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VIEWES AND OPINIONS

Franco and the New Ripalda

OUR contemporary, the Spanish resistance paper, *La Batalla*, reports that a new edition has just appeared of the famous *Catechism of Christian Doctrine* originally compiled by the Spanish Jesuit, Ripalda. "The new Ripalda" has just been edited by another Jesuit with additional material and now contains a complete list of the heresies black-listed by Spanish Catholicism. The list is a comprehensive one, which would have done credit to the Holy Inquisition in bye-gone days and which indicates, incidentally, that whatever indications of a superficially modern outlook the Catholic Church may assume in other more advanced lands, in Spain it retains all the old rigidity of the age of Torquemada, the founder of the Inquisition and of its first royal patron, Queen Isabella "the Catholic" who boasted, *inter alia*, that she had depopulated whole provinces for the sake of Christ and his Virgin Mother.

If the above appears rather ancient history, it may be recalled that the Spanish Inquisition lived and burnt its victims right down to the beginning of the 19th century, when Napoleon officially abolished it during the brief French occupation of Spain, in accordance with the liberal principles of the French revolution. Actually, the last victim of the Inquisition to be burnt alive for the "mortal crime" of heresy was an old woman at an *autos da fé* upon the shocking charge of "hatching infernal eggs as a result of carnal intercourse with the Devil which had prophesies written on them" (1781). As we have no desire to encourage national or religious chauvenism, we may perhaps be permitted to add that in enlightened and Protestant England witch-burning had its advocates in this country, amongst them it seems that the great John Wesley may be included, in the same (18th) century, and that a woman was actually burnt alive in London, though, it is true, for the secular crime of husband-poisoning about the same time as the last victim of the Spanish Inquisition perished.

However, it was not Spanish Catholicism itself but, rather, the pressure of secular public opinion that finally terminated the existence of the Spanish Inquisition. The Bourbon Kings of Spain, restored by the bayonets of Wellington's army in the Peninsular War (1808-14) made an unsuccessful effort to restore the sinister engine of repression. Indeed, right down to the closing decades of the 19th century, the ultra-reactionary followers of the Pretender, Don Carlos, made it one of their professed aims to restore the Inquisition, "that most august tribunal brought down by angels from Heaven to Earth."*

To-day, the bygone regime of "the most Catholic Kings" and of the Inquisition has been succeeded, thanks to the efforts of those deceased pillars of culture and humanity, Messrs. Hitler and Mussolini, by the regime of Franco and his Falangist oligarchy. The new regime is fully as devout and equally as cruel as was the

old one. In the quality of cruelty, the bowels of mercy are as remote from Franco as from Torquemada, whilst modern technique enables the "Caudillo" (Leader-Duce-Fuhrer) to kill wholesale where his Inquisitorial predecessors could only kill retail! Exact statistics are hard to come by, but we should not be surprised if Franco's victims since he first began his war against modern ideas in July, 1936, considerably surpass in numbers the total of people executed by the Spanish Inquisition in the whole course of its existence between 1474 and 1808.

Whilst as for devoutness, General Franco's regime has restored the Spanish Church to all its pristine glory. The vast wealth of the Church has been restored and stands in glaring contrast to the frightful poverty which has been the economic basis upon which the traditional facade of wealth and privilege has been based in the past. In Franco Spain, the old ruling-caste characterised by medieval exclusiveness is back in the saddle. "The rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate" are still national institutions, whilst beggary is a recognised profession.

Again, as in the days of the monarchy, no religion is officially recognised except the Holy, Catholic Apostolic, and Roman Church: all other forms of religious, even Christian worship must be celebrated behind closed doors and without any outward advertisement. Even this limited concession would, no doubt, be withdrawn were it not for the necessity imposed upon the Franco regime by its desperate poverty, of periodically borrowing heretical American dollars from Protestant financiers! With the solitary exception that there are, as yet, no *autos da fé* lighted with human fuel, the middle ages may be said to have returned, in Spain with the victory of the Christian general and of clerical fascism south of the Pyrenees.

The new Ripalda, the official "Catechism of Christian Doctrine" welcomes and blesses the above state of things. For it draws up a comprehensive black-list of all the chief heresies in Church and State which are to-day taboo in Franco Spain. Fourteen of such arch-heresies are mentioned by name: the list includes all the chief manifestations of modern thought in both the political and critical spheres, in the religious sphere, Atheism, Agnosticism, and Pantheism, are included by name. Whilst in the sphere of politics, all the enemies of the Franco State: socialism, communism, anarchism, syndicalism, liberalism, freemasonry, are expressly included.

In condemning Darwinism, our Catechism does not mince its words. Spanish Catholicism represents the extreme right wing of the Roman Catholic Church and Ripalda, unlike his Catholic counterparts in more advanced lands, does not make any compromise with evolutionary ideas.

Darwinism teaches that "advanced animals evolve from more primitive ones whilst man evolves from the monkey (*sic*). It is false and absurd to seek to establish any relationship between man, an intelligent being

* (cf. Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth*, p. 205.)

endowed with free-will, and a stupid animal." Similarly, syndicalism is a "criminal conspiracy."

But is not a State which endorses and enforces such teaching itself a "criminal conspiracy" against "an intelligent being endowed with free-will"? And do not the people who write and edit such antediluvian balderdash themselves indicate thereby plainly their obvious affinity with a "stupid animal"?

F. A. RIDLEY.

LOVE OR LICENCE ?

"The impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
And strip myself to death, as to a bed
That longing I have been sick for, ere I'd yield
My body up to shame."

MEASURE FOR MEASURE. Act ii, sc. 4.

THE literature of the past, both fictional and historical provides numerous examples of cases in which maidens have preferred death to the loss of their chastity, and of matrons who have been willing to suffer a similar fate rather than submit to dishonour. When we consider that civilization has been built around the family life, it should not be difficult to appreciate why the normal woman should seek to preserve her virginity before marriage, and to avoid extra-marital relationships afterwards. It is not just a matter of fear of the consequences. The matter goes much deeper, and has a more solid foundation than that. When Isabella made the remarks that stand at the head of this article, she had been pleading to Angelo for her brother's life, and Angelo had just promised to spare him on the condition that she yielded him her virginity. We can hardly suppose that Angelo's offer would have been any more acceptable to Isabella had he made it with a contraceptive in his hand. Nor is it a matter of religion. Morality in general has been developed as a result of social needs. The higher the civilization, the higher is the standard of morality required to sustain it, and this applies particularly to the question of sexual relationships. The fact that religion *claims* to be the guardian of morality is no reason why the latter should be rejected along with the former, and it is to be hoped that there are still some Freethinkers old-fashioned enough to believe that the disappearance of religion will lead to a higher, instead of a lower standard of morality. This brings us to a consideration of some of the articles and letters that have recently appeared on this subject in *The Freethinker*.

Some time ago Mr. Bower wrote an article in *The Freethinker* protesting against the introduction of slot-machines for the sale of contraceptives in public places, and adversely criticizing the low standard of morals that has of late come into vogue. Since then he has been assailed by several writers who, apparently, are unanimously in favour of the moral laxity which he deplors. In the issue of *The Freethinker* dated July 30, 1950, there appears a letter by Rupert Jellicoe on "Contraceptives, Slot-Machines, and Morality." In this letter Mr. Jellicoe states: "The machines are less embarrassing than asking in chemists shops." Really! If Mr. Jellicoe had the courage of his convictions he should not feel embarrassed. That he is embarrassed indicates that he has not quite lost that false modesty which he condemns in others. He then asks: "What right has anyone to dictate to youth, or anyone else, as to under what circumstances they shall break the 7th Commandment? They are not children." Also, "why is it the actions and 'carryings on' of married people are deemed quite respectable and in order, and

the exact same things by the unmarried called pornography, lust, decadence, etc.," as though actions that are permissible under one set of circumstances are permissible under any other. Does not Mr. Jellicoe realise that married people have obligations that the unmarried have not? Supposing Mr. Jellicoe to be married, any unmarried man desiring his wife could make the same remark to him, but it is to be feared that in that case the logic would not be quite so apparent. Mr. Jellicoe goes on to tell us that "for thousands of years the mighty forces of religion have tried to get youth and others, to avoid sex intercourse outside marriage and have failed completely"; that "of course, there should be a safe method of indulging in it," and finishes up by likening all those who disagree with his views to a "generation of vipers." Although not all the writers who have opposed Mr. Bower have gone quite so far as Mr. Jellicoe, his arguments are a fair sample of their views on the subject.

If such views as the above are to prevail modesty and chastity become meaningless words, and sexuality is reduced to the level of the barn-yard. It is on this level that sexuality is practised among savage and very barbarous races. It is modesty that gives to love the aid of imagination, and in so doing imparts life to it. Gross says: "Without the modest reserve of the woman that must, in most cases, be overcome by lovable qualities, the sexual relationship would with difficulty find a singer who would extol in love the highest movements of the human soul." It is modesty that gives all the delicate gradations of courtship and intimate love. Havelock Ellis, in his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, says: "The woman who is lacking in modesty is lacking also in sexual attractiveness to the normal and average man and only makes a strong sexual appeal to men who are themselves lacking in the complementary masculine qualities."

As regards chastity, Havelock Ellis says: "Without chastity it is impossible to maintain the dignity of sexual love. The society in which its estimation sinks to a minimum is in the last stages of degeneration"; and "Chastity is a virtue because it is a discipline in self-control, because it helps to fortify the character and will, and because it is directly favourable to the cultivation of the most beautiful, exalted, and effective sexual life. He also tells us that: "All that favours facility and luxurious softness in sexual matters is quickly felt to degrade character as well as to diminish the finest erotic satisfaction" and this applies to intercourse either with or without contraceptives. The same author also tells us that sexual facility cannot even claim to be natural for, in Nature generally, sexual gratification tends to be rare and difficult.

Although in our complicated society extra-marital relations are often unavoidable, still these cases should be considered as the exception rather than the rule, and condoned rather than encouraged. In the thoughts of the normal man of to-day, his physiological relation to woman plays but an intermittent role, in which temporary desires are followed by comparatively long periods of indifference. Even total abstinence has not the harmful effect which so many would have us believe it has. Havelock Ellis gives us many examples to support this view, and there can be no doubt that there is less misery and suffering due to abstinence than there is to over-indulgence. Even contraceptives are not the harmful things they are supposed to be. Although they may at times be necessary, they are by no means an unmixed blessing.

One cannot but wonder whether those who advocate unrestricted sexual intercourse would care to see the

principle applied to their own daughters and to their wives. If there are such then no argument of mine will avail. But let others, be they Christian or Freethinker, ask themselves which they would prefer to choose for a wife, a daughter, or daughter-in-law—a woman of the type of Isabella, or a modern sophisticated Miss who thinks she knows all the answers.

FRANK KENYON.

MAX PLANCK'S PHILOSOPHY

WHEN, 20 years or so ago, two leading mathematical astronomers, Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington, wrote books designed to show that science and religion might be not opposed, but complementary, many Freethinkers and Rationalists thought that this was a mere flash in the pan. True, both Jeans and Eddington had weaknesses in their philosophical outlook—weaknesses which were pointed out by such valiant intellectual warriors as Prof. Susan Stebbing (*Philosophy and the Physicists*) and Mr. Chapman Cohen (*God and the Universe*). And, even though they were both eminent in their own somewhat restricted sphere, Jeans and Eddington were not quite figures of world eminence. They did not rank, in other words, with Einstein and Newton. Now, I recently wrote here on a book which discussed Einstein's philosophy of life, and which concluded that, while the great man was not in any way an orthodox thinker on theological topics, he was in general agreement with a religious attitude to life.

There has now been published another book in which Einstein's only compeer in the field of applied physics expresses his opinion on things in general. The book is Max Planck's *A Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers* (Williams and Norgate; 8s. 6d.). I hope that to readers of these columns I do not need to do more than to state that Max Planck, who died in 1947 at the age of 90, was the discoverer or inventor (I am not sure which is the better term) of the Quantum Theory, one of the most revolutionary concepts to enter into the world of physics in the 20th century. The book I am now concerned to discuss, brilliantly translated from the German by Frank Gaynor, contains (as its title would indicate) a series of papers written at widely separated periods in the author's life, but unified by being all concerned with philosophical, as opposed to purely scientific, themes. Especially interesting to all concerned in any way with the inter-relationships between science, philosophy, and theology, are two papers entitled respectively, "The Meaning and Limits of Exact Science" and "Religion and Natural Science."

In these two papers Planck's main concern is to show that the scientific and the religious approach to the problems of life and the universe are not, in his opinion, so much opposed as is sometimes thought. Indeed, he would rather say that they are complementary, each taking a line which the other could not imitate, but each leading to the same ultimate goal—an understanding of the world order that is discernible behind all the complicated issues, whether of physics or theology. Indeed, Planck held that the issues were fundamentally the same, even though science tended to approach them via the observations of the senses and religion through a complex tissue of symbolism.

Here, then, is Planck's definition of the rôle of science:

"It consists in the task of introducing order and regularity into the wealth of heterogenous experiences conveyed by the various fields of the

sense world. Under close examination, this task proves to be fully consistent with the task which we are habitually performing in our lives since our earliest infancy, in order to find our way and place in our environment. This is a task which has kept man busy ever since he first began to think at all in order to be able to hold his own in the struggle for existence."

Whether we agree with Planck's general approach to the riddles of existence, there can be few quibbles on that paragraph, I think. It is clear, and it expresses a sensible attitude to the matter.

The heart of the problem, as it is envisaged by Planck, is whether it is possible to accept an orderly world, a world in which scientific laws operate and matter follows established rules, unless we can come to believe that these laws express some central principle. Planck uses the word "God," to describe the central power; but at the same time he makes it clear that he is not an orthodox Christian, whose beliefs would be thought satisfactory by the average member of any of the Churches. Yet there seems little doubt that he would have thought that an orderly universe meant a universe ruled by a central authority. Here he comes into conflict with many Freethinkers; but I am not at all sure that such opposition is necessarily general. There is, understandably, a feeling against using the word "God" in the way it is used by Max Planck, but I do not know that Freethinkers can really establish their beliefs without thinking that the world and the universe are unities, controlled by laws that admit of no exception. In other words, the opposition between the scientific and the religious attitude may not be as strong as has been thought. This is, of course, not to say that the orthodox Churches can claim the allegiance of scientists; but it is to say that there may be a greater accommodation between Freethinkers and Rationalists on one side and Liberal or Free Christians of the Unitarian and Quaker type on the other, than has hitherto been thought possible.

Some readers may feel that this is an odd conclusion to derive from a consideration of a book by a leading physicist of the late 19th and early 20th century. I feel, however, that it is a conclusion to which many open-minded people will be driven. And in any event Max Planck's book deserves to be widely read as one of the most stimulating scientific works of recent years.

JOHN ROWLAND.

STEPS TO SANITY

I.

ON May 17, 1948, the Atomic Energy Commission to the Security Council of U.N.O., issued its third, and, it may well be, its last, official report; the total significance of which is contained in the first eleven words:—

"The Atomic Energy Commission reports that it has reached an impasse."

Since its publication, as indeed prior to it, the race for arms gathered increasing momentum culminating in the announcement of America's intention to produce the hydrogen bomb.

There followed a brief, stunned and bewildered silence from which we are now beginning to emerge; chastened perhaps, certainly conscious of the failure of our organisational efforts and deeply aware of our moral inadequacy.

Millions of words have already accrued on the subject of the atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb. Attempts to ban their production and use have failed, as they

were doomed to do, since the bombs are not the root-but the fruit of the evil.

Little is forthcoming in unbiased explanation or defence of the policies and attitude of the "Cold War" protagonists. Much is the work of irresponsibles; of those who, trained and practiced in jingoism when it was possible for the few to benefit from the misery of the many, have failed to discern in the new situation, the future economic impoverishment of all as a prelude to the complete disruption of civilisation.

"Official" words on the subject are in harmony with the American-inspired foreign policy of our Government. They seek to justify an attitude of belligerency which stems from fear, and is only thinly disguised as defence. By sanctioning the use of a policy of stark expediency, with which to combat a situation which demands a revision of our ethical concepts, they seek to defend the indefensible. In the result, we are committed to a course of action which if successfully pursued, will warrant the future verdict, "Felo de Se." For however genuinely peaceful the Government's purpose may be, its efforts, with full support from the "Opposition," have brought us closer under the supervision of our transatlantic friends, nearer to the slaughterhouse and within sight of the tragedy it wishes to avoid.

A few letters to the press and a pious resolution or two are all that have emanated from under the dignified homburg, the respectable bowler and the crushed and bedraggled cloth cap; for poor John Citizen is as unaware of an alternative to the present foreign policy as he is unaware of its dreadful and inevitable consequences.

While the statesmen dig his grave, the great ones of the pen and word ignore his plight and their silence condones it. The mighty pen and the spoken word alike are impotent, the orations of the great and the feeble mutterings of the humble, fail miserably to express that fear for the future of the human race which has gripped the hearts of men, and will drive them ultimately to seek new leadership.

Time is short indeed. There is little to spare for recrimination. The arena is in process of erection; the candidates for "Glory" are engaging their seconds, lashing themselves into an ideological fury. Soon, if nothing is done, if the people's will proves weaker than atomic agony, the right to vote will count as naught; unless there is democracy in Hell. For Britain it is time to ban all blood sports, for soon we may be hunted by the fox.

Professor Philip Morrison, a member of the group which carried out the atomic bomb test at Los Alamos, New Mexico, in July, 1946, said:—

"The atomic bomb is the most terrible and deadly weapon yet devised. Against any city in the world from New York to London, to the hundreds of large towns like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the bomb is a threat. In any of man's cities a strike from a single atomic bomb will claim some hundred-thousand deaths and some square miles of blackened ruin.

"The gamma rays will kill men with white skin as they do those with yellow pigment. The fire will burn the cotton clothing of Manchester manufacture as well as it did that of Kyoto.

"And the bombs if they come again will not come in ones or two's, but in hundreds or thousands. Their coming will wreck not cities, but whole nations."

And that was said before the advent of the one-thousand-times more powerful "H" bomb.

One thing is quite certain. Geographically situated as she is, and whether in a defensive or aggressive capacity,

Britain's participation in an American-Soviet atomic war would mean her end.

Indeed then, there is far too much at stake to allow either a Labour or a Conservative Government to pursue a policy in this matter, upon which the electorate are not fully informed and agreed, as a separate, distinct and supreme issue.

Since the responsibility of government to-day is one of life or death, perhaps for the whole human race, certainly for Britain, we are not at this crucial stage in the history of our nation to be offered "job lots" of domestic and foreign policy, as though we were patronising a jumble sale.

Our stage managers have not the right to reply to our legitimate request for real wine in the banqueting scene. "Yes, but you must also take real poison in the death scene."

Yet every political party in our civilised democracy has always presented to the electorate, a domestic and foreign policy encumbered by the "holy" rule that the armed forces must always be retained and that blood-letting must continue as a national prerogative.

The historical, traditional pursuance of a policy of expediency in the erroneous belief that war is an inevitable functional disorder, has obscured its real institutional character.

It is high time to rid ourselves of the notion that there is a policy to be pursued, irrespective of which political party is in power; some mysterious policy which, without reference to the electorate and like the House of Lords, goes on for ever.

But our Prime Minister has said:—

"The broad decision of a General Election is by which party the country shall be governed, and that party is taken with its programme."

Now, to "take the good with the bad," may have been exciting when, as children, we plunged our tiny hands into the sawdust and drew forth a "Lucky Dip." Indeed, such behaviour may be excusable amongst adults at a church bazaar. But as mature and responsible citizens we must not indulge our childish habits in the matter of politics; for this time our worn and trembling fingers may emerge dripping with the blood of countless millions.

The first step towards Britain's emergence from beneath the threatening cloud which now engulfs her, and the foundation of that moral leadership of which humanity stands in such dire need, is that democracy in Britain shall prove itself.

The people's will should be made known now, to their leaders, through the ballot box, as to the continued use or otherwise of war as an instrument of national policy.

C. E. PALMER.

THE VATICAN'S WEAPONS

AFTER Mr. Morgan Phillips' speech, in June, at the International Socialist Conference, Copenhagen, it is now obvious to Freethinkers that the Labour Party has replaced dynamic materialism by the sterility of religion. However, this is certainly not time to weep over the tragedy, we must rather examine those influences which have brought about the present position, and do our utmost to cause a radical change.

Undoubtedly the major force which has caused the sell-out of the working class movement to religion is the Roman Catholic Church, aided and abetted by those non-Catholics who are prepared to flirt with the Vatican to maintain or further their own interests. How this has

come about, and the means used to exert influence in favour of the Vatican from within the ranks of the Labour Party and the trade union movement, which is so very closely connected with that Party, is the object here.

The Vatican's main weapons, excluding the pulpit, in supping the materialist strength of the working class movement, are those bodies which make up what is termed Catholic Action. Namely, the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (A.C.T.U.) in England, and to a lesser degree of effectiveness the Catholic Workers' Guild in Scotland. These bodies, which function according to the direction of the policy of the Catholic hierarchy in their respective areas, serve to indoctrinate Catholic workers in the social teachings of the Church, and to promote one hundred per cent. participation by the Vatican's dupes in official associations connected with their trade or profession. Both organisations are gradually achieving a greater degree of mutual co-ordination, as is witnessed by the proposed "Federation of A.C.T.U.s," which if carried out will result in one national embracive group.

The claim is made that these bodies are non-political, but what this infers is that only Vatican politics are permitted for study and discussion, and members are expected to exert influence favouring Vatican interests from within the ranks of whatever political party or trade union to which they may belong. The success with which this activity has met within the Labour Party has been adequately illustrated at Copenhagen, but another sphere in which the Vatican is making progress is the T.U.C.

As Labour organisations have found to their cost, the Catholics are a noisy but dangerous block having effective voting power in the trade union movement, and as a result the Vatican and the T.U.C. are engaged at present in a marriage of convenience. This arrangement has been so successful for the Vatican that the T.U.C. has assured A.C.T.U. of its support on the Church schools question, and A.C.T.U. for its part has stipulated in its constitution that all members must be members of trade unions affiliated to the T.U.C. This is another sphere in which the Vatican has succeeded in getting its foot inside the door, and we can be sure that it is determined to keep it there.

It is essential that Freethinkers within the Labour Party and the trade union movement organise themselves to rid the working class movement of the rot which has set in by combating Catholic action wherever possible. Centres of such activity which have come to my notice are Birmingham, Brentwood, Cardiff, Crewe, Galloway, Glasgow, Leeds, Lancaster, Liverpool, Newcastle, Salford, Southwark, and Westminster.

"FORUS."

FREETHOUGHT DICTIONARY

SURGERY.—That branch of medical science which treats injuries or diseases by manual or instrumental intervention. A recent paper on the treatment of epilepsy shows that this devil is now cast out most successfully by means of an operation on the brain of the sufferer which has, in effect, the result of immobilising one half of the cerebrum. This gave food for thought.

After deep prayer and serious meditation, I am now convinced that surgeons should not stop short at cutting out the epileptic half. Which half that is, I forget for the moment, but no matter. Why stop at either half? Why not try, say, three-quarters, particularly three-quarters of the brains of salvationists, fundamentalists,

the whole crowd of those who roll about obscenely with foam-flecked lips shouting Hosannas and Alleluiahs, instead of comporting themselves as reasoning human beings?

If such an operation were to emancipate the world from the disease of organised religion, it would be the greatest advance known to science since man discovered fire, because he discovered Hell-Fire at the same time.

Deep cogitation assures me that this removal of three-quarters, or even seven-eighths of the alleged brain of such people could have only the most beneficial results for mankind. Moreover, I feel it should be made compulsory on any victim of religious hallucinations and protestations. Such an operation, brought to a successful conclusion, opens up visions of benefits too numerous to be classified in the space of this journal. As for the unsuccessful ones, we never hear of these, anyway, and the loss of that kind of brain is of no account whatever, even to its owner, who cannot be aware that he has one.

AMULET.—A charm or talisman against ill-luck. Large numbers of these are still sold to the credulous, of every possible shape and condition, from plain water to parts of the human body obtained by ritual murder, still common in Africa.

Perhaps the most interesting of these were those in use by Fray Thos. de Torquemada, Spanish Chief Inquisitor. This man who, having a strain of Jewish blood, spent his whole life in an attempt to exterminate Spanish Jewry; who only appeared in public under the escort of a troop of cavalry and a company of infantry, lived in constant fear of poisoning.

For years he never ate a meal unless the horn of a unicorn and the tongue of a scorpion were laid on the table, these being antidotal to poison. As neither of these articles is obtainable in nature, what substitutes were used in their place is a matter of speculation. Whatever was used did not do its job, for he suffered greatly from gout, a form of food poisoning.

This is just another instance of a devout believer in miracles and the personal favour of God, deciding to protect himself against any possible forgetfulness on God's part.

F. W. RENNIE.

GOD - FORGOTTEN

What knows the bird of branches perched upon?

What knows Lord God of worlds that He has made?

It seems that Deity this one mislaid,

Or, maybe, the Old Chap has just forgotten.

Such things can be, yea, even gods forgot:

Are knowing and remembering the same?

A god remembering were much to blame

Leaving his earthly children here to rot.

So be it; let us waste no further time

In vain regret for missing Father-Love;

Seek not to move by prayer the Powers above;

To wait on God would but condone His crime.

"Up, Guards, and at 'em!" our device should be,

The waiters we should rudely brush aside;

Let man his own world make, then he with pride

Can make a planet that is fit to see.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

ACID DROPS

According to the "Newcastle Journal," "totalitarianism," which is defined as "Authority from the top down, obedience from the bottom up" is the enemy of religion, political liberty and tolerance. This is really funny, for it is about the best description of religion we have seen for a long time. To crown it, the *Journal* goes on to say that "critical thought and judgment, freedom of conscience, are fundamentally Christian ideas." One would be charitable and add that the writer of the above must have been a cub reporter who has never even heard of Loyola, Calvin, Luther, not to mention Lecky and Joseph McCabe. The history of Christianity is authoritarian in the extreme, and the biblical injunction "Thus saith the Lord," made tolerance and criticism impossible.

It is seldom that the *Universe* does not report at least one miracle at Lourdes, although compared with Spanish, Portuguese and Irish Catholic newspapers, it is very circumspect. This week we are more inclined to think that the case of Marie Lepretre is more an occasion of either inferior plaster, bad workmanship, or clumsy stretcher bearers. Marie lay encased in plaster and as the Blessed Sacrament passed, her stretcher jerked and the plaster broke into small pieces. The next day, Marie walked unaided to the baths. An obvious miracle when one considers that some plaster casts almost need a hammer and chisel to break.

The Holy Year racket is not coming up to expectations at least so far. The *Chicago Tribune* reports that Rome authorities have revised their original estimate of pilgrims from 4,000,000 to 2,000,000. The all-round high prices make Rome more expensive than most places, and it is said that pilgrims have had to pay even lift attendants to take them to their bedrooms after a hard day "doing the holy places." It looks almost as if the Pope will have to fall back on the usual stunts of Peter's pence and collections for "Mother Hubbards" for the benighted heathen.

The Rev. E. Rudman, of Hove, complains that preaching the Gospel is "a thankless task." "Even the natives of China, India or the Congo," he said, "did not ask us to bring them the joyful news, but if we had waited to be asked, these places would still be the dark places of the earth, full of cruelty." Like Humpty Dumpty, when a parson says something it means something different from the usual sense, for no one but a Christian would suggest that the places mentioned are exactly havens of peace and light even after all these years of missionary effort.

Mr. Percy Hitchcock, a well-known Spiritualist, emphatically declares "that God will not stop war." Man's "earth" destiny is in his own hands, and God leaves him to get on with the job. For once we thoroughly agree with a Spiritualist. God can't and won't stop a war, simply because there is no God. He is a myth based on man's ignorance, credulity, and stupidity.

After nearly a years' hard work, the "Instruction on Faith" lectures arranged to follow up the complete failure of the London Mission have concluded. The speakers included the Bishop of London, the Dean of St. Paul's, and members of the Preachers' Group. The *Church Times*, in announcing this, says nothing whatever of the results of this "Instruction," not a line

about the "converts." Is not the true reason simply that no converts were made and that the lectures were just as futile as the Mission?

Whether present day parsons do or do not believe in "divine healing" is a problem for the Church to settle. But it is a fact that the Bible teaches it, and that there are thorough believing Christians who would rather die than call in a prosaic, materialistic, and secular doctor to cure them. According to the Annual Report of the Churches' Council of Healing, there appears to be a "popular" confusion between the methods of "divine" healing and "faith" healing—even "among instructed Churchmen," and this is hindering the good work. The increase in the number of public healing services is to be "deprecated" because of wrong motives or preparation, and also because it is making co-operation with doctors difficult. And in all this boring discussion, the poor patient is completely forgotten.

In Irish law these days a mixed marriage pledge—that is, any Protestant marrying a Catholic who pledges the children to be brought up as Catholics—is binding. A case came up the other day before Mr. Justice Duffy, and he insisted that in the highest interests of the community and the State the pledge had to be upheld. The moral is—avoid a mixed marriage like the plague if religion is a prominent trait in either of the parties. Marriage is difficult in any case, but two religions are sure wreckers.

The Rev. Frank Martin, who is taking the place of the Rev. W. H. Elliott on the *Sunday Graphic*, blandly informs his readers that "the New Testament is never naive and never mawkish." That delightful piece of balderdash, an angel appearing to Joseph in a dream—a real angel, mark you, not a dream angel—to tell him that he wasn't the daddy of Mary's baby, is not a bit naive. It is just beautiful history and therefore actually happened. Mr. Martin does not seem much of an improvement on Mr. Elliott.

Spare a tear for the Rev. N. Southgate whose congregation has dwindled so much because people will do their gardening and odd jobs on Sunday morning. It must be heartbreaking for a parson to see his parishioners enjoying themselves digging or painting the parlour instead of listening to his gloomy sermons. "Give God His part of the day" he says, "and the rest of Sunday is for man's rest so that body and soul may be ready for the coming week." Mr. Southgate is fighting a losing battle, for, to a gardener, no day can compare with Sunday morning gardening, ending with a pint at the local, and no gardener, Christian or otherwise can afford to "give God" this part of the day.

God and his ministers just cannot stand against any kind of competition, even a cafe is more than a match. The Rev. F. R. Chatfield was so furious at his falling congregation, who found that drinking coffee opposite his church was more pleasant than praying, that he complained to the Torquay Council that the open cafe on Sunday morning was having a "deleterious effect on the number of worshippers," and urged that the opening hours be put back. The Council apparently out to please the parson rather than the public, agreed, and the Cafe will now not be allowed to open at the same time as the church. The predominantly Conservative Council evidently do not believe in "free enterprise," and their idea of democracy is purely "Christian."

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,
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TO CORRESPONDENTS

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, John Seibert, giving as long notice as possible.

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

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), DON BASILIO (Italy).

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

Will correspondents please write on one side of the paper, and keep their letters brief. This will give everybody a chance.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

Like everybody else, Freethinkers must eat, and for those who feel that the killing of fine animals for food is a horror which should not be tolerated, the Manchester Vegetarian Society has produced a large number of guides to better and cleaner food. One of the latest is Ivan Baker's *75 Vegetarian Savouries* (1s.), all well-tested recipes, giving a rich and varied menu to what is these days rather a monotonous diet. Even those who do not accept vegetarian claims will find in these recipes many excellent dishes, quite easy to prepare, and an appetising change from one's usual fare. We strongly recommend this little work, and especially to any harassed housewife who simply cannot ring the changes on our rationed diet.

From the Chicago Daily Tribune:—

"A total church membership in the United States of America of 81,497,698 is reported in the *Baptist Handbook, 1950*; and increase of 1.4 per cent. over 1949. Members of Protestant sects total 47,199,576. Roman Catholic 26,718,343. Of the Protestants the largest membership is the Methodist Church, a total of 8,792,569"

English visitors to New York may be pleased to learn that Freethought literature, including *The Freethinker*, can be had at the Bryant Park Newstand, 46, West, 42nd Street, New York, or from *The Truth Seeker*, 88, Park Row, New York, 8.

Again and again, the Lord's Day Observance Society interferes with the people's Sunday. Last week an attempt was made to ban a polo match at Chillesford. How long are we to put up with the attempts of Nosey-barkers to make Sunday as dull as a church service? And what has happened to the "Brighter Sunday Association" that was inaugurated with a fanfare and a flourish last year and which was going to "settle the hash" of "Misery" Martin and his crew?

SACRED MUSIC

WHEN Alec M'Conkey visits my studio he always seats himself at the piano. Music while I work is all right, and Alec is a gifted player, but when he wheels round and lectures me, I can do nothing but listen—to the talk and the tunes.

Sacred music is the stuff to soothe the spirit, he began. Oh, I know you'll tell me there's no difference between sacred and any other music. At one time I held the opinion that I could play "Ta-ra-ra-boom-deay" convincingly as a funeral dirge. But I was wrong. Man has an innate capacity for appreciating that when a tune is wedded to a religious theme, it acquires a dignity, a sublimity; a something or other . . . I discovered that last week in Ballygoeasy.

The Swank-Pots concert party had just bust up, and I was on the point of returning to Belfast when Ned Fogarty, a local newsagent (and bookmaker) persuaded me to play for him at a show he was giving to old age pensioners. He had got the hall for nix on the understanding that he would show a set of holy pictures, the property of Father Snuffagin. What he wanted me to do was to supply a musical running commentary to suit the slides. I wanted a run over or rehearsal, but nothing was in proper order, and the lantern didn't arrive till late.

"Look, Alec," said Ned, "all you've got to do is to keep the old folks merry and bright. Sure them ould pinchers is aisy to plaze."

"Yes, but if his reverence rumbles some of my tunes—"

"No fear of that. Most likely he won't be here, but the old boy's dotin' and as deaf as a post. Sure, all the bad weemen of the country come here to him to make their confession—they can tell the truth, and as he doesn't hear, he lets them off light. Ould Biddy Mulligan was just after telling me how she pulled his leg. She confessed that she drowned her five children, cut her husband's throat, and committed polygamy with the bishop. 'Is that all, me child?' says his reverence. 'For your penance, say three Hail Marys' . . ."

It seemed pretty safe, Jack, so I fell for it. There was a good turn-out as I seated myself at the piano. In a few well-chosen words, as we say, Ned told them that the pictures were by the courtesy of Father Snuffagin (loud cheers) and then we were off.

I've had some experience of bad lanterns, indifferent slides, and incompetent operators, but Ned Fogarty's fit-up was the limit. Some pictures were coloured, some were not, and a few had titles or what we now know as captions. The focus was bad, the light sputtered, and even went out, the lens steamed, slides went in upside down or wrong way round—but "them ould pinchers" were not too critical.

There was no system or sequence, chronological or otherwise. But as it happened the first one shown was Adam and Eve in the garden. In glorious Hecticolor. Nature defeating nudism cleverly by fortuitous exotic growths. As I surveyed the wondrous scene, I had no doubt about the music. I put down the loud pedal and played:—

"If you were the only girl in the world,
And I was the only boy . . ."

It was a hit, a palpable hit. As Fred seemingly couldn't get the slide to move, I thought about forbidden fruit, "Yes, we have no bananas to-day" worked in nicely, "I've got a lovely bunch of Cokernuts" was a bit wide of the mark, but I came back to the Bible with "An apple for the teacher."

It was quite a good beginning but I slipped up with Moses. The picture showed a wee baby in a basket, and a lovely girl looking at it. I was playing myself in with "The Spring Song" when Ned gave me the tip. With what relevancy I know not, I burst out with a full-blooded "Toreador" which, however, was well received, stamping of feet helping the rhythm. Too late I discovered that I had mistaken the reference to bull-rushes! In the next picture Moses, now an old man, had led his people for quite a while—there was some claim to historicity when I played:—

"We've been together now for forty years,
And it don't seem a day too much . . ."

I was awkwardly placed when the old chap showed the tablet on which God had written the commandments. Still, "The stone outside Dan Murphy's door" was appreciated by the pinchers.

With the Miracles we were on safer ground. If that is the right word for Christ walking on the waves. Its showing was certainly a vindication of the miraculous, for, at first, the slide was put in upside down; the effect was that on an equilibrist spinning a magic carpet with his feet. Ned was quick to put this right—too quick in fact, for this time he got the picture in sideways. We saw a cataleptic Christ with head in the Occident, feet firmly pressed against the (corrugated) Iron Curtain of the East! Clearly symbolic, Christ uniting all men. But I grieve to say the audience laughed. When the picture eventually came right way up, Ned's success was rewarded with a cheer and I played briskly: "A life on the ocean wave," "Sailing, sailing home again," and "I do like to be beside the seaside."

Noah's Ark was simple. With a moo-moo here and a ba-ba there, I worked in "Old Macdonald had a farm" and Ned came in with realistic animal imitations. His pig noises were perfect.

Jumping from one historical epoch to another put a strain on me, but I evolved what I might call a generic technique; when (I thought) it was an Old Testament subject, I played "Begin the Beguine" as background music: and then, usually as I was breaking into something appropriate, Ned changed the subject! Difficult to avoid a fox paw? I wouldn't know, for nothing succeeds like excess, so I let the foxes pass so quickly that nobody could see a tail.

Comparatively, the New Testament was easy. Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday gave me a winner with "The Donkey Serenade." The scene at the Temple called for "Money is the Root of all Evil," and at the Resurrection, I thought most appropriate, "He's dead but he won't lie down."

For the changing of water into wine, I gave "Another little drink won't do us any harm," and I faded out with "Beer, glorious beer."

There came a portrait of a very tearful bloke with hands clasped. It wasn't our Lord, or anybody else's Lord that I could think of. I played a bar or two of Handel's Largo, then Ned let a slide fall with a clatter. I burst out with:—

"Hush, hush, whisper who dares,
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers."

This number got an encore, and as the slide came on again, Ned broke something else to heighten the effect. The ould pinchers literally howled the "hush, hush"; it would, indeed, have been a brave fellow who would risk whispering during Christopher's supplications.

Came the last picture. The scene was the stable at Bethlehem, the traditional group. I played all the "Mary" tunes I could think of. "Ma Mammy" and

"My Yiddisher Momma," then I thought I would do a turn for Joe. No, not Stalin, but Holy Joe. There he stood, the ould lad, a pathetic figure looking questioningly into the face of the infant. I had an inspiration, and triumphantly played the tune that I felt sure represented his thought at the moment. So pleased was I at my brainwave that as I played I gave voice to the words:—

"Is you is or is you ain't ma baby?"

At this moment, I became aware that Father Snuffagin had come in and was in conversation with Ned Fogarty. Evidently he was uncertain as to the reception of the holy pictures.

"What are the words of that secular music?" he asked in a loud voice.

Ned cupped his hands to the priest's ear, but before he could give voice to a lie I took the initiative and gave my buddy a signal. As I thundered out the last tune, Ned beckoned the audience to rise. Father Snuffagin catching a familiar strain smiled happily, and actually made some show at leading the singing. The ould pinchers did me proud the way they responded to:—

"Faith of our fathers, Holy Faith,
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword.
We will be true to thee till death,
We will be true to thee till death."

Ned Fogarty and I were profoundly moved, and I might even say touched, when his reverence shook hands with us and thanked us most thankfully. . . .

Ned, with emotion, said he was completely and almost quite, overwhelmed by the overwhelming enthusiasm. It was a privilege for him and his talented associate to bring a ray of sunshine into the evening of the ould pinchers' day. They were, indeed, "Kind hearts and gentle people, who would never, never let you down."

J. EFFEL.

THE MORAL PERFECTION OF JESUS

I WAS brought up to believe that the Gospel picture of Jesus is a picture of moral perfection; that He was the only man who ever had been perfect. Re-reading the Gospels to-day, they leave me with a very different impression. Let us consider some of the Gospel characteristics.

When faced by criticism He never makes the least attempt to conciliate His critics, but says, repeatedly, what He knows will exasperate them. He utters bitter curses on cities which decline to bow-down to Him, or to receive His preaching disciples. To His own disciples, often, He is anything but pleasant—usually for their lack of faith, as with the case of the demoniac shortly after the Transfiguration; for faith in Him is of course the virtue of all virtues. . . . "I am meek and lowly of heart"; as if any man who really was meek would advertise himself as such. While, in the very next chapter, "A greater than Solomon is here." Again: "All that ever came before me were thieves and robbers . . ." what really great teacher (Gotama, let us say, or Kung-fu-tse) would ever have said such a thing as that? At a supper given in Bethany, Martha waits on Him with assiduity, to be met with something like a rebuff, whereas Mary is commended for her adoration of Him. After His resurrection, we find Him much the same: on the journey to Emmaus He talks long and eloquently, and His subject is . . . Himself.

In another walk of life, He evades the tribute-money puzzle with a clever verbal quibble like that of a petti-

"Blessed are the peacemakers." Yet not long after: "I come not to bring peace but a sword"—which assuredly He has, through century on century. In His own period, too, by publicly denouncing the rulers of that period, scribes and Pharisees, priests and Levites (the two latter in the adored parable of the Good Samaritan), He incites the populace against them, thus preparing civil strife which, in fact, blazed out at the time of the siege of Jerusalem.

He is not a gentleman. At the outset of His career He is rude and undutiful to His mother. When entertained to supper by a Pharisee (the very class He so bitterly denounces) He is rude and ungracious to His host.

In proclaiming Yahwè as God, He sets his imprimatur on the count-crimes of Yahwè, in particular the atrocious massacres of the Book of Joshua, which, as a Jew, must have been known to Him.

Often He is far from kind. At the notorious Gadarene episode, we hear much of the demoniac, but what of the unfortunate swine? Jesus consigns them to a death far indeed from instantaneous, not even rapid, but protracted and distressing: He is cruel to animals. Not to mention that they belonged to someone or other, whose property He destroys.

Some of His parables are unloveable, such as the fate of the man who had not on a wedding garment. We hear far too often of "outer darkness where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He tells His disciples that he speaks to the public in parables on purpose that they shall not understand, "lest they should be converted and I should heal them." Such a pronouncement, if made by some "heathen" teacher, Christians would stigmatise as wicked.

When foretelling that His second coming in power and great glory will take the world by surprise, He illustrates from the Flood (in which myth, He, manifestly, believes). One would have expected at least a passing note of pity for its countless innocent victims, women and young children, not to mention unoffending animals. No such note can be detected, He is completely stony-hearted.

That is can put forward such a picture as one of moral perfection is surely the heaviest indictment of the creed of Christianity.

EDWARD GREENLY, D.Sc., F.G.S.

SWEET ARE THE USES OF ADVERTISEMENT

LET us hand it to the Roman Catholic Church. In matters of advertisement, it has the other Churches beaten to a frazzle. Even the Church of Christ, Scientist, is a babe in arms by the side of the wily priests in the Vatican.

Holy Year, for example, got and still gets all the publicity it needs in our—mostly—Protestant Press. Everything that the Pope said or thought was duly recorded as news, news for which a gasping Protestant public was thirsting. And it got it. Even now, almost every item with Holy Year Rome as its subject, will get free space in our national newspapers.

Then there is a documentary on Holy Year which is being shown all over the country. Whether cinema-goers like it or not, they will have to sit through it—and it must be confessed that it is interesting enough to be shown. The film is cleverly produced, the shots of Palestine including, of course, Jerusalem, as a prelude to Rome, are well done. We see exactly where "our Lord" was born, where he walked, and where he was buried. It is all quite authentic, and I am sure that not

one member of the audience in ten thousand would question a single item.

All the familiar show places of Rome are also screened, until we get the grand climax, the Pope being carried about by his devoted followers, showering "blessings" everywhere, and looking exceedingly comic in his fantastic headpiece, a replica of a large fish head. The cardinals are just as funny, and I could not help chuckling to myself as these fish heads kept bobbing up and down, and taking my attention away from the picture as a whole.

The accompanying monologue was spoken by Wilfred Pickles in his most reverent tones—as befits a convert, of course. He was describing his "faith," and he let you know it as well as he could considering that the producers had to be as circumspect as possible in not blatantly allowing propaganda to be too prominently in evidence.

But from the advertising point of view it was all first class. Here was true Christianity as it came straight from the mouth of Jesus himself. Mr. Pickles slyly admitted that there were other faiths—but his was the real thing. It was Rome's Holy Year, not Canterbury's or Jerusalem's or Mecca's. The Pope acted beautifully, so did the huge crowds acknowledging him as Christ's representative on earth.

The B.B.C. and the cinema have been veritable godsend to a dying faith. It will take a long tussle from the "intellectual" point of view to cope with these two institutions which are doing so much to bolster it up and which have perhaps delayed its disintegration a hundred years.

H. CUTNER.

CHURCHES, CASH AND CLERGY

SOME time ago. The London Society issued an account of the London City Churches with a comment on the "scandal" referring to City clergy, living in luxury, away from their parishes, and receiving incomes of £1,000 yearly; and, that Sunday congregations are few. Quite recently, Members of Parliament raised the question for inquiry concerning money, and lands bequeathed to the clergy for purposes now obsolete, and where is the money which can no longer be used?

In some of these City of London churches there are large painted notice boards giving details of benefactors and their gifts; for example, John Wardell, 1656, gave "The White Bear" Inn to the Grocers' Company to pay the Vicar of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate Street, for providing an iron and glass lantern and its upkeep for ever to guide travellers at Houndsditch waterside all night long.

Eliza Brown bequeathed a house, freehold, with land in Warwick Lane, for the poor of Christchurch, Newgate Street, to pray over her burial stone; long since removed.

John Hall bequeathed to St. Clement's, Eastcheap, a dwelling house with land to provide two turkeys with sausages, every Thursday before Easter, as love feasts in settlement of parishioners' married quarrels.

Giles Kelsey requests the clergy priests to keep a lamp alight at the altar of St. Dionis, Fenchurch Street, for his soul and those of penitents, day and night, for which he gave, absolutely, land rentals, to St. Dionis, which church was demolished years ago.

Dr. Thos. White, by his will, left a spacious house, the rent of which was for the vicar to provide a dinner, every quarter, for himself and his wardens, and to keep in repair the parish pump at Aldgate. Fifty pound was invested, with interest, for the Vicar of St. Sepulchre's, Holborn, to say certain words to be delivered to all

prisoners awaiting execution in Newgate Jail, and the churchwardens to receive payment to toll the church bell when prisoners were hanged. No Newgate, no prisoners to be hanged there, but the £50, with 2½ per cent. interest, is still to somebody's benefit.

Another instance showing how these bequests cannot be used, according to the testator's wishes, and how the value of London land has increased since 1544 when John Hasilwood gave a freehold site in Bishopsgate Street to produce £12 2s. 8d. annually to pay four bedesmen and three bedeswomen eightpence each weekly, in money, and two sacks of coal yearly, to pray over his tombstone, removed years ago: the said John Hasilwood's legacy is now valued at £128,225, according to the records kept in the Guildhall Library.

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

FLYING DISCS

THROUGH the merits of two professionals of Como and one worthy citizen of Milan who have seen "flying discs" with their own very eyes, these modern vehicles have, at last, entered Italian history; all over the world they have been seen, pursued, photographed and the Italian public already grew a sense of frustration, an inferiority complex which resulted in general incredulity. You cannot convince us easily of the reality of something that is said to have happened over the Sargassian Sea (which nobody knows where that is) or in Damascus (of St. Paul's conversion fame and, consequently, heartedly unpopular with the Italians who, in their majority, are anti-clerical even though they do not show it openly). Now that we have our discs, we may talk discs without restraint (and without having to run home for looking up the map to find such places as Damascus, Como, Milan).

But, first of all, shall we call them "saucers," as we used to a couple of years ago, or "discs" as they do now? The term of "saucers" is more familiar but reeks of kitchen stuff, so it is unable to convey the valour of authority. "Flying saucers" reminds one of the concomitant phenomenon of a matrimonial dispute. "Discs," on the other hand, sounds quite more gentlemanlike; immediately you come to think of a radiogram in a posh flat with a reproduction of Picasso—or, at least, of that ancient phonograph and the doggie listening to "His Master's Voice." And that is highly appropriate. The expression "flying discs" thus represents the victory of snobism over domestic issues.

After that we come to the problem of what we ought to think of the content. Who could doubt that these discs exist now that they have been seen pressing forward, at high speed, from the Swiss border, as a contraband intercepted by our brave customs officers? However, are these anti-aircraft weapons or vernal meteors? Comets or means of inter-planetary locomotion? Do they emanate from Mars, Venus or Mercury? Strangely enough, for a long time they have been spoken of in a way suggesting that there is Life on another planet, yet the Church has been prudent enough to keep silent. You will remember (though you are not old enough to) poor old Galileo who was persecuted by the Inquisition for saying that, in contradiction to the biblical notion, our earthly lump keeps spinning like a top. Well, in those days the Church meant business (as the saying goes) and no sooner something not fully squaring the canonical scriptures was pronounced, than you found yourself anathematised and ex-communicated, as easily as one says "trash." But nowadays the Catholic papers are printing reports on "flying discs" without the least attempt at refuting (as they ought to do) that these projectiles come from

some other planet! Why doesn't the Church (as seems to be her duty) immediately shriek and declare that other planets there is not, there cannot be and must not be Life, since there is no Pope there?

Abridged translation from "Don Basilio."

P. G. R.

A FREETHINKER'S RHYMING ALPHABET

A's the Agnostic—the bloke in between,
Who thinks thought unthinkable—see what I mean?
B stands for Bradlaugh—a man amongst men,
Pushed out of Parliament—stormed it again.
C—Chapman Cohen, our leader for years,
Work full of wisdom—fights without fears.
D means the Deity—blind, deaf and dumb,
Silent and sulky—his Kingdom won't come.
E's the Emotion religionists show,
They think that it's thought—but they don't want to know.
F denotes Faith, which fed the fierce fires
With fearless Freethinkers the world now admires.
G is the Gosh, awful future in store,
After ten billion years, even Heaven's a bore.
H means the Hell that's in store for us all,
There's no need to wait—it's just within call.
I's Ideology—stiff, straight and stark,
Pushed from the platform—pranged in the park.
J means Jehovah, who sits in a cloud,
We know he's up there—'cos he thunders aloud.
K denotes King, which believers reveal,
When down on their knees, just to grovel and squeal.
L stands for Legion, the loud devil's name,
There are still plenty left—and they sound just the same.
M is the Music—the organ and choir,
You don't have to think—you just stand and admire.
N means Nonentity—one in each church,
If you look for a leader, you're left in the lurch.
O is the Opium—Marx called it, once,
It may be all that—but it brings in the "bunce."
P stands for Paley—"design" he explains,
We remember him now for his watch—and his chains!
Q denotes Question—the babe soon says "why"
So don't let your answer be "Pie in the sky!"
R means Relief, when we rise from our knees,
It's no answer to prayer, but it's certainly ease.
S, the Salvation they're offering me,
If I'll bind myself—never again to think free!
T's the Torment in the sweet bye-and-bye,
If you don't book your harp and your home in the sky.
U is Unknowable—what does that mean?
We'll never find out till the mortician's been.
V is the Victory freethought is winning
(Two parsons can't meet without winking and grinning).
W—the Wicked—the friends of Old Nicks',
Who spend Sunday evening in watching the "Flicks."
X—Xestential—the new school of thought,
I'm starting another when this one is "bought."
Y is the Yes-men who prays with the priest,
He's good for a tanner each Sunday, at least.
Z is the Zealot, who burnt, hurt and slew
Those who dared to stand up and say what they heed true.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

AN ESSAY CONTEST

PARTICULARS have just reached us of an Essay Competition which, we are sure, will interest many readers. It is called "The World Humanism Essay Contest," and there must be many would-be writers who would like to enter. Here are the particulars:—
On behalf of world understanding and peace, the Com-

mittee of World Humanism of the American Humanist Association announces a forthcoming World Humanism Essay Contest (WHEC).

Subjects of the essays may be on the following or related topics:

Humanism and UNESCO.

Future Steps to World Humanism.

Humanism as a World-Unifying Faith.

Humanism—Ethical Basis of World-Co-operation.

Science for Humanity—A Programme for Humanism.

Humanism—Alternative to Totalitarian Religion or Politics.

The contest is open to anyone not a citizen of the U.S.A. Essays should not exceed 2,500 words. Prizes are offered as follows:

First Prize \$200. Second Prize \$100. Third Prize \$50.

Fourth Prize \$25.

Essays should be submitted in English if possible, but entries in French, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Spanish, or German will be accepted. Judges will be announced later.

Essays are to be addressed to the American Humanist Association, 137, South Walnut Street, Yellow Springs, Ohio, U.S.A., accompanied by a statement of nationality of the author, and postmarked not later than December 31, 1950. The A.H.A. reserves all publication and property rights to essays submitted.

This contest is part of an effort to establish closer co-operation among Humanists throughout the world. Humanism can be developed as an alternative both to authoritarian religion and to political totalitarianisms, for it is a belief in the ability of men together to secure a lasting peace, a democratic world order, and a satisfying and significant personal existence.

A number of essays will be published in *The Humanist*. Many will be compiled into a volume of world opinion regarding ethical demands on both religion and government by a humanistic philosophy.

Information, literature, and issues of *The Humanist* will be sent upon request.

LLOYD MORAIN,

Chairman, Committee on World Humanism, A.H.A.

EDWIN H. WILSON,

Executive Director, A.H.A. Editor, *The Humanist*.

CORRESPONDENCE

APPRECIATION

SIR.—I appreciated I. Effel's recent article much, and should like to see more of them.

Apparently he has been a Roman Catholic. I should think that articles of his dealing with the attitude of the evangelical Protestants and the Papists towards each other would be instructive, interesting and amusing.—Yours, etc.,
H. PURDY.

CHRISTIANITY AND FREETHOUGHT

SIR.—I think that many who have in the past called themselves Freethinkers and Rationalists will be more than a little perturbed by some recent arguments in your columns. I refer to the discussion by Mr. King and Mr. Cutner on Christian ethics, and the argument on the public sale of contraceptives which has now been going on for some time. Many people (I am, I admit, one of them) who would regard themselves as both Freethinkers and Rationalists would say that if the line taken by Mr. Cutner—"an eye for an eye"—and by those who support the free sale of contraceptives in automatic machines is the line of Freethought then the case for some sort of religious view is stronger than we formerly thought.

Indeed, that leads to a wider issue, my view on which has probably become perceptible to some of my readers here in recent months. Is Freethought such a purely destructive

force as has sometimes been thought? May it not be that some of the more rational religious bodies, ranging from the Ethical Societies through the Unitarians and the Society of Friends to the Modernist wing of the Church of England really have as much claim to the names of Freethought and Rationalism as the N.S.S. and the R.P.A.? After all, it is possible to come around to some theological position such as that which I have indicated by a pure piece of rational consideration.

A letter is no place in which to set out the full argument on such a wide issue; but I hope to return to this in an article one of these days. Yet I think that in this twentieth century the divisions of opinion which were so marked and so rigid fifty years ago are becoming more fluid.

I'm sure that this letter will worry and annoy some readers, but it says something that I have been wanting to say for a long time. I hope that I shall not merely be thought another good man gone (or going) wrong!—Yours, etc.,

JOHN ROWLAND.

BAAL SABAOOTH

SIR.—Interesting though Mr. Ridley's opinion is, I do not consider that there is any justification in assuming "Baal Sabaoth" to be the "God of (a particular human) Army."

The plural "zabâ'ôth"—status constructus of "zabâ'"—means: band, crowd, host, serving mostly in temples or for war; yet, at the same time, it denotes the host of planetar angels (or animated stars), and "Ba'al" or "Jâhwâh-z'ba'ôth" is clearly the Lord of the Starred Heavens. This explains why this heavenly host can join battle together with the Israelite warriors as in the Song of Debôrah, the most ancient piece of the Hebrew scriptures:—

"They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." (Judges, v, 20.)

Yours, etc.,

P. G. ROY.

OBITUARY

HARRY EVETTS

We regret to learn of the death of Harry Evetts, an enthusiastic member of the N.S.S., who died in Nottingham on July 27 last. He was very well known in the musical world as a fine conductor, winning 36 first prizes, and in addition was a first class cornet player himself. Interested in the Salvation Army in his youth, he got hold of Paine's *Age of Reason* and thenceforth became a convinced Freethinker. Dying at the age of 81, he expressed a wish for a secular funeral, which was ably conducted by Mr. Tom Mosley. The Chief of the Derby Police arranged for four members of the police band to be present. Our sincerest sympathies go to his surviving relatives.

H. S.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, R. BILLINGS and G. WOODCOCK. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—7-45 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, R. BILLINGS and G. WOODCOCK. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, R. BILLINGS and G. WOODCOCK. (St. Mary's Gate).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK.

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

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Messrs. A. ELSMERE and T. M. MOSLEY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park, Herne Hill).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

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