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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Our Soldiers

NOW and again we have given a short account of great men of the past from the time when the Christian Church did what it could to suppress great men. In the early times of Christianity, torture and execution were the methods adopted in an endeavour to stop the flow of heretical ideas. To-day the practice is not that of physical ill-treatment, but there are other forms by which the desired results are accomplished. Even in the Houses of Parliament, where members are constantly declaring that in this country everyone is free to say whatever they please, there are men who shrink from expressing unbelief. To-day there is in this country nothing in the shape of physical punishment for disbelief, but there is still a penalty for honest and outspoken opinions. The curious thing is that often the men who cry loudest that we are all free to say what we may, are often, by their own timidity, helping to prevent freedom of expression. It is strange that a declared right to speak what one pleases is so often an exhibition of mental tyranny.

The case now before us is that of Lucilio Vanini. He was born in 1585 or about that date, in Taurisano, near Naples. His father was steward to the Duke of Taurisano, Viceroy of Naples, and according to his son's statement, a man of elevated character. His father sent him to Rome where he studied theology and philosophy, and after his return to Naples studied physics. His teacher in philosophy was Jean Bacon, whom Vanini describes as the Prince of Averroes, and from him he learned to swear by Averroes who did so much to awaken the minds of the people and which Christianity had done so much to darken the western world.

Vanini's father was a poor man, but his son met poverty with honour and courage. He said: "All is warm for those who love. Have we not braved the snows and cold of winter solely by the desire to learn?" When he completed his studies he found himself prepared to travel through Europe. He visited the Academies and assisted at the conferences of the learned. According to his own writings he travelled over the larger part of Europe, visited the whole of Italy, France, England, Holland and Germany, and travelling in those days meant peril and trouble.

At Paris, Vanini made many friends and among some of them Bishops. A curious incident was that two of his works were being praised even by many eminent bishops. But the storm was brewing, and slowly his friends became enemies, while his books were ordered to be consumed by fire. God's Church has always been particularly good in burning books—and humans.

At Toulouse, Vanini found that the burning of his books would only be a prelude to his own fate. He was accustomed to hold conferences with his friends on matters of interest, and among them one named Francon. He posed as an interested student and admirer of Vanini's work.

He turned out to be just one of the "sons of the Church" playing the part of a medieval "quisling" for the "greater glory of God" and the Church. We let the Church speak for Francon who played the informer, in the person of the priest who denounced Vanini and in describing the "crime" said that "Lucilio Vanini is a Neapolitan nobody who has roamed over all Italy in search of fresh food, and even a great part of France as a pedant. This wicked rascal, having arrived at Gasconne in the year of 1617, endeavoured to disseminate his own madness, and to make a rich harvest of impiety, thinking to have found spirits susceptible to his teachings, he insinuated himself with effrontery amongst the nobles and gentry, as frankly as if he had been a domestic, and acquainted with all the humour of the great, but he met with spirits more strong and resolute in the defence of truth than he had imagined. The first who discovered his horrible impieties was a gentleman named Francon, possessed of sound sense. It happened that towards the end of 1618 Francon, having gone to Toulouse, as he was esteemed a brave gentleman and an agreeable companion, soon saw himself visited by an Italian, reported to be an excellent philosopher, and one who propounded many novel and startling curiosities. This man spoke such fine things, such novel propositions, and such agreeable witticisms, that he easily attracted himself to Francon by a sympathy of the supple and serviceable position of his hypocritical nature, and he commenced to insert the wedge, until he discovered himself entirely."

Gramond, author of the "History of France under Louis XIII," gives an account of the trial which ensued. It is said that when Vanini stood before the men who were to try him, he flinched as to what would be his end, and we have the picture of a truly Christian judge deliberating whether he should decide to have Vanini's tongue cut out, before he was burned, or whether he should sentence him to be strangled. In effect, Vanini was condemned as an Atheist, to have his tongue cut out, and to be burned alive. Vanini was burned at Toulouse on February 19, 1619.

It was said that during his imprisonment Vanini went as far as to recant and return to the religion he despised, but we have nothing but the word of a Christian for that, and in such circumstances, no one but a thoroughly prejudiced Christian would accept such evidence. We are not all marked with the courage of Vanini, when, in spite of the tortures he had undergone month after month, he could stand up before his judges and say, "It may be that you deliver judgment on me in greater fear than I receive it."

His courage was such that, as he was dying he said to others around him, "Come, let us die cheerfully." That was the talk of a man. There is also a report of Father Garass that Vanini died "stubborn to the end" and he would not confess his "crime."

It is often asserted that his work "De Admirandis Naturae" is a Pantheistic work, but Vanini's atheism

was clear. So clear in fact that the Sorbonne condemned the work to the flames. He was regarded as an atheist, and in those days that meant a courage of the highest order, for the price an independent thinker had to pay—at a minimum—was his life. He was one of the most enlightened men of his day. In the amphitheatre of the great war of ideas, he entered the contest willingly, and won. He can be regarded as a great soldier who fights not for gain, nor to display his courage, but because he holds that freedom and truth are the only things that count. In the prime of his life he gave all he had.

So went a great man whose crime was that he had tried to understand the world as he saw it and that he passed the knowledge on to others. Ignorance has always secured safety to organised religionists. But bad as torturing and killing this or that great man, or woman, there is a much greater crime by preventing honest teachings. That prevents multitudes of men and women ever knowing what is the truth of man and the world. The religions of the world, and which Christianity has governed for long periods of time, the greatest ill is done to those who live and die without ever coming near to truth. Unacquainted with truth is bad enough, but to shut out the truth and force the belief of a lie is one of the vilest crimes that anyone may conceive.

This idea was well expressed by H.C. Lea, one of our finest historians, talking of the change from the old world to a new one, he points out that when new ideas are on hand, "when the whole system of the European monarchs was undergoing reconstruction and the happiness of future generations depended on the character of the new institutions," then it was that the Churches showed their hands by presenting whatever opposition that could be given. I believe that is the full truth in the history of religion. To-day men cannot—in all places—be punished, or even prevented, from speaking or writing against religion, but the poison of religion is still used, even though the penalties may be lighter, but the poison is here. Vanini gave us an example of what Christianity could be, and what it could do when it was unchecked. But our religious leaders will do what they can. It is not their fault that they must act *like* civilised people, even though feeling and action often run the other way.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## THE PUNJAB CATASTROPHE AND RELIGION

SOME months ago, I had an opportunity afforded me to give expression to my views regarding the happenings in the Punjab. They may perhaps be of some interest to the readers of "The Freethinker."

To begin with, then, the people, who were engaged in this mutual slaughter, and in acts worse than slaughter, did not represent any political parties, but three religious communities. All that has happened was done in the name of religion, for its glory, and for the greater glory of the God, who they claim, has inspired their religions. Each one of them claims that his religion teaches him the Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of man, and that it teaches him to love others, and not to take revenge for the injuries received. And yet, the events gave a lie direct to these claims.

Religious differences in my country are much more acute than they are in this country. Here, in spite of all the differences, you form but sects of one great religion; you all profess to believe in one revealed book, and to honour and adore one Great Teacher. It is not so in India. There the religions of the people are

diametrically opposed, and stand ranged against each other for all time.

The idea of an Indian Nation is a new one, barely half a century old. It has not taken root yet, and as recent events in that country clearly show, it may never do so. The idea of nationalism has come from the West, and is the consequence of the presence in India of a third party, and that party, the ruling one. This idea was a compact between two people, against a common opponent; the close contiguity under external pressure, of two inert metal pieces, not forming an amalgam. As soon as that pressure was removed, the two people stood apart. In India, whenever we talk about some common problem of the Indians as a whole, we do not say that the question concerns the "Indian Nation," but we say that it concerns "Hindu-Mussulman." This expression "Hindu-Mussulman" stands for the Indian people collectively. Hence the two-nations theory advanced by the Indian Muslim League, and hence also the persistent, vigorous and practically unanimous demand of the Indian Muslims for the division of India into a Hindu India and a Muslim India. The "Indian National Congress" had perforce to agree to it, idly hoping that the two dominions might unite again into one India, at some future date, under the stress of economic circumstances.

The Islamic religio-political ideology militates against any such hope. This ideology was evolved within a few years of the Prophet's death. As soon as Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Persia were conquered by the Arabs, the question of the government of these countries, with large non-muslim populations arose, and the question had to be decided without delay. The Prophet's successor, the Khalifa, who was the Spiritual head of the Muslim Community, had necessarily to become the Temporal head as well. Precedent for this decision was found in the Theocratic State in which the Prophet himself, during the last few years of his life, was as much the ruler of their Muslim State as the prophet. All the conquered countries were to be united into one Muslim country called the "Dar-al-Islam," or "the Home of Islam." Within the walls of this Home, all Muslims were alike and equal, brothers all. This sentiment finds a very powerful expression in the words "Akhawat-i-Islam" or "the Brotherhood of Islam." Everything in the conquered country, nay, in the world, belonged to the Muslims by divine right, even the persons of the non-Muslims. A verse in the Qorau, which reads: "He it is who created for you all that is on Earth (ii-27)." was taken as a Deed of Gift, which annuls all other rights of property; the word "you" in it, it was interpreted, refers to "Muslims," and the word "Earth" includes the person and property of the infidels. This is a basic point of law of the Hanafi School of Jurisprudence, and the "Hanafi Mazhab" is the one followed by an overwhelming majority of the Muslims. The people of the conquered countries were to be given a choice between becoming Muslims and continuing to live in the Muslim country as *Zimmis* or despised slaves on payment of a poll tax or *Jizia* as the price of life, or be killed.

Outside the boundaries of "Dar-al-Islam," all was "Dar-al-Harb," or countries with which the Muslims were potentially "at war," and with which "Jihad" or "Holy War" may be entered into, at any time, for the suppression of Infidelity and the propagation of Islam. Gibbon quotes a Hadis or saying of the Prophet: "The sword is the key of heaven and hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent

in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer; whoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven; at the day of judgment, his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk, and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim."

This is the ideology that still commands the implicit acquiescence of the Muslim masses in India. Even the Modernists among them make it clear that "Jihād-bis-Saif" or "Holy-war with Sword" is, in India, only suspended and that the Command for Jihād in the Qoran (ix-29) is not abrogated. The Church and the State in Islam are inseparably associated; interwoven like the warp and woof of a piece of cloth. Such an ideology conscientiously followed, should in practice make its followers fanatic, aggressive and unsusceptible to any suggestions of compromise with the infidels, subject, of course, to temporary expediency.

The exchange of populations between the "Dar-al-Islam" and the "Dar-al-Harb" is a new idea borrowed from certain recent events in Turkey in Europe; but the ruthless manner in which it has been carried out, on such an extensive scale, and so expeditiously, is the Indian Muslim's own achievement. Fancy uprooting of five millions of non-Muslims and driving them over the boundary in a few months' time. The Muslims are realists!

Opposed to them are the Hindus, whose weakness as a community invites the Muslim's contempt towards them. Islam and Hinduism are quite the antithesis of each other; where Islam unites the Muslims and makes them a powerful body, there Hinduism divides the Hindus and makes them weak. Their social organisation divides them into many water-tight compartments, and their creeds all tend to disrupt them. They have no congregational prayers, and no Kaaba or a central point to look towards. A Hindu's religion is personal and individual, he ploughs his lonely furrow, all by himself, for the salvation of his own soul, and is always looking forward to the *peace and quietude* that reigns in the next world. His mild and meek character is the result of the preaching of "ahimsa" by the Buddha and Jain religions, and of his abstention from meat diet, about which the ordinary Muslim taunts him and gives him the nickname of "lentil-eating idolator."

In the absence of any definite political ideology of their own, the Hindus have recently adopted the Western ideal of democracy as their political creed. There is nothing to be surprised at, therefore, in the attitude of the Muslims, who do not see eye to eye with the Hindus in this matter.

The third party in the struggle were the Sikhs. They are not a race, martial or otherwise, but a religious community, a reformed religious sect, within the bigger, ever-expanding, indefinite circle of Hinduism. Socially they have never parted company with the Hindus, from whom they have sprung, and they have no political ideology of their own as apart from the parent stock. They are too small a community, confined to the Punjab, and of too recent a growth, to have had opportunities to evolve any ideologies of their own. Their only experience in that line has been that of a brief unstable autocratic monarchy. But the religious persecution they had to suffer in the past has made them a well-knit community which its opponents cannot afford to ignore.

So far as the Sikh faith is concerned they are in several respects closer to the Muslims than the Hindus, so much so that a prominent Hindu writer has said that the Sikh religion is Islam minus Mohammed. They

have given up idol-worship, and have adopted in an unmistakable manner the pure and rigid monotheism of Islam. Even the founder's conception of the Deity comes from the same source. It is an irony of fate that, with all these similarities, the Sikhs and Muslims have come to hate each other the more bitterly.

There are reasons for it.

The Sikhs began their existence as a harmless peaceable religious sect with a deep tinge of asceticism. But the transformation into an embittered martial community was not far off. The turning point came in the first year of Jehangir's reign, when their Guru or Pontiff was put to death with torture for giving his moral support to the rebel prince Khurram. More acts of religious persecution followed for another century or more. Embittered feelings against the Muslims are, thus, the legacy the Sikhs have inherited from their martyrs, whose deeds they are never tired of relating. The tradition is still fresh, and the wounds received in the past have not healed so as to be forgotten. And like the Muslims, but unlike the Hindus, the Sikhs believe in the practical doctrine of resisting evil.

Nor have the Muslims forgotten on their part that they were the rulers of the whole country not so very long ago. Why should they not regain their lost position, when there is an opportunity for it, or create opportunities for doing so?

This was the mental make-up of the three parties in the Punjab when the trouble started in the beginning of 1947.

The rest is easily told.

G. B. SINGH.

## RELIGION AND SCIENCE

THERE have been many attempts to reconcile the outwardly conflicting views of humanity and its problems which have been advanced by scientists and religious leaders. For the most part these attempts have failed utterly, and even those scientists eminent in their profession, who have been religious men, have found it no more easy to make their ideas rational, largely because they have usually tended to keep their religious and their scientific views in watertight compartments of the mind. Only thus can we account for the absurd religious views of such acute scientific thinkers as Faraday and Newton. Mr. F. B. Welbourn, however, is both chaplain and lecturer in physics at Makerere College, Uganda, and thus in his "Science and Humanity" (S.C.M. Press; 4s.) he gives, as one would expect, a sensible discussion of the points at issue between science and religion. Naturally, his views will not appeal to many of the readers of these columns; but nevertheless there is much about his book which does not come under the heading of "special pleading," and which deserves to be carefully considered by all who wish to base their philosophy on reasonable foundations. For instance, he points out that both Marxism (as expressed in dialectical materialism) and what has recently become popular under the name of scientific humanism may be regarded, not so much as merely rational explanations of existence as religions which are rivals (and formidable rivals) to Christianity. I know that many who are adherents of one or other of these schools of thought would not for a moment agree with this diagnosis, but it is not easy to disprove Mr. Welbourn's allegations.

What is more valuable, however, from the purely philosophical point of view, however, is his analysis of the character of knowledge, which is a matter having a

definite influence on our religious beliefs. He points out that there is a difference between knowledge of someone and knowledge about someone, and considers that this has a genuine bearing on what we think about God. This, Mr. Welbourn says, derives from a distinction made by the eminent philosopher Martin Buber, who distinguishes between what he terms the "I-It" and the "I-Thou" relationships. What makes Mr. Welbourn's discussion really original, however, is that he extends this to distinguish between knowledge and information.

Here is the passage which is germane to this issue:—

Suppose, imaginatively, that as a scientist I meet a human family for the first time. I regard it as something worthy of scientific investigation. Legitimately, I consider it first in terms of physics and chemistry, and obtain a mass of useful information. But there will be gaps in my scheme unless I recognise that the family unit is characterised by patterns of growth and reproduction, which can be studied only by biological methods . . . and unless I introduce the concepts and methods of psychology to study the personal relationships which form an integral part of its existence. . . A more radical change takes place when I become a "friend of the family"—or maybe its implacable enemy. It is no longer an object of scientific study; there has been personal encounter between observer and observed and the object has revealed itself as capable of personal relationship, as worthy of love or hate.

Now, I hold that, whatever we may feel about the general philosophical attitude taken by Mr. Welbourn, this is an argument which has considerable weight. Naturally, he extends it to apply to the existence of God, holding that God is not a person who can be in any way studied scientifically (or, at any rate, not in any exhaustive way), but that he can be *known* in the sense in which we can get to know a human family. And this argument has far more validity than the classical arguments for the existence of God, the logical flaws in which have been exposed over and over again by Freethinkers and Rationalists. He deals, too, with Dr. Julian Huxley's familiar book, "Religion without Revelation," and points out that in common parlance "only a person can reveal himself." Revelation, he says, is an activity of persons, and to speak of a religion without revelation is a contradiction in terms. With this, too, many of our Freethinkers would be in general agreement.

I hope that what I have said is sufficient to make it clear that Mr. Welbourn's book is something very much more penetrating than the average religious apologetic of our day. It is, indeed, a book which would be found of interest and value by others than professional philosophers and professional Christians. I am not at all sure that Freethinkers in general will find it easy to disprove all its assertions, and for that reason I am delighted to recommend it. The only sensible defence of the philosophy of life which a man holds is to become acquainted with the best that can be said against it. And any Freethinker worth his salt will want to know what is said by religious thinkers of all schools, from Dr. Barnes to Mr. Christopher Dawson. That there are many thinkers on the religious side who will bear comparison with those who are critical of Christianity is something which Freethinkers are sometimes (I am not quite sure why) reluctant to admit. That Mr. Welbourn is opponent worthy of any opponent of Christianity, no matter how eminent, is something which, to my mind, is undeniable. His book is stimulating to those who dis-

agree with its main contentions. I imagine that it must be equally so to those who find it convincing. But it deserves to be widely read.

JOHN ROWLAND.

## INDIA'S HINDU CRITIC

THE review of "A Critique of Hinduism," by Luxman Shastri, calls for a few comments. Both the writer and the reviewer, G. B. Singh, have offered some fair criticisms of Indian religious institutions, especially the abuses of the caste system. I have pointed out in my little book on "Buddhism and God," that "Priestcraft from about the eighth century B.C. had attained to a power in India unparalleled in the history of other nations"; and that there is "evidence to show that priest-rule was the bane of the country." But here we must distinguish between the essence of a religious faith and its corrupt developments. The historian of Indian life and thought has to recognise that there is an attitude to life common to both Hinduism and Buddhism which since earliest times has become woven into its very texture.

Indian thought in other words cannot be "secularised" in the way Mr. Singh and a few other writers may wish. The Hindu has ever seen and felt that life worth living has its cultural and spiritual side as well as its political and economic. Man cannot live by bread alone, and when Mr. Singh remarks that "the author is inclined to be realistic and has no use for the Salvation of Soul or its annihilation, he is saying in other words that the author has no use for an integrated personality."

Then he speaks of the "pessimistic philosophy of karma." It is really surprising to find a Hindu writer falling for such a misconception. (Karma is simply *deed*; in thought, word and action, and its infallible results; and as such it is neither optimistic or pessimistic, though in its consequences it may induce either of these states of mind. Then he offers the following travesty of Buddha's teaching:—

"The philosophy underlying this standpoint is that life is transitory and full of misery which it is desirable to remove" (is *this* "pessimism" or *fact*?) further, "the means to do this is to remove trishna or craving for life and its pleasures by abandoning the world and leading a hermit's life."

But it is *not* necessary, in Buddha's teaching, in order to enter and realise this higher life, that one should become a monk or hermit and leave the world. I have said elsewhere that "when we have become enlightened and see that there is no such thing as a separate self, we shall have destroyed selfishness in every form and have also destroyed the root of greed, sloth and hatred, and of all other sin." The "four noble truths" of Buddhism are dukkha—sorrow, the restlessness and dissatisfaction always present in life; the cause of this in trishna—lust and craving—the emancipation from craving and the "way" leading to this great result. This great teaching does *not* "recommend the giving up of the world," or "cutting off connection with society."

Even the monks—the brethren of the Yellow Robe—moved about among the people, and do to-day, teaching and inspiring them with the Dhamma—the teaching of the better life. To call such teaching "selfish and immoral" is surely an inversion of the truth. Buddhism was the reforming and regenerating influence in Indian history under the emperor Asoka with its social services, its schools and hospitals for man and beast. Mr. Singh should look to his history.

R. J. JACKSON.

## • LISTEN, MY SON !

LISTEN, my son! Are you wondering why I do not take you to church, send you to Sunday-school, or let you join in the morning prayers at your own school. If so, let me try to explain.

In the first place, it is my hope that in growing-up to manhood your mind and your reasoning powers will develop *freely*. Unfortunately, it is the practice of the Church to protrude its long nose into the class-room and take advantage of the infant mind before it is capable of reasoning for itself. In this way, much damage is done and deep impressions are made, *false impressions*, because the religion so taught is false, untrue, and contrary to scientific fact. I do not intend that the creaking and rusty chains of an outworn religious doctrine, based on ignorant superstition and pagan myth, shall hold any son of mine in bondage if I can prevent it.

Now, what does the parson tell his infant class? He tells them they are all miserable sinners, born in sin, and that when they die a certain gentleman called Satan will take them all to hell. Hell, he tells them, is a place of torment and everlasting fire. There they will be tortured and roasted for all eternity; unless they confess their sins to God, obey all his commandments, and fall down on their knees and worship him. If they do that, and go to church regularly and give their pennies to the parson every Sunday, God *might* decide to forgive them. In that case they will go heaven, play harps and sing praises to God for his kindness. He may also provide them with long white night-shirts and a pair of wings!

Of course, the parson tells them a lot of other things, too. They must read the Bible, because that is God's holy book. In it he explains how he made the world and all the universe in six days out of nothing, and how he made Man from a handful of dust. Having peopled the earth with human beings he then decided to destroy them all by drowning the whole world with the exception of a man called Noah and his family. Noah, who was a farmer, six hundred years old, was told to build a ship—although he had never seen one—and then he had to collect the male and female of every kind of living creature and put them all in the ship which was called the Ark. Only a child could be fooled by such nonsense!

The Bible is filled with many other equally absurd stories which every Christian must *believe*—or else go to hell. God, by the way, is a sort of Giant Know-all. No one has ever seen him because he is invisible. The parson will tell you that God is Three Persons in One—his own father, his own son and some sort of ghost. He is so tender, loving and kind that he allows horrible diseases, suffering, pain, sorrow and wickedness to fill the earth; although, being all-powerful he could prevent anything he wanted to prevent! The Bible also tells you how this God of Love massacred innocent babies, and many other little pleasantries. The contradictions it contains are too numerous to mention, but you must believe everything without question.

No, my son. Such stuff is not for any decent-minded person to read, and to put it into the hands of little children and tell them it is the Holy Book of Truth is diabolical and shameful.

How does the parson get away with it? By investing himself with an air of mystery and unreality. He sets himself apart from ordinary people as being on speaking terms with God. He wears his collar back to front and, sometimes, walks about in a long black skirt. He calls himself God's Messenger—and the very simple-minded people believe him! But I will tell you what he is. He is a sanctimonious hypocrite. He knows he is no more

holy than you are, yet he must be called "Reverend." He presumes to order our daily lives, tell us what we must do and not do; and the silly, ignorant people who listen to him actually *pay* him for his presumptuousness. Religion is his bread and butter. He commercialises God for his own benefit and profit.

In the course of your studies at school you will probably hear of primitive savages who also worship invisible and all-powerful gods and spirits that punish the evil-doer and reward the honest and just—but the parson will tell you that they are heathens, wicked and sinful to believe in such nonsense! If you will pay his expenses he will even go out to them and tell them so—and at the same time he will tell them to believe in *his* special God, superior to all other brands, and promise them *hell* if they don't.

Now, my son—are you still surprised at my refusal to allow any teacher of religion to contaminate your growing mind? Belief in supernatural nonsense is excusable in savages, but not in an enlightened civilisation. The only way it can survive is by cramming it into the infant mind, warping and distorting it so that it cannot even reason intelligently in after life. The Church is fully aware of this and by taking this mean advantage manages to prolong its hold on the people. It takes courage to walk out of step with the masses, but do not heed the jeers of the brainless mob who have not the guts to revolt against their ecclesiastical dictators. It may take hundreds of years and many generations before the tottering Church finally collapses—but collapse it surely will.

The lick-spittle prayers of sickly sycophants begging for favours now and hereafter and the fawning flattery of frightened fools disgraces the dignity of Man. Creatures that crawl have no right to stand on two feet.

Away with this mockery called Religion born of Ignorance and Savagery, symbol of blood-lust, superstition and paganism! Only fear keeps men in subjection to this monstrous, mythical, non-existent God. *But what has Man to fear?* He can support himself without the aid of an invisible prop. He can live a good, honest and moral life without the parson's blessing—and without the threat of eternal damnation or the repeated confession of imaginary sins. If he can't, then he is not worth bothering about, anyway!

W. H. WOOD.

## SCOTTISH SABBATH

Drones the long-nosed, low-Church Scottie,  
"Nae the Sabbath shall ye spottie!"  
When a Princess goes all Frenchie,  
Hoots, Mon! Does he raise a stenchie!

Nasty-minded in full measure,  
He sees Sin in ev'ry pleasure;  
*Jezebels* in bows and sashes,  
*Virgins* in sackcloth and ashes!

On his little platform stumping,  
Flinging mud and bible-thumping,  
Who shall take the low-Church lightly?  
("Low" was never used more rightly!)

Doleful, dismal, Mournful Meanie,  
O to biff him on the beanie!  
So to send him hastie-postie  
To his Highland Holy Ghostie!

W. H. WOOD.

## ACID DROPS

The Rev. Duncan Finlayson must sigh for the Golden Ages of Religion when people were forced to attend church under pain of being liable to a charge of heresy, or at least a threat of the pillory, and imprisonment. Now the parson has to sally forth and almost drag his congregation to church. After sending his 60 missionaries into the highways and byways, the net result of the Rev. D. Finlayson's assault was 100 new worshippers for the Stonefield Church, Blantyre, which could not be considered an important achievement. If the worshippers had been recruited from the ranks of unbelievers, we might concede the importance, but—as we see it—the Rev. Mr. Finlayson's gain is another reverend's loss.

We have noticed the increasing cautiousness with which the clergy make their pronouncements on social affairs, and the findings of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on artificial insemination (the pros and cons of which we are at this juncture not concerned) bear out our opinion when it is stressed that the report "is not a Church document." The clergy are obviously waiting to see the reaction of the public. Such reticence was unknown formerly when the Church's pronouncements were thundered from every pulpit. Personally, we fail to appreciate the difference, their Founder was not born naturally—so we are told.

Cardinal Griffin, in the true religious manner, must have someone to blame for the world's troubles. In this instance he blames the Communists and passes on a suggestion that was made to him that "an Atom bomb on the Kremlin at the right moment would solve the problem and settle the trouble," but he coyly adds, "but, of course, I couldn't say that." The Cardinal's squeamishness is amusing, for even Church of England bishops are agreed that atom bombs may be used in certain circumstances. In any case, the Churches' (R.C. or C. of E.) war record is nothing to be proud of, and so the Cardinal need not fear that his Christian status will be lowered by such a pronouncement. Of course, the atom bomb is not the solution, and the Cardinal knows it.

The "Modern Churchman," in a review of the London Syllabus of Religious Education, suggests that because the Butler Education Act (1944) enacts that Government schools shall commence their daily session with an act of worship, and that religious instruction must be a part of the curriculum, it is quite clear "That the Christian view of life is fundamental to our teaching," and that "the best moral conduct follows from the acceptance of Christian ideals." If this means anything at all, it means that our relationship with each other depends on the acceptance of, say, the Jonah story, Noah's ark, and all the rest of the ridiculous Bible stories including the impossible utterances of J.C., such as turning the other cheek, taking no thought for the morrow, the blessed states of poverty and meekness—all surely a little out of date in 1948.

Once again it is possible to point out how Christian communities love one another. According to the "Church Times," the Anglicans of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon are in a worse state than ever. "Lawlessness," we are informed, "and confusion have grown from the bitterness and distress of the past few months of union." We like the word "union" when applied to Christian communities. The very first community ever established by the Church quarrelled with

the second, and quarrelling has never ceased. And how can we stop all this quarrelling and lawlessness? Quite easy. The Church should be "revitalised," if necessary, "a blood transfusion" must be given, with new missionaries, and the management of the schools should be vested in the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. And the Heavenly Choir would then sing again!

Sir Richard Livingstone made a gallant effort of trying to talk sense and Christianity at the same time. In a speech to the Liberal Summer School at Cambridge he said, "Christianity, at the moment, is a minority philosophy, but it has left a stiffening on life, but divorced from a rational foundation will not live." With a little more courage in religious matters, Sir Richard could have expressed himself clearer by saying that if Christianity is not brought up to date it will die. We are, however, sure, that if it is brought up to date and rationalised, it will die in any case. And all the Liberals (political variety) in the world will not be able to prevent that.

Addressing the Modern Churchmen's Union at Oxford, Sir Henry Self said, "Men are looking for profound thought by the Fathers of the Church." We disagree. Men no longer look to the Church for thought, much less profound thought. There is obviously such a wave of indifference and apathy towards the Church nowadays that it must be frightening to the Fathers of the Church, whose attitude in the past to almost all social questions has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Try again Sir Henry.

The Vicar of Writtle magnanimously offers not to object to Sunday cricket "so long as it does not clash with Church services." We think the Vicar's offer modest compared with Church's attitude when trains were forbidden to be run during church hours, or at some time previous people were not allowed to be abroad during the hours of service. Religious stranglehold is slowly loosened, and the parsons are reduced to trying to stop Sunday recreation, and let no one think the Church voluntarily gives up its hold. Eternal vigilance is still the watchword.

The newly-formed Manchester Humanist Fellowship is gently taken to task by "Protonius" ("Literary Guide"). It seems that when prospective members were canvassed as to the topics to be discussed at the meetings, "Those interested in religion were extremely few." "Protonius" very properly points out "that having freed themselves from the oppression of superstition, the members apparently feel no urge to work for the liberation of others." Religion has its roots too deeply in our lives to be ignored, and how "Humanists" who presumably will discuss all questions, will be able to avoid discussing religion remains to be seen. Of one thing we are certain, whether we call ourselves Humanists, Rationalists or Atheists religious ideas must be attacked and exposed.

The "Record," one of our religious contemporaries, informs us that "God is in His world and in His Church." There is therefore, no further need to look for Him, we know where to find Him, all we have to do is to find the right church, and when that is found, we have to find something that looks like God. A little difficulty is to know him when we find him, so many Churches have different ideas of what He is. To some he is a benevolent old gentleman with a long white beard, to others he is "without body, parts or passions," or even a mathematical symbol.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## SUGAR PLUMS

Readers who have appreciated Mr. John Rowland's contributions to our columns may care to be reminded that he has just published a book, "Atoms, Electrons, and Rays" (Paul Elek; 4s. 6d.), which is a clear statement of the development of our knowledge regarding atomic energy, written in non-technical language and without mathematics. It is a book which can be recommended to all who wish to understand the way in which our knowledge of this highly important subject has grown.

As usual, Blackpool has been the scene of a great Christian "mission," August Bank Holiday being specially selected because of the crowds, out of whom can always be expected a sufficient number to form an impressive congregation. The "Church Times" calls it a "gigantic opportunity" as the people flock to Blackpool in "multitudes." This makes it all the more intriguing to read that, at the opening procession, "many (spectators) surged past with scarcely a glance." Even when the loud speakers "carried the initial message," few "seemed to heed" and "it was much the same throughout the opening two or three days." It is only fair to add, however, that the persistence of the missionaries did bring good congregations on the Sunday—for a Christian crowd generally finds it difficult not to follow the parson on the Sabbath. All the same, the only point that matters is—not how many Christians can be induced to go to a religious service on a Sunday at the seaside, but how many unbelievers can be converted? Did all the eloquence of the Bishops, Canons, Archdeacons and Priests bring a single Atheist into the fold?

The "Universe" has discovered how the Test matches can be coupled with that sturdy Roman Catholic, St. Bede. It appears that the English Captain, Norman Yardley, used to go to St. Peter's School at York. This school was founded about A.D. 676 and reorganised by the Venerable Bede in A.D. 735—so there you are. What devils these Catholics are proving that the Church is everywhere, not only in Test matches, but in everything else. What about domino spots?

## MORE FACTS ABOUT BUCHMANISM

CONGRATULATIONS to the "Freethinker" for reprinting the article on "The Buchmanites." Yet, for all its enlightenment, I think it is necessary to fill in some background.

Founded in the 'twenties by the Evangelical preacher Frank Buchman—an American of German-Swiss extraction—the movement is increasing its activity very perceptibly; its missionary functions are coupled with activities in the political field. And it is this kind of service to the extreme wing of world reaction that contrived to gain this adroit religious quack an international position of a sort.

It is common knowledge that for instance, in Tsarist Russia, the confessional box worked wonders in tracing plots and the father confessors were the backbone of the Intelligence Service. The idea of public confession appeals enormously to the Intelligence Service of Non-Catholic countries, particularly as the members of the "Oxford Group Movement" are recruited principally from near the top of the bourgeois political and military world. There are the closest of ties between different Intelligence Services and the Buchmanites, and in certain European countries the leaders of "Moral Rearmament" were direct agents of the Intelligence Service. Among these were the heads of the German branch, the Hessen Evangelical minister I. F. Laun, the Evangelical Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard in Denmark and Bishop Berggrav in Norway.

This mutual assistance explains why Buchman's organisation has always had the very highest sponsors. The list of names is eloquent. America is represented in the list by Herbert Hoover, the late Henry Ford, William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper king, and the rubber magnate Harvey S. Firestone; Himmler and Hess represented Germany, the Chiang Kai-sheks, China. The Belgian Prime Minister Spaak, the Japanese ex-Premier and war criminal Konoye, the South African Field Marshal Smuts, the Canadian Premier Mackenzie King and ex-President Motta of Switzerland. Buchman meetings were attended by Lord Halifax, Lord Rowbux and Lord Addington. In June 1938, when Dr. Buchman celebrated his sixtieth birthday, the occasion was marked in the House of Commons by a dinner attended by 70 M.P.'s.

Before the war the Buchmanite organisation served the British and German intelligences in turn; now that the centre of world reaction has shifted across the Atlantic, the "Moral Rearmament Movement" works full-blast for Washington.

The Nazis used the organisation for their own ends. At Buchmanite meetings their representatives—a German spy with a Swiss passport in the name of Eder, the Stuttgart merchant Henn, the priest Rücker and others—met Lord Halifax, the Belgian Socialist Spaak, the Chinese Foreign Minister Soong and many other ministers, bankers and industrialists. Their confessions were undoubtedly of interest to the agents of Himmler and Hess. Adroit agents like Laun and Henn especially "cultivated" those who came to the meetings, drew them into "pious" confidential talks and told them imaginary sins of their own in order to extract in exchange valuable information about their private or public lives.

Other German agents of the Intelligence Service in the movement were the Frankfort lawyer Dr. Keil, Dr. Buttersack, a lawyer and churchman of Wiesbaden, Geheimrat Weinberg, who at that time held a big post with the I. G. Farben, etc. Some of these names are now again emerging.

No wonder then, that the Buchmanite funds never ran low. Buchman lived in a sumptuous villa belonging to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and said that he did not worry about money—the "Lord" would always look after him. The Lord was personified in N.A.M.—(the National Association of Manufacturers), identified with the heads of the American twelve billionaire corporations and the "Sixty Families." The duPonts, the Pews, the partners of Morgan, Rockefeller and Mellon direct the foreign and domestic policies of the U.S. through their Congressmen, Ministers and Generals. Leading lights of the N.A.M. attend conventions and dinners of the American Legion and are members of the most reactionary organisations. John Foster Dulles, outstanding member of the "inner circle" of the financial oligarchy, belongs to the leadership of reactionary clergymen. The N.A.M. has always financed all kinds of fascist and semi-religious organisations and sects, and for quite a definite purpose. It has a special and very active propaganda department known as the Committee on Co-operation with Churches, whose chairman is none other than Jasper E. Crane, vice-president of E. I. duPont de Nemours and Company. The number of clergymen who engage in fascist propaganda, dissemination of race hatred and anti-Semitism is therefore not to be wondered at. The American Legion, the Ku Klux Klan, the St. Sebastian Brigade, the Nationalist Veterans of the Second World War, the Crusaders, the American Action, the Sentinels of the Republic, the Silver Shirts, the Knights of Columbus are just a few of these fascist and semi-religious organisations maintained by the financial oligarchy of the United States. Buchman is generously subsidised by Ford, Hearst, Firestone and George Eastman, other billionaires contribute to the maintenance of Father Coughlin, the Reverend Dr. James W. Field, Jr., pastor of the Congregational Church of Los Angeles and others. The tie-up between religion and politics is exceedingly close.

Many and varied as they are, these church organisations perform one common function; and so far as the Buchmanites are concerned, there is an unmistakable reactionary purpose behind the public confessions, the resounding phrases about moral rearmament and expiation of sins and all the rest of the Buchmanite humbug. Buchman preaches anti-Semitism, race discrimination and hatred for progressive ideas, but extols the system of "free enterprise," i.e., unrestrained freedom for exploitation of individuals and nations alike. At the end of May, 20 United States Senators and 58 Congressmen put out a call inviting the governmental and industrial leaders of the 16 Marshallised West-European countries to take part in the World Assembly of the "Moral Rearmament Movement." The world situation, it said, places "over-riding priority upon skill in ideological warfare, which demands intensive training for governments."

This World Assembly was held early in June in Los Angeles, California. The members of the assembly evidently avowed their sins in Hollywood, where the opening ceremony took place. A reception was given for them by President Truman's special assistant Steelman. Tsaldaris and Saragat sent messages of greeting. In a word, the management spared no expense.

Among the delegates to this motley gathering could be seen: the British Lord Hardinge and General Hood; Kristensen, the Conservative ex-Premier of Denmark; the Swedish Admiral Ekstrand; the Vice-President of the Italian Constituent Assembly, Peccorati, the Gaullist general Ghislain de Benouville and the Austrian Social-democrat Kanth. The high-light of the programme was

provided by the West-German representatives—the President of the Bavarian Parliament, Horlacher, the Hessen Minister of Education Stein, the Minister of Justice of North Rhine-Westphalia, Heinemann, and others. The picture was completed by a group of British trade union officials, headed by Secretary Smith of the British National Mineworkers' Union. At a luncheon which the local officials of the American Federation of Labour hastened to give in honour of the Buchmanites, Smith announced that the British coalminers hoped "through moral rearmament to achieve a new spirit between capital and labour."

Paul Hoffman—the automobile magnate who is the Marshall plan administrator—sent the Moral Rearmament Assembly a message declaring that it was "giving the world the ideological counterpart of the Marshall plan." Thus, along with dried eggs, the U.S. means, under the Marshall plan, to export "superior ideas." Under cover of "soul-saving," religious hysteria and appeals for class collaboration, N.A.M. wants to use the Buchmanites as an additional instrument for spreading its propaganda, for organising espionage and details of "Marshall Aid." Their "ideological weapons" will turn out to be very material weapons for world-wide exploitation.

Religion has always been the "ideological" cloak to veil oppression and exploitation, and the Buchmanite organisation is the most up-to-date garb of this kind. Therefore, it is not enough to ridicule the coat without hitting at that which holds the religious cloak erect.

TOM HILL.

## HIS DOUBLE

ANNUAL DINNER of Larston Debating Society was a stylish and jovial function, successful in every respect. Although a non-statutory body having no powers beyond the passing of resolutions Larston Debating Society stood in high esteem among the borough's institutions. Its membership comprised leading townsmen, and its meetings were well attended, with lively discussion of whatever was under review.

Dining part of the ceremony was drawing to an end, changing to conversation with a toast list to follow after the King had been musically honoured. That formality out of the way conviviality and merriment arose round speeches made to present guests and in response by them.

Eventually in the artistically decorated programme "The President" was reached, his health to be proposed by Outram Barr.

A man seated to one side well down the hall rose to his feet as the buzz lapsed to silence. He had a newly lighted cigarette between his lips. Looking across the chamber he noticed a long mirror facing him. In it a tall dark man was revealed, a smile breaking on his saturnine face and vanishing again as he took the fuming cigarette between his fingers, the tips of which rested lightly on the table.

"Yes," his reflection seemed to say, "You're a posour, but no doubt, as always, you'll impress this simple audience and pull off a highly successful speech."

He who was to speak nodded slightly, frowning when his image raised one corner of his lips in a sneer to comment: "And you're drunk on whiskey. Not that it'll hinder you speaking well; rather the reverse. You'll make a better speech drunk than sober, perhaps better than most others sober."

Without preliminaries Outram Barr declaimed in a rich sonorous voice the passage from Book Two of



Milton's "Paradise Lost" where the fallen angels go into conference.

"High on a throne of royal state  
Satan exalted sat, by merit raised  
To that bad eminence."

A ripple of laughter and applause met this.

The reflection laughed too, a fleeting leer of contempt, with the pronouncement: "That's right, quote freely. You've a powerful verbal memory, so by scattering fragments of literature have established a reputation for intellectualism. But go on, the audience like it."

They did. Their attention was won and the speaker continued. He remembered the President joining the Society a diffident speechmaker. Trained in the rough and tumble of vigorous debate he developed into one of its leading practitioners.

"All the same," reminded the tall misty figure in the mirror, "You often privately criticise the President, as you do other debaters, for their inanity. I've heard you say some of them don't know the first elements."

Stung into defiance by this, Outram Barr went on to say the President had attained his high office sheerly by the weight of admiration the mass of members felt for his prowess in the open field of controversy where no quarter was asked or given.

"Secretly you're jealous," insisted his other self. "The President's popular while you're not. Though you can enforce attention, you sting, not inspire your audience. So you refuse office feeling the undercurrent of doubt among members which galls you although it sharpens your debating points."

Knowing him to be bland and genial, Outram Barr carried on by praising the accuracy of his wit. For example, in a discussion on the United States of America, no less than seven speakers emphasised the equality prevailing in that community. "Yes," commented the President piquantly. "Trouble is some are more equal than others."

There had been a moment's silence while the audience digested this mot, then a burst of laughter and applause.

"Quite so," whispered the mirrored reflection, "and you were mad you hadn't thought of such a good epigram yourself. Often, since you've used it as your own."

"Why not," retorted Outram Barr. "One may glean in every field, but must grind in your own mill."

So he proceeded to dwell on the fact that the President had achieved municipal honours, becoming a Borough Councillor, the sort of thing which happened to men developed in the rigorous school of Larston Debating Society.

"In vulgar parlance you're talking through your hat," remonstrated the shadowy double in the mirror.

"Actually men prominent in the public life of Larston attain eminence by the support of a political party, church, or other organisation, or simply because they're wealthy in some way which has a hold on the burghesses, as being big property owners, manufacturers or traders. This Debating Society's merely a release for hot air and half baked opinions."

Easy it was for Outram Barr in his speech to translate the last two statements into the President's enthusiasm for great causes and grip on essential principles.

Going on Outram Barr emphasised the humanness of their President's conduct in the chair; how he ever did his best not only to be fair to all sides, but was especially generous and encouraging to poor speakers, particularly young ones.

"Nevertheless," objected the tall wraith in the mirror.

"Often have you seen the President smiling, not always kindly, at efforts of amateur and halting speakers."

What of it? Outram Barr wanted to retort. I've done the same myself.

With no break in the continuity of his speech, he gave a piece of basic advice to would-be debaters and orators; that is to make no notes but get up and launch forth, if only one sentence.

"Many of them couldn't do that much," jeered the reflection of himself, "immediately on rising to their feet they suffer from perpendicular paralysis."

"That's better than the spreading boredom of the speaker who can start but seems unable to stop—like our President," said Outram Barr under his breath, finishing his speech by a sustained eulogy of the Larston Debating Society's President in all his public aspects.

Sitting down amid loud and lengthy applause Outram Barr cast back to his disappearing counterpart in the mirror its last look of amused contempt. Of the wine waiter he ordered a double whisky.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

## EARLY ENGLISH FREETHOUGHT

### V

THE Oxford Reformers, who at the close of the fifteenth century imported the New Learning into England, were the first who made scholarly free inquiry possible. Erasmus, the incarnation of Humanism, the apostle of common sense, and the most cultivated scholar in his age, wrote his "Praise of Folly" in England, and by his teaching at Cambridge, and his communion with such men as John Colet, the founder of St. Paul's Schools, and Sir Thomas More, did much to break down mediæval Christianity. The young King Henry VIII was little disposed to favour ecclesiastical pretensions. In 1513 benefit of clergy was taken away—a prelude to the subsequent claim of the king to be supreme Head of the Church, and to the dissolution of the monasteries. More, in his youthful "Utopia," had the boldness to leave the ascetic ideals of old, and outline an ideal commonwealth where every child should be properly educated, and where "it should be lawful for every man to favour and follow what religion he would." Alas! he departed from this ideal when he saw the results of the Reformation in the Peasants' War and the vagaries of the Anabaptists.

William Tyndale, whom Sir Thomas More calls "a blasphemous fool," did much by the publication of his translation of the Bible to fan the smouldering embers of Lollardy into a flame. Although his theology was of the darkest Augustinian character, his view of the sacramental dogmas was essentially broad English Puritan. "As good," he wrote, "is the prayer of a cobbler as of a cardinal, and of a butcher as of a bishop; and the blessing of a baker that knoweth the truth is as good as the blessing of our most holy father the pope."

The same spirit, yet more vigorous and broadly humanitarian, appears in "Supplication for the Beggars," by Simon Fish. The clergy, he complains, possess half the realm, and do nothing for the commonwealth but advance profligacy of all kinds. "Tye these holy idell theues [thieves] to the cartes to be whipped naked about every market towne til they will fall to labour." Fish prudently kept abroad till assured of the king's protection. Less fortunate was James Bainham, a barrister, who drew suspicion on himself by marrying the widow of Fish, who died in 1530. Soon after his marriage he was challenged to give an account of his faith. He was charged with denying transubstantiation, and with questioning the value of the confessional and "the power of the keys." It was further asserted

that he had said he would as lief pray to Joan, his wife, as to our lady, and that he affirmed and believed that Christ was but a man. This he denied. He, however, admitted holding the horrible heresy that "if a Turk, a Jew, or a Saracen do but trust in God and keep his law, he is a good Christian man." He was imprisoned and racked in the Tower by order of Sir Thomas More. Enfeebled by suffering, he abjured, but, recovering courage, took up his cross and was burnt as a relapsed heretic in 1552.

That with the spread of the Reformation appeared a spirit of Rationalism is evident from the speech of a Member of Parliament in 1550 (given in the appendix to T. W. Rhys David's Hibbert Lecture). Thomas Cromwell, a statesman who did services for England second only to those of his mighty namesake Oliver, was a latitudinarian of the broadest kind.

The dissolution of those haunts of idleness and vice, the monasteries, the dispersal of the ill-gotten opulence of the clergy,\* and the reduction of the spiritual aristocracy to that subordinate position in the Legislature with which they have ever since had to be content, marked the overthrow of mediæval Christianity, with but little extension of the principles of toleration. By the Act 25 Henry VIII (1534) execution of ecclesiastical sentences for heresy could not take place without the king's warrant being first obtained. Availing themselves of the supposed liberty, a number of the ferociously persecuted Anabaptists of Holland sought refuge in England. The primitive Christianity, however, was of an anti-trinitarian and communistic cast. Stow informs us that on November 21, 1538, four Anabaptists—three men and one woman—all bare faggots at St. Paul's Cross; and that on the 29th a man and a woman, Dutch Anabaptists, were "brent" in Smithfield. Three more were burnt near Newington in the following year. No fewer than twenty-six Anabaptists were burnt during this reign; but whether for denying infant baptism, for impugning the Trinity, or simply on account of the odium arising from the affair at Munster, is uncertain. Be this as it may, their opinions were deemed so obnoxious that they were excepted from an Act of grace passed in the year 1538.

Henry maintained the laws against heresy with equal vigour both before and after his quarrel with God's vicar. After the Six Articles—the whip with six strings, as it was called—were promulgated, there might be seen the spectacle of Lutheran deniers of the king's supremacy dragged together for execution, with the nice distinction that Protestants were to be burnt and Catholics hung. For Henry remained a Catholic. As a writer of the period expressed it, the king "had cast the devil out of this realm, yet both he and we sup of the broth in which the devil was sodden."

The English Reformers, to a large extent, lost sight of the New Learning. They replaced the pope with the Bible. The change from Catholicism to Protestantism was but the shifting from one rigid scholastic creed to others equally rigid. Persecution had by no means made the persecuted tolerant. The notion that all the nation must be of one creed long prevailed. After the publication of the Act of Uniformity (1549) an incredible number of Anabaptists suffered death under Cranmer's Commission. In the previous year John Assheton, a

priest, had been forced to recant for denying the Trinity and the Divinity and Atonement of Christ. John Chaunpneys, another priest, also recanted similar offences joined to Antinomianism. Amongst the martyrs of this period must be noted Joan Boacher, who denies that Christ took flesh from his mother. When sentence is pronounced she tells her judges: "It is not long since you burned Anne Askew for a piece of bread, and now, forsooth, you will burn me for a piece of flesh." Young King Edward signs her death warrant with tears in his eyes, placing the responsibility on Cranmer. George van Parris, a Dutch surgeon and member of the Stranger Church, denies that Christ is God, and, refusing to recant, is burnt to death April 7, 1551.

The reaction and persecution under Mary only served to enlighten Englishmen to the true nature of Catholic rule. Cardinal Pole expressed its spirit in the declaration, "There is no kind of men so pernicious to the commonwealth as these heretics be; there are no thieves, no murderers, no adulterers, nor no kind of treason to be compared to them, who, as it were, undermining the chief foundations of all commonwealths, which is religion, maketh an entry to all kinds of vices in the most heinous manner." One of the first measures introduced was the banishment of all foreigners, in consequence of which such inquiring spirits as Bernard Ochinus and John a Lasco had to quit the country. No doubt amongst the two hundred and seventy-seven put to death in Mary's short reign some exhibited advanced forms of heresy. We know, for instance, that Patrick Patingham was burnt at Uxbridge on a charge of Arianism. Amongst heretics who escaped may be mentioned Christopher Viret, an antitrinitarian.

How devoted the clergy of the time were to their livings may be judged by the fact that at the accession of Elizabeth only one hundred and seventy-seven resigned out of a total of nearly ten thousand. Soon after that event Henry Niclas, of Amsterdam, came to England. Niclas, who believed himself to have a mission from God, was founder of a sect called the Family of Love. The Familists sprang from the Anabaptists, and shared in many of their views. They, however, had no sacraments. Their only baptism and communion was a baptism and communion of the spirit. Their doctrines were so spiritualised that it is supposed they denied the historical statements of the New Testament. They admitted no Trinity. The crucifixion of Christ was crucifying "the old man"; the resurrection, our rising to newness of life. Angels and devils were good and bad men with their virtues and vices. The seven deadly sins which possessed Mary Magdalene were the seven deadly sins. Heaven and hell are in this world. The Familists are interesting by their abandonment of the religion of the letter, and as the progenitors of the Quakers, Seekers, and Mystics. The works of Niclas were translated from Dutch into English, but were burned by the common hangman, and are very scarce.

At this time poor crazy Robert Browne, the father of the Congregationalists, was preaching against the appointment of ministers by bishops. He boasted that "he had been committed to thirty-two prisons, and in some of them he could not see his hand at noonday." Browne denied that it belonged to magistrates to compell religion, to plant churches by power, and to force submission to ecclesiastical government by lawes and penalties." His protest was taken up by Barrowe, Penry, Copping, Thacker, Greenwood, and Dennis, all of whom were executed for heresy under Elizabeth as well as various Anabaptists.

J. M. WHEELER.

\* The great mistake was in permitting the funds of the monasteries to pass into the hands of the nobles instead of retaining them for schools. Wolsey, who with all his faults was a lover of culture, had begun to appropriate the endowments of some of the smaller houses to the encouragement of learning.

## FATALISM AND DETERMINISM

IN his article in "The Freethinker" of 18th July, Mr. Archibald Robertson has some interesting remarks on Fate and Causation. He says that for a long time he accepted the fatalist view that everything that happens is predetermined, but that a more rigorous examination of the question induced him to dismiss that view in favour of simple causation. He asks, "If everything is predetermined from the beginning, in what sense is it true that one event causes another? In a predetermined universe no one thing more than another thing can be said to cause anything else; for the word 'cause' loses its meaning. They were all bound to happen from the start, and nothing made or can make any difference. Thus the fatalist view, which we arrived at by generalising from particular cases of cause and effect, ends by destroying the foundations on which it was built."

I venture to dissent from Mr. Robertson's conclusion for the following reasons. To me the question between fate and causation seems to depend on what we mean by fate. If the term is taken to imply the act of a purposive Intelligence or God who has preordained or decreed the course of events, I agree with him in "chucking" it. If such is not our view I cannot see that it makes any difference whether we regard phenomena as the result of fate or causation, seeing that, virtually, both stand for one and the same thing. Mr. Robertson does not make clear why, in a predetermined universe, the word "cause" should lose its meaning; for, even if we take the decretory or predeterminate view of fate, we cannot avoid the conclusion that some means or agency is necessary to implement it, and what other can we conceive than the necessary sequence of cause and effect? How the fact that a thing is fated or predetermined should make it impossible to be "caused" is more than I can fathom. One would think that, if a thing comes into existence by predetermination or the fiat of fate, it is caused, otherwise, how does it happen? Thus, the fatalist view, instead of "destroying the foundations on which it was built," is quite consistent with it.

My belief is that the observed sequences of cause and effect arise from forces inherent in things themselves, and that the present event is the result of a series that go back to an infinite past, and, as such, that it is the concrete expression of inevitable necessity.

A. YATES.

## GAMBETTA

Freethinkers can claim Gambetta as one of themselves. He never entered a church even at the burial of a friend, and he publicly professed himself a disciple of Voltaire. He called Comte the greatest thinker of the nineteenth century, and most of his intimate friends were Atheists or Positivists. It was he who uttered the famous word—"Clericalism, there is the enemy." He helped to drive the priest from the schools, to secularise education, to cripple the power of the higher clergy. But he was too sagacious to propose the immediate separation of Church and State. Gambetta knew that Catholicism was still a great power in France, and that while its dignitaries might be tied down and its unauthorised orders expelled, it would only provoke a religious reaction if the poor rural clergy were molested. He saw that by secularising education, and bringing girls as fully as boys under its influence, the future was assured to Freethought. His enemies called this Opportunism.

## CORRESPONDENCE

## THE FACTS ABOUT POE

SIR,—I am obliged to Mr. Cutner for his friendly remarks about myself, but I am afraid that his attempted defence of Poe will not hold water. I know that the work of Griswold was an attempt to blacken Poe; I know, also, that G. E. Woddberry, who published a life of Poe in 1884, was able to write: "An unsupported statement by Griswold respecting Poe is liable to suspicion." Griswold, in fact, though Poe made him literary executor, was to a large extent responsible for the idea, which spread shortly after Poe's tragic death, that the poet was a Satanic drunkard, outdoing Baudelaire in his excesses.

All this is, I think, common ground between Mr. Cutner and myself; but I would invite Mr. Cutner to consider the evidence as presented in an impartial and sympathetic book, such as "The Murder of Edgar Allan Poe," by J. A. T. Lloyd (1931). This is based throughout on contemporary evidence, and it discounts the spleen of Rufus Griswold. But it is beyond all doubt that Poe was a drunkard, losing jobs from the fact of his unreliability. I do not say that this detracts one iota from his literary achievements; but I do say that it is a mistake to try to whitewash the personal life of a writer, merely because we admire his work.—Yours, etc.,

JOHN ROWLAND.

## OBITUARY

It is with the deepest regret that I record the death of Ernest Chidley at the age of fourteen. He was killed while climbing a tree as part of his duties as scout in connection with the 2nd Cheadle troop. He was full of promise for the future in both school duties and other matters. In such a case there is little that one can say at such a time, and yet one feels something must be said to ease the pain that the father and mother must feel: and as time passes the sharp pain deadens and the memories of our children are transformed into our dearest treasures. We cannot destroy death, but we can overcome its sting.

C. C.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

## LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Messrs. E. C. SAPHIN, JAMES HART, G. WOOD. E. PAGE.

## COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. S. BRYDEN, E. LAWASI and J. HUMPHREY.

Great Harwood.—Saturday, August 21, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (on Blitzed Site, Ranelagh Street, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. G. THOMPSON, W. PARRY, W. C. PARRY.

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

Read.—Thursday, August 26, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers' Pool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. A. SAMMS, G. L. GREAVES.

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