

God in the Test-Tube

by Bertram D. Wolfe

HAS SCIENCE DISCOVERED GOD? A Symposium of Modern Scientific Opinion, by Mather, Millikan, Eddington, Curtis, Conklin, Einstein, Huxley, Patrick, McDougall, Thompson, Pupin, Langdon-Davies, Stetson, Jeans, Lodge, Bird; edited by Edward H. Cotton. New York, Thos. Y. Crowell, Inc., 1931.

This symposium provides startling evidence of the decay of bourgeois culture. The capitalist class in its heroic days carried on a determined struggle to liberate science from the degrading position of hand-maiden to theology. The revolutionary bourgeoisie needed science and found a determined enemy in established religion. Therefore, the vanguard of the rising middle class was materialistic and atheistic.

But the bourgeois revolution ended in terror at the rising spectre of Communism and in compromise with feudalism and medievalism. The capitalist ruling class must be preserved for the people and ended by "silently dropping their free-thought, as a youngster, when sea-sickness creeps upon him, quietly drops the burning cigar he has swaggeringly brought on board." (Engels).

Nevertheless, as long as capitalism remained a progressive and expanding system, it dared not replace the shackles that it had struck off the limbs of the good giant, Science. Only one prohibition it placed upon the giant: "Keep your eyes on the ground. Plough your own field. Do not lift your eyes to survey the whole universe at once. Above all, keep away from the siren, Philosophy." And so the Giant did as he was told. Still he could not avoid feeling his strength and raising his eyes to look around him; when he did so, the earth shook and capitalism trembled.

The crisis in science has a twofold origin. On the one hand, the very progress of science makes it impossible to avoid philosophy any longer. On the other, the decay of capitalism carries with it a profound ideological decay as well, which seeks to impose on science a thoroughly reactionary anti-scientific philosophy. At the very moment that science is getting to the end of its chain, the chain is being shortened and made heavier; the striking off of the shackles is inseparable from the proletarian revolution.

Out of the Mouths of Babes

This "scientific" symposium is adorned with a fitting text: "To our children, who teach us more of Eternal Goodness than all the sages."

What could be more appropriate in a book in which the sages set themselves the task of backing up the "wisdom" of the children and telling the frightened bourgeoisie that the spectre of Communism isn't real, but God is real and spooks are real and there really is a Santa Claus!

"All this nonsense (one cannot even call it "learned nonsense") is supported by the authority of some great, near and not-so-near-great names in the field of science. Alongside of Eddington and Jeans and Einstein are found the names of philosophical and scientific babbles and charlatan "psychic researchers." In fact, the clergyman-editor of the symposium (who boasts that he is listed in "Who's Who" as the author of "Theodore Roosevelt, the American" and the "Ideals of Theodore Roosevelt") has selected the contribution on "psychic research" of J. Malcolm Bird, which deals with mediums crystal gazing and ghosts that specialize in furniture-moving, as "the important paper which concludes this discussion." It serves Einstein and Jeans and Eddington right. He who goes swimming in a sewer must not object to the company of rats.

When Is a Scientist?

In spite of its pretension to be a "symposium of modern scientific opinion", there is not a word of science, not a trace of the scientific spirit in the book. It furnishes evidence of what should be an obvious truism; namely, **not every opinion of a scientist is a scientific opinion.** Thus, the fact that Sir Oliver Lodge knows considerable about physics, mathematics and wireless telegraphy doesn't prevent him from being the most gullible victim of the medium-quacks and the table-telegraphing ghosts as soon as he gets out of the laboratory. And the fact that Michael Pupin's discoveries in electro-mechanics "have saved telephone companies \$100,000,000" does not oblige us to take seriously his contention that his researches in light and sound have proved that they are "God's message which calls you to his altar to praise his everlasting glory" and "the whole terrestrial globe is a cosmic church bell . . . responding to the clappers of the luminous stars," (or alternatively "responding to the strokes of the solar clappers") and adding its voice "to the celestial choir which is declaring the glory of God." Such stuff is not science. It is not even bad science. It is merely bad poetry.

The Gods of "Science"

Along with the bad poetry the book is noisome with crude theology. The

more subtle contributors give Religion pointers on how to dress her, conceal her time-worn wrinkles in glittering enamel and make herself less unglamorous to a "modern intellect" (i.e., to a scientist trying to be religious.)

Drop your three-dimensional God, says Cotton. In the fourth dimension anything can happen! Define the Savior in scientific language, bids Millikan and calls Jesus "the finest qualities of universal energy thus far displayed by man." Science deals only with measurable things, says Mather—by the way, a methodological error—therefore let us make Jesus a measuring rod, "the standard by which each individual may gauge his own ideals of conduct and philosophy of life."

The more "enlightened" foreign scientists sound the warning: Be less crudely anthropomorphic. God should be more tenuous and elusive. He should not put all His eggs in one basket. He should diversify His investments, so that if one stock goes down another may go up. Thus Eddington: "The religious reader may well be content that I have not offered him a God revealed by the quantum theory, and therefore liable to be swept away in the next scientific revolution."

But the American philistine "scientists", who make up the bulk of the contributors, do not even confine themselves to the elaborate refinements and sophistical disguises of modern theological casuistry. They do not know enough theology and philosophy for that. Men who would be ashamed to offer the phlogiston theory or the theory of the four primal elements as something new, do not even bother to look up the past discussions in theology and philosophy; they dish up stale old arguments, hardly warmed over sufficiently to kill the mildew and proclaim these as the "latest discovery", science's "last-word" contribution to religion.

The "Science" of God

And what theology these men of science offer us! Note that Millikan does not discover merely religion in the laboratory, but Christianity! Not merely Christianity either, but on closer perusal it becomes clear that what he found in the cosmic rays was Unitarianism! Conklin, Cotton, Mather, Millikan, Curtis and Lodge offer a God that rewards and punishes. Jeans makes God a mathematician "working outside time and space" and playing with mathematical formulae which become time, space and matter. Eddington defines God as

"Him thru whom comes power and guidance." Pupin makes Him a great bellringer with the earth as a bell and the stars as clappers calling all scientists to church. Millikan finds that the Creator is "constantly on the job." Patrick makes of Him a "creative agency", an "organizing principle", a "drift or tendency", an "evolutionary urge", a "struggle for freedom", an "initial and eternal principle of growth and expansion." Cotton makes him a "Supreme Architect," an "infinite control" of the electron and the supposedly expanding universe, a "power outside of us that works for righteousness", "Cosmic Purpose", "Eternal Reality", "First Cause" and "Eternal Goodness".

If only these scientific fellows make up their minds and agree on some one "hypothesis" and "test it out"—since they insist that they can "find God by the laboratory method" (Cotton). Multiplying contradictory and meaningless words, piling empty phrase on empty phrase until there is a windy mountain of vacuity, never was a laboratory method!

Puns for Proof.

It is a thankless task to analyze and refute all the elusive methods of "proof" with which these scientists satisfy themselves once they are outside of the laboratory. The favorite method is a kind of word-play proof by punning! Some writers play with the word relativity, jumping from the special and general theories of relativity of which they betray no general or special understanding, to the "relativity of conduct", to a God who "is inside the time process; but also outside of it." This, Cotton gravely assures us, "happens to be but one of many implications of relativity, indicating the contribution the theory has to make in the search for God." Others play with the word "miracle." "To the man of science," writes Mather, "every event is a miracle." Mather forgets that where everything is a miracle, there are no miracles at all.

The favorite, pun-proof, however, by which God is to be conjured into existence, is an endless playing with the word "spirit." "They worked", writes Cotton, "in the spirit of science" (*Spirit* is italicized). But spirit the "proof" goes on, is religious. Therefore, the spirit of science is religious! Therefore, science is religion! Therefore religion is scientific! I am inevitably reminded of that old conundrum about the similarity of a line on a sheet of paper to a lazy dog. "A line on a sheet of paper is an ink line plain. An inclined plane is a slope up. A slow pup is a lazy dog. Q.E.D."

(Concluded in the next issue)

THE TRIAL OF MANABENDRA NATH ROY

(Continued from page 3)

travelling expenses for them all. This is to make it practically impossible for him to defend himself, in violation of the laws of the government. Besides, it is an established practice that when the accused is held in prison, pending trial, the defence witnesses are called at the expense of the government. In all political cases, when the accused are in custody, under trial, copies of the records of the case are supplied to them free of cost. In this case, the accused has been disallowed the privilege; at the same time he is not permitted to see his friends in order to make financial arrangements for the defense. The people in charge of the defense are not allowed to speak to the prisoner.

All other political prisoners are allowed to read newspapers. Roy is not allowed to have them even on his own account. In the beginning all the principal newspapers and journals of the country used to come for him in the jail free. Soon, he was not allowed to have them. In spite of repeated representations, the prisoner cannot have even one single newspaper. Books are allowed but those coming from abroad are held up by the superintendent of the jail, without giving any reason. The prisoner has absolutely no way of learning which book, letters, etc. coming for him are withheld. Similarly with the letters

written by him. In his letters he is not allowed to write about his trial. For example he is not allowed to inform his friends abroad that he is not permitted to have newspapers or that their letters do not reach him.

The trial is half over. It is likely to be finished before Christmas. The prisoner is awaiting the Christmas present of imperialism. The government is terribly nervous and wants to finish the trial as soon as possible, so that they will have this prisoner safely locked up away from any public contact. But the calculations of imperialism may go wrong.

Fraternally yours,

AJOY KUMAR GHOSH
In Charge-Publicity
Roy Defense Committee

Dumb Dora Sells Gillettes

As to the Gillette Ads, what are we to say of Dumb Dora who is pictured looking at her husband's face in bed or at the breakfast table before he shaves and asking: "I wonder if I'm losing my husband's love?" instead of: "I wonder if his face is sore" or: "I wonder if he's growing a beard?" Just dumb that's all. But what's the difference—the ad sells razor blades, doesn't it? And maybe it gives Dumb Dora a talking point besides!

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