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IEWS AND OPINIONS

The Twilight of the Gods

(Concluded from Page 206)

WE left the gods worried and downhearted with the decay of their power, and dreading the advance of Atheism. All the gods agreed that the position was a very serious one, the little one taking the situation easily, the big gods saying that they are faced with destruction. Jupiter himself notes that members of his own family are turning against him, and one says bluntly that he is not at all surprised that men should cease to worship the gods, or even believe in them. He says:—

"What other conclusion could they arrive at when they saw the conditions around them? Good men neglected, perished in penury or slavery, and profligate wretches wealthy, honoured and powerful. . . . We gods affect surprise that men who are not fools decline to put their faith in us. We ought rather to be pleased if there is a man left to say his prayers. They perceive that whether they pray or don't pray, go to church or don't go to church, makes no difference."

A number of suggestions are made by the gods—big and little—some arguing that it is best to treat unbelief with silence in the hope that its existence is not observed. Others suggest that force is the method for Atheists. Eventually Jupiter says:—

"What now remains for us gods to do is to bow down our heads from heaven and harken to the debate. Let the bolt be pushed back, let the clouds move aside and the gates of heaven set wide open."

The gods are on the scene in time to hear Timocles—the champion of the gods—shouting at Damis, "What, you blasphemous villain, you don't believe in gods and providence!"

Damis replies that he sees no proof of the existence of gods, but he is willing to listen to evidence. Timocles refuses this but indulges in a scream of abuse. Zeus, who is listening, exclaims, "Our man is doing well. He has in the rudest manner and the loudest voice. Well done, Timocles. Give him hard words. That is your strong point. Begin to reason and you will be as dumb as a fish."

Stung by the calmness and power of ridicule of his opponent, Timocles puts forward reasons for his belief in God. His first point is the order which is visible right through the universe. The sun and moon move in their allotted places, the seasons come, plants grow, animals are born, everything is organised with exquisite skill. To this Damis, the Atheist, replies:—

"You beg the question, Timocles. You have not proved that these things are by design. What is, is,

That it has been so ordered by Providence is no sure conclusion. You look at the universe as it exists, you examine the movements of it, you assume that these movements were intended, and you fly into a passion with those who cannot agree with you. But passion is not argument."

Timocles next urges that the greatest of the poets, Homer, says that there is a Providence. Damis retorts that Homer may be a great poet, but he is no authority in other directions. Timocles next asks whether "the multitudes of men and nations, who have believed in gods and worshipped them, have all been deceived?" The Atheist replies:—

"Thank you for reminding me of national religious customs. Nothing exhibits more plainly the foundations upon which theology is built. There is one religion on one side of a ladder, and another on the other side. . . . At Memphis, a bull is a god, at Telmessus, an onion. . . . Do you really mean, Timocles, that such things are a serious proof that god exists?"

Timocles returns to the argument from design. He drags forward the analogy of a ship with sails, rowers, etc. Damis answers:—

"Most inspired Timocles, the captain you speak of settles his course and adheres to it. His men are all in order, and obey commands. Spars, ropes, chains, oars, are on board and in their place. But the great captain of the universe shows none of this foresight. The anchors are sometimes of gold and sometimes of lead. The crew are dispersed at random. A craven fool is a commissioned officer. A swimmer is sent aloft to man the yards, a skilled navigator to work at the pumps. Knaves sit at the captain's table, honest men are huddled into corners. Had there been a captain in command he would have distinguished the good from the bad. In short, my friend, if your ship had had a commander, he has not been fit, there is need of a revolution."

One of the listening gods, Momus, says to Jupiter, "Damis is sailing on to victory with a fair tide and a comfortable breeze," and his chief, Jupiter, replies, "Timocles has absolutely nothing to bring out but such tripe, everyday stuff, that may be overturned with a finger."

After the last shot Damis walks away and the defender of the gods falls back on a very familiar weapon with most religions, and which was very popular in our youth. Timocles follows Damis shouting:—

"You will jeer at me, you god-robbing, shabby, villainous, infamous, halterstiek miscreant. Does not everybody know that your father was a tatterdemalion, and your mother no better than she should be? That

you murdered your brother, you lewd, lying, rascally, abominable varlet. Wait, you shall not get off without a good drubbing."

Zeus says to his gods, "Damis has gone away laughing, and the other fellow at his heels railing and raving. It appears as though he is going to throw a tile at his head. What are we to do?" The god Mermese replies, "The old play says that you are not hurt if you do not acknowledge it. Suppose a few have gone away believing in Damis, what then? A great many believe the reverse; the whole mass of uneducated Greeks, and the barbarians everywhere."

But Zeus finds little consolation in that fact, and he replies, "For all that it was excellent which King Darius said concerning Zopyrus, I would rather have one such champion as Damis than be master of ten thousand Babylons."

It would have spoiled this dialogue, with its powerful satire and cogent reasoning, to have interlarded it with a number of reflections and their application to present-day conflicts. A mere change of names would be enough to turn it into a controversy with living defenders of the faith. Every argument used against Lucian is in some form alive to-day. The arguments from tradition, from the belief of great men, from the appearance of nature, and from the existence of religion, are all used, and when these are exposed then we have the cowardly, lying army of the B.B.C. with no essential difference, save for a change of terms and a forced politeness in speech.

Rightly enough Damis pointed out that the course of nature is entirely different from what the world should be if it were ruled by benevolent intelligence. Our religious leaders, with tongues in cheeks, tell us that "the rain falls upon the just and unjust alike." Of course it does, but is that anything more than saying that "God" does not care the proverbial damn who is drenched and what damage it causes? Damis was correct, the ship of God runs any way, and with no regard to human deserts.

Damis was scandalised because he asked if non-belief in a god was a crime why did not God see to it that his, or hers, or its, existence was made plain to all? If god really exists, the responsibility for his not being known rests with him, not with man. Non-belief in God is treated as a crime—not always punished in this world, but in another world that is different from this one in every way, save that of singing psalms and telling God what a great person he is.

Why is the man who does not believe in a god guilty of the greatest of all possible misdemeanours? Will my rejection of God be likely to affect him? It looks as though it will. And historically it has, for history is full of accounts of gods, north, south, east and west, who have disappeared from no other cause than that people ceased to believe in them. It is curious that man should not be alive to this feature of the death of gods. Will my disbelief in God help to kill him? I believe it will. Gods, like other bogies, only live so long as people believe in them. And as neither scientist or philosopher has ever clearly established the existence of a god, may it not be that Damis was right and Timocles was wrong?

It matters not, said the god Hermes, that some people believe with the Atheist Damis, since the larger number of believers are with us, "the whole mass of ignorant

Greeks and the barbarians everywhere." In that respect human nature does not seem to have altered very much. Multitudes of godites still exist, and the aim of the B.B.C.—a very powerful instrument—is to preach religion in its lowest level, fearful that higher forms would end in their unbelief. That indeed is the keynote of much of the worst phases of our social life—the belief that we must lie, and lie, and lie again to the "People" unless they get out of hand. It is said that truth will out. So it will, given time and place and intelligence. But these qualities appear mainly to the few, and they are not easily established in the minds of the people. When all other arguments failed, Timocles fell back on an attack upon character. Sensible men and women know the moral value of that; but it serves the crowd and the timid. How were Voltaire and Paine and Bradlaugh treated? Always beware of those who preach so of the value of truth, or that truth will be heard. It may be heard, but just as true is the fact that a lie will find a home and be praised aloud while truth is lying in the gutter.

Yet no policy, such as those named, can prevent forever the decay of the Christian creed that has met the many other religious systems. All flourish for a time, long or short, yet they ultimately fade away. And unless man remains stationary the change that has affected other gods will affect the gods of the Christian creed. To-day the leaders of Christianity are crying aloud for help, which is the beginning of the end. The modern outlook of mankind looks little to heaven and more to earth. In all our churches there is a fear that is developing into a certainty that human interests are taking the place of religion and gods. The dominating desire to-day is not thoughts of an impossible God and an undesirable heaven, after all, it is man who has made the world in which he lives. He is mastering the facts of existence. His real concern is with the facts of life, and not the preservation of sacred survivals.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

PAPAL INTOLERANCE AND TYRANNY

THAT fine humanist, the late Dr. J. B. Bury, whose definitive edition of Gibbons' *magnum opus*, the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," is now ranked as the standard authority, was also the author of various volumes of original historical research. Among these discriminating studies are his *History of the later Roman Empire*, his "Life of St. Patrick," the "History of Greece," his excellent "History of the Freethought of Thought" and his "Idea of Progress."

In 1902, Bury was appointed Regius Professor of History at Cambridge where he delivered a course of lectures in 1908 dealing with the "History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century." These addresses were published posthumously in 1930, with an interesting memoir by one of Bury's old students, Dr. R. H. Murray, who notes that: "Those who delight in parallelism will observe that Bury and his predecessor in his Cambridge chair, Acton, were fascinated by the annals of the Papacy. There is much in common to the two historians. Both were born students even as boys, both were omnivorous readers, both possessed encyclopaedic knowledge, and both put this knowledge most generously at the service of scholars who endeavoured to use it. Both were ardent lovers of liberty, devoted to the cause of toleration."

In truly Ruskinian style, Bury opened his Papal lectures by declaring that: "When the temporal power of the Papacy was

tottering to its fall, in consequence of the Liberal movement and the political ability of the Sardinian Government, Pius IX sang down the gauntlet of challenge and defiance to Nineteenth century civilisation." Earlier Pontifical pronouncements had occasioned little concern, but at this late hour, the mildest progressives were amazed to discover that the Vatican still remained in medieval darkness.

In 1849, at the Council of Spoleto, Father Pecci, then Bishop of Perugia who later became Pope as Leo XIII, advised the assembly to petition the reigning Pontiff Pius IX to officially condemn the heinous sins of the age relating to the authority of the Church and the sacred rights of property. Pecci's suggestion had little to do with theology, but much with civil life. It was warmly welcomed by the Jesuits, and their organ, the *Civiltà Cattolica*, also recommended a Papal denunciation of modern misconceptions concerning the Church and the promulgation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the blessed Mary. This last, however, was reserved for later consideration. In 1850, one of the Italian bishops issued an instruction to his clergy "in which he enumerated 85 erroneous doctrines of a rationalistic or rationalistic nature."

The Pope appointed a Commission to further this good work, but its proceedings were conducted in strict secrecy until its sinister activities were made public in a Turin newspaper. So scandalised became public opinion that more enlightened prelates such as Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, were alarmed. So a new Commission was appointed and a modified Syllabus appeared in 1864.

This document condemned toleration for any form of heresy in any Catholic State. This declaration delighted the ultramontanes, especially the Jesuits, and it was hailed as a censure of the veteran Liberal Catholic, Montalembert, who had advocated a Free Church in a Free State when addressing a Romanist audience. Measures against the assertion of such a heresy were called for. Still, it was deemed politic that "freedom of conscience should be asserted in countries (like Russia and Poland) where Catholics were in a minority, but not in Catholic lands."

The Encyclical letter that accompanied the Syllabus despatched to the clergy denounces the "impious and absurd principle of naturalism" which subordinates the Church to the State. Virtually everything that the intellectual life prizes is defamed. Then, as Bury notes, "the assumption by the State of the duty of educating children is a principle which is denounced as communism and socialism." Presumably, as the prologue of the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the Encyclical ends with an expression of confidence in the power of the Immaculate Virgin, who is said to destroy all heresies in the Universe."

The Syllabus itself definitely denies the right of human reason to decide the truth of Christian doctrine, for this is the exclusive prerogative of ecclesiastical authority. Even science must be subservient to clerical control. Also, the philosopher must not invade the sacred realm, but must humbly submit his speculative opinions to the Church. Again, the Church will not tolerate philosophical errors or grant philosophers the privilege of rectifying their own mistakes. Thus, is the Index justified.

Then there emerges the audacious assertion that: "The decrees of the Apostolic Chair and the Roman congregations do not hinder the free progress of science and learning." As Bury ironically remarks: "This reminds us of the case of Galileo," and he cites Dujardin, who averred in 1877 that, "The Church has a sovran right to delay developments of science if she believes that in the existing circumstances they could be dangerous to the higher interests of the faith."

Secret societies (apart, of course, from the secret Society of Jesus), Bible societies, communism and other devilish devices, had been censured in many earlier Encyclicals in the severest terms. But the principal secret society that aroused the most

inveterate Papal animosity was that of the Freemasons, since suppressed in Fascist Italy and elsewhere.

Leo XIII was ever antagonistic to the Masonic Order. As Bury reminds us: "In a brief especially intended for Italy in 1892, he advised a method almost equivalent to boycotting persons suspected of belonging to the sect, for instance, doctors. It is delightfully humorous to find that when he himself became extremely ill in 1899, his horror of the pernicious society did not deter him from employing the Freemason surgeon, Mazzoni, to perform the necessary operation."

As the Italian Freemasons played so pre-eminent a part in securing the unification of Italy and subsequently supported the Italian Governments in their anti-Papal policy, the Jesuits untiringly schemed to create and sustain feelings of hatred and suspicion of the Lodges. They defamed the Masons as the spawn of Satan spreading their infidelities "like an iron net over two hemispheres, and under the mask of progress and culture aiming at a general social revolution and the destruction of Christianity."

The Encyclical claimed that the divinely inspired Church stands superior to the State. The Church is an independent institution and is not subject to secular laws. Consequently: "The ecclesiastical power may exercise its authority without the permission and consent of the secular power."

When reviewing past events, ultramontane scribes aver that the historian must base his conclusions on interpretations most favourable to the Church. This places a premium on systematic falsification. Moreover, the Church is fully justified in using force to ensure conversion. As Bury observes: "Schrader in his commentary says significantly, 'it is not merely the spirits of men that are subject to the power of the Church.' The most authoritative organ of the Roman Church which was influential in promoting the publication of the Syllabus, the *Civiltà Cattolica*, in 1853 described the Inquisition as 'a sublime spectacle of social perfection.'" And as recently as 1895 a Roman journal—*The Analecta Ecclesiastica*—exclaimed: "O benedictas rogorum flammis, O blessed flames of funeral pyres by which, with the sacrifices of a few crafty wretches, hundreds of regiments of souls were saved! O glorious and venerable memory of Thomas Torquemada!"

Sentiments so outspoken as these are rarely expressed in Protestant States. They are now almost invariably reserved for the beguilement of illiterate and priest-ridden laymen in Romanist communities. And the verity remains that the Church's power to persecute is not restrained by the presence of humanism within her fold, but by the pressure of the Secular State, and the presence of an ever increasing number of heretics and unbelievers who resent and oppose ecclesiastical encroachments on freedom of thought and expression.

More remains to be written concerning the notorious Syllabus of Pius IX, and to that we hope to devote a further article.

T. F. PALMER.

AGNOSTICISM AND EXISTENCE

IN "Views and Opinions" for the issue of December 22, 1946, Chapman Cohen again deals with this question, and again fails to see the logic of the case. He says that one cannot accept Hume against Berkeley, without also accepting Berkeley against Locke. In other words, the two arguments cancel out, leading nowhere. So, he says there is room for agnosticism concerning existence. But if the conclusions are unsatisfactory, the logic is that there is something wrong with the premises.

The question, he says, is whether the senses are reliable or illusory; whether things are as we observe them. We cannot get outside consciousness and so cannot know what the outside world is like. But the question whether the senses are illusory does not touch the question of existence. How do we reason from sensation to existence? If knowledge is dependent on the senses is it reasonable to assert a belief in something apart from sensa-

tion, and how do we assess its reasonableness? One can appreciate degrees of knowledge ranging from possibility, through probability to certainty, but are there degrees of existence? To the questions what do we know and how do we know, we must add, what do we mean by knowledge? The question whether the world of my perception is my creation, actually raises this question, and whether it exists apart from me, only shifts the question of existence and calls attention to the fact that knowledge is subjective as well as objective. Is the subjective experience non-existent? The question whether the senses are reliable is not one of existence, but of the relativity of two aspects of experience. If we are liable to misunderstand the external world in its relation to ourselves, we are also liable to misunderstand ourselves in our relation to it.

Sensation is both objective and subjective experience; the question concerns the correspondence between them; it does not concern existence. If discussion is only conducted in words without demonstration, the question what is . . . cannot arise. As discussion is the exchange of ideas expressed in words, it is necessarily ideological, and we need some idea of the function of definition. An undefined existence is as absurd as an undefined god, for the call for definition does not require a statement of what is . . . it concerns the meaning of words, and can only be answered in words. The Socratic question was not, what is . . . but what do you mean by . . . It was not meant to end discussion but to facilitate understanding. To ask the question, what do you mean by God, would start a discussion. The assertion of existence or non-existence is not a question. Answering questions and framing definitions is part of the process of accumulating knowledge. It is not an individual but a social and cultural fact. Experience is both personal and educational. But if the senses are unreliable; if existence is unlike what we know; in what terms are we to define it? Existence is an assumption about which we have different ideas arising from the difference in our experience. In our comparison of our experiences, do we discover existence? Whether or not we have a common existence, the problem is to achieve a common understanding.

Locke's essay was on human understanding, and the fallacy in the question of the reliability of the senses is implied in his proposition. Locke asserted that there is nothing in memory that is not in consciousness. It assumes memory as an automatic function. Now if, instead of following the "cloud of dust" raised by the bishop, we consider Leibnitz's criticism, the position takes on a very different character. We might accept the idea that there is nothing in memory that is not in consciousness, but the converse does not follow. For there is more in consciousness than there is in memory. To illustrate his point Leibnitz considered our observation of a mill-race. We see a multitude of ripples on the water, and if we logically reason from the sense of sight, we infer a multitude of tiny sounds corresponding to them. But we do not hear a multitude of tiny sounds, we hear a roar. The multitude of tiny sounds is there, but we do not distinguish them.

The point is that the senses are aware of a complexity of detail but we only remember generalities. We do not remember all we observe. If the senses respond to external stimulus, e.g., rays of light and ripples of sound, the misapprehension does not arise in sensation but in the co-ordination of these perceptions or impressions; that is in memory. The question then is, not whether the world is as we observe it, but how much of our experience do we remember; not whether the senses are reliable, but whether our memory is illusory. The question does not concern the external world but the subjective experience. It is not a physical but a psychological and cultural question. The introspective metaphysical reasoning from axiomatic assertions is, as Chapman Cohen says, an interesting Christmas puzzle. But, whereas the logic of Berkeley and Hume led to contradictory confusion, modern scientific research has justified Leibnitz.

The Berkeley-Hume controversy is enlightening only insofar as it shows its absurdity, for it led only to Kant's "Thing in Itself" about which we can know nothing. It was a blind alley. Leibnitz proposition appears to have passed without notice, but it does seem to anticipate later discoveries. Modern psychology has amply shown the intellectual confusion in memory; it has given us the unconscious and hypnotism, and the mechanism of escapism; the desire to forget. And Freudian dream psychology and psycho-analysis has given us the function as well as the character of illusion. And so we can say that neither the "power of the terms we are using" nor the "anthropomorphic implications" arise in deceptive "conception" of the "outside world," but in the subjective fact of misunderstanding; that words still "express old thoughts and thought forms" is evidence that it does not arise from the senses. The illusion is of a very different character. It is a misunderstanding of ourselves in our relation to the outside world. Instead of going back to the ancient Greeks for science, we go back to them for metaphysics. Science is a more modern development, and involves our relations between ourselves.

If Democritus is to be credited with the atom, he is also to be debited with the idea. Before Plotinius, the ancients had no concept of consciousness, and as Tyler tells us, Democritus borrowed the primitive double or soul in his theory of ideas or visions; to explain how we are aware of objects at a distance. The idea was developed by Plato in his Philosophy of Forms. These visions were Reality. Aristotle distinguished between reality and actuality. The question became one of motive. Epicurean pleasure, Stoic duty, Neo-platonic and Gnostic mysticism. Men lived in a world of visions, which were spiritual and motivating; and they were potent. To Augustine they may cause the birth of children. Men were lost in that mystical maze of psychological misunderstanding we call religion. Theological formal causes were identified with the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel and the mystical phantasy of Revelations. Alongside the development of mystical methods of hypnosis, and through periods of mass hysteria, we can follow the metaphysical controversy, from the Peripatetics and Scholastics through the Nominalist and Realist, the Voluntarist and the Intuitionist, the Empiricist and Rationalist, the Materialist and Idealist. But the categorical imperative still remains.

Men still live in a world of illusion, and imagine themselves actuated by motives, like Marx's "personifications of economic categories." From atoms and ideas we have arrived at atom bombs and ideological differences of opinion.

H. H. PREECE

THE SEPIK

II

THE ghost-houses of the Sepik then were crammed with skulls, flesh removed, by boiling or exposure, and replaced with clay. Two shells for eyes and the hair stuck on top again. At any instant there might have been a million skulls in the Sepik Valley ghost-houses, venerated, the harvest of generations of head-hunters.

Gross barbarians the Sepik natives appeared to be; yet their arts and crafts were of the highest found in New Guinea. Their dugouts were excellently cut, a carved head of a crocodile at each end. They made chairs and sago bowls with a crocodile motif. The crocodile dominated life. When a boy was flayed in a ghost house, so that his body would carry no inartistic *keloids* (raised scars) it was "the crocodile" who was the surgeon. And if an adulterous woman was found dead it was "the crocodile" who had killed her. Millions of crocodiles lived in the Sepik, its tributaries and its swamps.

The crocodile was a staple food. Once I went hunting for baby crocodiles in a swamp. It is easy work. Clench your fist and suck between the thumb and forefinger, and that is an imitation of a mother crocodile calling its young. Keep squeaking and moaning

wealthily in the direction of the answering squeak; then slash with a knife—but beware of the mother crocodile.

An amazing stream is the Sepik. For about 300 miles from its mouth it is little more than an enormous drain through a swamp.

Water lilies clog the swamps, lagoons, and small streams; lake roses float in millions; birds fight for places on which to lay their eggs; flying-foxes sometimes blot out the sun; ducks fly in speaking battalions; osprey herons, haughty and proud, look disdainfully at the world about them; and in the jungle the bird of paradise looks down on its rival, the Victoria (*goura*) pigeon.

But the mosquito blights all this beauty. At night, and in dark places by day, the fever-carrying anopheles fills the air; by day the sago-swamp mosquito seeks blood, biting, then rolling over, too gorged to fly and ready for the swat. At night the natives retire into tubular, woven grass bags, close the end, and sleep in families in an odour that could be collected and taken away.

Head-hunting is cowardly. A boy is at puberty; he is nude; his elders think that it is time that he began his sex-life; but he must display manliness by obtaining a human skull. In a swamp, perhaps, a man is cutting the decaying bole of a sago palm in search of succulent grubs; like a crocodile in grass, the boy steals on him and throws his spear; the victim writhes like a moth on a pin; and the boys hack at the neck and runs with the trophy, still bearing its agonised, startled expression. At home the village is waiting for him, the conquering hero. Women remove their grass skirts and lie naked on the ground, including the boy's mother; and he treads on them as he carries the head into his house. He is a man, and he may cover his genitals with the skin of a flying fox. There is a lot more, including ball-players, the biggest in New Guinea. One would think that where sex is worshipped unto murder descent would be rated from mothers; actually, the Sepik totems are patrilineal.

At Ambunti we were friendless. When the station was built on a steep slope near the river bank, the river natives decamped. By chance, I found that the natives of Malu had built a second village near a lagoon a few miles away, complete with ghost-houses, so strong is religion. The Government was very sympathetic, but in those days the native was distrustful. Ambunti was frequently in the centre of those cyclones which are endemic in the Sepik Valley. A high wind was the first warning. Then came lightning which was terrifying; then wind again in the opposite direction, the whole taking only a few minutes, and rain. It was a whirlwind, or *willi-willi*, the centre as an electric spark, the noise deafening.

Church bells will always remind me of this adventure. One night at Ambunti the guard reported to me that an epileptic man had come from the hills to the southward. Years before he had been employed by a German planter, and he remembered enough pidgin-English for his story to be understood. He had remained while I was questioning him. He said that his people had seen the sago-leaf roofs of Ambunti and knew, from their style, that white men lived there. Shortly before he came to Ambunti his people had been raided by head-hunters and he feared that another raid would quickly follow.

I was short-staffed, but I gathered together some native police and all the fit prisoners in the gaol and set out with the epileptic as guide. The Sepik was then in flood and the lagoons full, allowing us to travel for some miles inland by dugout. We had the strange experience of canoeing through jungle in between creeks and lagoons, for, to use a nautical expression, the Sepik dugout will float in a heavy dew, so shallow is its draught.

A lot of archers awaited us when we disembarked from our dugouts. Their bows were excellently constructed, their arrows masterpieces of barbed savagery. It was my first journey in bow-and-arrow country, and I felt very green despite my previous five years in New Guinea. Primitive man devotes his highest skill to two things, ghost-houses and implements of war. Had I applied his intelligence to other things the history of the world would have been written differently.

We slept at the epileptic's village, near the ghost-house, a high building with steeply sloping roof and a decorated façade, a cathedral in wood and sago-leaves. The effigies ("ghosts") were stored on a platform; the door was curtained; and the slit-gongs, large and small, were on the ground under the house.

In the morning we pressed on in search of the head-hunters. A woman, who was guarding a corpse which was being smoked, handed me a flat sago cake, which I took through politeness. Towards sunset we reached a hut, evidently a hunter's lodge. Voices came from the valley below. I wanted prisoners so that I could speak to them through an interpreter and make friends with them. In a land where murder was a commonplace thing, why punish instead of curing? I had brought some of the epileptic's people with me as guides. They were armed, but I warned them that fighting, except in defence, was the police's job.

We concealed ourselves on the sides of the path up which the natives—called *Kirkirs* by the river people—were walking, talking gaily. The police were about to seize them when the epileptic's people threw spears. A vicious three-pronged spear went into a girl's neck, killing her instantly; a woman, pierced by a spear, ran screaming down the valley and fell dead; and the others decamped. The police corporal was swearing like a maniac. The epileptic's men were stripping the corpses of their skirts and shell ornaments, but I drove them away from the bodies and made them give up their loot.

I then prepared for the attack, which came an hour later, the survivors having raised the alarm. Archers appeared and fired their arrows at us, but we drove them off with rifle fire.

It was too late to retire and risk a night of stumbling along native pads. In the night a sentry fired and roused the camp. Pop-eyed, he informed me that he had seen the women's ghosts and had fired at them. The girl was carrying a basket of pups when she was killed. In the night they escaped from our camp, and for hours they squealed, fainter and fainter, as they made their way down the valley, to their mother or to perdition.

We waited until it was full daylight before setting off for home, the better to see any archers who might be in trees. We were guided along a short-cut, through a dry swamp where sago grew. Torrential rain fell when we were in the middle, threatening to bog us forever. We felt like the damned.

At the epileptic's village the slit-gongs in the ghost-houses were sounded, a victory peal! In the surrounding village the peal was taken up, until the air shook as if by thunder.

In the night a man must have gathered souvenirs. I saw him reverently place the girl's skirt in the ghost-house, beside the three-pronged spear with which he had killed her. I seized the relics and burnt them.

Sadly we returned to Ambunti. It was useless doing anything about the murders. The people were savages and did not understand. Church bells will always remind me of the placid face of the dead girl, the skewered woman and the squealing pups.

The Sepik rolled on and on, like a great sewer. One day I rolled out in its current to the ocean, and saw it no more.

Milson's Point, New South Wales. BERTRAM CALCUTT.

COD AND SPARROWS

The Bishop of London appears to still be convinced that "no sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of God." That may be true—if that unthinkable, untouchable, unseeable, unhearable and generally non-understandable thing called "God" really exists. But having settled the existence of God, there still remains unanswered the direct question what is God who could do so much, insist on doing so little. Our religious leaders say God is not dead. We do not know, perhaps he has retired from active service only, but the plain thing is that God does nothing. It may be true that God knows when a sparrow falls to the ground, but what people are asking is why does he not stretch out his hand to prevent his children falling over. "The Providence of God" is an insult to human intelligence. The fact that God knows all that is going on and does nothing is a crime of indecency.

ACID DROPS

A great man is Catholic Cardinal Griffin. He has discovered that teachers who do not believe in God would have a "disastrous" influence on their pupils. A good word is "Disastrous." A man can play the liar while saying what may seem quite honest language. For example, if a man ill-treats a child in the street, and another man gives the brute a thrashing, the good man's influence is disastrous to the child-beater. Griffin is careful not to say what and how is the non-Catholic teacher disastrous to the child. Really, there are many ways of telling a lie, or scandalising an honest man.

Now a truth is a truth whether it is in Church or out of it. And what the Cardinal means is that it is disastrous to the Catholic Church if the teacher does not press upon children certain things as true, without letting on in any way that the particular term is very misleading. What the Cardinal says is that the influence of the teacher would be disastrous, but so is a policeman coming along when a thief is breaking through a window. To give a child some knowledge of the ups and downs of religion is one thing, to keep that away from a child is robbing it of its freedom and dulling its understanding. Cardinal Griffin plumps for deceit in the interests of his Church. We really should like to see Cardinal Griffin and find out what kind of human he is. Take this. He says that "Godless scientists are irresponsible and misguided . . . Their scientific knowledge brings death and destruction to millions of innocent women and children." We are not fond of using strong language but he is either a first grade liar, or a man who ought never to be in charge of children.

Everybody knows that it is almost impossible to catch up with a good Christian lie, and we note one in particular that is going the rounds with increasing regularity. It is the story that before World War No. 1, some Russian aviators discovered that on Mount Ararat there still were the authentic remains of the original Noah's Ark. The story was a most circumspect one, of course, giving full details of its height, the number of its rooms—in fact, the Czar gave orders for a company of soldiers to take complete measurements, plans, and many photographs. Owing, however, to the war the Czarist Government was overthrown and the records were never made public, especially as the Bolsheviks would never in those early days give any credit to religion.

A Mr. Vladimar Roskovitsky has actually repeated this tissue of lies in "The Modern Mystic and Monthly Science Review," and no doubt it will be repeated as often as the story of the Miracles of Lourdes, as often, indeed, as there can be found mugs enough to believe it. The whole story, with its Russian aviators and company of soldiers, is a thoroughly Christian imposture, and that it can be solemnly printed again even in a "mystical" journal, shows how far credulity and superstition can go even in our own "materialistic" age.

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of England says "There is no tolerable future without God." We have heard that kind of thing before. What we should like to hear is some responsible Christian leader to deny that along with the decrease of religious belief there has gone, side by side, better housing, better feeding, better dressing and better education. We have memories of the hovels that people lived in, say, fifty years ago, and compared with what they were, present livings for "common people" may be counted as palaces. And if one goes down to the end of the last century he will see a state of brutality, of bad food, and bad housing were so bad that to-day the pictures are hardly believable. And let us always remember, all these changes for better education, etc., occurred with an unbreaking of religion. The fact is that, generally speaking, at the period named, the chief work of the Churches was to keep the people content where God has placed them. Now the people are securing their homes, etc., and the utility of the clergy is fading, and with that their religion.

That indefatigable Primitive, Mr. C. S. Lewis, has just added another to his many books proving that Christianity is 100 per cent. true. This time he champions miracles, but it is difficult to learn from his reviewers whether he has finally put miracles on

the map never again to be wiped off. The "Church Times," for example, riotously enthusiastic, feels constrained to point out that Mr. Lewis is more of a poet than a philosopher—but whether this should make miracles all the more real is not clearly indicated. We are, however, assured that the "distinctive quality of the book is not its "argumentation" but its "descriptive passages—which no doubt make miracles absolutely possible, or at least it is as good a way as any other to be weak in argumentation and strong in description to prove the miraculous.

"There has," says Bishop Bell of Chichester, "been a real landslide from the Christian religion." That is true, and, so far as the clergy are concerned, there is no prospect, for the moment, for the Churches to "make good" again. We do not say that it is impossible, for one may keep before them the narrow escape we had escaping from Hitlerism. Given absolute power to determined rulers and all that civilisation has gained may be swept away again. We may recall that the best men of ancient Rome and Greece, while noting that there was an up and down movement in civilisation, never imagined that in a century almost the whole of pagan culture would be swept away. Nor can we say with truthfulness that an awakening was certain to come. For the revival did not come from within, but from without. Mohammedan culture, with the revival of Greek and Roman culture, brought light and life. But for those forces the Christian dark ages might have remained for a very long period.

In a recent work, "The Oracles of God," the author gives a comprehensive study of Calvin, coming to the conclusion that "Calvin's character has been much misunderstood." It appears that, after all, "he had a profound compassion for souls and love for fallen humanity." Well, a good test of his character is the way in which he treated Servetus—not only hunting him down and moving heaven and earth to have him burnt at the stake, but so that the agony would be prolonged, ordering damp green wood to burn slowly. Calvin was, of course, a thoroughly religious man and a great theologian—but it would be hard even in a crowd of Christian saints to find a more fiendish character. As Lugersohn said, "Knox and Calvin were made for each other; they fitted each other like the upper and lower jaws of a wild beast." There is a far better case for whitewashing the Devil than for John Calvin.

One of the standing lies of the Christian religion is that it aims at creating a "Brotherhood of Man." That is not true. In fact it is glaringly a lie. What has been aimed at by the several Christian churches is to create a brotherhood of a particular religion. And even with that we have to allow for the lust for conflict. In sober truth no other religionists have been less concerned with brotherhood and more with conquests than the leaders of the Christian Church. All men have not the same religious opinions, and of those that have there is nothing ethically fundamental in their religious belief. Let the Christian Church be as wide as it may, humanly it remains one of the narrowest sects on earth.

The non-religious appeal to brotherhood is based upon qualities that are common to all men. For example, There is no man who lacks some degree of brotherhood. And as a mere matter of fact it is in proportion to the weakness of religious belief that the sense of brotherhood is shown. It is also certain that in the history of the world Christianity has done more to hinder brotherhood than to develop it. But we suppose that one more or less will never upset Christian champions.

It is worth noting that the usual shame-faced lies are turned out by religion to account for the dislocation of social life following the world war. Every war has that result. Keeping preparing for war threatens the higher social ties. That is one of the prices we have to pay. To say that the war was inevitable makes no difference to the generalisation. Life goes lower with the length of the war. But war or no war the Christian Churches would have been decaying. The war offered the churches an excuse for the decay of religion. That is all. But the decay would have gone on war or no war.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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SUGAR PLUMS

A lady reader of "The Freethinker" pays us a compliment. She says she reads our journal "almost regularly"—which is an indication that she does not buy a copy—and finds it "very interesting," but what puzzles her is why we should put God on one side. We assure the lady we do not put God on one side. In no one would be more eager to find "God" if he was findable. But as we have no idea of what He is or where He is, He must be like something doing something or how is it possible to recognise Him? As it is, we are looking for something that is not like anything, and something that is not like "any-thing" seems to end in "no-thing," and a thing that is like anything is very much like no-thing. We hope that explanation is clear.

There can be no doubt," says "The English Churchman," that as a nation we are getting further and further away from God. We think we know what "The English Churchman" means, but it seems to be very muddled. For the principle of Christianity is that God is everywhere, and although we may wish to get away from God, yet will He be with us, either to punish or to praise. But when the "Churchman" moans out "The vast majority of English need to be converted to Christianity," it is really getting very much mixed. For it is the people who are crying out to be converted, it is the churches and God who wish to get the people converted, for if they do not get converted it is a serious matter for both God and the church. They appear to be the only ones that will suffer. For the gods have been coming and going for almost as long as Man has existed, and for another god to disappear will hardly cause a stir. It is indeed a curious fact that while multitudes of gods have disappeared no one knows where and how the gods have disappeared. They just float away and no one appears to be the cause for their disappearance.

The writer in "The English Churchman" attempts to frighten the people into Church by laying stress on the development of crime and the lack of religion; and that we say is not merely a lie, it is a lie. Consider. We have just finished one of the most cruel and bloodthirsty wars that have ever occurred. Men have spent over five years fighting, they have lived more apart from civilised life. They have killed in a way that never before existed. And, as is common with all wars, the

softer and better forms of civil life have suffered. There never has been a serious war that has not been at the cost of civil life, and from the last war we shall be lucky to get rid of its effects in a generation. On the whole, we have done as one could expect. But the Churches have suffered, and to regain their losses they will lie, and lie, in the interests of a lying creed. We have to get life back to its more peaceful level, and that will not be done by the Churches. Manhood developed without God, and the better manhood will get back to the better life as the evil character of war dies out.

The City of London has, in its history, given the Freedom of the City to but three women. The first was the Baroness Burdett-Coutts. The second to Florence Nightingale for noble work in military nursing and improvements in hospital conditions. The third woman is Princess Elizabeth—for achieving the feat of being the daughter of her father.

LAMENTABLE EXPERIENCE OF A PHILOSOPHER

LUCIUS APULEIUS, a famous Latin author who lived throughout the two middle quarters of the second century, was born at Madaura, a city in that part of the African continent which the Romans, who had taken it from the Carthaginians, named Africa Provincia, and which covered the area now occupied by Tunisia and its inextensive adjacencies. This Apuleius, in a justificatory missive addressed by him to Claudius Maximus,¹ proconsul of the aforesaid province, relates how he and his wife were the innocent victims of a shocking persecution.²

Here is a brief synopsis of the story.

At Oea, a city on the North African coast opposite Malta, resided a lady named Pudentilla. She was a widow, left with two sons, Pontianus and Pudens, who upon their father's death had become wards of his father. The old man wished Pudentilla to marry another of his sons, one named Clarus, whom alas she detested. As her father-in-law deterred all of her other suitors, and threatened to disinherit her sons unless she would espouse their objectionable uncle Pudentilla agreed to the desired betrothal, but by various excuses prevented it from ending in marriage. After many years the tyrannical old fellow died leaving his two grandsons as his heirs, and appointing the elder guardian of the younger. When, after a widowhood of almost fourteen years, Pudentilla, whose health had long been imperfect, reached the age of forty or thereabouts, physicians and midwives told her that nothing but marriage could save her life. Hearing of this prognostication, Aemilianus, a brother of Pudentilla's late husband, wrote about it to Pontianus, his nephew, then at Rome, urging him to return and persuade his mother to marry Clarus, her brother-in-law. But Pudentilla intercepted that letter, and instead thereof sent Pontianus one from herself in which she told him that as he was of connubial age, and his brother was ready for the *togæ virilis*, she had decided to remarry, adding that both her sons would find her thereafter as they had found her hitherto, their own loving mother.

Pontianus, knowing that Pudentilla had a large fortune apart from her dowry and fearing lest she might become the prey of

¹ There is every probability that this Claudius Maximus is the one whom Marcus Aurelius named in the list of his teachers, and honoured with a description which George Long says "is that of a perfect man."

² The title of the above work in the edition I have used is as follows; L. Apulei Madaurensis Apologia sive de Magia Liberi. Edidit. Gustavus Krueger, Berolini Apud Weidemanos 1863. The annotations are copious. These, however, excepting one or two illustrative of literary, or archaeological, allusions made by the author, deal with variations of the text, and never elucidate the development of the story, which is eloquently but very confusedly presented. A biography of Apuleius is not furnished. I have never met with any translation of the work. There are a few piquant extracts from it in Bayle's Dictionary, but he makes no attempt to give an outline of its narrative.

some avaricious man, hastened homewards. On the journey he met at Alexandria a friend named Apuleius, to whom he had been introduced at Athens a while back, and with whom he had afterwards enjoyed intimate but apparently interrupted fellowship. This man seemed to Pontianus the very sort of husband that Pudentilla needed. Hence he vaunted to his friend the salubrity of Oea, and showed how delighted his mother who lived there would be to receive that friend into her home.

What could have been more probable? Apuleius, the son of a high official in his province, was yet in his early manhood, had received an excellent education, presented an attractive appearance, possessed great intellectual capacity, behaved like a sage, and could even claim triumphs at the bar.³ These estimable qualifications possessed by Apuleius, and the fact of his winning the approbation of all the best people in Oea by the delivery of a brilliant address, caused Pontianus to offer him the hand of his mother; and, when Apuleius seemed to hesitate about its acceptance, he threatened in case of refusal to consider him no longer as either a friend or a philosopher. Having gained the assent of Apuleius he begged his own mother to dismiss her other suitors, and to accept the one whom he had chosen. When the marriage was arranged he would hardly agree to its being postponed until he himself should have got a wife, and his brother, Pudens, have donned "the manly robe." This delay had fatal effects. For Pontianus, against the advice of his friends, married illegally into a most disreputable family. The parents, each richly equipped with vices, kept a disorderly house, and pursued blackmail as a side line. The bride herself had a deplorable past. The father-in-law, Rufinus, having an eye on the fortune of Pudentilla, threatened to remove his daughter from Pontianus unless he would take measures to have the marriage of his mother and Apuleius annulled. To this infamous demand Pontianus consented and took the suggestion to Pudentilla, who naturally refused it. Enraged at this refusal, Rufinus flew to her house, where in the presence of her son and within the hearing of several adducible persons, he called her a concubine and referred to Apuleius as a sorcerer, whom he would slay with his own hands.

Pudentilla, seeing how matters stood, retired to the country, whence she addressed some chiding letters to her son. In these she let her feelings overflow, describing how madly she loved Apuleius, what a magician he was and how potent were his spells. All this plainly amounted only to metaphorical extravagance; but the dastardly enemies of Apuleius adduced it to prove his having employed "magic" in the real sense of that term to gain himself a rich wife. For Rufinus, leading Pontianus in tears, came into the market place and, accusing Apuleius of magic, read up to the rabble, as evidences of the charge, certain passages which he had taken without their context from the above letters, adding that other and worse missives were in his possession. No one demanded that the letters produced should be examined, which was unfortunate as the omitted parts showed clearly that Pudentilla so far from accusing Apuleius of magic, absolved him from the charge thereof made against him by Rufinus, whom she described as "an unjust and nefarious man."

The case came into court at Sabrata, a city on the Mediterranean coast not far from Oea, and was, as we learn from a previous reference, heard by Claudius Maximus himself in his capacity of proconsul.⁴ At the first point now reached we are told that Apuleius, on the above-named occasion, not only cleared himself of having won Pudentilla by magical arts, but also proved that he had insisted upon her making a far greater provision for her two sons than any she should make for his own benefit. The outcome of the case was that all the city execrated

³ Some of these advantages are expressly mentioned by Apuleius in the work, and others are therein clearly manifested. The last item is derived from one of his later works. On the present occasion he argues that riches, not poverty, would be the thing for which to blame a philosopher.

⁴ Chapters 85, 97, 98.

Rufinus, and applauded Apuleius. As for the wretched Pontianus, even before knowing of the liberality shown to himself, he had, with the deepest humility and the warmest affection, expressed his sorrow to Apuleius for having paid heed to the instigations of Rufinus and implored that his share in the conspiracy might be forgiven. On freely obtaining this indulgence, he begged Apuleius to let him visit Carthage in order that he might solicit pardon from Lollianus Avitus, who was then near the end of his consulate,⁵ awaiting at Carthage the arrival of Claudius Maximus. This request was granted. Pontianus visited the consul who gave him wise and benevolent advice, and also sent Apuleius some beautiful letters expressive of his sympathy and esteem. These epistles Apuleius sent to Maximus as confirmatory evidence of his own innocence. Letters breathing affection and respect came to Apuleius from his stepson Pontianus. This young man had evidently a weak character but Apuleius refers to him as highly cultured, and depicts him as by no means destitute of good impulses.

They never saw each other again, for, after a brief absence Pontianus died on his homeward journey. In his will he bequeathed his fortune to his mother and his brother, leaving to his worthless wife nothing but some linen of derisory value. This brother, Pudens, still in his teens, had always been unteachable and unteachable. Now, as he greatly resented having to share his brother's heritage with their mother, he began to treat her abominably, even going so far as to have her grossly insulted by a band of young ruffians at his brother's funeral. Soon after this he left her and went to live with his uncle, Aemilianus, who until then had ignored him completely, but now received him gladly, thinking he would be helpful in providing Apuleius with family trouble. At his uncle's Pudens was allowed to rule the household, and to gratify all his vices without impediment. Rufinus, who being closely associated with Aemilianus had prompted him in many of his attacks upon Apuleius, joined in the present scheme, improving it with an eye to his own interest by offering his dear, widowed daughter to Pudens, her late husband's brother.

The bad conduct of her surviving son so exasperated Pudentilla that once when she had fallen ill she resolved to disinherit him, and was only kept from doing this by the threat of Apuleius to divorce her if she did it. Apostrophising the infamous youth, Apuleius tells him that if he is still searching for proof of his mother's insanity all he need do is to open her testament, for there right at the beginning he will find the words: "Pudens, my son, be thou my heir."

Apuleius concludes his appeal to Maximus by saying that he had made a special effort in vindicating himself to him, not from fear of his power but from dread of losing his esteem, thinking it a lesser evil to be condemned by a proconsul than to be disapproved by "a good, pure and blameless man." At the end of the work, instead of the word *Finis* stands the word *Dixi*, which means "I have spoken." How sublime is that ending!

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

POSTSCRIPT.—The accusers of Apuleius laid great stress upon the difference between his age and Pudentilla's, asserting that he to be not less than sixty years, an assertion which he refuted on documentary evidence. As he had studied at Carthage, Athens and Rome, had travelled extensively, and had got together forensic practice, he could not have been very young when he became acquainted with his future wife. This is borne out by the fact that his friend, Pontianus, her elder son, evidently looked up to him with the sort of admiration and respect which lower form boys often display towards the ornaments of the higher benches. It seems likely that at the time in question the age of Apuleius was not more than thirty or less than twenty.

⁵ The Editor failed to notice that the above reference clearly indicates A.D. 144 as the year of the trial, because throughout that year Lollianus Avitus held his one and only consulate. See *Fasti Consularis Imperii Romani*. W. Liebenow, Bonn, 1888.

years. As regards Pontianus and Pudens, their respective ages at that time might well be twenty-one and sixteen years. The general conduct of the former, and the recent assumption of the *toga virilis* by the latter, support these estimates. Pudentilla, like *Salvia* the mother of Apuleius, was a native of Thessaly, the largest division of Greece. The letters cited in the case were written in Greek. Pudentilla was a virtuous and intelligent woman, as Apuleius had no difficulty in proving. The bad conduct of her sons seems referable to hereditary tendencies on their father's side.

WHAT RELIGION ?

FROM the primitive savage to the modern Christian there is an unbroken relationship between religion and war. That will be readily admitted by those who understand the natural history of religion, and its influence, especially upon primitive people. Warfare with its risks and chances, its twists and turns of fortune and misfortune, its havoc and heavy costs to victor and vanquished provides the ideal field for gambling with the supernatural.

In secular culture the modern Christian has left his savage brother far behind but in religion they are still holding hands. Part of the savage warrior's preparation for war is to put himself right with his god and he does that by rites and taboos. The Christian warrior achieves the same end by church parades and religious services. The Christians who believed that an army of angels appeared in the sky in A.D. 1914 and routed the Germans, thus saving General Joffre and Sir John French's armies from destruction were religiously not a bit more advanced than the Israelites of 1541 B.C., who believed that Joshua, like a celestial policeman on traffic duty ordered the sun to stop, that God's chosen people could continue killing their enemies. An army of primitive warriors would tolerate a heretic in its ranks, that would be a direct challenge to the tribal gods, and running fearful risks; and for a long time only those wearing a Christian label were permitted to join our fighting forces. Where the State allowed legalised killing and wounding, Christians claimed the sole rights. I would agree that the old recruiting sergeant might have occasionally struggled with his conscience—and won—balancing the risk of losing the next war by smuggling an unbeliever into the army against the certainty of losing the commission on a catch if he refused, plus the awkward situation of having already stood half a pint to the prospective recruit. The King's Regulations for the Army lays it down that, "A soldier's religious denomination will be classified for all purposes, in accordance with his own declaration of the subject." No provision was made for the Freethinker. In the war of 1914-18, the National Secular Society took the matter up and a concession was made. The wording in the King's Regulations was not altered, but it was held to make valid a statement of non-religious belief—except Atheist. So long as a man or woman joining the Forces avoided using the officially sanctioned word Atheist, heaven would be appeased, and the conscience of the recording corporal would sustain no shock. Between the two world wars the weeds of religion appear to have grown over the ground that had been won. On the outbreak of World War No. 2 Freethinkers joining the Armed Forces, in replying to the question, "What religion?" were greeted with an old retort, "Oh you must have a religion in the British Army," uttered in a tone that implied, drop that b— nonsense of no religion, there's some killing to be done and you can't do that properly if you don't believe in Jesus. Some gave way and became military Christians for the duration, but the more independent challenged the statement and letters from serving men and women at home and abroad asking for help and guidance, began to reach the offices of the N.S.S. The Society took the matter up with the three services. The War Office without any

hesitation replied that a declaration of Atheist would be accepted and recorded. The Admiralty seemed a bit timid about admitting the dreaded word and stated that "none" would in that case be recorded in the space provided for religion on service certificates. The Air Ministry gave the assurance that a man entering the R.A.F. had complete freedom to state his religious denomination (if any). That was not very precise, but hopeful. That reliable advice and help was available free from the N.S.S. offices spread among the Forces. Our services reached the Middle East, Canada, and places nearer home, and at home, and we received many letters of grateful thanks from serving men and women for our help in securing for them a truthful record of their non-religious belief. Quite recently the Air Ministry has made the position perfectly clear by an amendment in the King's Regulations for the R.A.F. The amended list of abbreviations used in recording declarations on religion now include "AGN" for Agnostic, and "ATH" for Atheist.

Taking the position as it stands to-day, in the next war, if there is time for declarations to be recorded, the only hitch to the acceptance of "Atheist" will be the ignorance of the regulations by the recording officer. This should also be borne in mind by young Freethinkers now being called up.

R. H. ROSETTL.

APPLIED SCIENCE IN PEACE AND WAR

"Science, Liberty and Peace." By Aldous Huxley. (Chatto and Windus.) 63 pp.; 3s. 6d.

MANY Freethinkers have found cause to disagree profoundly with Mr. Aldous Huxley's recent divagations into the depths of oriental mysticism, and there can, indeed, be little doubt that he has changed his point of view very considerably from that somewhat cynical scepticism which he typified in the days when he wrote "Antic Hay" and "Do What You Will." In his latest book, however, he is sufficiently realistic to please even those who have been most severely critical of him. He faces the greatest problems of our time in the sphere of applied science and frankly discusses the issues which he rightly holds to be of the most vital importance.

Expressed briefly, what he is trying to do is to decide how we are to gain all the possible advantages from the recent developments of applied science without at the same time running the risk of a complete breakdown of civilisation through the misuse of atomic power and of such other destructive inventions as science may produce within a measurable period. His conclusion is that it is only by a deliberate decentralisation of power that a happy outcome can be found. He blames the industrialised State and the centralised Government (no matter whether that State and that Government be Socialist or Capitalist) for the perversion of science to destructive ends, and he considers that scientists themselves are in no wise to blame for what has happened, except in so far as they share with their fellow-citizens the nationalist prejudices which are so difficult to overcome.

In the course of his argument, which is so highly condensed as to merit extremely careful reading, he has many wise and witty things to say. "Power is always corrupting, and no human being or group of human beings can be trusted with too much of it for too long." And, in discussing the propagandist power of the Press and the radio: "Never have so many been so much at the mercy of so few."

It is to be hoped that Mr. Huxley's little book will be seriously studied by people of all schools of thought. It is not Freethinking in the narrowest sense, but its general argument depends ultimately on the sanction of Reason. He admits frankly enough that religion now has no power to move great masses of men; but he holds that men have to be moved somehow, if the possibilities held out by science are to end in progress and not in total destruction.

H. L. S.

DOUBT, AND BE DAMNED !

On the 1st of the 1st of the 1st, A.M.,
The Lord began Creation ;
On the 6th of the 1st of the 1st, A.M.,
He stopped for recreation ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

In the year Eighteen hundred, or less, A.M.,
The Lord was scared by builders
Who were climbing to heav'n on a pile of bricks ;
A feat which quite bewilders,
But you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

In the year Forty hundred and four, A.M.,
The Lord became a fetus ;
Like a pup and a sprat, he'd a tail and gills—
If parsons do not cheat us—
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

On the 1st of the 1st of the 1st, A.D.,
Th' Creator posed as creature,
By a navel disguised ; for his navel was
His only godless feature ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

On the 8th of the 1st of the 1st, A.D.,
The Lord was vivisected ;
It appears that himself he so badly made,
He had to be corrected ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

The Creator's a bachelor, sad to say,
A fact that painful, maybe,
To the purity folk, for he was, 'tis said,
The pa of Mary's baby ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

In the year three-and-thirty the Maker made
The Romans nail their Maker
To a post, which made Sol become black in th' face,
And earth a cracking quaker ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

When the Lord was sufficiently killed, *pro tem.*,
He left his corpse, "till called for,"
In a hole, while to hell went his corpseless ghost—
'Twas this "The Book" was scrawled for ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

When he called for his corpse, on the 2nd night,
Its heart resumed its pumping ;
So he walked it away, took a snack of fish,
Then showed his skill in jumping ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

We are promised by God that believers all,
Through all the world, for ever,
Will be proof against damage from deady drinks,
And need a doctor never ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

You are damned if you doubt, said the late J. C.
Of ev'rywhere, and Zion,
Who created the makers of beds, but yet
Had ne'er a bed to lie on ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

You are damned if you doubt ; and the fact is clear
To those whom God engages ;
For the proof of the fact is the fact that thence
The parson draws his wages ;
And you're dull, if the fact seems doubtful !

If "The Book" seems devoid of the needful proof,
Of course you're forced to doubt it ;
But your justified doubt will destroy your soul,
Say those that know about it ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

We are told that salvation's the work of Christ,
Who asks us to receive it ;
But he left us the *worst* part to do ourselves,
For we must first *believe it* ;
And we're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

On the last of the last of the last of all
The Lord Chief Judge will try us ;
If we're lucky, we'll lie on an old Jew's chest ;
If not, the Lord will fry us ;
And you're damned, if the fact seems doubtful !

As the most of our race will be damned by God,
Who *wisely* planned creation,
And does "*all for the best*," through his *boundless love*,
Let's gladly greet damnation !
To be *lovingly damned's* delightful !

G. L. MACKENZIE

THE NEW TYRANNY

FROM time to time the columns of "The Freethinker" furnish evidence of the tendency of rationalists to espouse the cause of the Left in politics. It is, of course, not surprising to find rationalists adopting advanced political ideas, since they are more disposed to accept conservative political creeds than they are fundamental religious dogmas.

It is a disturbing fact, however, that when engaging in political controversy many rationalists discard their rationalism and display all the irrationalities of which they accuse their adversaries in the field of religion.

It is easy to be rational where religion is concerned. The claims of religion are so obviously contrary to all our knowledge and experience that they fall to the ground as soon as challenged. With politics it is otherwise. What the people believe religiously has relatively little influence upon their everyday life, but what the people believe to-day politically may be translated into legislation to-morrow with momentous consequences for good or evil.

It behoves everyone then to discover whether their political beliefs are founded upon facts rather than sentimentalities. To observe a number of leftist rationalists engaged in a political controversy is a depressing experience. One might be pardoned for thinking that they had discovered the infallible political system, their deity, Carl Marx, their sacred book, "Das Kapital," with minor deities and saints in the shape of Lenin, Stalin, and others.

When our leftists have done with it poor old Capitalism hasn't a leg to stand on, yet calm reasoning in the light of facts, rather than passion-inflamed prejudice, discloses that leftist propaganda is largely based upon a number of fallacies. These fallacies, as leftists continue to propound with all the irrational zeal of fundamentalist Christian defending God, despite the fact that time and events disclose that the conditions they rave about no longer exist.

It is astonishing, too, to note with what zeal our leftist rationalists rush in to repudiate the suggestion of more rational and less prejudiced observers that socialism in practice will eventually lead to a new form of tyranny.

As the British Labour Movement threatens to follow the trail blazed by this most democratic country, Australia, it may interest leftist rationalists to note whether Australian labour is drifting.

Here, the New Tyranny has already got well into its stride. During the recent war, and at a time, be it noted, when Australia stood in grave danger of invasion, the trade unions demanded and received under threat of non-co-operation far-reaching concessions one of which was absolute preference to unionists in all industries engaged in production for war purposes. At a bound this concession placed the unions in an unassailable position, and at once union presidents and secretaries blossomed into petty dictators.

Conscious of their new-found power they proceeded to enforce union membership upon all workers. The rank and file also recognised their increased power to enforce their demands, and at once industry seethed with agitation and discontent, strikes and go-slow became the order of the day resulting in a disastrous drop in output per employee.

It is true that compulsory unionism has not yet the status of a law of the land, but for all practical purposes it is already an accomplished fact. Nor are the unions content with this achievement, but although during the war uncompromisingly opposed to every other form of compulsion, ceaselessly agitate for compulsory unionism so that they might impose their autocratic will upon the people with all the sanction of the law.

The New Tyranny has already shown what it can do. Strikes, on the most trivial grounds, are in continuous session, and Australian public live in hourly fear of having their vital services drastically curtailed or completely stopped. Coal, gas, electricity, trains, trams and buses, meat, bread, milk, are all affected in turn, and at the moment the milk carters union has decreed that citizens of Sydney shall not be supplied with cream.

With unlimited power in their hands, and the growing recognition that concerted action on the part of the unions places them in the position to dictate their own terms, it is but a little while before they are the virtual rulers of the country. It is hardly realised as yet that leadership is a thing of the past in trade unions. The policy to be followed is determined by stop work meetings on the job, a practice which is scarcely distinguishable from mob rule.

Were there some indication that the new-found power of unionism would be used wisely and reasonably, one might look toward without serious misgiving, but the growing strength of unionism has been accompanied with an upsurging of every conceivable characteristic pertaining to man. The war is over, but national animosity remains at its peak level while class hatred flourishes as never before. Justice and fairness towards political opponents is an unknown quantity, the fruit of a propaganda of half-truths, misrepresentations and malicious lies. By one can hear expressions of anti-Semitism that would have brought the heart of the now-defunct Hitler. With all the talk about democracy, one can discern that to the workers "democracy" merely means whatever favours the workers, and that no other class should have any rights.

The common people, the workers, have whipped themselves into a mood of peevish discontent, and pursue their own purpose for more money for less work with vindictive determination that has to be experienced to be believed. And should the trade unions find themselves in the position to dictate their own terms wages and conditions, what then? I venture to predict that a period of chaos, want and strife will be ushered in, together with a tyranny as complete as any hitherto seen.

T. HUNTER.

OBITUARY

ELLEN ISABELLA LARKIN

Members and friends of the West Ham Branch N.S.S. will mourn the loss of Ellen Isabella Larkin, who died on June 3, in her 74th year. She and her husband were among the oldest members of the Branch with many years of service and interest in the Movement. The funeral took place on June 9 in the Burial Ground at Romford, Essex, where before a gathering of relatives and friends a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary N.S.S. Our sincere sympathy is with the husband and surviving members of the family in their loss.

R. H. R.

ALFRED HENRY FAWN

With deep regret we announce the death of Alfred Henry Fawn which followed an operation in his 64th year. A very sincere freethinker he worked for the cause in a quiet, modest way, arousing interest in his beliefs by his friendly disposition and logical outlook on things in general. A large assembly of relatives and friends, including representatives of his bowls club, of which he was an enthusiastic member and player, gathered at the Golders Green Crematorium on June 12, where the General Secretary N.S.S. read a Secular Service.

R. H. R.

CHRISTIAN IMPERTINENCE

"The Chinese think that Europeans have neither religion nor morals nor manners, and only worship force as represented by big armies and navies. They say that, while we profess Christianity, its spirit influences our actions far less than do economic considerations; that Christianity is even less to us than is Confucianism to them; and that it is like our impertinence to send missionaries to China."—REV. E. J. HARDY, "Chambers' Journal," April, 1912.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES. ETC.

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 (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m.; Messrs. E. C. SAPHIN, F. PAGE, JAMES HART, C. E. WOOD. Thursday, 7 p.m.; Messrs. E. C. SAPHIN, F. PAGE, JAMES HART, C. E. WOOD.

LONDON—INDOOR

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

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, June 22, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: A lecture. Mr. A. REILLY.

Enfield (Barnes Square).—Saturday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Hapton.—Friday, June 20, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A lecture. Mr. J. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Lecture: Messrs. KAY, TAYLOR, McCALL, Sunday, 3 p.m.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Blitzed Site, Ranelagh Street, Liverpool).—Sunday: A lecture, 7 p.m.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

Oswaldtwistle.—Wednesday, June 25, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Albert Hall, Peter Street).—Thursday, June 26, 7-45 p.m. Debate: "Is Christianity True?" Pro. REV. J. RUSSELL POPE (Methodist). Con. Mr. C. McCALL (N.S.S.).

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