up into a number of more or less autonomous societies, and also to the animosity existing between them, we have been unable to obtain exact figures. The difficulty of an exact calculation is enhanced by the fact that this particular occupation has associated therewith a large number of practitioners who have no official or trade rank. These seem attracted thereby by various motives—love of gain, dissatisfaction with more laborious methods of employment, sheer vanity, or the mistaken idea that they are specially fitted for the work. But your Commissioners observed that there are few occupations so easy to follow, or that demand less preparation for those who adopt it.

"While on the whole this occupation appears to be a healthy one, we yet find associated therewith diseases and disorders of a well-defined character. These afflictions, while not confined to this profession, certainly manifest themselves to a quite abnormal extent. Your Commissioners feel justified in saying therefore, that while these diseases might be produced in other circumstances they certainly are aggravated by the occupation in question. These maladies are very largely of a mental character, but one may cite among the physical ones the great prevalence of myopia and other forms of ophthalmia. The majority of the sufferers seem quite incapable of seeing things in their true relations to others. Aphasia is still common. Under this head may be noted the preval-

ence of amnesia, there being a marked inability in a large number of cases to find and use the right words in describing people or things. In a series of experiments conducted by your Commissioners, in which the subjects of investigation used such terms as 'Faith,' 'Miracle,' 'Inspiration,' 'Providence,' etc., it was found that there existed nothing like a common agreement as to meanings and, indeed, in a large number of cases meanings quite at variance with the legitimate ones were given to the words in question. The delusion that these men are called to their occupation by God seems to be held by all, and although your Commissioners pointed out to these unfortunate people that their trade had been selected by their parents, the delusion seemed unshakable. An inflated egoism leading men of often less than mediocre attainment publicly to declare the belief that their existence is essential to national well being, with the refusal to look at national well-being as dependant upon them, indicates the existence of mental disorders of a depressing character.

"Your Commissioners also desire to place on record their conviction that there appears to be at work a selection by which men of weak or disordered intellect are deliberately kept from other professions and placed in this one. This, of course, may suggest that this is of benefit to the community by segregating the type described. There may be something in this, but against it is the fact that the ailments would be aggravated instead of moving in the direction of a cure. The system of training seems to point in this direction. Independent thinking is strongly opposed, and the text-books used are mostly of an antiquated type. Students are cut off from advanced thinking, and there is produced a degree of personal weakness painful to see and socially harmful to development.

"Concerning the earning of this class, your Commissioners have also failed to secure exact figures of maintenance. Many complain that their payment is miserably poor, but some receive large incomes, with corresponding pensions when retiring. But in this matter it would seem that the way of coming to a just conclusion is to take this industry in relation to others and with regard to social values. So far as other industries are concerned we have failed to find any social benefits accruing. Certainly there is no social function that would not serve as well without help from those under observation. Moreover, we have had placed before us documents to show these people hinder, rather than assist, social growth. It is also suggested that in many instances these men serve as agents who strive might and main to keep in being at least two populations where only one should be. Finally, on this point, we have no evidence for believing the men whom we are examining would receive better pay were they paid by the outside world."

The report ends with a list of "Suggestions," from which I take the following:—

"Although your Commissioners are strongly impressed with the conviction that the industry under examination is dying, it does not suggest any drastic action. Much might be done by selecting the younger

and healthier persons, teaching them a new trade and thus surrounding them with a healthier environment. But obviously, this could only be applied to a small number of people, many having been placed in this trade because their natural qualities did not permit of their adopting with profit any other, it would be unwise to expect that the method suggested above would be of any value except in relation to a few. And bearing in mind the large numbers engaged in this profession very serious evils might result from throwing them on to the world, destitute of either natural or other resources, a body of men incapacitated by inclination, by training and by custom, from earning a living in other directions. We would also point out that in segregating a certain type of mind the clerical profession does something of a social service. Of the evil consequences of the interference of clericism there is ample evidence, and therefore the letting loose of some 50,000 clerics might be productive of great injury.

"Probably the most satisfactory plan would be to establish a fund for the preservation of the type of people we have been examining. This would serve the purpose of keeping them from lowering the tone of other professions, and at the same time the inevitable growth of public education and public opinion might be trusted to make the type less numerous in the future."

There are many other important passages in the report. I have only outlined it. Perhaps some of the Members of Parliament, perhaps the Government, will take in hand so serious a subject.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE EARLY CAREER OF SERVETUS

ALTHOUGH Michael Servetus, the physician, stood almost alone in his heresies and left no known disciple, his teachings and tragic death deeply impressed later religious thought. He was a man of commanding ability, and even Stähelin, Calvin's laudatory biographer, admits that Servetus "was in intellectual endowments undoubtedly the peer of the greatest men of his century, Calvin included." He was also a man of remarkable versatility and he distinguished himself in ecclesiastical history, biblical criticism, the history of medicine and anatomy, and in geographical studies.

When a student, Servetus read the Bible in secret, but found nothing to support Catholic claims. He discovered "not one word about the Trinity, nor about its persons, nor about an Essence, nor about the unity of the Substance, nor about one Nature of the several beings." At this time Servetus was studying at Toulouse on dangerous ground, as in nearby Spain many thousands of Moors had recently been incinerated there for anti-Trinitarianism, while 800,000 monotheistic Jews had been banished for the same heresy.

Inspired by his Scripture studies, Servetus determined to become a religious reformer, while eclipsing Luther's achievement by restoring the purity of Biblical doctrine. And in his enthusiasm he actually contemplated the conversion of the Moslems and Jews to Christ.

Moving as he now did in Court circles he was shocked at the glaring contrast between the simple New Testament teaching and the pomp and splendour of the princes of the Church. As the influence of Erasmus was most marked in Strasbourg, to that city Servetus repaired to enlist the sympathies of the

Humanists towards his views. For he had already published a book in which he stated his conclusions concerning the scholastic interpretation of the Trinity adopted by the Church.

As Dr. Earl Morse Wilbur states in his long and elaborate "History of Unitarianism" (Harvard University Press, 1945): "If Servetus had hoped through his book to make his doctrines acceptable to the reformers, and through them to win favourable attention from the Protestant world at large, he was soon disillusioned. At Strasbourg where it was openly sold in the market place, it was warmly received not by the adherents of the reformed churches but by those opposed to and by them, namely the Anabaptists and other radical elements."

The sale of his work was now prohibited in Strasbourg, and Butzer publicly declared that its author deserved death. In Protestant communities generally, Servetus's work was suppressed and he deemed it prudent to tender an apology for his heresies. He also attracted the attention of the Inquisitors, so in order to postpone a fiery martyrdom Servetus vanished from sight. He obtained safety under an assumed name and his life for the ensuing twenty years remains a blank.

Before he returned to Paris he apparently resided in Lyons where he officiated as a Press corrector. This occupation was frequently followed by scholars, Erasmus among them. Once more in Lyons, Servetus edited a new edition of Ptolemy's Geography. Owing to recent geographical discoveries, Ptolemy's work was now out of date. Servetus's scholarship and travelling experiences fully qualified him for this task. He greatly amplified the work with excellent descriptions of the British Isles and accounts of several Continental States. He suggested that the New World should have been named after Columbus. But unfortunately he retold the truth about Palestine, for that country, "so far from being fertile was uncultivated, sterile and utterly wanting in charm, and should be pronounced though a 'promised' land, yet a land of no promise." He also doubted the French king's cure for scrofula. At a later day these indiscretions were urged against him. Servetus seemingly became interested in physiology through his corrections of the proof sheets of medical writings. He studied under Dr. Champier, a noted physician. Then came disputes with Fuchs, the eminent anatomist and botanist after whom the fuchsia was named.

Subsequently, Servetus studied medicine under Sylvius and other famous physicians. "He became a skilful dissector," writes Dr. Wilbur, "and together with Andreas Vesalius, later to be recognised as the father of modern anatomy, he served as prosector for Professor Guintier, who in a work published a little later praised him as a man highly accomplished in all departments of letters, and hardly second to any in his knowledge of Galen."

Servetus's contributions to geography were greatly valued and his lectures on that subject were successful. In that age of discovery when the Atlantic and Pacific had been opened to the navigator, and the Western World was being explored, there was wide public interest in geography, astronomy and mathematics. Although astrology had been exposed and partly discredited by Mirandola and its practice declared a capital crime, belief in this pseudo-science died hard. As Wilbur reminds us: "Princes and free cities had their astrologers. . . The Emperor, Charles V. and Francis I. had their astrologers. The Medicis and Richelieu were given to it; Melancthon was addicted to it."

Two departments of astrology—natural astrology and judiciary astrology—were recognised. The first studied the heavenly orbs and their movements with their influences on earthly affairs, especially in relation to the cause and cure of diseases and human life generally. Judiciary astrology, on the other hand, predicted future events. The ascendancy of certain stars at one's birth, when one's horoscope was cast, enabled the astrologer to forecast coming occurrences. This superstition long resisted exposure and the general credulity was widely exploited by professional astrologers for monetary payment. In educated circles, how-

ever, there was a growing rejection of its claims and some eminent physicians were expelled from medical practice for their illicit dealings in the astrological arts.

So long as Servetus's lectures remained geographical, they were acclaimed, but when he added astrology to his discourses trouble arose. He was a firm believer in the efficacy of astrology in medical practice, but his detractors insinuated that he also utilised judiciary astrology to increase his income. Even when warned by the faculty, he declined to discontinue his astrological discourses. Further pressure was brought to bear and the lectures prevented. Servetus was deeply wounded by this humiliation and he composed a written reply to his critics. He was advised against publication, but this advice he angrily ignored. Ill feeling prevailed on both sides and several doctors stigmatised Servetus as an impudent charlatan. So he hastened the appearance of his "Apology" but only after he had been summoned before the Inquisitor and then acquitted.

In his "Apology" Servetus relentlessly assailed his antagonists. The University faculty then petitioned that the work should not be placed on sale. In the judgment of the Court in the trial that followed, Servetus was requested to exert all his authority to suppress the "Apology"; to pen nothing derogatory concerning the faculty and physicians. He was called upon to abandon judiciary astrology but he could continue to expound astrological teachings relating to the wind and weather. Finally, if the Court's findings were ignored he was liable to expulsion from the University.

Servetus now left Paris and later travelled from place to place but appears to have enjoyed a tranquil time. He served as a physician and displayed marked devotion to the plague victims of 1542.

Up to this period Servetus's religious attitude was peculiar. Dr. Wilbur's analysis of Servetus's system of conformity is instructive: "For though he had in his first books sharply criticised some of the teachings of the Church, he had never withdrawn from it and he had recognised its authority, while the Reformed Church had decisively repudiated him. In short, he was still nominally a Catholic, albeit a liberal one. He therefore continued to attend the Church services regularly, and abstained from religious discussion. At the Geneva trial he confessed that he had sinned in doing this, but said he had been forced to do so by his fear of death, and he cited the example of St. Paul in similar circumstances as his warrant."

Amidst his medical inquiries Servetus was constantly meditating over his plan for the emancipation of Christendom from the trammels of priestly despotism. This appears in his "Restoration of Christianity" which led to his agonising death in Calvin's sacred city.

T. F. PALMER.

OUT OF BONDAGE

The bargain made ere I became aware
 Before life came unasking and unasked,
 This harshest tyranny in kindness masked
 That points the danger having set the snare,
 Is reason's mockery. Must I accept
 The power to choose my way without the right;
 Be wrested from oblivion's timeless night
 Then vested with an entity still kept
 In pawn? This spark was not within me lit
 That I, for some celestial caesar's sport,
 Fearing the arbitrary thumb's report,
 Should joust against his hazards in the pit,
 But to blaze free as it was freely given
 Not flicker fearful in the shade of heaven.

H. W. SAVAGE.

ACID DROPS

Everywhere the churches are losing ground, and all sorts of reasons are given both for the cause of the decline and also ways of recovering lost ground. One suggestion is that church services should be brief and lively to the point of being humorous. We take it that sermons could not be too brief to please the average attendant. But humour, that is a rather dangerous method. Encourage people to laugh *with* the preacher and it will not be long before he is laughing *at* them. Humour—after wit—is a very dangerous weapon to use in connection with Christianity or any other religion. Take, for example, the story of how Jesus fed a *multitude* with a handful of bread and a few fishes, and then had more food than he started with. Or consider the humour that gathers round the story of Joseph's discovery that his sweetheart was about to become a mother, but it was God's son and not his. Some real humour could be taken from Jesus spitting in a blind man's eye and so restoring his sight. There is plenty of material for humour in the New Testament, but it involves danger. We repeat what we have said—you cannot encourage people to laugh *with* a preacher and also prevent him laughing *at* them.

This is a very sad story. It is one where God should have helped, apparently he did nothing. The story tells of how a poor minister of God found himself losing his position, and God doing nothing to help him. When the priest came to his church he found the daily Mass regularly performed. The good preacher of God's doctrine promptly put the Mass out of commission. People stayed away. Then he refused dancing and more left the church. Then whist drives were barred and still more people stayed away. And now, says the minister, he often finds himself with only one worshipper. There the matter stands. We fancy God has let the poor preacher down.

Very solemnly the papers the other day announced that the King had contracted a cold and so was unable to attend the church service at Crathie Church, Balmoral. Something here seems to have happened. The King is Defender of the Faith, and God in turn should look after his representatives. It would serve the "watchers of God" to openly declare that they will no longer act as God's defenders. Even gods ought to play up to their undertakings.

It is rather difficult to read what leading Christians have to say, and then deal with them as perfectly honest men. For example, here is the Dean of Gloucester who commences an article in a Gloucester paper with "We English claim to be a Christian nation." Well, that is simply not true, either in the legal sense of the phrase, or in strict accuracy of fact. Not only is that statement untrue to-day, but it never was true. Over and over again we have tried to kill that lie, but truth counts for little where the interests of any religious doctrine or association is at stake. It is true the English rulers conceded favours to the Church, but that is a different thing. The lie that England is or was a Christian nation is too profitable for the clergy to give it up. And our politicians—the leading ones and particularly those holding high posts—are afraid to let out the truth of religion.

Anyway, this is the manner in which the one Bishop gives his version. He tells us that the morality of the English people has decreased in recent years. Of course it has in some directions, but the bishop forgets—no, the straiter word is that as a leading priest he cannot afford to tell the truth. The first truth is that we have been at war and war always lowers the human and civilised level. There never was a war that did not level the general conduct of life. There was the same lowering of life after the last war—the present one can hardly be said to be over. However "justifiable," however unavailable is war, it brings disasters in its trail. It may be that it would have been a greater disaster if we had not gone to war; still the price must be paid. We had the courage to fight, but it requires on a higher level to say that both victor and vanquished sink lower. If we have the courage to war, we should have the courage to speak the truth about it.

But this bishop's first thought is to see in what way he and his churches may make capital out of the war; he would make capital out of the bloodshed. And lacking the wit to develop a new form of defence for his churches, he tells us that we need more and more a larger dose of religion. Think of it. The Church in many parts of the world—particularly those involved in the war—has, to a very large degree, been under the teaching of the religion from which the Bishop draws his daily bread—with considerable bits of other materials. Let him think of the time during which the Christian churches have had a considerable influence over the people of this country; see and if he can find out that the shock of war has heavily reduced our moral sense and courage; must we not say that Christianity is one of the greatest failures that mankind has ever known!

We can quite conceive some men being made more religious by this war. A superstitious person may easily see the protecting hand of "Providence" in his coming alive out of an action. (We know at least one family which ascribes the fact of one of its members not being killed to the constant prayers offered at home for his safety.) But others who reflect upon the religious theory may, and do, quite naturally connect "Providence," not with the number saved, but with those killed. The men who write home to a religious newspaper dwelling upon the way God has preserved a wayside crucifix or a church altar, are certainly outnumbered by those who wonder why God's care was not shown in the preservation of homes, of women and children, and non-combatants. It is not the number saved, but the number lost that impeaches "Providence." It is not the victory that issues from war, but the fact of war that is the condemnation of the religious theory of the world. The superstitions of some may be strengthened by the war. It is certain that the formal religion of a much larger number will be destroyed by it.

Lourdes has been in the background for some time—due to the war. Now that this factor has weakened the angels are getting to work again and we are getting a repetition of miraculous cures. Of course, not too many are miraculously cured. That would take away the market value of the miracles. For a miracle that is on hand for all applicants becomes very commonplace and its market value just drops. So we have, out of hundreds that visit the famous shrine, just one or two who are miraculously cured—but not under test conditions. Perhaps the shortest and best way to describe the whole thing is that fools are always plentiful and rogues are never wanting to take advantage of their being.

Words were once upon a time very powerful for good or ill. Words were then living things—of which the famous "Abracadabra" was a very good example. That was very, very powerful because no one could make out what it meant. Above all, there was the "Word" to which St. John introduced us, but who was very careful not to say what it meant. Now the Church of England—so called because half the people do not believe in it—has great faith in creating new conferences with loud-sounding titles. The latest we have noticed is a "World Church Commission" which is to inquire why Christians are not doing more to help the Church and to "make it apparent that the Christian faith and doctrine appeals to world affairs."

All this sounds very well—or would do so if it were not so familiar. Let us remember what most people appear to forget: for nearly two thousand years the Church has been able to exert considerable power in the world. Then look at the results. The world in ruins today is a world in which it exerted both power and wealth; and while all the leading Churches made a dash from the earliest times for both wealth and power, the world did not develop as it should have done. In fact, the two greatest uprisings for the people that have done most good for the people resulted from the French and Russian Revolutions. Neither called for the help of God and both were well slandered and flayed by the Churches. But we can at least pay a compliment where compliment deserves it, and that is the fine way in which the Churches keep giving the people dose after dose of the same "gush" without being found out—by most people.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

G. HUMPHREY.—Will appear as early as possible. Thanks for portrait; it is interesting.

C. E. WATERS.—We hope in the near future to have a larger "Freethinker" than we have at present.

T. MATTHEWS.—You have been misinformed. The Church of England did not give up its riches. What the State did was to buy some amount of its wealth, which meant a continuous loss to the people, and arrange for the Churches to receive through a Commission to better distribute the wealth in a more satisfactory way.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 2s. from Mr. R. Hallam to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

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SUGAR PLUMS

Is it not time that some Members of Parliament raised a protest against prayers being officially said before business commences? No one believes that members are more able or more truthful because some paid parsons pray to God to see members acted honestly. We do not believe that through the whole of the two Houses anyone believes that this orgie of praying will make members more truthful or more able as a consequence of these prayers. On the other hand, there is enough humbugery in both Houses in their natural state for anyone to assist. We should like to see a Member of the House of Commons bring the question to the attention of the general public.

We print the following letter from Mrs. Ruby Ta'Bois:—

"Sir,—The letter in your issue of September 7 from the Hackney and District Sunday School Union to the chairman of Clapton Stadium protesting against children seeing a fireworks display on 'grounds where dog racing is the practice' is a typical illustration of how the Church egotistically sets itself up as an arbiter of 'right' and 'wrong.' Considering that young children are taught false dogmas in Sunday Schools, viewing fireworks at a racing stadium seems harmless by comparison. But it must be remembered that the Church has always condemned enjoyment and invented 'sin' where no sin existed; the reason is that if there were no 'sinners' the Church would have no souls to save, and its pews would be even emptier than to-day.—Yours faithfully,

RUBY TA'BOIS,

Member of the National Secular Society."

Other papers please note and copy. The familiar newspaper attitude that Atheism does not really exist is really very, very laughable.

We are indebted to "The Star" for the information that Hollywood—which is ready to produce any film that will pay—has given the world a film dealing with Sir Hiram Maxim's life. The title is "A Genius in the Family," and part of it deals with his domestic life. The film shows Maxim, when his wife is ill, on his knees offering a prayer for her recovery. Of course, that is an unadulterated lie; but when religion and money-making work together a lie more or less does not matter. We knew Maxim, and if there ever was a firm Atheist it was he. We can say that on the basis of all we know of his life. "The Star" puts a fitting tail to the story when it suggests that the next effort should be to provide a film of Ingersoll singing a Moody and Sankey hymn. We should not be surprised if something like that does occur on the screen.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. has a visit from Mr. T. M. Mosley to-day in the 38, John Bright Street premises at 3-30 p.m. As a speaker Mr. Mosley is forceful and clear and holds regular meetings in Nottingham. We do not know the subject of the lecture but his matter is always good and interesting.

We never make it a feature of "The Freethinker" merely to hold a clergyman to ridicule because he has committed a misdemeanour, legal or social. We have adopted this plan: we do not expect clergymen to be different from other men—allowing for what we might call occupational misdemeanours. We do not expect parson's different from others—allowing for what we call occupational qualities. Parsons, like others, have what we may call occupational evils, but so have others. Of course, there are some moral faults that are peculiar, but other groups show the same features. We have always taken this position because, to us, a parson is a man who has had the misfortune to become a minister, and he has our sympathy.

EVOLUTIONAL SOCIOLOGY: SLOGANS AND SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS

THE letter by J. Pepper on August 25, 1946, together with previous ones such as those by W. Robson and H. Crossley (June 2, 1946), emphasise the urgent need for us all, not only to understand what Freethought-Secularism means, but to make the greatest possible effort to practise it with "logical consistency and intellectual sincerity." The more dangerous the conditions are in National and World Politics, the more need for us all to try to do this by that Mental Courage which is, in a peculiar degree, the distinctive characteristic of the Freethinker—Paper and Person alike. It is the attempting that counts: 'Tis better to have tried and lost, than never to have tried at all. "But, we will be free." The long historic record of Freethinkers is proof of this, and to earn a place in that—if but a single line—is an Ideal in life surpassing far anything that any Godist has ever had in any pictured Paradise.

This is no new theme of mine, nor is it confined to recent writings on Freethinkers, Rebels, Lenin, Stalin, k.t.p. On April 12, 1936, I said in "The Freethinker": "I suggest that the essential feature of the Freethinker, as Freethinker, is the same as that of the Scientist, as Scientist. It is the desire to know, to understand, to seek Truth. . . There are many Freethinkers in relation to Religion, who are as irrational about other subjects as are any of the rigid orthodox." On November 13, 1927: "The development to Atheism is the development of Humankind. The culminating point is the victory for philosophic Atheism—when 'God' has to make way for Humanity." And, on July 4, 1920, criticising an "Apologist" for "Early Christian Communism": "As I know even less about 'Bolshevism' in Russia than Mr. Martin knows about Christianity, I trouble not to criticise in that direction. Doubtless the truth will out some day. Only it may be remarked that, inasmuch as the 'Bolshevists' appear to base their 'Communism' on this world, they are a little more sensible than the Christians who based

it on the next—that never came. They may persecute and punish their enemies here; they do not, like the early Christians, threaten their enemies with awful torture after death, worlds without end." Nothing need be added from C.C. on this, as his teachings can be found in well-nigh every issue.

J. Pepper condemns "Freethinkers" who are "Stalin-stupified"; being utterly blind to the fact that anyone who is so is, in the very terms of the case, no Freethinker—or Scientific Thinker—in that respect. Then he refers to "Stalin's Altruism"; in this case being doubly blind to scientific reasoning or "Analytic" or "Dialectic" Reasoning. "Stalin" has never professed any belief in "Altruism," and the word itself is but a coin from the Mental Confusion Mint of Christian Godist Verbalism and Verbosity. To-day, all Godism is merely sheer Verbalism and Verbosity—Words without end, Amen; and that is the diametric opposite of Scientific Reasoning. Again, to say, "But there is some excuse that can be made for the God-intoxicated Christian . . .", is another example of that verbalism which can lead only to Mental Confusion, worse confounded, in the victims. In the cute ones who use it, such apologetic dope prolongs the mental dishonesty and hypocrisy in Public Affairs, which led to suspicion, fear and mental cowardice among the "General Public." These two Social Forces, acting and re-acting on each other, produced the 50 years' drift to Fascism and war. *The same Process, intensified in some of its modes, is still dangerously active, not alone in one Nation, nor in one "Bloc," nor in one Continent, but throughout the Human Universe.*

The victims are *not* "God-intoxicated," and it is *not* the aim or purpose of the Freethinker, in any Sociologic analysis, to "excuse" any such Christian nor to "excuse" any such "Stalin-intoxicated" "non-Freethinker." The victims are, in the one case, "Godism-intoxicated": in the other, "Prejudice-intoxicated." Just as there are many forms and blends of Potable Dope in a multitudinous variety of Containers with an even more multitudinous variety of Labels, so also is it in the Mental Dope of Godism. And just as Potable Dope affects different people in different ways, and the same person in a different way at different times, so also does the effect of Godist Dope vary.

Similarly the Dope of "Prejudice" operates in very many ways. It may be a literary prejudice or a prejudice of economic interests, or of Artistic Taste, or of "Schooling" ("education" is too indefinite a term), or out of youthful environment, "group loyalty," personal ambition, etc., or—as is generally the case—a composite blend out of these prejudices. It may arise, as it often does, from a more or less conscious urge "to dodge the column" on the march to Battle for Equal Freedom. Of this nature was the "Belief"—self-induced or mentally swallowed—that one can *always* dodge the "Crisis." True, one can refuse to face a crisis or even "The Crisis"—as was more or less definitely advocated by one "school" 53 years ago; but in that case, sooner or later "The Crisis" faces "The Many" with disaster that—"Might not have been."

The aim of the Freethinker in such Sociologic Analysis is "to explain" how the victims "got that way": to trace the effects of this Godism—or Prejudice—intoxication in the Individual Persons and in the Social Existences of which they are parts, and from this double analysis to find the remedy. Anyone who starts to examine a problem in "Evolutional Sociology" (i.e., constructive sociology based on evolutionary economics) as a "special pleader" or with pre-conceived—"fixed"—ideas or "Absolutes," etc., is not acting as a Freethinker. The Freethinker must make sure his "facts" are correctly stated; he must prove that his "facts," if correctly stated, have a definite relation to the subject; he must distinguish between causative and concomitant factors, and evaluate them in relation to the whole problem. Above all, these processes must be worked out in strict accordance with the principles of Analytic Logic. As

stated on April 21, 1946: "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." When a Scientist, in any specific science, finds that he has made a mistake he works to correct his miscalculations. Thus did "Stalin" do: see "The Freethinker," December 9, 1945. "Stalin" began his great victory—as great as "Lenin's"—by realising that nationalist sectional interests (patriotism, A.Z.) plus religious sectarian interests (separately or together, A.Z.) were too strong. The struggle could not be for Socialism against Fascism; it must be to save Political Democracy from Fascism. That was one of the greatest Scientific Decisions in Human History. Had the U.S.S.Rian Leaders agreed to go, or had gone, to the help of Poland without a "binding reciprocal Alliance" for action in the West—as so many of my political friends and opponents expected them to do—I shudder, even yet, to think what "might have been."

There is much more of this misleading, sometimes vicious, talk going on at present in Press, Pulpit, B.B.C., Conference, and on Platform, at high pressure, in order to poison the political atmosphere against the U.S.S.R.—for ulterior purposes. My purpose herein is not to defend "Stalin." To presume in that way would be impudence indeed, and I shall try to emulate neither the fly on the flywheel nor the white mouse Utopian in his revolving cage. So far, "Stalin" has maintained the "New Civilisation," guided by a Scientific Philosophy, against all its enemies—direct and indirect, open and secret. It is certainly they and not those of the U.S.American Mode who "inspire" the Common People in the Liberated Lands. Personally, I have sufficient faith in that Scientific Guidance and in the U.S.S.Rian strength based on integrated economic Unity, to be confident that they shall win through to the end. However, that is not our business as Freethinkers and Secularists. Still less is it for me or us to defend or attack the British Communist Party in its Political Policy. Success or failure in that depends upon the Brains and Political Guts of its own members. Saying this I can also add that I have friends in all British Political Parties besides the one Party which I have supported through the years, but that disturbs neither my active interest in the struggle nor the Philosophic Imperturbability with which one can welcome victory or re-form the ranks after defeat.

Few, even among Freethinkers, seem to realise the complete change in the nature of the Political Struggle that has taken place as the outcome of the war to save Political Democracy. We are at the end of an Epoch and the beginning of another. Already the forces of Political Parties are being re-aligned for the greatest struggle in Human History—for World Democracy with Equal Freedom for all Humankind and Privilege for none, or for a Human World ruled and exploited by Minorities or Privilege—the modern equivalents of the Kings, Priests and Nobles, who first "got there" some 6,000 years ago.

Freethinkers with the Philosophy of Secularism, working in the World Union of Freethinkers, shall be a vital Force in the coming struggle; for Secularism is the only Philosophy for Science and Democracy.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

THE STILL SMALL PEN

TO those Freethinkers who, as many do, feel the vague sense of vacuum permeating the indefinable and unimaginable habitat which once housed their God, there is something to be said for the substitution of The Great Biographer. This benevolent Deity can be most useful, and in contradistinction to any of the well known Gods can be made in any likeness, as the Gods themselves once were, but untrammelled by tradition or the hopes and fears of other men. I have for many years found Him most helpful. For not only does he see me at all times as I really

am, knowing my innermost thoughts and anticipating my deepest hopes and fears, but flatters me unchangingly by seeing my point of view when to others it remains persistently obscure, and justifying my every argument, rationalisation, course of action by standards the world would often deny me with every rigour at its command.

Like other Gods the Great Biographer embodies also within himself a firm but kindly moral code suspiciously in keeping with my own albeit, but nevertheless strong, if as pliable, as the best leather only, where the traditional Gods were wont to use iron. On some issues, He can come down on me with devastating scorn. At other times, and more often, he writes my inconsequential little story with comforting tolerance of my faults and weaknesses, since he knows me so well.

Those who can "find" Him will at once feel the uplift and self confidence inseparable from the knowledge that their puny little life stories are ever to acquire the dignity and importance of being presented to posterity, and each and all of their insignificant little personal possessions, writings, letters and whatnot take on a new dignity in the guise of "material" some day to be lovingly collated, sorted and spread about a large mahogany (it must be mahogany) table as the monumental work proceeds.

The moral effect of all this comes to one slowly, and almost imperceptibly as faith in the Great Biographer grows deeper with advancing years, until there comes a time when ones every thought and action tends to become related and referred to Him as often and as devotedly as the prayers of St. Francis or the naive religious bonhomie of an ardent Buchmanite in full flower.

One is faced with a decision, perhaps of momentous personal importance. Ever in such moments one hears the "Still small Voice" reading monotonously from the written, yet unwritten pages. "At the age of 50 he embarked upon a course which was to bring about his untimely end"; or, alternatively, "In his 50th year he drifted into new interests which were to carry him on through a generation of fruitful and improving work—"

His passion for individualism was in the end his undoing"; or "Had he had the courage to break away from routine and develop his individual gifts . . ."

And in time all this can become a comfortable unobtrusive habit of thought, charged with the comforting illusion of flattering self importance unrelated to anyone, yet strangely satisfying. One thing I must guard against. That when the great book finally comes before my admiring descendants, illustrated with complementary plates showing me as various stages of my sadly unappreciated career, there must be no question of treachery, once the Great Biographer shakes himself free from his Creator. Else, somewhere in the last chapter, he may find it necessary regretfully to admit that his Hero, though an avowed Freethinker fell at length into the old, old error, and in seeking to free himself from the Gods of the past, succeeded only in creating a monstrous Hybrid more partial, less sincere, and sillier than all the rest.

J. STURGE-WHITING.

OBITUARY

HERMAN WILLIAM HANSING.

The North London Branch N.S.S. has lost one of its staunchest members and supporters by the death of Herman William Hansing, which took place suddenly on September 16. His membership of the N.S.S. covered many years, and he was present in support of the North London Branch platform at Highbury Corner the evening before his death. His remains were cremated at the Islington Crematorium, Finchley, on September 21, where, before an assembly of relatives and friends, including representatives from the North London Branch N.S.S., a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary N.S.S.

R.H.R.

CORRESPONDENCE

"MY FAITH AND MY JOB"

SIR,—The other week (September 3) we had another exploit on the B.B.C., on the "My Faith and My Job" series, this time by a Dorset farmer. He started off by telling us that "milking is now done by electricity." That is, of course, a matter of human scientific effort. He said he had an advantage over other speakers by reason of being in touch with *nature*. He spoke deprecatingly about car builders who put knobs on doors. What has that to do with Christianity?

He said his work was never finished, and that it was disappointing to see a field of clover ruined by rain and to have to pitch the hay again, and that sterility of the herds, robbery by birds, and being worried by abortion in the cows, and rabbits eating his crops, brought on quinzies and put him on his back, and he wondered why God had left him there. I expect he is still wondering. He said his thoughts had brought him down. Evidently his God hadn't helped him much.

However, while on his back in bed he said he had made peace with God, but that after getting up and to work again the cows still misbehaved, the rabbits still ate his crops, and that the rain still ruined his crops. A pity they didn't come to better terms while he was ill. He said that "I see the creator in the birth of a chicken," and that was "bringing the dead to life." That is very curious biology. He finished up by saying that farming "had become a Christian vocation."

Further comment is superfluous.

"ALERT."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 4 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY. Highbury Corner, 7 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.
West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m., Messrs. E. SAPHIN, J. HART and E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—11 a.m., Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.: "Facts and Values."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—7 p.m., Mr. J. V. SHORTT.
Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Ranelagh Street, opp. Lewis's).—7-30 p.m.: A lecture.
Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—7-30 p.m.: A lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street).—3-30 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.
Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—6-30 p.m.: "Use Your Reason," Mr. J. M. THORNTON, B.Sc.

WANTED.—Chapman Cohen's "Religion and Sex." Any condition. Offers to Manager, Pioneer Press, 41, Grays Inn Road, W.C.1.

WANTED.—"Mrs. Besant's Philosophy" by G. W. Foote. Offers to Manager, Pioneer Press, 41, Grays Inn Road, W.C.1.

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH, by Chapman Cohen. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

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

SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, by Lady (Robert) Simon. Price, post free, 2s. 8d.

SINCERITY, REASON AND POLITICS

(Concluded from p. 347)

SUPERFICIAL generalisations seem to be rather fashionable nowadays. It is of vital importance, however, if we wish to get to the truth of the matter of any of the burning issues of the present day, to try to understand exactly what is being advocated on each side. Few people appear to be able to explain accurately and without the addition of personal colouring the exact aims of the political parties that they consider opposed to their own. So many people nebulously conceive the creed they claim to embrace as representing goodness and those attitudes popularly considered in opposition as things vaguely evil. A man who actually reasons on the subject and attempts to make an honest examination of the question is often regarded as cynical.

Most of us will be aware of some popular contentions that seemingly belie our ideas, yet are subscribed to by people who are apparently as intelligent as ourselves. Those of us who set a high value upon the truth will have had an urge to understand the "other person's" viewpoint in such matters. To be efficacious, however, this almost invariably necessitates a departure from our established ways of thinking and is usually an intellectually valuable experience; for we must try to glean our information from those sources that appear to dispute to truth of that which we credit. We will be familiar with our own ideas so we must go out of our way to put ourselves in the other person's position, but not attempting to "cling" to our own ideas.

It is essential that we should not assume that when we do discover a political truth it will seem self-evident. A commoner reaction to belatedly revealed truths than a feeling of their obviousness is one of disbelief. "... It cannot be true; it is ridiculous to think that I have been deluded to such an extent for so long; I cannot believe that such a notion if it were false could have gained such widespread acceptance; I do not think that so-and-so would believe this and he is much more intelligent than I..."

It is important, too, that we should not delude ourselves by feeling that, because something is rather unflattering; because it militates our established and satisfying scheme of things; because it is contrary to what we expected or for what we had hoped; that it is evidently false. It is a natural tendency to accept items of news as true because we dearly hope they are so, and to disbelieve information because it is not very flattering. In politics wishful-thinking is an extremely insidious element; it can only be offset by an honest attempt to see the political panorama with academic detachment.

I do not think that it will be disputed that the political scene should be approached with sincerity and completely divorced from anything in the nature of unreasoning passion if we desire to make any progress towards understanding it. I am presuming that we really do wish to understand it and not merely to justify an attitude we have assumed in that connection. The truly honest approach, however, conflicts with many human tendencies.

It is a natural desire to have our mind made up on the burning questions of our age and to be able to give our opinion on an issue in a few words. If we adopt an unbiased and patient reasoning attitude in preference to a bigoted one this usually necessitates our making certain reservations and being somewhat "long winded." Many people are impatient of the "if's" and qualifications, the "but's" and explanations that are often found necessary when we try to express an honest opinion accurately.

Patience is essential to the sincere, and if we take the trouble to find out whether what is being passed as news is news; if we refuse to accept without reasonable inquiry unsubstantiated

assurances; if we do not hesitate to "quibble" when this seems to be merited by ambiguity, and go to work with patient curiosity, we may find a surprising change in our political outlook.

The tendency blindly to embrace the official creed of political party in its entirety; to read the party's tendentious literature, but that of no other faction; to uncritically acquiesce in its decisions on topical questions does not make for unfettered and intelligent thought. The faction may be admirable in some of its objects; possibly deserving of our moral and financial support; but we should never allow it to become an obsession by annihilating our capacity for thinking clearly and objectively in that sphere. Our decisions should have been premeditated and consequently our own, not merely what "our side" would dearly like us to make, and that which we credit should be logically credible, not merely what it would have us accept. This may make us a little unpopular, but we will be mentally honest.

Those who are mindful of the present plight of the world, and who wish to do the right thing, will probably feel impelled to support that which approximated to their convictions. There is no reason why we should not wholeheartedly support an organisation if we are rationally aware its vicissitudes matter to us since we consider it to be a real power for goodness; but the association should not, in my opinion, be obsequious, and the decisions and action of the organisation should only be endorsed when they resonate with what we have arrived at by independent thinking.

Even if we allege the ideas of our political party to be irrefutable we can still gain by making a real attempt to comprehend to opposing viewpoint. Sometimes in this manner we are able to understand what makes certain people act as they do, and if our own ideas prove to be tenable we may gain rational assurance. Should we discover in such a process a definite flow in our own assumptions then such an effort will have been still further edifying.

It is usually fairly easy to criticise, but in politics well-meaning and rational criticism is quite rare, for most of those that criticise have ulterior ends for doing so. I think that more really honest criticism is needed, for the world abounds with deluded fanatics in high positions. Only a comparatively small, though I believe increasing, minority are really concerned with knowing political truths as they are. Only occasionally is the truth popular. It is the truth, however, and so it is preferable to a perverted sense of values.

E. G. GORDON.

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