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## IEWS AND OPINIONS

### A Falling Creed

I HAVE been accused of hating all clergymen. That is not true. I am more like the boy who explained that he had no dislike for fleas, but he detested the way they got their living. To begin with, "hatred" is indicative of a high quality of human nature. When we say we hate a man, we are not far off from paying a compliment. For example: The finest character in Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" is a Jew, and the heart of that great play is that the Jew hated well and strongly. Without that, the play would not be the great thing it is. The Christian characters in the play did not hate the Jew, they despised him, or they just disliked him. In that play, Shakespeare gave us a never-dying lesson of the distinction between hatred and dislike or contempt.

Another example is to be found in the first pages of the Bible. The greatest character is Satan. Without him there would be no background. He was a very great character. He hated God, and he did so with justification; God and Satan hated each other, and for that, both had justification. Without Satan, the story of creation would never have come to life. Without Satan, Eve would have been no better than that poor specimen of humanity, Adam. It was Satan who induced Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge. Without him, what kind of crawling animals should we have had bearing the names of Man and Woman? In common life we do not really hate rats, we simply dislike them. It is much the same with politicians posing as philosophers.

So when I am told that I hate Christians or clergymen, I simply reply that it is not true. I just dislike them, or, to be more exact, I dislike their occupation. And I dislike them the more because some are of marked good quality, as men, and their qualifications are robbed of their excellence because of the way in which they get their living. I have been very friendly with some clergymen, and have thought but very little of those who are burning to explain to me the meaning of something they don't understand. I have liked some clergymen and I have tried to induce them to lead a better life. Others, I have just told them that God intended them to be what they are.

It may be taken as a truism that no one is able to say when a god dies. The certain thing is that gods do die, and so completely that their very names are unknown. There is not a sudden death or we should be able to date it. Perhaps we are better able to account for this than our predecessors. Or perhaps the gods do not die, they may simply fade away as the light of day sinks into the darkness of a moonlight night. At any rate, here is one brief thought that may help us to understand the situation.

In a recent issue of the "Sunday Dispatch" there appeared an item of news which indicated at least the weakening of religion. It may evoke a smile, but it is none the worse for that. At any rate it is an item of news.

The Rev. F. G. W. Heydon, Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Paddington, says without hesitation that at least one thousand churches belonging to the Church of England might be closed with no loss. He also says that in his own district there are 19 churches costing a thousand pounds a year to keep open, and about 25 per cent. on the roll are non-effective. He says that 3,000 parsons on the roll are costing £19,000 a year. This is not all, for the same situation, with rare exceptions, can be seen throughout the country. One is almost heart broken to learn from the Rev. Heydon that "collections are not what they were." For example, we are told that a whole week there were only four baptisms and the collections from that in hard cash totalled "nine shillings and twopence." Could anything be more distressing? How can a clergyman feel happy with a handful of twopenny halfpenny baptisms, and with the prospects of both sinking lower and lower?

It is just a question of time for the Christian religion completely to collapse. From being everything, religion is sinking to nothing. It is the fate that sooner or later befalls the gods. History and experience tell the same story that gods, from being everything, end in nothing.

No one has better pictured the life and death of a god than was done by that great writer Heinrich Heine writing about a century ago:—

"A strange dread, a mysterious reverence . . . our breast is filled with compassion; it is the ancient Jehovah himself preparing for death. We have known him so well from his cradle upwards, in Egypt, where he was brought up among sacred calves, crocodiles, holy onions, ibises and cats. We have seen him as he bid adieu to these playmates of his childhood and obelisks and sphinxes, and became a small god-king in Palestine to a poor pastoral people, and dwelt in his own temple place. We saw him when he came later into contact with the Assyrian-Babylonian civilisation, and laid aside his all-too-human passions, and no longer belched wrath and vengeance, at least no longer thundered for every trumpery trash of sin. We saw him emigrate to Rome, the capital, where he renounced all national prejudices and proclaimed the heavenly equality of all races, and with such fair phrases formed an opposition to the ancient Jupiter, and intrigued so long that at last he rose to power, and from the Capital governed the State and the world. We saw how he spiritualised himself more and more, how he sweet-saintly wailed when he became a father, a universal friend of humanity, a benefactor of the human race, a philanthropist. It all availed him nought.

"Hear ye the bell ring? Kneel down, they bring the sacrament to a dying God."

Has any other man so beautifully depicted the rise and fall of a God? In the great French Revolution people said they had been nothing, but wished to be something. The history of all gods reverses the situation. The gods were something, they end in being nothing. The gods are everywhere the same. They come, they rise, and they fall. They are brutal or inclined to kindness, that completely depends upon they who worship the gods. Yet with all the gods, the time comes when they fall behind the culture of the day. It is then that man must be on his guard. It is also the point at which the gods begin to decay. The safety of a god depends entirely upon the understanding of his people, but, alas for the gods, understanding cannot be checked for ever. Sooner or later, the gods must give way and they die at the hands of those who created them. A god is, after all, a very frail thing.

That gods die is indisputable. When they die, no man knows. Monuments to gods can be found wherever Man exists, but never is there to be found a monument bearing the inscription, "Here Died a God." But in good time, the gods have to make room for Man-making—the greatest of all industries. Of course, profession of faith in gods continues, but the lie is clear. Consider; there has been for many years, a Methodist Fire and Life Assurance Society, but few followers of God denounce it as blasphemy. When it comes to hard matters of fact, the godite acts pretty much as does the Atheist. In sober truth, no Christian can, today, afford to see god as his ancestors did. Science has so well explained the world in terms of natural forces, that nowadays God—if he happens to exist—is being driven to commit suicide to evade slaughter. He must listen to his followers apologising for his existence. The God that created the world has to be contented with sitting up aloft and watching things move. His followers become fewer and fewer. It is a pitiful situation.

The Christians of earlier days knew of no such situation. To them God was indestructible. To-day, even those who pose as his followers, are found apologising, begging man to be considerate, God is doing his best. That may be; God is always doing his best, but the secular side of life develops more and more, and religion becomes a kind of indulgence of no greater value than the colour of a woman's hat. The plain fact is that mankind is outgrowing the gods. "God" is becoming a demonstrated impossibility. Experience shows that man can soar higher without God than with it. Experience shows that man can reach a higher form of life without God, and that same experience is proving that God cannot exist without Man.

Just over a century ago, people were engaged in stepping from one form of religious belief to another. It was only a small minority who saw that a life without gods was not merely possible, but it was desirable. The movement of a better social life moved side by side with the weakening of religion. Since then, we have seen one social movement after another; discovery after discovery; proof after proof, that the spirit of Christianity is fundamentally alien to the methods of science. Contemporary science is dismissing God as a myth, the so-called religious science as a fairy tale, and its description of another life is hysterical and useless. With the various doctrines of Christianity affiliated to similar teachings of half-primitive people, with the Bible

reduced from its historical character as a god-given revelation to a mere collection of anonymous pamphlets without a shred of authority in science or history, with these and other considerations we may well ask how long will it be before Christianity takes its place among the discarded superstitions of the world? Conviction, honest and intellectual, is becoming a thing of the past. The connection between the Christian religion and honest belief in modern science is getting thinner and thinner. How long will it be before the cord snaps?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## "SEVEN AGAINST HEAVEN"

### IV

#### "Giordano Bruno"

THE 16th century, which was the watershed from which our modern secular civilisation has derived, may well be regarded as, in the intellectual sense, the most revolutionary age in recorded history. For it witnessed both the Reformation and the European Renaissance: both the religious revolution against the "dead hand" of the mediæval totalitarian Church, and the intellectual revolution against an ecclesiastically sponsored scholasticism of which a modern thinker (Dr. W. R. Inge) has aptly remarked that for its practitioners, "there were no problems to be solved—only authorities to be consulted"! And this same wonderful century also witnessed the rise of the modern national state in the political sphere, and those wonderful Voyages of Discovery which first (literally) "put the world on the map."

However, it has been well said that the greatest and most lasting human achievements take place in the human intellect. It is now evident in retrospect, though it was far from evident to his contemporaries, that the most important, historically, of the men of the 16th century—even though not, perhaps, its greatest individual figure—was an obscure Polish astronomer named Copernicus. And, similarly, that the most profound and durable revolution achieved even in that century, par excellence, of revolution, was achieved neither in Church nor State nor in geography, neither by Luther, Magellan, nor William the Silent; but was effected by this self-same Copernicus, when he revolutionised the Universe by his heliocentric theory. The greatest and most far-reaching events usually fail to make much immediate contemporary impression, and so it was with the book published when actually on his death-bed by the Reverend Canon Copernicus, and prudently dedicated to the reigning Pope, Paul the Third. Apart from a few cheap gibes, chiefly from Protestant bibliolators rather than from Catholic traditionalists, the great book on "The Revolutions of the Heavenly Orbs" fell more or less flat. None the less, the heliocentric astronomy and, therefore, the cosmic revolution which fatally undermined the intellectual basis of Christian theology, had been decisively launched by the obscure Polish astronomer. The next generation saw the heliocentric astronomy become the storm-centre of the contemporary intellectual revolution which was destined, in ultimate analysis, to sweep the mediæval world entirely out of existence, and to open up a world of creative Humanism, with undreamed of potentialities.

In the evolution of the scientific and philosophical revolutions accomplished by the Copernican astronomy, a certain rough parallel can be drawn with the historical origins of the Christian religion itself, which really received its intellectual death-blow in 1543. For just as, whoever represented the initial starting-point of Christianity; whether an historical Jesus, or a group of Messianic zealots; it is, at least, incontrovertible that it was Paul of Tarsus who was its fighting standard-bearer, and who took the new religion out of the underworld of the Jewish ghettoes

into the highways and byways of the wider world of ancient civilisation. So, also, it was not Copernicus himself, but Giordano Bruno who first made the heliocentric astronomy a fighting force on the field of contemporary Europe. It was not Copernicus, the academic recluse, but Bruno, the unfrocked monk, the contemporary "Ishmael" of the orthodox world, who, so to speak, took the infinite Copernican universe out of the quiet study of the astronomer and revealed it to the dazzled eyes of a still half-medieval mankind.

Giordano Bruno, the philosopher, agitator and, ultimately, martyr of the new scientific secular revelation, was born in Nola in the Kingdom of Naples in (probably) 1548, that is, five years after the death of Copernicus. By the time of his arrival upon the historic stage, the Italian Renaissance was in full decline: the daring spirit of secular inquiry which the "new learning" had aroused, was being exterminated systematically by the Jesuitical Counter-Reformation, backed by the fanatical Spanish conquerors of Italy. The Italian peninsula was fast sinking into the mere "geographical expression" that it remained down to the Risorgimento in the 19th century. "The times were out of joint" for Bruno; and his life was one long crusade "to set them right."

His external career was exciting, stormy, and brief. Born in 1548, he vanished into the dungeons of the Inquisition, first in Venice and then in Rome, in 1592, at the early age of 44. And from his Roman dungeon he emerged only to perish at the stake in the "Campo dei Fiori" in Rome on February 17, 1600. During his 44 years of free life Bruno had been first a Dominican monk, and after having broken with his Church and Order (in 1576), a modern Ishmael, a wanderer upon the face of the earth; chiefly in the Reformed lands of the North, where, despite the grim Calvin and his martyrdom of Servetus (1553), persecution was, at least, less systematic than in the Catholic South, and unfrocked priests were not condemned as such. Bruno visited Switzerland, Germany, France and England. Of the last-named country, then at the height of the Elizabethan Renaissance, the Italian visitor has left an interesting account, and here he published several of his scandalous books and, it would appear, participated actively in the intellectual life of Elizabethan England, which was by no means all conformable with the Thirty-nine Articles! (1583-5.) It seems probable that Bruno made the acquaintance of that sombre enigmatic genius, Sir Walter Raleigh, and his atheistic "School of Night," to which the poet, Christopher Marlowe, also adhered. (Both Raleigh and Marlowe narrowly escaped prosecution for their opinions; in Catholic Italy both would certainly have perished at the stake.) The years spent by the Italian reformer in England were probably the happiest and most secure in his short and stormy life.

His tragic end was due to Bruno's rashness in revisiting Italy in 1592, where he was betrayed at Venice by a fickle disciple to the Inquisition. From Venice he was extradited, at the special request of the Pope, to Rome where, after a protracted captivity of seven years, where he retracted a previous submission made in a moment of weakness on his arrest at Venice, he perished at the stake on February 17, 1600.

The peculiar and peculiarly important role occupied by Giordano Bruno both in his own contemporary epoch and in the history of human and European thought may be described under two heads: he first popularised and made known to the world at large the epoch-making discovery of Copernicus in the previous generation; and, a still more important and original task, he first drew from the scientific fact of the heliocentric astronomy its philosophical corollaries—inevitable deductions which, we may say, are utterly fatal, in ultimate analysis, to the very foundations of the Christian religion; even if dishonest theologians still make their ultimate conclusions. (Nowadays, ignorance can hardly be pleaded by our clerical Cyclops.) A word may usefully be added upon these two indispensable services rendered by Giordano Bruno to European civilisation.

As already remarked, the great work of Copernicus made but little impression upon its first appearance. To be sure, the great astronomer was not entirely original but owed the germ, at least, of his epoch-making idea to the ancient Greeks—what modern idea does not owe something to that wonderful people?—in particular to Aristarchus of Samos, "the Copernicus of Antiquity." But as the revivalist of an obscure Greek School of Astronomy, with little credit in the learned world, Copernicus, had it not been for his ardent disciple, Bruno, would have continued to flourish in learned obscurity. It was Bruno who, so to speak, brought the Copernican astronomy home "to men's business and bosoms"; who made a popular issue out of the new astronomy. In this respect, Bruno was to Copernicus what, a century and a half later, Voltaire was to Newton's "Principia," its universal populariser. Henceforth, the Copernican astronomy became the battle-ground of the mental revolution against the dead hand of Christian dogma.

But even this last feat does not constitute Bruno as the epoch-making figure that, in fact, he is. The last rank he owes to his daring philosophical deductions from the scientific infinite expansion of the Universe which the heliocentric system of astronomy had effected as against the Liliputian universe of the Middle Ages. It was these deductions which led to his martyrdom by the Church but, also, constitute him as one of the great and also bravest thinkers of our race. A modern historian thus describes this memorable intellectual feat: "Bruno was the first to recognise that the fixed stars were other suns distributed through endless space, centres of solar systems inhabited by 'beings perhaps better, perhaps worse than we are' . . . The astronomical theory involved in Bruno's system was absorbed through Galileo, Kepler, Descartes, and others, and remains the foundation of all later world views." Since Bruno, every theologian must, if logical (and honest!), imagine Christ becoming incarnate and dying in an endless series of worlds! The geocentric theology follows the geocentric universe into oblivion!

No wonder the Church burnt the arch heretic! We can hear her savage hatred in a letter written on the day of Bruno's martyrdom: "And so he was burned and perished miserably, and is gone to tell, I suppose, to those other worlds of his fancy, how the blasphemous and impious are dealt with by the Romans." Bruno died as nobly as Socrates, declaring to his judges: "Greater, perhaps, is your fear in pronouncing my sentence than mine in hearing it." In death as in life the Nolan martyr has been the centre of controversial storms; Liberal Italian governments have put up statues to him; Fascists and Catholics have, as regularly, pulled them down! Of Giordano Bruno, far more than of any Christian martyr, we may declare that he lit a candle in Europe which will never be put out.

F. A. RIDLEY.

## THOSE 100 BEST BOOKS

IN "American Notes and Queries" a correspondent asks for Lists of the 100 Best Books. Apparently a collector of lists, he doesn't say whether or not he reads the collections. Anyhow, if he read everything listed by the Oracles from Sir John Lubbock's (1890) to, and including, mine, he would have an edge on his fellow co-operatives to say the least.

We presume that many a book-lover has mullied over these lists as the years go by . . . and have we!

I began an article months ago, "Why I, too, Quit the Church," listing books that opened my eyes and swept away the cobwebs; books that taught me to begin thinking that I hadn't learned how to begin to think.

I changed my title eventually to "A Dozen Reasons Why"; to "24 Reasons Why"; to "36 Reasons Why"; and as I worked on the thing, correcting, interpolating, changing my mind, etc., it seemed 'twill never end until I reach the inevitable "My 100 Best Books."

I'm just a plain man; not a scholar and no oracle. The best is none too good. The more I read the more certain it seems that Sham is on the increase. Humbug hides behind false-faces in many directions other than religion.

Naturally *my* list of "The 100 Best" is merely from my own library, chosen carefully in past 20 years, from the leads offered by various authors who seem to know what is best. I find myself developing with the years a greater and more colossal scepticism.

And then there are times I meditate like Marcus Aurelius on the Question: Should I be a sceptic—am I doing the correct thing? Like the old Irishman said to his wife: "I don't bate ye because I hates ye, Bridget. It's because of me *a'thoritee!*"

You can see by my books that I love being a sceptic. There isn't much cheesecake in the list.

"The Tyranny of Words" (Chase).—How the very working tools can be used to tyrannize and enslave us to begin with.

"Language in Action" (Hawakawa).—More of the same.

"Misinforming a Nation" (Wright).—Questioning the so-called sources of knowledge . . . particularly the *best* of reference volumes, "Ency. Britannica." Naturally, this book seemed to vanish shortly after publication.

"Martyrdom of Man" (Reade).—Sort of First Primer for the uninitiated. The Law of Prey and other things for which old Nobodaddy Aloft stands-accused.

"Family Names and Their Story" (Baring-Gould).—Simplifies a common mystery; often slaps down the ears of the over-proud; proves Shakespeare answered his own question.

"Riddle of the Universe" (Haeckel).—If we all had this book pounded into the old bone when we were 16 . . . perish the thought! Chapters on the "soul" are the best explanation ever written. Suggest Joad tackles this—the book needs re-popularizing.

"The Existence of God" (McCabe).—I'd call this the old Maestro's *Chef d'oeuvre* . . . I realize that's saying a mouthful; only have 25 McCabe's to judge from.

"Almost an Autobiography" (Cohen).—How the Great Freeman arranged the Garden of His Mind . . . and How it Grew. Makes me feel like Scepticism is the proper road, after all.

"The Ten Commandments" (Lewis).—A new book by an honest and scholarly American. I believe this big tome about the toughest examination those foundation stones ever had. (God! how the clergy will *love* this book.)

"Illusion of Immortality" (Lamont).—One philosopher you'll understand . . . which is saying a lot. American. Tough stuff on the "Immortal" racket.

"Twilight of Christianity" (Barnes).—500 pages of Cultural Contrasts. How mankind got that way, what price religion? Blasting at the Rock of Ages—and generally, a mine of documentation showing religion "this way out."

"Life of Christ" (Renan).—This preferred to "Lives" by Farrar, Strauss, Popini, etc., because Renan was both a boy prodigy and a brilliant scholar during a long life. He went in so deeply that he came out a sceptic. This often makes me laugh, ha, ha (without the !!).

"Philosophical Dictionary" (Voltaire).—Often wondered if this was old Vol.'s best seller . . . the one that put him in the cellar; been in the dog-house ever since. (Bitter as Bierce was, he still couldn't slash the head off a Humbug like old Vol.) If Joad isn't too busy, he might try refuting some of this . . . sort of give it a Recall.

"Studies in Pessimism" (Schopenhauer).—A sort of overall coverage of many masked Shams. A critic of many phases of life, he related the adventures of his mind . . . how else could it be but sombre? Regardless, there are lots of laughs in Schopeny.

"Our Placo Among Infinities" (Proctor).—This is all the astronomy I really needed. God recedes as you proceed—and that's what Mr. Proctor aimed at.

"Pagan Christs" (Robertson, J. M.).—I presume this is the great scholar, J. M. R., at his best. He seems to have "told them" for all time.

"History of the Popes" (McCabe).—The *infallible* Popes. What a cure for the Humbug of Infallibility . . . How the Rednecks must *love* Mr. McCabe!

"Canon of the Bible" (Davidson).—Last word on what "Holy" and what ain't . . . written for "Ency. Brit." and too strong in places. . . . Here given entire.

"Life of Our Lord" (Dickens).—Just re-read this the other day, nearly luffed my head off. Will use it to spoff my grandsons.

"The Golden Bough" (Frazer).—Soon as grandsons get ready for it, I'll use *this* on 'em.

"Forgery In Christianity" (Wheless).—A huge book of demermentation by an American Judge-Advocate; should have been a Nobel prize winner . . . but for one good reason wasn't.

"Book of the Damned" (Fort).—For super-colossal sceptics. This great Rebel shocks even a *regular* sceptic.

"Cornwall, Land of the Gods" (Dexter).—Now I know why there are so many towns ("Saint" so-and-so) in Cornwall. And I discovered the Great Transformation Trick of turning my Druid ancestors into *Christians* . . . by Trickery.

EARLE CORNWALL.

## MATTHEW ARNOLD RE-READ

"LITERATURE and Dogma," by Matthew Arnold, is a book which was famous in its day. The edition before me was published in 1889 by Messrs. Smith, Elder and Company. I have been re-reading it and have derived from it some impressions which possibly it may be interesting to put on paper.

The chief of those impressions is that of the evils of "compromise." Arnold was, in his latter-Victorian age, a man of decidedly liberal views. He was keenly alive to the progress of ideas, especially in matters relating to religion. The times during which he lived were, though in some respects full of the spirit of revolutionary change, yet, on the other hand, far from fully emancipated from the venerated traditions and sentiments of the past. The Darwinian theories; the investigations of the Higher Criticism of the Bible; the studies of archaeologists, historians, and others had upset, in many minds, the beliefs of old; but much of the affectionate tenderness attached to those beliefs still remained. As a result, there was a decided tendency to try to accept new facts but yet to clothe them with the nebulous mists of inherited emotion. Ernest Renan's "Life of Jesus" was a remarkable instance of this tendency. Rejecting the miraculous parts of the Gospel stories it accepted the rest as true, and depicted an historical Jesus much as believed in by tradition, except for those stories. In so doing it was illogical for the miraculous narratives are no less authentic than the parts devoid of miracle—or, conversely, the miraculous parts are no more authentic than are those of the miracles. If we reject, from the Gospels, only what does not appeal to our theories, and accept the rest, we are in an impossible position. It should be "all or nothing."

"Literature and Dogma" is a striking example of this tendency to compromise. It emphatically rejects belief in the miraculous. In the preface to the edition before me, Arnold says: "The object of 'Literature and Dogma' is to reassure those who feel attachment to Christianity, to the Bible, but who recognize the growing discredit befalling miracles and the supernatural. Such persons are to be reassured, not by disguising or extenuating the discredit which has befallen miracles and the supernatural, but by insisting on the natural truth of Christianity."

Arnold goes through the Gospel narratives and carefully cuts out the miracles. Of them he says (p. ix): "Belief in them has been given way and cannot be restored." He admits (p. 95), "that miracles, when fully believed, are felt by men in general to be a source of authority, it is absurd to deny." He adds, however,

(p. 96): "And yet the human mind is assuredly passing away, however slowly, from this hold of reliance also; and those who make it their stay will more and more find it fail them—will more and more feel themselves disturbed, shaken, distressed and bewildered. For it is what we call the Time Spirit which is sapping the proof from miracles—it is the 'Zeit-Geist' itself." In other words, the miraculous has not so much been proved untrue by logic, as it has been simply outgrown. We no longer feel "a taste" for it.

As remarked in an article in a previous number (April 13) of this paper, that is a very dangerous mode of forming one's opinions. If we are to estimate truth or untruth not so much by logic as by our sentiments, then the basis of truth is poisoned. What appeals to one person will not appeal to another. The old pun recurs to the mind: "Truth is what a man troweth."

Arnold's book shows this to a remarkable degree. It accepts what appeals to its author's "feelings" and casts aside what doesn't. It has no definite logical standard. As already observed, it goes carefully through the Gospels and puts aside, as fictional, the stories of the miracles. For example, writing of the narratives of the resurrection of Jesus, Arnold says (p. 109):

"The more the miraculousness of the story deepens, as after the death of Jesus, the more does the texture of the incidents become loose and floating, the more does the very air and aspect of things seem to tell us we are in wonderland. Jesus after the resurrection not known by Mary Magdalene, taken by her for a gardener; appearing 'in another form,' and not known by the two disciples going with him to Emmaus and at supper with him there; not known by his most intimate apostles on the borders of the Sea of Galilee; and presently out of these vague beginnings the recognitions getting asserted, then the ocular demonstrations, the final commissions, the ascension; one hardly knows which of two to call the most evident here, the perfect simplicity and real faith of the narrators, or the plainness with which they themselves really say to us: 'Behold a legend growing under our eyes!'"

It comes to this: The belief in the possible and/or real occurrence of miracles has not been disproved by strict logic, but is distasteful to "the spirit of the times" (or to what Arnold thought to be that spirit); so everything in the Gospels which is a miraculous nature must be dismissed as fiction.

What, however, do we then find? We find that Arnold sets out to tell us what was "the real Jesus." In making that attempt, he accepts as true the very Gospels he had discarded as regards the miracles! He devotes a chapter (pp. 124—140) to "The Testimony of Jesus to Himself." In it, the words of the Gospels are accepted as unquestionably accurate. "If thou shalt enter into life, keep the commandments," said Jesus (Matthew xix. 17). "Leaving the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition," said Jesus (Mark vii. 9, 13).

To this experimental sanction of his secret, this sense it gives of having the Eternal on our side and approving us, Jesus appealed when he said of himself, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again" (John x. 17)—oblivious of the fact that the mystical speeches are one of which this is a quotation) in the Fourth Gospel are amongst those most liable to be rejected by critics as fictional.

Yet by this process of arbitrary selection—rejecting what does not appeal to his taste, accepting what does—Arnold builds up a picture of "the real Jesus": a humanitarian teacher of morality. "But search and sift and renew the idea of righteousness Jesus did" (p. 125). Finally, Arnold presents his readers with what he regards as "true Christianity"—a religion of pure morality but deprived of miracles.

The Roman Catholic Church was, and is, more wise than these compromisers. It declares emphatically that the Christian religion is a system of supernatural, miraculous revelation; and it refuses to recognise as true Christians those who would disavow that fact.

This brings us to an interesting consideration. What is the real place of writers like Matthew Arnold in the growth of thought? They are illogical—but are they useless? Far from it! They simply illustrate the fact that the realisation of things comes not suddenly, but by degrees. Arnold, and the "non-miraculous Christian" school, were and are illogical—but that was because they did not altogether see the implications of their theories. Those implications, however, were clearly seen by the Pope, Pius X, when, in 1907, in the celebrated Encyclical Letter *Pascendi*, "on the Doctrines of the Modernists," he excluded such people from the ranks of true Christians. "On what grounds," he asked, "can Modernists deny the truth of an experience affirmed by a follower of Islam? Will they claim a monopoly of true experiences for Catholics alone?"—and: "They are already known to and praised by the Rationalists as fighting under the same banner, and they not only plume themselves on these encomiums, which would only provoke disgust in a real Catholic, but use them as a counter-compensation to the reprimands of the Church"—and: "The error of Protestantism made the first step on the path; that of Modernism makes the second; Atheism makes the next." (Encyclical *Pascendi*, English translation, London Catholic Truth Society; pp. 19, 44 and 52).

The Pope was right. Either Christianity is a definite, supernatural revelation, or it is mythology. Writers like Arnold tried to compromise by depicting it as a mere humanitarian system; but they were and are in an impossible position. We cannot blame them! The human mind realises things only by degrees. Arnold's theories, and those of the Modernists, were and are stages on the road to complete disbelief.

J. W. POYNTER.

### CHRISTIANISING OUR NATIVES

I cannot but sympathise with the missionaries in regard to the serious difficulties which they encounter in their work in our African territories. The men in the civil and military services in Uganda are as good and decent representatives of the backbone of our nation as can be found in any of our Colonies, and yet most of us do the very things which the missionaries are always telling the natives they must not do. We play cards and, though not to any serious extent, gamble a bit. We drink spirits, and not always in moderation. Nine-tenths of us never put a foot in a church for months on end, and various other things are sometimes done which are certainly against the teachings of the Churches. I have often wondered how the missionaries manage, without impairing the prestige of the ruling community, to explain the position to the natives. It must often be very difficult.

The measures recommended by Col. Lambkin for dealing with syphilis are now well under way, but the problem is a terrific one. . . . The spread of the disease has been terrible and continues to increase. When he was here, Col. Lambkin had a conference on the subject with all the Europeans who might give useful advice as to coping with the problem. Missionaries, of course, were able to offer practical suggestions, and one of them—a man of much breadth of view—when asked by Col. Lambkin as to what he attributed chiefly the spread of syphilis in Uganda, had the courage to say: "In a considerable degree to the introduction of Christianity." He explained that converts, who had several wives, had been obliged to rid themselves of all but one. The discarded women, being no longer under proper control, usually became prostitutes, and were the main spreaders of infection. I fear that the check of this terrible disease, which is already greatly affecting the birth rate, will be almost as difficult a problem as the suppression of sleeping sickness.—"Glimpses of a Governor's Life," by SIR HESKETH BELL, G.C.M.G. (1909).

## ACID DROPS

We rather like the reasoning of Canon Spencer Leeson, of Southampton. First of all he asserts that "a satisfying purpose (for life) can be found only within the Christian religion." To a priest that is self evident. But as the majority of people are getting on without bothering over religion, it does not seem conclusive to more than half the population of the country. Next, we are told that "If we would strengthen the Christian education within the schools, we must bring more religion in the schools." That, again, seems conclusive. If we want more religion in the schools we must see it gets there. But suppose the people are getting more convinced than ever that religion is not a primary factor in a good school, what are we to do? The man seems to be working in a circle. If we want more Christianity we must get it, and if we would get it we must turn people into Christians. Meanwhile, it would be interesting to get Canon Leeson to tell us how it happens that the longer the preachers call for more Christians the fewer respond. Our columns are open if the Canon wishes to explain.

From the "British Weekly"—a very, very religious newspaper—we learn that preachers like Canon Leeson are on the wrong line. The Rev. Peet says that no preacher can convert a man if he doesn't want to be converted. He seems to think that God ought to do the trick. Well, he is certainly a most interested person. But if we lose God we can still get on comfortably if we would. But it is certain that if all men cease backing God, he will soon drop out of the scene. A very large proportion of the ancient gods were jolly, good-natured fellows, and they did not seem so eager for people to do this or that. But the Christian God appears to need propping up every now and again, and that invites criticism; and no god has ever been strong enough to stand that.

The indissolubility of marriage is one of the standing laws of the Catholic Church. But there were ways by which the Papacy might declare a marriage null and void—generally when people of power and position were concerned. By the new law of Italy the more humane and sensible, divorce is now part of common law of Italy. Of course, the Papacy may go on declaring that such law as is passed by the Secular State is null and void to all good Christians, but the law stands, and it is a law that common sense will command.

Another thing that appears to be harassing the Catholic Church is the difficulty of getting women to "devote themselves to Christ," which means to give up the common and healthy life of woman in order to pose as servants of God. Cardinal Griffin and his priests are seriously disturbed by the difficulty to "make people realise the need for vocation", that is, to lead an unhealthy life in the interests of an unhealthy creed. So our English Cardinal Griffin is left moaning that the people are "practically pagans," and nowadays "the name of Mary is almost unknown." We believe that is stretching the truth, but it is really cheerful reading.

Now that the King and Queen and their two daughters have finished their holiday in Africa, and have found everything they were allowed to see was full of happiness, and the Princess has devoted herself to secure the well-being of the natives of Africa, it might be well if the King and his eldest daughter might take another visit and hear what the coloured masses have to say for themselves. For really it is the coloured population of the Africas that is getting more and more restive, and the "show" that was prepared for the royal visit will deceive none, and will satisfy none. There are others in Africa than the King was allowed to see.

The discontent of the Catholic Church of the state of religion is not alone. Distrust of religious leaders is growing rapidly. The disbelief of historic Christianity is also growing—in fact, they are the same things, looked at from different angles. For example, Baptism was one of the most important things in the established Church. Now some of the dare-devils of the Church have been asking whether "baptism is really necessary"? Naturally the leaders, and the more wide-awake, which involves the least honest,

the preacher, will discover that anything is permissible if people will only come to church. Bringing God to earth is a tiresome game nowadays.

The "Sunday Pictorial" has an article which is written by a Fred Redman, with the heading "Did the Christian Commandos make fools of themselves?" He does not think that the things of life really come from God, and he does not think the Commandos are responsible. Well, we cannot be certain who is responsible, but the Commandos did act as though they were partly responsible.

Stands Scotland where it did? It looks as though it does not, for in the Wick District schools there is to be no further religious examination. It is said that religion is taught, but there is no examination. Well, if the teachers are not worried and the game is played fairly, there should be growing demand by persons in that quarter for "The Freethinker." We may remember that "A man's a man for all that" comes to us from Scotland. And it has had some bonny Freethinkers among prominent men. We wonder what is coming.

From the Melbourne "Tribune" there is some uncertainty as to what kind of head-cover should women use in Church. We suggest that a good plan is to wear something entirely to cover the head with a thick material. They will not lose anything of any very great consequence.

The Methodist Church is the only Church that has the courage to give the losses and gains connected with the Church. This year the retiring President, the Rev. Richard Piper, says that what is needed is "a mighty revival." Quite so. That is what all the Churches wish to say, but the droppings off of believers continues. . . It is to be said that the Methodists are honest in this matter of attendance. The other Churches are on lying, more lying, and still more lying. And now we have added the "Commando" pantomime who will be telling the world of the souls they have saved. For good, healthy lying give us a body of Christian preachers.

We have been asked why we always write as though intolerance is peculiar to religion. We must reply that if what we have said gives that impression our writing was in bad form. Intolerance can be found in all branches of life. It is in politics. We recall that we were once introduced to a man who was said to be so filled with hatred against religion that he would not tell the time by a church clock. He must have been a very bad case. We agree that intolerance is found in all classes; some, indeed, turn it into a virtue.

But when we touch the situation things change. Then we find that intolerance has been the most constant feature of Christian history. That, indeed, was the one feature of Christians that impressed the Romans. It was something new to them, but the Christians as they grew in power so insisted on it that it became a feature of religion for many centuries. In the name of getting the best out of man Christianity nurtured the worst. When Christianity is in full play it will lie—by presumption if not by set words. If things are not so vile as they might have been it is because free thought has got stronger while religion is weaker. The Christian churches have many ill-doings to their discredit, but no greater injury was done to the life of man than the intolerance of the Christian Churches and their supporters.

The Rev. Townly Lord is seriously disturbed by existing "democracy." Well, we admit that many shaky things are not what we were expecting. But things happen in that way, and there is nothing in a clergyman of standing to be disappointed when the development of a democracy is not of the kind that he would have picked. It is now an open thing that the Churches are steadily losing their status. And so long as we have the right to speak, and dispute, to praise and to denounce, we are winning a democracy. One of the prices we pay for saying what we believe is the risk of another fellow saying the opposite. The plain fact here is that the Churches have been hit very hard and the parsons do not like it. As a parson we are sure that we would like such as us to disappear. We return the compliments to all the Churches and parsons. But there is no justification in trying by illegal methods to silence those who are socially driving the Churches to annihilation.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

*P. D.*—We regret the delay in publishing the new edition of the "Bible Handbook," due to causes we cannot control. However, we are doing our best and we hope to have the book on sale in a few weeks.

To "The Freethinker," Miss E. Oates, Perthshire, 3s.

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

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

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

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

## SUGAR PLUMS

At the Conference reception in the Crown Hotel, Clayton Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on Saturday, May 24, 7-30 p.m., members and friends can attend, but the business sessions in the same hotel on Whit-Sunday, May 25, are for delegates and members only. Credentials or current card of membership must be shown. On Whit-Sunday afternoon delegates, members and friends can join together at The News Theatre, Pilgrim Street, where tea will be served at 5-30 p.m., to be followed by a public demonstration in the theatre at 7 p.m. Admission to the demonstration is free, with some reserved seats at one shilling each. Mr. Chapman Cohen will preside, supported by a number of speakers. The local branch has worked very hard and the prospects are that their efforts will achieve a successful conference, as far as the arrangements go.

A leaflet on "Sunday Cinemas" has been issued by the Executive of the N.S.S. and specimen copies can be obtained from the General Secretary at 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1. The leaflet should be useful in those areas in which a poll on Sunday opening of Cinemas it to take place.

Readers may have noticed that the paper now being used is a little thinner than usual. This is because there is another "cut" on printing paper. This means that we have to either print fewer copies of "The Freethinker," or print on paper that is smaller than it has been. We fancy that many readers will not notice the change, or they will agree knowing the cause, that we have taken the wiser course. We may even be able to take on a few newcomers. We were hoping to be able to enlarge the journal, but now we must put that aside. On that head we may say if a reader will take the trouble to make the contrast, the loss of reading material is not so great as one might imagine.

We hope to have on sale presently a new edition of Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason." The issue carries an introduction of over forty pages by Chapman Cohen. We have had several large issues and we anticipate the same again. It is curious that there have been several books of late dealing with him as the great man he was; they have all been rather careful over the "Age of Reason." This is a complete edition. That book was to be indestructible.

## A NOTE ON THOMAS PAINE

RELIGIOUS listeners to the B.B.C. must have had the shock of their lives when one of its book reviewers, dealing with Mr. W. E. Woodward's "Tom Paine," referred to that great democrat in the most flattering terms. There were none of the lying slanders so assiduously propagated by Christians but a generous—and, of course, quite truthful—appreciation of Paine the Pioneer, the great social and political reformer, head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries in farsightedness and clear thinking.

What I waited for and was hoping for was the reviewer's opinion of the "Age of Reason," for in these days it is not difficult to show one's appreciation of a social and political reformer even of "left" tendencies. But not a word came over the air of Paine's opposition to Christianity, not a word about the way he slammed the Bible. This was not surprising. I expect if the reviewer had told the truth about the "Age of Reason," he would have been politely told that his services would not in future be required.

Mr. Woodward devotes a chapter to the "Age of Reason"—the book which made Paine the target for all the foul attacks a good Christian imagination could conjure up. It is an interesting chapter and reveals quite a lot. He was certainly not too happy in writing it. He managed to get out of his dilemma, however, quite cleverly.

Whatever other criticism might be passed on Paine's masterpiece, nobody can read it without seeing that here was an attack on the very fundamentals of Christianity—an analysis of the Bible sparing almost nothing. This attack is written in the very clearest language—vigorous, outspoken, logical, and is put in such a way that the most uneducated artisan of the day could understand it. There was no need to ask what Paine meant. He meant exactly what he said.

In the ultimate, the result was one of the most merciless expositions of Christianity and the Bible ever written. Paine hardly bothered to quote this or that opinion from other authors. He went to the Bible itself, and his Christian opponents knew more than anybody else how deadly was this uncompromising onslaught on their creed, how irrefutable and convincing its arguments. Paine was a great forerunner of what became known as the "Higher Criticism" but his rejection of a Divine Word of God was complete. He had no reservations.

Mr. Woodward was anxious to do Paine full justice, but he preferred to concentrate more on Paine's Deism than on his Biblical criticism. He quotes the "Age of Reason" fully where Paine avows his belief in God, trying to show that his opponents were quite wrong when they called him an Atheist. Mr. Woodward also quotes Paine's appreciation of Jesus as "an amiable man," and his opinion that the morality preached by Jesus was "of the most benevolent kind"—though similar systems had been preached by other people. He admits that Paine ridiculed "the absurd fictions of the Bible," but he did believe "in God, in a future life, and in the external kindness and all-embracing love of the Creator." The point to note is that Paine should be particularly admired because he believed in God, even if he did something to expose "the absurd fictions" of the Bible. Thus even Christians should admire Thomas Paine—whatever else he did or thought, he was not an Atheist. That dreadful charge was a slander on a good, God-fearing man.

The truth is that it was not easy in Paine's day to take up a complete negative attitude on the question of Deity. God was the Creator of the Universe, or of Nature, for the world must have been made by something or somebody, and that something or somebody was God. The Bible was a collection of fables and myths, but we had Nature before us and so "The Word of God is the Creation we behold," as Paine put it. It certainly never

occurred to him that he was using meaningless words when he wrote on God. What he said about the Bible he made crystal clear; what he says about God is in almost the same language as any Theist would use, even a Christian Theist. If Paine had tried to explain what he meant by the "eternal kindness" and "all-embracing love of the Creator" I suspect he would have got as angry as any modern Christian Commando. For, of course, the words are completely without signification.

So deadly was the "Age of Reason" to Christianity, in spite of Paine's Deism, that dozens of replies were published and it is a great pity that Mr. Woodward does not deal with some of them. He obviously feels that the average Christian would be better disposed these days towards Thomas Paine if his belief in God was strongly urged, and his attack on Christianity only just admitted. As far as I can read him, I feel that Mr. Woodward, though acknowledging that there are "fables and myths" in the Bible—as Paine did—would be prepared to claim that true Christianity still stood almost unassailed. But I may be wrong.

It is quite true, as Mr. Woodward says, that "for about one hundred and fifty years Tom Paine has been a target of abuse." But it is also true that he has been championed by hosts of men and women and by many great ones at that. I think that this might have been stressed.

For example, Gilbert Vale wrote a life of Paine which did something at least to rehabilitate his name among decent people but all the notice he gets is a mention in the Bibliography. The brave stand Richard Carlile and his wife made to sell the "Age of Reason" is only just referred to—when it was, perhaps, Carlile more than anybody else in England who compelled the British authorities to stop the cowardly persecution with which they assailed all who sold Paine's work.

It was Ingersoll who, in 1877, made the "New York Observer" retract its vile and cowardly attack in his magnificent "Vindication of Thomas Paine." This typical Christian journal had to eat the dust after Ingersoll had finished with it. He wrote often about Paine and always had something fresh to say—but Mr. Woodward does not even mention Ingersoll. Nor does, it must be admitted, Moncreu Conway in his splendid and intensely interesting biography of the great Englishman.

Conway however does refer to John M. Robertson whose pamphlet, "Thomas Paine—An Investigation," is one of his finest controversial efforts. In it, he rightly castigates Sir Leslie Stephen who, for some reason, did not like the style or the method of the "Age of Reason." In his "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century"—in many ways a valuable work—Stephen repeated the old libels so assiduously circulated by Paine's Christian enemies, Cheetham and Oldys, without making any effort whatever to find out if they were true. He took no notice of Robertson, but when Conway's "Life" appeared he sent a very lame apology to the "National Reformer," actually pleading as his excuse, "pure ignorance." Personally, in spite of Stephen's reputation, I feel that he wanted some buttress for his attack on Paine's "English" and so was by no means sorry to quote Cheetham. Robertson made mincemeat of Stephen's arguments—but Mr. Woodward appears never to have heard of Robertson's pamphlet, or even of Stephen's "History."

There are many other splendid vindications which, in my opinion, might have been noticed—in particular, John E. Remsburg's "Thomas Paine," which contains no fewer than the testimonies of 500 writers to the greatness of one of the most remarkable of political, social, and religious reformers.

By the way, "Picture Post" gave, a little while ago, a reproduction in colours of Paine's iron bridge—which in its day was a splendid example of his work in a field not many writers have been successful. Needless to add, however, we were not told that the designer of this bridge was also the author of the "Age of Reason."

Great as he was in political and social reform, the name of Thomas Paine should rather be bracketed with his attack on the Bible and Christianity than with anything else. For no one saw more clearly than he that no real reform is possible if men and women have to grovel to an Almighty to be "saved." That, surely, is the culminating point of egregious absurdity.

H. CUTNER.

## JOSHUA IN NEW GUINEA

"12. Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

"13. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day." Joshua 10, in the Word of God.

IN 1924 I took charge of Wide Bay Police Post at Waitavlo on the island of New Britain in the Territory of New Guinea. Two years before that George Naess had established the post, and I took over from him. Some years later Naess commenced a coconut plantation at Tongue Point, near Waitavlo; and it was at this place, in 1942, that the Japanese sailors massacred a party of white men who were retreating from Rabaul during the occupation of New Guinea by the Japanese. The natives called the plantation Tol, and the massacre is known by this name in the infamous history of the Japanese occupation of New Guinea. Naess was captured in 1942 and forced to work for the Japanese on the south coast. He was never seen again. Natives reported that he had been murdered by his captors when the Americans advanced from Arawe towards Gasmata.

Waitavlo is a pleasant spot. Nearby is the Powell, or Maik, River, named by the missionary explorer, Dr. George Brown, in the 70s of last century. It has the only stretch of sparkling beach for many miles, fertile soil and beautiful creeks of sparkling mountain water. The Japanese garrisoned it, and in 1942 it became the battleground of Golden Beach, when the Australian troops rooted the Japanese from their foxholes and swam in the Pacific's breakers which crash unceasingly on the sand.

Little was known of New Britain's hinterland in 1924. I had a chart of the coast, made by the German Navy. Here and there an elevation was given. Some of the mountains rose to 7,000 ft. The area was the "perpendicular scenery" of New Guinea par excellence officers' jargon.

The land bulges out south of Waitavlo to form Cape Orford, so named by Daupier more than two centuries before. I decided to cross the bulge from the south, from the Mengen tribe to the Sulka tribe, via the Tomoip tribe which owned the mountains.

I was warned to be careful of Sinakoi, a mighty chieftain at the headwaters of the Bergberg River. Was he not New Guinea's Joshua, a man who could at will extend the hours of daylight?

I gathered some Mengens as bearers for the few days' journey from Kolai back to Wide Bay over the vicious mountain massif. We trudged upward, the natives disappearing into the jungle as we approached, with the exception of a toothless old man, who crushed his betel-nut and pepper in a mortar made from a cassowary's leg bone before putting the mixture in his mouth with a pinch of lime. I was without a compass; so I borrowed a ship's binnacle from a schooner master, and this kept us on a northerly course and brought us home again, the first binnacle in history to cross a mountain massif far from the sea.

We trudged on. We were in Sinakoi's land. We camped near the Bergberg, there a mad torrent. Bana, the corporal, of aboriginal pitch-black skin, from Bougainville, told me that he did not like the silence. In the night something slithered past us back in



the jungle. We had been followed. Kalplangio had followed us from Romtu, a village near the coast.

When dawn, the rosy-fingered of the Greeks, came we stood to arms. Bana went scouting. Soon he returned and reported that there was a primitive cane bridge over the Bergberg and that some Tomoips were assembled on the other side. He said that he suspected a trap.

We advanced to the bridge. Manuai, from the Admiralty Islands, noticed that it had been cut and now hung in the racing Bergberg. He dodged a spear. An ambush! I heard the infernal too-too-too-ing of bellicose savages, the snapping of slings, the crashing of slingstones in the trees, the crack of rifles and the filthy language of my native constables.

I rushed to the river bank and peeped across the stream from behind an enormous boulder. I saw Sinakoi and fired my Webley at him and missed. He chewed wild ginger and spat it in my direction; then he filled his mouth with lime and blew a white cloud for a few feet in front of him. I was getting an exciting experience of black magic—ginger to make him savage and lime to blind me by sympathetic magic. He had his sling, a butcher's knife and a spear; but he preferred to throw stones at me. I replied with revolver shots of bad ammunition. I discovered that the patrol's ammunition was for the most part unserviceable.

Kalplangio was in a depression from which he rose to sling his stones, which came with terrific force and crashed against a bank at our backs. Manuai was waiting for him, like a cat watches a mouse. Kalplangio whirled his sling while he was in the depression, then rose to cast the stone. Manuai fired and the bullet raced clean through Kalplangio's left lung. (Kalplangio crawled for 15 miles to his home—and recovered unaided!)

I have forgotten Lothario's name, but I give him that name because he was the pride and joy of the coloured girls near Waitavlo. He waited for Sinakoi, who stepped from cover to stone me; Lothario fired, and Sinakoi fell back dead, shot through the arm, the bullet racing on into his heart.

The remaining Tomoips retreated, taking Kalplangio with them. We hastily crossed the river, fearing that there were natives at our rear. Manuai wanted to eat a slice of Sinakoi, believing, as most of New Guinea did, that the qualities of a mighty warrior would pass to him. I declined permission for a cannibal feast.

I was worried as my ammunition was bad. Manuai, a mighty fisherman with gelignite, tied sticks of the explosive to stones for use as bombs; but no counter-attack came. Anyway, who could harm us? The police had sprigs of ginger tied to the trigger-guards of their rifles, and we had triumphed despite bad ammunition.

We left Sinakoi where he lay and marched on. We found friendly natives, and the track to the coast was pointed out to us. We also found Paula, the loudest voice in the world, a little man whose whispers rocked the mountains, and the Sangomar, the corpse that would not stay interred.

The summit of the massif was a place of lightning and rain. Nearby was a mound, probably centuries old, formed from branches placed there by travellers who hoped to placate the savage gods and obtain a tranquil passage. We bowed to custom and placed branches on it. Soon we saw Wide Bay below us and Waitavlo on the other side of it, looking like a square cut out of the jungle.

I nearly forgot Joshua. Well, the Old Testament Jews had timepieces so it was easy for a sorcerer, for a fee, to convince his dopes on, say, a long march that he could extend daylight by making the sun stand still, the Bible people, like South Sea Islanders, believing that the sun travelled round the earth. Having no check, the yokels never knew whether they had been cheated. Sinakoi gained much of his prestige with the same trick!

BERTRAM CALCUTT.

## WHY I CALL MYSELF AN ATHEIST

IT seems to me that the objection which some Freethinkers have to the name of Atheist (apart from the obloquy with which Theists have invested it) is due to a misconception of the scope and applicancy of the term. They admit that they do not believe in the existence of the God of religion, but they do not feel sure that there may not be some creative Power or "Ultimate Reality" behind phenomena whose existence, though "unknown and unknowable," is yet an undeniable possibility which makes the positive assertion of Atheism precipitant and logically inconsistent.

In his article, "Are We Freethinkers?" (March 16), Mr. J. W. Poynter tells us: "For my part I would not call myself definitely an Atheist, a Theist, a Polytheist, Pantheist, a Monist or by any other name distinctive of a final belief as to the nature of Ultimate Reality. That Ultimate Reality is far too mysterious for me to be sure of its nature. I would call myself either a Freethinker or a Rationalist or (in a long phrase) simply a person of independent mind."

In refusing to decide on the relative merits of Atheism and Theism (for that is really the only alternative the case admits of), Mr. Poynter misapprehends the question. He will not commit himself to any final belief because he is not sure of the nature of that mysterious nondescript, "Ultimate Reality." But to suppose that any such assurance is necessary to a final belief is to confound two different questions by assuming that they are one and the same. In the case of Theism we have to deal with certain definite affirmations in the examination of which we have all the data needed to come to a decision. In the case of Ultimate Reality we have nothing—for nothing is possible. As all rational belief must be commensurate with knowledge what is confessedly "unknown and unknowable" is, for that very reason beyond the sphere of human thought, and, therefore, cannot be the subject of any consideration whatever whether of belief, denial, doubt or suspension of judgment. An existence that is manifested by no assignable act or effect is, as far as we are concerned, just—nothing.

Now the Atheist does not deny what cannot be known—that would be a superfluous absurdity. He simply denies the existence of a particular divinity called "God" who is alleged to exist, and concerning whom a great deal is claimed to be known. As an illustration of the extent of such claims and of the character of the subject of them I quote the following description from an authoritative source, The Shorter Catechism—"God is a Spirit, Infinite, Eternal and Unchangeable in His Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth." That is the God whom the Atheist denies, whom I deny, and whom Mr. Poynter may (maigre "Ultimate Reality") also deny without any resultant loss to his consistency and independence of mind.

To the Atheist the question of the existence of a god is simply a question of evidence; and there is none worthy of the name. We have not only no knowledge of such a being, but we are, in no way, made sensible of the deficiency, for no penalty or disability, mental or bodily, is attached to it. Nothing necessary to life and well-being is involved in or affected by our ignorance. Our whole experience teaches us that it is not upon a knowledge of "God" but upon a knowledge of Nature that our preservation and progress depend. To suppose that that which our experience shows to be sufficient of itself needs to be supplemented by something of which we know nothing is absurd—it is to exalt ignorance above knowledge and credulity above reason.

A. YATES.

To do anything because others do it, and not because the thing is good, or kind, or honest in its own right, is to resign all moral control and captaincy of yourself, and go post-haste to the devil with the greater number.—R. L. STEVENSON.

Milton's Point, New South Wales.

## A WOMAN PIONEER

### I.

IN 1810 few places seemed further apart than the province of Pyeterkow in Russian Poland and London or New York. The railway, the telegraph and the transatlantic steamer were yet to come while the wireless and the earth-girdling airplane were not even dreamt of. And great as was the physical distance between Pyeterkow and London, the psychological distance was still greater, yet such are the ways of history that, if the woman of this country (and of the U.S.) enjoy the rights that are due to them as human beings, they owe it in no small measure to a girl born 137 years ago to an orthodox rabbi in Pyeterkow.

This Polish rabbi's daughter advocated equal rights for women at a time when the appearance of a woman on the public platform created a seven days' wonder, and was an eloquent and fearless champion of Freethought decade before Robert Ingersoll, or Bradlaugh.

This brave soldier in the war of human liberation and enlightenment deserves her medals not only on account of her achievements, which are weighty, but on account of her dauntless pioneering.

Ernestine L. Rose (nee Susmund Pototski) was born at Pyeterkow on January 13, 1810. Her father was a very pious and learned Talmudist, and so conscientious that he refused to accept remuneration for his services, in accordance with the Rabbinical injunction that one should not make of his learning "a spade to dig with," e.g., a source of revenue and gain.

Little Ernestine early manifested a reflective turn of mind, and preferred the company of her father to that of playmates, though, otherwise, a perfectly normal child, healthy, active and cheerful.

Contrary to the custom of those days, which permitted girls to grow up almost in utter ignorance, she early commenced the study of the Pentateuch in Hebrew. She soon became involved in serious difficulties regarding the creation of the world, the origin of evil and other obscure points suggested by the Bible. At first she was not bold enough to dare expressing her doubts, but as time went on, she began to ask embarrassing questions, and all that her teachers could do by way of reply was to scold her for irreverence and to say: "Little girls must not ask such questions." This made her at that early age an advocate of religious freedom, for she could not see why any subject of vital interest should be held too sacred for investigation.

Despite these juvenile ventures into Bible criticism, she was noted for her strict observance of all the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish faith, even those which one of her tender age was exempt from.

Nevertheless she could not wholly suppress the promptings of her inquiring mind which bade her question the usefulness of these innumerable observances. One day, for instance, she asked her father, whom she loved dearly, why he fasted so much more than other Jews, seeing it was seriously impairing his health and spirits. Her father answered that it was in order to please God, to which she retorted with all the fire of her young and passionate being, "If God is pleased in making you sick and unhappy, I hate God." This idea of God's cruelty towards her father had a profound and lasting effect upon her, and already at fourteen she was a full-fledged heretic, a fact which brought down upon her the wrath of the community, and made her the butt of persecution at the hands of both Jews and Christians.

She left home at the age of eighteen and travelled in Poland, Russia, Germany, Holland, France, England and the United States, and in all these countries she witnessed and took part in important events.

In Holland, for instance, she became acquainted with a very distressing case, that of a poor sailor, the father of four children, whose wife had been imprisoned for a crime of which he insisted she was guiltless. Having inquired into the case and convinced

herself of the woman's innocence, Ernestine drew up a petition, which she personally presented to the King of Holland, and had the satisfaction of seeing the mother restored to her children.

In Berlin she had an interview with the King of Prussia concerning the rights of Polish Jews to remain in that city. They were not permitted to stay in Germany unless some Prussian subject who owned real estate stood security for them, and even then they might remain only as visitors, not to transact business for themselves. Ernestine, as a Jewess, was subject to this disability.

Now she could easily have obtained the requisite security, but she refused to do so, preferring to stand upon her rights as a human being. Accordingly she secured an audience with the King, remonstrated against the injustice of laws, and forthwith obtained the right to remain as long as she wished.

She was in Paris in 1830, during the revolution, when the last Bourbon King of France, Charles X was deposed and Louis Philippe enthroned. On seeing the latter presented by General Lafayette to the people of Paris from the balcony of the Tuilleries she remarked to a friend: "He, too, will share the lot of Charles X." He did so.

In England she became acquainted with Lord Grosvenor, with Frances Farrar, sister of Oliver Farrar, M.P., and with other of the nobility; also with prominent members of the Society of Friends, among them J. Gurney, and his sister Elizabeth Fyfe, the eminent philanthropist, in whose company she visited Newgate Prison. In 1832 she made the acquaintance of Robert Owen, and warmly espoused his teachings. Two years later she presided at the formation of a society called "The Association of all Classes of all Nations without distinction of sect, sex, party, condition or colour." Some time later, she married a wealthy, cultured, and very sympathetic man named William E. Rose.

In the Spring of 1836, she went to the U.S., which was to be the scene of her greatest triumphs, she remained there for thirty-three years, residing in New York. Robert Owen, who at that time was engaged in the establishment of his colony, New Harmony, in Indiana, probably was the magnet. Shortly after her arrival she embarked upon her career as public speaker. Ernestine attracted large audiences with her lecture on "The Science of Government." She lectured also on the evils of the existing social system, on slavery, the formation of human character, religious liberty, and, above all, women's rights. Thanks to her charming personality, rich musical voice and great oratorical powers, she soon became the Queen of the public platform. A slight trace of a foreign accent served by its piquant to enhance the charm of her oratory. Ernestine had come to the U.S. in the belief that it was the land of freedom and equality. She was, therefore, amazed to find that one half of the American people—the women possessed hardly any rights. They could not vote or hold office, property, even the wages they had earned by the labour of their own hands, and the children they had agonised to give birth to, belonged not to them, but to their husband.

(To be concluded)

## AN EXPLANATION IN ADVANCE

"There should be no limit to the aloofness of a sincere honourable spirit from the sanctimonious idealism of its neighbours."—LLEWELYN POWYS' "Glory of Life."

I INTEND some day to write an autobiography which some will condemn—if it is fortunate enough to be published—"grumbling" book. But these people will be wrong, it is generally agreed that what matters in a book is the conception behind it, however lamentably the author may have failed to convey his conception to others. This proposed autobiography

therefore, is not designed to be a "grumbling" book—and I am in a position to be categorical about this—not because I have my moral views about reproach, but because, to me, it seems to be a waste of precious time and to narrow, without compensation, the person who lifts his fretful voice to moan. I love my fellow-men deeply because I see quite clearly that my highest happiness can only be attained when every other individual has his highest happiness at the same time. Therefore I grieve when other persons thwart me with muddled motives because I have no alternative. I grieve not only for myself but for them, when I see them needlessly pained or revengeful; I can conceive of circumstances in which I should be distressed beyond measure to hear that one pigmy in darkest Africa has fallen below the ideal happiness and be constrained with no escape to help him, in an intelligent way, to regain his lost treasure, without which life must lose its natural magic. If you challenge this for a preposterously exaggerated conception, I reply, reasonably enough, I think: "Where are you going to draw the line?" But complaint is sterile of remedy. At present and very presently, I can only see one progressive way of life, slow but unflinching, like a river forging its gorge out of the living rocks, tranquilly, without haste, whittling the obstinate crags imperceptibly, moulding then its liquid will, one drop merging into another, the will gradually becoming clearer. It is to think out one's own logical scheme, keeping it liquid, plastic, reaching out eagerly for new conceptions and considering them justly, being quiet, dogged, purposeful, losing no opportunity to probe humbly into other men's minds, allowing them free access to one's own, fearless of rebuffs.

I am a completely selfish woman, believing in no rewards, no penalties after death, believing, in the total absence of proofs to the contrary, that the body returns to its Mother Earth. The spirit, freed from its temporary prison, departs, whither no man knows, and is only preserved in unison with the mouldering body by the memories of those who knew them together. But the living wedlock takes its part, noble or lowly, in the fused background of the men to come, sons of a heritage which all can share.

I used the expression "muddled motives" in my first paragraph which, I feel, calls for an explanation. Muddled motives, to me, constitute motives which do not descend to the logical foundations, admitting always that the undermost is still beyond, but lodge themselves on a comfortable shelf half-way down, unwilling to contemplate the thought that they are not at the bottom. I intend to try and make it plain that my parents (and others) are culpable in this way, without blinding myself to the fact that they think their motives pure and have suffered for their "beliefs." They "sincerely" believe that they are being right in thwarting me—because they doubt my ability for logical thought which leads me into unorthodox results—and I am deprived, my autobiography will explain why, of my freedom. That is because they prefer to believe in the Bible and the conventional English law, grotesquely claiming to confine itself to the exquisite book, which is prostituted by those who defend it as "inspired," shirking the task of reasoning out this complicated world for themselves. Therefore their "sincerity," surely, is only a signpost of their undeveloped minds. I have two legitimate "grumbles," if I did not discard them as unhelpful, at that attitude to life—first the general grumble that it deprives all thinking people (and that means all who have the will to think) of their heritage of the highest happiness, and secondly, a personal grumble that, at present, situated as I am, dependent on my father, I have the choice between open warfare and an artificiality which grates on me more than it grates on them because I am more "aware." But they (and all human beings) could be as much "aware" as I—if they would shed the dwarfing mantle of fear and develop separate, fuller lives for themselves, instead of confining themselves to the orbit of anxiety.

Surely, in logical minds worry, a near relation to religion, would not raise its shamed head. I am not arguing that the Christian religion is basically wrong (except as regards

immortality, which is a base doctrine)—I am very conscious that Christ was said to be always sympathetic to "sinners," reserving his scorn and contempt for the Pharisees—but I maintain that it is unnecessary and dwarfing, depriving human beings of the right of free thought; is a hot-bed of deceit and superficiality; and has performed, as a church, acts by millions which any sane man, down the ages, would have shunned. Until we have a reasonable race of humanity, thinking for their unrestricted selves, we shall not have begun to touch the hem of the problems which are strangling us.

LYNN CARLTON.

The Baganda make excellent servants and, for the most part, are clean and honest. They are remarkably quick at learning the work which Europeans require and are invariably respectful. I don't think I have, anywhere, met better servants. It must, however, be distressing to our missionaries to know that non-Christian servants are usually preferred to those who have a smattering of education.—"Glimpses of a Governor's Life," by SIR HESKETH BELL, G.C.M.G. (1909).

## CORRESPONDENCE

### GOD AND SOUTH AFRICA

SIR.—The South Africa Act of 1909, establishing the Union of South Africa, you will see functioned with no hitch and without God for 16 years. Our "Wise Men from Gotham," who drew up the Act of Union in 1909, did so without God and forgot to put His name in the Act.

All of a sudden, after having been "godless" for 16 years, they found that there will be quite a lot of benefit in it, especially for themselves, if they could manage to enlist God on their side in our Legislative Body.

Behind the whole "awakening" about the absence of God in the Constitution was, of course, the Dutch Reformed Church, of which we have no less than four varieties, all four going hammer and tongs to save our souls in four different ways. We thus have the "liberty" to choose in which one of the four we would like to go to the Dutch Reformed Church Heaven.

JOHANNA DU TOIT, Natal.

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### LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m., MESSRS. E. SAPHIN, F. PAGE, JAMES HART. Thursday, May 22, 6-30 p.m., MESSRS. E. SAPHIN, F. PAGE, JAMES HART.

### LONDON—INDOOR

Rationalist Press Association (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, May 20, 7 p.m., "Psychology of Religion," fourth lecture, "Religion and Morality," Mrs. A. BLANCO WHITE.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., "Is Man Selfish," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

### COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., a lecture.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (Bull Green).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. G. THOMPSON. (St. James Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m., "Why I am an Atheist," Mr. G. THOMPSON.

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