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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Man and His God

WHEN I was quite a youth I remember acting as a go-between with regard to some workmen and an employer. In the course of the conversation I remarked that what the employer proposed was not honest. With a straightforwardness that I have always remembered he accepted the indictment, but retorted with "Honest! Who is honest?" I declined an explanation, but I have remembered the problem. Who is honest? Evidently honesty has so many shades and differs so much with so many people and places that we had better, for the time being at least, side-track the problem.

And now I find myself—I fancy from one who is not well acquainted with either Freethought or "The Freethinker"—faced with a charge of robbery. I will not say that even taking the word in its common meaning I could not commit a robbery, for a sense of having robbed so often depends upon not being found out. And in one form or another, either in stealing a goose from a common or a common from the goose, the crime of robbery is very common. Its commonness is illustrated by stacks of prominent names that decorate our island history. Land has been stolen, huge fortunes made, civic and national honours secured in ways that were certainly criminal in quality if not in name. It would be well, then, not to be too critical over the quality of many who have come down to us as "Great Englishmen" or "devoted patriots" or noted for their services at home and abroad. So I decline to put in a defence against a general indictment, and confine myself to the specific case given.

The specific accusation is that I have robbed, or seek to rob, men of their God. And my answer to that is a plea of "Not guilty." Why should I rob a man of his God? What use have I for a god, anyway? We cannot find a place for him—or it, for we do not know whether the said "god" is a thing or a person—in our mental storehouse. Our problem is not to find a god—the earth still swarms with them—but to what use can he be put when he is discovered.

Once upon a time things were different. Then "God" took a definite form and possessed realisable attributes. He gave orders and played the very devil with those who disobeyed them. He could help a nation to win a war, and by inference cause the opposite number to lose it. "God" was then something very real, as solid as the three-headed giants and beautiful fairies in which children rejoice. But when a god degenerates from a person to a principle there is nothing left to bother about, for a "principle" remains constant in its operations. It cannot be altered by prayers or petitions. No preacher could ask his congregation to kneel and offer thanks to a "principle." A principle neither listens nor responds. So I plead "Not guilty." The charge is a ridiculous one.

Man and His Past

Let us try another approach. I fall back upon Shakespeare. In the plainest of words he categorically lays down this rule: "He that is robbed, not wanting what is stolen, let him not know't and he's not robbed at all." When a man is in the state of mind indicated by being robbed of his god, he does not go about hunting for a lost deity; he appears to be quite unaware of having lost anything worth recovering. Decidedly he does not appear to be "wanting what is stolen." It will be noted that the Shakespearean category does not include God; that would have merely exchanged one absurdity for another of the same quality.

The situation is a very curious one. The Atheist gets rid of his god, the preacher walks about lamenting. God should be in a most miserable state of mind, but the man shows not the slightest desire to find him again. In terms of our authority the man has not really lost anything. The preacher assures the man that having lost God he should be in a most miserable state of mind, and the man replies that he feels the better for his "loss" and simply declines to join in a hunt for the recovery of God. Looking at things historically, it seems more in accord with the facts to say that it is God who moans for having lost a follower at a time when followers—to quote Ingoldsby—"get scarcer and scarcer every day." Finally, while there is no evidence of any human being being any the worse for losing God, there is overwhelming proof that a multitude of gods have died out from having lost followers. Flowers do not decline more certainly in an over-dry season than gods who find their worshippers "losing" them.

The situation suggests another analogy. There is in existence an official lost property office. Its function is to receive articles that are lost in trains, omnibuses, cabs, etc. Any person who finds an article in these conveyances is not requested, but ordered to hand over the article to the police. If claimed, the finder may receive a reward. If these rules are not obeyed, the finder may be charged with "unlawful possession," and that, legally, is a kind of cousin to stealing. These lost property offices perform a very useful purpose.

I am a pretty fair loser, so I hasten to point out that this habit of losing things is one of the most ancient features of humanity, and an extremely useful one. If early mankind had not acquired the habit of losing things, modern investigators would not be able to so successfully explain the mental habits of our remote ancestors. We should still have found out much concerning the physical facts of our semi-animal predecessor, but our knowledge would have ended there. But it is the discovery of ideas that has enabled scientific investigation to understand the "spiritual" side of man's nature.

To cut short a very lengthy, but immensely interesting story, one must remember that man is not merely a tool-

making animal, he is also a tool-losing one, and that to the anthropologist is something of great value. Wherever man went he left behind him numerous creations—artefacts—which are so many registrations of the civilisation achieved. These artefacts are more than indications of man's physical life at different stages, they are also exhibitions of his mental development. If one had to thank a God for anything it would be that he created a tool-losing animal; for tools are incarnations of ideas, and they bear testimony to what man was at the numerous stages of development, from animal to man, and so help us to realise the primitive thoughts of early humanity and its relation to man's modes of living. In this matter churches, with their decorations and ceremonies, are examples of survivals in the mental world, as surely as the kind of physical tools used express manipulations of the physical environment. Museums and churches, which to the scientific student are just another kind of museum, help us to recall the past history of humanity. The churches of to-day are, in a sense, lost property offices in which lost gods are housed.

But there is this striking difference between the two. When a man loses a tool—an umbrella, a handbag, or any serviceable article—he inquires for it at the Lost Property Office. But when a man loses his god he does not, as a rule, rush to the religious L.P.O. to find another one. He feels glad at his loss, and as happy over it as is a man who has used crutches for years and then discovers that he can walk without them. Some of these primitive gods, belonging to the time when man made crude images to worship, may be found serving as paper-weights—we have several in our house—and in that way they are more serviceable than they were in the days of their greatness.

How are the mighty fallen when men are becoming more concerned in the loss of an umbrella than they are over the loss of a god!

A New Plea

Now, on reflection, I think I may well withdraw my plea of "Not guilty" and substitute that of "Guilty with no intention to do harm," and to add that no evidence is forthcoming that harm has been done. I do not know if this withdrawal would be permitted in a modern law court, but then even judges are found who are behind the time. For what I have said with regard to gods, in these notes or in others, is just putting into plain language what the whole of modern science is bawling at us. I do not even say that gods have never existed or that they do not exist now. I say that they have existed, and that they will exist just so long as people believe in them. More generous than Christians with their miserable allowance of gods, I say that gods have existed by the thousand. All these gods were real to those who believed in them. They are real as nightmares are real, as visions are real or delusions are real—so long as any of them are believed in. And I do not think that I deserve verbal assault because I have tried to make plain to all who have wit enough to see it that illusions are real so far as they are accepted as such. Mumbo-Jumbo is as real as Jehovah, both were born in the same way; they were built of the same stuff, and it looks as though Mumbo-Jumbo will actually survive the God of the Christian Churches.

When a man visits a doctor and complains that every now and again he has a number of visions, some pleasant, some unpleasant, he does not, if after treatment the visions die out, turn on the doctor and complain that he has been robbed. On the contrary, he thanks the doctor for restoring him to a healthy normality. And that really is all that I have ever done or attempted to do. Curiously enough, I find that those I have managed to influence, and who have learned to stand erect and face life as it really is, say they are happier, better fitted to face the storms of life and to enjoy the periods of sunshine that occur than they were when they did their daily grovel before God. They have learned to take, as all men should, pride in their own strength. We Freethinkers know that—to use that excellent phrase of Professor Gordon Childe—"Man makes himself," certainly so far as his ethical and intellectual qualities are concerned. In that process of learning man has disposed of a few thousand gods, but some of them—attenuated and comparatively powerless—still survive. But they stand to the body mental precisely as do his physical rudiments remain, and both are in course of disappearance.

So I do not plead guilty to having robbed a man of his God. No one can do that. One can show a man how useless is the idea of a God, how it frustrates much that might be done. But getting rid of a God is a job that every individual must do for himself or herself. When that is done, the first step to real freedom has been taken.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE VICISSITUDES OF FAR EASTERN CATHAY

IN his preface to Mr. Tsui Chi's "Short History of Chinese Civilisation" (Gollancz, 1942; 12s. 6d.), Laurence Binyon introduces this excellent volume to the English reader in highly appreciative terms. "There are many books about China," Binyon observes, "written by Europeans. Here is one written by a Chinese in admirably lucid English. It tells the story of Chinese civilisation from remote and half-legendary times, its splendours and miseries and, in fuller detail, the story of the recent years crowded with events that are apt to be confused in our memories or forgotten under the pressure of the momentous upheavals in Europe."

The work under review is extremely interesting and instructive from its first page to its last. The Chinese versions of the Creation and the Great Flood are vividly portrayed, and a fascinating picture of the Stone Age in China restores the past to life. It was at Chicken Bone Hill, near Peking, that a human cranium dating from Palaeolithic times was found, whose endocranial capacity was only slightly less than that of modern man. Ancient as this fossil is, its teeth were shapen much like those of present-day Mongolian peoples and unlike those of the black and white varieties of mankind.

Archæological knowledge concerning prehistoric times in China remains incomplete. Still, it is possible to fairly reconstruct early man's surroundings in that country, for in 1921 at Yang Shao, a prehistoric settlement was excavated by the Peking Geological Survey, where stone hoes, mattocks and perforated stone discs apparently used in spinning operations, suggest the cultivation of some textile plant, probably hemp, for weaving into the basket patterns which decorate the grey porcelain ware discovered on the site. "It is clear," contends the Chinese writer, "that the Stone-Bronze Age people had learnt to tame the pig and keep it for their use. Nearly all the animal bones

found at the Yang Shao site belong to this animal, and they are far too numerous to have been the relics of wild boar killed in the hunt. It is worth commenting that pork is still the staple meat of the Chinese."

The earliest indication of a Chinese script has been unearthed from an ancient sepulchre, and deep devotion to the dead has ever played a conspicuous part in Chinese observances all down the ages. Indeed, a considerable section of the moral code of Confucius (500 B.C.) was consistently observed until the impact of European Rationalism, especially the writings of Darwin, Mill and Spencer, westernised the minds of the Oriental intellectuals. Chi's chapter discussing the implications of the bones and shells discovered at Yin in Anyang, a town in Honan, deals with the many remarkable relics of a distant past that have come to light. If tradition is to be trusted, the Shang or Yin dynasty flourished from 1766 to 1122 B.C., so that these remains may be approximately dated. It appears that the under-shell of the turtle, especially, but also the bones of mammals, were then utilised for divining future events, and the entire procedure of these operations has been traced. This superstitious practice has thus preserved for posterity an acquaintance with its primitive script. For our Chinese informant assures us that "these pieces of shell and bone dug up from the 'Mounds of Yin' are all records of questions put before the 'oracle' and the oracular answers that were delivered. Every kind of problem, religious or secular, questions concerning the gods and ancestors, journeys, hunting and fishing, the raising of battle, doubts about the harvest and weather, sickness, dreams, queries on the fate and fortunes of an individual or group—all these were brought to the turtle shell oracles; and from the answers, later ages have learnt much about the Chinese 'civilisation' in those far-off times."

The erection of the Great Wall of China, designed for the purpose of excluding the destructive nomadic hordes of Asia from the fertile soils of the industrious Chinese agriculturists, entailed an enormous expenditure in money and a terrible sacrifice in human blood and tears, and it has been said that the Chinese never got over it, but the Tartars did. For centuries the Huns remained a menace to Chinese agriculturists, whose crops they ravished and carried off their victims into slavery. Ultimately these predaceous nomads were so completely vanquished in battle that their remnants retreated westwards until they reached Europe and assailed the Roman Empire itself when, as Gibbon so vividly records their exploits, having devastated and pillaged to their hearts' content, their army was shattered, and Attila's brief kingdom vanished from view.

The long chronicle of the various Chinese dynasties makes mournful reading. Yet the Han rulers had many redeeming qualities and left indelible impressions on Chinese life and character. The Han Period is still venerated, and it lasted from 208 B.C. till A.D. 220, when the immense Han dominions dissolved in anarchy. The six kingdoms which succeeded were never long at peace with one another, and the lack of any real national spirit enabled the war lords—China's perpetual curse—to inflict untold misery on the people, who became mere pawns in the military gambles of the various holders of, or aspirants to, authority. No wonder then that: "These centuries of wars between the people of China and the foreign tribes, between neighbouring States and between sovereigns and ministers thrust a deep rein of pessimism and also of anarchy into the intellectual life of the times."

The Sui dynasty followed this time of troubles, but its ascendancy was of brief duration (A.D. 581-618). The succeeding Tang line enjoyed a much longer lease of power, ruling from A.D. 618-907. This was certainly one of the most glorious periods in Chinese history, and even in its decline it sustained a high standard of intellectual and cultural life. But all things come to an end, and the Sung dynasty succeeded the Tang. It maintained its sovereignty from 960 to 1279, when invading Mongols

established their reign until 1368. Ming Emperors then ruled for nearly three centuries, but only to be superseded by the alien Manchus, whose dynasty survived until the establishment of the Republic in 1911.

Confucianism, Buddhism and other cults are ably surveyed, and a review of the Jesuit mission is sympathetic, inasmuch as the Jesuits in introducing Western science, while refraining from interference with Chinese customs, exercised a beneficial influence. Far different were the methods of the arrogant and dictatorial Catholic priests who arrived later, whose aggressive activities were approved by the Roman Pope. Consequently, these meddling some missionaries were ignominiously deported.

As the years rolled on the European Powers trespassed more and more on the integrity of China and Christian missions were restored, and our author observes that, with the increasing aggression of the Western States, the native Christian converts assumed so superior an attitude towards their unconverted countrymen that the scorn and hatred they incurred were well deserved.

The story of European intrusion in China is a sad one, yet Tsui Chi is most temperate when recording it without the slightest sign of resentment. Nor does he spare the effete Manchu rulers, nor their corrupt and incompetent subordinates, whose follies and wanton extravagance made China an easy victim of predatory Powers. Still, in dealing with the suppression of the Boxer rebellion, he notes that: "The lovely city of Peking was left at the mercy of the victorious Allied soldiers, who burned, looted, plundered, raped and destroyed even more savagely than the Boxers had done. It was not a reputable page in the history of either East or West."

Chi seems to think that the distracted Chinese State is at last united now that it is threatened with enslavement by the villain of Asia: Japan. Let us trust that China will prove successful in her life struggle, and that her 450 million inhabitants, or those that survive, will remain united. But if the Spencerian law of segregation hold true, the permanent unification of so vast a territory, containing so dense a population, appears practically impossible.

T. F. PALMER.

ACID DROPS

THE death of Trebitsch Lincoln recalls the way in which, as a convert from Judaism to Christianity, he was boosted up by the Christian Church and with its strong support became M.P. for Darlington. It was expected that such a shining light, that such a brand snatched from the burning, would prove to the obstinate Jewish race the advisability at once of coming over to Christ. Alas, his defeat at the next election and the war of 1914-1918 appeared to take the allegiance of Trebitsch from Christ to the Kaiser, and he was hastily disowned by his Christian brothers. In fact, the wonderful example of the power of Christ over a benighted Jew was never alluded to again by the Society for the Conversion of stubborn Jews, while Trebitsch himself appears to have gone over to Buddhism—so long as it paid him, we suppose. To put the matter bluntly, Jesus certainly made a holy mess of this distinguished convert.

Laymen are now permitted to touch the "Sacred Host" and remove it if an air raid occurs likely to bomb a church. One reason for this gracious condescension is that on many occasions "Sacred Hosts" completely disappeared when churches were demolished by explosive bombs or were burnt out by incendiaries." The Body and Blood of Christ thus disappearing must be a source of dismal depression for many Catholics and fervent converts, for here is proof positive that God Almighty is just as powerless against a German bomb as he was against the "chariots of iron" of the Philistines.

We believe that Roman Catholic processions are legally not allowed to take place in Britain, but so many do take place in spite of the bar that the police generally look another way in the interests of religion in general. In that stronghold of

Irish Catholicism, Liverpool, there have been so many that the police are now insisting that priests must notify them—at least, for those which are now going to be held as a protest against the Government proposals on religious education, proposals in which, it will be remembered, Catholics are not going to have it entirely their way. It is worth noting that when Catholics are out on parade the police have to be on guard to prevent them and their brothers in Christ (Protestants) having a free fight.

There must have been great unrest in heaven when every Roman Catholic Church in Britain suddenly let loose on heaven with prayers for the safety of the Pope. The concern was whether the Germans might not take the Pope with them when they vacate the "Holy City," as a means of bargaining with the Allies. Personally, we think that is very likely, but in any case, the protection of the Pope seems God's business, and to pray to him in this wholesale and open way to look after his chief Minister may make God angry. After all, such prayers are merely distinguished reminders that God ought to do something, but may do nothing unless he is told that his followers have their eyes on him. It is advising God what he ought to do, and those in power do not care for this treatment. Imagine what would happen if a back-bencher in the House of Commons stood up and solemnly advised the Prime Minister how to run the war. To thank God for what he has done is one thing, to advise him what he ought to do in the near future is more than any autocrat would calmly stand.

We are not suggesting it to God, but we do suggest to the people of this country that it is time the ridiculous Vatican State was abolished, with its pretence of being a government, with accredited ambassadors, etc., etc. We must remember that this so-called State was created by Mussolini, that large sums of money passed from the Mussolini Government to the Pope, and that the Pope gave Fascism his blessing both in Spain and in Italy. The Allies will certainly take away from the King of Italy the title of Emperor and the King of Albania—he also helped Fascism to establish itself—and if his titles are to be taken from him, is there any reason to treat this small colony of the Vatican as an independent State?

If the Vatican has for its political subjects the residents of the Vatican City only, the situation is ridiculous. If the Pope is granted the status of an independent secular State, with its subjects scattered all over the world, we may be nursing an instrument of international danger. The Allies should make it plain that the status of the Papacy in Rome as an independent State will go with the rest of the creations of Hitler and Mussolini.

We are glad to note that feeling is growing against the policy of the B.B.C. with regard to what the B.B.C. calls educating the people. In a recent issue the "News Chronicle" has a scathing article, which opens with an objection to "one political faith" forced "down the necks of a few million radio sets." Almost unnecessarily, or to soften the criticism—for newspapers appear to feel that their chief function is to guide the people, when their first duty should be that of disseminating reliable news—the writer says that while it has not yet come to that, "it leads vigorous-minded people to the microphone only when they have had the anger and passion to instruct taken out of them. They may not offend anyone—scoundrel or fool as anyone might be." It has already confessed it will have only one kind of religion.

Unconsciously the writer has given evidence that one political faith only is admitted by the B.B.C. For what else but "cooking" is for speakers having the fire taken out of what they said or say. And what kind of self-respect can remain untarnished by men and women who submit to this double dishonesty? And the writer, Frederick Lawes, says that we can be sure that when two men are placed opposite to each other by the B.B.C. in a discussion, neither of them "will make a speech strong enough to persuade a single listener to do anything he had not meant before." Exactly, every speech is "cooked," more or less. There is no greater threat to the real education of the people than the B.B.C.

The Brains Trust? That is to answer questions, but let any listener see how many questions deal with matters that are related to things of consequence. The whole management here is wrong, deliberately wrong. First listeners are led to believe that the questions are taken by chance. They are not. They are carefully selected beforehand. There is a committee that goes carefully through the letters and who decide what questions shall be asked. The talkers may not know the questions beforehand, but there is so much dishonesty involved that one cannot be sure of anything, and in any case, should any speaker wander into "dangerous matter," he is soon shut up. The chairman sees to that. Between the two the value of the questions should be counted in farthings instead of in pounds.

And the men gathered round the table. Where is the gain of their not knowing what the subjects are to be—granting that this is so? Where is the sense of that arrangement? It is not the selected four or five speakers who are on test, or who are being examined, it is the public who ask questions, and what they want is the best kind of answer, not to know how Smith or Jones will reply to them. And often the replies are pitiful in their poverty. They fumble and stagger in many cases where an ordinary and moderately educated man would reply in a much more sensible manner. Why not give the questions to a staff to look up, and then reply to them, or send them to the people who now reply? They could then speak with authority. As it is, in the majority of cases there are few good readers who could not do better. But one or two very good gigglers.

It is astonishing how liberal some sets of Christians may become when it is to their interest to become so. Thus in an Australian paper to hand which chronicles the fact that the authorities feel that the opening of some places of amusement on Sunday is desirable. Wandering aimlessly about the streets is not good for men in the Forces. Quite true, but what puzzles us is why, if it is good to have places of amusement for soldiers lest ill comes, is it not just as bad for civilians? These very pious Christians seem to forget that civilians are just as human as soldiers, and are neither better nor worse.

A second example is the advertising at present in Roman Catholic papers that the Pope, or Popes, have protested against the use of bombing-planes in war. Again, it is a pity that the Popes did not think of it when the Vatican was blessing the bombing of the Spanish revolutionists. Nowhere was the crushing of the revolution hailed with greater joy than it was by the Papacy and its followers.

On about the same level comes a complaint from a branch of the Presbyterian Church that men will pay 5s. 9d. to spend an hour with a cinema performer, but to be with God for an hour only 3d. It seems to us just a matter of judgment. After all, an actor or actress has to work hard to gain a position, and he, or she, must bring "the goods." But God has an easy job. He punishes people if they do not cheer and encore him again and again. If the B.B.C. "Christian tradition" is dependable, he even made the human race so that he would have someone always to sing aloud his praises. We have heard of actors and actresses hiring people to applaud them, but we never heard of them settling down to breed a regiment of men and women for that purpose.

The Archdeacon of Clogher (Northern Ireland) says that "To give boys and girls the highest intellectual training and then send them to influential positions without any attempt to mould their character on Christian lines is nothing but an act of criminal folly." These impertinent clerics exist in large numbers, but lack the courage to put their opinions into plain language—at least nowadays—with the result that they finish off their capacity for lying by showing themselves experts in slander, for what they are really saying is not merely that every child must be so trained that the adding of its brains will secure a life-long devotion to the Church, but that it is "criminal folly" not to do so. We wonder whether this particular sample of God's servants would have the courage to repeat his statement in front of a really well-educated gathering.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. FREEMAN.—Thanks for cutting. It is interesting that British Christians only found good in Atheistic Russia when the Russians showed they could fight well. But Russia's greatest fight, and the one that history will most respect, is the bringing of a huge population out of the ignorance and degradation created by religious domination.

E. R. LODGE.—Pleased to hear of the number of men serving with you who are non-Christian. It is strange that the army of padres never see any of them. With regard to definition of "Rationalist," it may stand for an Atheist who does not like to shock religious folk, it may be synonymous with Atheist, it may mean one who is trying to make Christianity less objectionable than it is, it may mean one who puts naturalism against supernaturalism. It is rather difficult to say exactly what it may be or may not be.

G. H. PRATE.—We have frequently commented on the "Radio Parson." He is poor stuff at his best, but what is one to expect? If he were better than he is he would not be where he is.

A. HANSON.—Thanks for the compliment you pay us on our dealing with Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding. Satire is a very effective weapon, but the weapon must be finely tempered. A hammer is useless.

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SUGAR PLUMS

THE "Evening Standard" of October 11 reports that a number of American soldiers intend erecting a memorial tablet to Thomas Paine at Thetford—Paine's birthplace. They will unveil a plaque at a military parade, and have arranged for a memorial being designed. We suggest that these American Service men invite the Archbishop of Canterbury to be present. It would also be pertinent that as the head of the Established Church he wore "sackcloth" as a sign of repentance for the ocean of lies that were circulated by the Church he represents. A great Englishman, Paine was also a greater citizen of the world, and no country owed him more than the United States.

We note an excellent letter appearing in the "Railway Review" on the so-called education question. There is, of course, no quarrel about education, there is only a difference of opinion whether the "higher" education should be open to every boy or girl capable of using it, and whether the schools shall be used as breeding grounds for the Churches. The writer of the letter in question sarcastically remarks that perhaps when Mr. Butler and the Archbishop of Canterbury talk of education they mean that children should be taught the value of truth, justice, etc. Mr. Marr, the writer of the letter, observes that the parties named cannot regard Christianity and morality as synonymous, or believe that the cultivation of virtue is impossible without religion. That, of course, is the essence of

the situation. The President of the Ministry of Education is playing a political game, and honesty of expression and accuracy of thought count for very little.

We should never forget that Mr. Butler proclaimed his desire to bring children up in the religion of their parents. That is a sufficiently stupid thing in itself, but its falsity is plain when we know that he is not making, and will not make, arrangements for any religious education save that of Christianity. There is no mistake here, it is a case of deliberate falsity.

The "Yorkshire Post" deploras "in recent years the drift of large sections of the population away from the Churches." There surely must be some mistake in this because there are scores of Christian leaders who deny that there are such people as Atheists outside of Russia, and if the Archbishop of York is to be believed, these are crowding back in such numbers that the churches can hardly accommodate them. And on top of this we have the parsons who are with the Forces telling the public—via the B.B.C.—that the one thing soldiers enjoy is a good Christian service.

The Rev. Eustace Wade, Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Bournemouth, told his audience the other day that he had never met an Atheist, although he had met people who put up the defence of being one. We imagined that this kind of pulpit idiocy had died out several generations ago. But if one wishes to meet a first-class mixture of ignorance and falsehood, the Christian pulpit is a place to which he may turn with a certainty of getting what he is looking for.

The Belgian Fascist, Degrelle, so notorious before the war, wanted Holy Communion from the parish priest of Bouillon, and on being refused assaulted him, and was in consequence excommunicated by the Bishop of Namur. Degrelle is a thorough "collaborationist" and is hated in Belgium for that reason. But he is all the same a good Catholic, and his excommunication cannot take that from him or from his religious followers. They are all traitors to their country, the friends of Germany, they believe in Hitler's insane "herrenvolk," and they are thoroughly religious! Why not?

The "Sunday Express" tells a touching story, and a religious one, concerning the destruction of the aeroplane on which Leslie Howard lost his life. The Rev. Arthur Holmes (R.C.), of Lisbon, had engaged the last place on the doomed plane. He was asked at the last minute if he would give up his seat to Leslie Howard. He did so, and Leslie Howard was killed. "This," says the priest, "was most providential." Maybe, and yet there are plenty of people who will wish that providence had not interfered. After all, priests are more numerous than good artists, and would the more easily be replaced.

The B.B.C. terror, which on the whole can let loose more ineptitude in five minutes than an ordinary man can in a full hour, never has its efforts reprinted. But occasionally a bit of truth is let loose, we are willing to grant, accidentally. Thus on the morning of October 8 we switched on just in time to catch the following gem: "We are not seeking God, God is seeking us." We were almost knocked sideways, and we are quite sure that the religious committee could never have recognised the quality of the saying. Had they done so they would have cut it out, or passed it on to the Brains Trust for its obedient members to stamp on.

In a rapidly decreasing measure men are giving up hunting for God, and for fear of following so many gods, the God of the Churches must get busy and hunt up worshippers. Man, it is plain, can and does manage to get on without bothering about God. We may meet a man who is moaning because he has lost an umbrella or his pipe, or may lose his job, or has left his overcoat in the train, and so forth. But one never comes across moaning or groaning, or a man depressed in any way, because he has lost God. Man can and does live comfortably without a God. But where is the God who can live without men? We wonder how that 7-55 terror stumbled on so great a truth!

THE MIRAGE IN MARRIAGE

Misses! The tale that I relate
 This lesson seems to carry;
 Choose not alone a proper mate
 But proper time to marry.

--WILLIAM COWPER.

OF all the activities of man which are subject to innumerable restrictions, controls, limitations, compulsions, and the like, the least affected is that which leads to marriage. Of the causes or just impediments why any two persons should not be joined together in matrimony, the two very important ones are ill-health and inadequate income. Other impediments may be inadequate housing accommodation and conflicting temperaments. The amount of capital, if any, brought into the partnership, and the absence of insurance undertakings are no bar. Objections by parents on account of age or one or both of the contracting parties, may be overruled by a magistrate who can grant permission to marry to those of minor age.

The way to marriage is a comparatively easy one. Apart from the fact that most people are kindly disposed to lovers, all differences and obstacles which confront any romance are usually regarded as more apparent than real—in fact, amidst the glamour and excitement of a forthcoming marriage, may be disregarded altogether. When the ceremony has been completed, the happy couple, inspired by the felicitations of relatives and friends, are launched in their little bark in a calm sea, with a blue and serene sky overhead, and warmed with the refulgent rays of a smiling sun. They do not doubt that it always will be so. May good luck and happiness always attend them!

So far, so good. When two moving units are connected, as say, in marriage, the smooth running of the one is dependent on the reciprocal movement of the other, without which there can be no harmonious functioning. Who, or what, is at fault when the units fall out of alignment? When the assemblage is likely to "fly to pieces" at any moment, thereby upsetting other units also, who is called in to effect repairs? Obviously, for ill-health, a doctor; for quarrels, a parent; for legal obligations, a magistrate; for religious affairs, a parson, and for incompatibility of temperament, a psycho-analyst. And yet, all these problems arise, broadly speaking, from one denominator, i.e. money—by which is meant the ability or inability to satisfy desires and cravings which are conditioned by the present form of society.

Is it unreasonable to suppose that it is very rarely that the contracting parties in marriage consult these authorities in an advisory capacity regarding the expediency or otherwise of marrying, and abide by the advice given? When the advice is against marriage and is obeyed, the act of abnegation is evidence of moral principles which merit admiration and esteem. But if a state of society arose which compelled adherence to such advice, would the result make for the happiness and well-being of the race? This is a problem which strikes deep at the root of what is called the liberty of the subject, and in the matter under discussion, the liberty of choice. Again, is it unreasonable to suppose that the children of unhappy parents are unhappy also? The consequences arising from such family discord cannot be calculated. In this connection it is a cause for melancholy reflection that only one marriage in ten is a happy one!

In any business or profession it is customary when applying for a post to submit evidence of ability accompanied with credentials. In the marriage business no references are necessary. One day, perhaps, it may be necessary to have a certificate from a doctor of physiology and psychology before an application for a post in the marriage market can be considered. In addition, some satisfactory answers to questions relating to income and prospects will be necessary. It is not thought that the adherence to any particular religious faith or creed would be evidence as showing that the applicant would be more efficient or happier in his contemplated sphere. On the contrary. S. GORDON HOGG.

BOOKS WORTH WHILE

"Was There a Summer?" By Irene Rathbone, published by Constable and Company, London; 5s. (Edition limited to 500 copies.)

Miss Rathbone is a well-known writer with a remarkably fine literary style. She has written several books. Perhaps the two best known are "We That Were Young" and "They Call It Peace."

"Was There a Summer" is a narrative prose poem—a love story of two weeks of summer written round the beautiful country of Provence. It savours of a delightful candour and freshness. To those who are looking for something different from the usual love story, this book would be a most acceptable present.

"Crux Ansata." By H. G. Wells. An Indictment of the Roman Catholic Church. Penguin Special, 96 pages; 9d.

This is a book which should be read by everybody who is interested in the political activities of the Roman Catholic Church.

Mr. Wells deals with the history of the R.C. Church throughout the ages and, as a historian, supplies us with enough evidence to justify all his charges, especially that the Roman Catholic Church is one of the greatest dangers in the world to-day.

That this book would get under the skin of devout Catholics we have not the least doubt; in fact, it has already done so.

Writing in the "Catholic Herald" on September 24, the Rev. J. A. V. Burke attacks Mr. Wells as "A childish babbler of malicious misunderstandings about the Universal Church." He asks: "Why should a book like this be read by men in the Services?" and "are the powers of the Home Secretary no longer capable of controlling journalistic attacks on members of the Allied Forces?"

And this is the Church which is continuously prating about democracy and liberty—the R.C. idea of liberty is to take all the liberties they like with the liberty of other people. In this book, a well-deserved compliment is paid to Joseph McCabe, who for many years has pointed out the dangers to democracy exerted by the R.C. Church. Mr. Wells says: "McCabe is one of the most able, interesting and learned of all anti-Catholic writers, and like most thorough-going reformers of the past, he sprang from the bosom of the Church; he writes with an erudition and amount of knowledge that puts him by himself as the most capable critic the Papacy has ever had." Wells shows how the Catholic priest is a man who goes through life shackled. He says: "But a Catholic priest is not free to read what he likes. His reading and thinking are elaborately controlled and rationed. The Church is so essentially out of harmony with reality and the truth of things, and is so aware of it, that it has had to train its priests from the outset to shut their eyes and close their ears. Watch a priest in a public conveyance. He is fighting against disturbing suggestions. He must not look at woman lest he thinks of sex. He must not look about him, for reality—that is to say the devil—waits to seduce him on every hand. You see him muttering his protective incantations, avoiding your eyes. He is suppressing sinful thoughts."

Everything Mr. Wells writes is worth reading—this book is no exception.

The Roman Catholic Church, with its guttering candles, its stinking incense, its Holy Water, its masses for the dead, its purgatory swindle, its saints' bones, its apparitions, its prying confessional, its suppression (when it has the power) of books on any vital subject such as Birth Control, Socialism, or anti-religious works, its ghastly record of cruelty and wars, and deliberately encouraged ignorance, claims to lead us to a new world of enlightenment, security and freedom.

The general run of the public do not realise what the hidden hand of Rome means; they will know it much better if they read this book.

"The Birth of New China." By Arthur Clegg. A sketch of 100 years—1842-1942—published by Lawrence and Wishart Limited, London. Price 3s. 6d.; 144 pages.

The author of this book is to be congratulated on having condensed into 144 pages a comprehensive history of China during the last 100 years. The first chapter, which deals with early China, tells us that "Cheques, bills, drafts and paper money were known in China 300 years before Europe"; also that "hereditary titles were unimportant and, even under the Manchus, what titles there were were automatically extinguished after a few generations. Nor did China suffer from a monopolistic, powerful and power-hungry Church, and for the most part her rulers showed considerable religious tolerance."

It was as the result of the first Opium War in 1857 that the European Powers secured privileges, everyone of which was an insult to the Chinese. This led to the gradual carving up of China amongst the Great Powers. In 1913 Standard Oil procured prospecting rights from China. Tsarist Russia was also busy, whilst Japan was steadily advancing her control. Nothing but the jealousy of the foreign Imperialistic Powers prevented the complete subjugation of China. But everywhere before the last war she had, in the words of the author, "Foreign troops on her soil and foreign navies patrolling her waters and rivers. China had become a plaything of the Powers." "No dogs and Chinese allowed" ran a notice in Shanghai Park!

But China was beginning to awake from her long slumber. In 1917 the Soviet Government denounced all unequal treaties with China. Although Japan and the Allied Governments tried to suppress the news, it could not be hidden.

It is less than 30 years ago since the first trade union was formed in China, and the movement gained ground until, in 1920, the wages of coolies were raised from 6s. to 14s. per month.

Industries were started and a new spirit of national unity sprang up. The one country who watched this with grave anxiety was Japan. Japanese encroachments on the new-found liberties of the Chinese and the confiscation of their land, received the blessing of the Imperialistic Powers, who swallowed the Japanese propaganda that their actions were directed against the Soviet's encroachment of India. And so the brutal story of Japan's aggressive wars against China continued without any hindrance from European Powers. On the contrary, after July, 1937, the start of the China-Japanese War, Japan was supplied with oil, ammunition and bombs by the three Christian Powers—Holland, U.S.A. and Britain.

On October 10 the Christian Churches of Britain had a Day of Prayer for China. If instead of a Day of Prayer they had had a day of forgiveness and went to their churches in sackcloth and ashes to ask their God to forgive them for the wrongs they have inflicted on China, it would have been more apropos. For six years China, a pacifist nation, ill-prepared, has waged war against one of the greatest military Powers in the world. The author quotes an American critic, who, speaking at the end of 1942, said: "China has been receiving each month fewer supplies than a single army division uses up in one day, and China's Lease-Lend receipts amount to less than 2 per cent. of the minimum programme filed by the Lease-Lend authorities in Washington."

Mr. Willkie, after his visit to China, also emphasised the minuteness of the supplies China has received. Practically every phase of life in China is stressed in this book. But it is with modern China that we are most concerned. Here is how the author ends an intensely interesting book: "To-day the Chinese are not humble—they are proud. They have borne gigantic burdens in their struggle against Fascism, while governments of other countries that once held China in contempt have often behaved like cowards and knaves. The Chinese have entered the main stream of world history; they are making it, and they demand that all shall take account of that fact."

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

IS CHRIST DIVIDED?*

THE differences and hatreds among the Christian Churches throughout the long history of the Faith are so notorious that the issue of a Penguin Special with the object of showing the world that these things are now on the mend is a matter of no small interest. Is the leopard in the process of changing his spots? Archbishop Temple edits the book. He begins by asserting, "The Christian World is moving steadily and rapidly towards deeper unity," and one reads on through the contributions of the nine writers to try and discover precisely what this "rapid movement" is.

One chapter, by the Rev. Henry Carter, on "Citizens and Strangers," breathes a broad humanity that would do credit to a Freethinker. It bears an attractively honest character which makes it stand out from the sophistries and obscurities of the rest of the volume. Thus, in dealing with the Jews, Mr. Carter writes that he "must record hostility breaking into active persecution of Jews in many countries at the instigation of Church leaders from the fourth century A.D. onward," and "Christians to-day cannot reverse the wrongs done in the Christian name in bygone centuries; but we can seize the present opportunity to build a right relation through fellowship with Jews in their anxieties and perils." But this admirable contribution is out of place in this book. What we are led to expect is not a study of how Christians ought to regard non-Christians, but how they are coming to achieve unity amongst themselves.

The great advance appears to be that representatives of some of the Churches have met round the same table in discussion—but one seeks in vain to find any tangible result of it all on the home front. One fact which strikes the outsider is that the

* A Penguin Special. Edited by William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury; 1943.

(Continued on next page)

"QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." A Monthly Subscription Magazine of interest to all Thinkers. Specimen copy Sevenpence. "Questions and Answers," 35, Doughty Street, London, W.C.1 (top floor).

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 3-30 p.m.: Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. E. O. SAPHIN and supporting speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Sunday, 11 a.m., PROFESSOR G. E. G. CATLIN, M.A., Ph.D.—"Anarchism, Pacifism and Communism."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. W. A. ATKINSON: A Lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Laycock's Café, Kirkgate): Sunday, 6-30 p.m.—"The Anvil."

Chester-le-Street Rotary Club.—Friday, October 22. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. J. P. MORRISON: "Religion and War."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Mr. F. J. COUNA—"Religion, Youth and Sex."

Primrose Jarrow-on-Tyne (Valley View Schools).—Sunday, 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: "The Need for Freethought."

THE BOOK THAT WAS CALLED FOR

Christianity—What is It?

By CHAPMAN COHEN

The substance of this book appeared in the "Freethinker" in answer to the question "What is real Christianity?" It is in reply to many requests that the nearly twenty articles were revised and added to, and now appear in book form. It is a criticism of Christianity from a not common point of view.

Price 2/- Postage Three halfpence

PIONEER PRESS, 2/3, Furnival St., Holborn, London, E.C.4

(Continued from previous page)

largest of the Churches, the Roman Catholic, refuses to join in these round-table conferences. Whatever the result has been it is made clear that no Church is offering to modify its cherished beliefs—and when it is remembered how different these are and how mutually exclusive are the doctrines as to what is necessary to salvation, one is puzzled to know where the unity is to come from. These worthies assemble for amicable and carefully guarded talk, but they still refuse to meet together at the Lord's Table for Holy Communion.

The learned Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford (Rev. Leonard Hodgson) tells us that in 1930 he suggested "that the unity of the Christian Churches is like the unity of triangles"—a better simile would be that of the square root of minus one for all one can glean from this book. In more theological but equally unilluminating jargon, the unity is said to consist "in that divine 'particular'—that fact of Jesus Christ," or "to join in the confession of Christ's name." What is the plain man to make of all this verbiage?

Canon Raven (pacifist) and Archbishop Temple (non-pacifist) combine to explain their fundamental unity despite their support of "diametrically opposed policies," and they end their entertaining performance with the suggestion that Jesus was "perhaps neither pacifist nor non-pacifist." So we have Jesus, the canon, and the Archbishop, with different views on a matter of the gravest import. What sort of unity in Christ can this be?

One bond between these Churches seems to be the belief that Jesus was divine—the Unitarians are not mentioned and presumably were uninvited to the conferences—and in this connection one of the unconscious humours of the book may be mentioned. The Rev. Leonard Hodgson tells of the following incident which "was surely the clearest illustration of the new working of the spirit of God transforming Christendom out of all recognition." At one of the meetings there was a feeling that the Czechoslovakian National Church, being heretical on the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, should not be allowed to remain in the Faith and Order Movement. But a representative of the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church pleaded for their retention "that through association with the Christian fellowship, that other Church might come to be strengthened in the true faith." Thus you may stay in, but only in the hope that you will come to think aright. To the reverend professor this is the mighty working of the Holy Spirit—to some it will appear as a cunning subterfuge.

There are pleadings scattered through the volume that Christians should respect one another's convictions. It is indeed pitiful to find that the Churches are in such a state of sociological undevelopment that what has been a canon of decency among rationalists since before Christ should now be only timidly approached by Christians, and that this belated development should be trumpeted forth as a God-inspired advance. The use of extravagant and exalted terms in recording trivial matters is

a common dodge to impress the uncritical, and it is exploited to the full in this work.

"Moving steadily and rapidly towards deeper unity." Are these the words of a Simple Simon or of a humbug? If there is any movement—and that remains to be seen—it looks like a drunken crawl far to the rear of the spearhead rationalist forces of enlightenment and progress.

L. HAWKES.

CORRESPONDENCE

FACING THE TRUTH.

SIR,—The seemingly incurable practice of dogmatism which is common to preachers of religion—notably the Catholic Evidence platform in Hyde Park; e.g., "Jesus Christ was the Son of God"—prompts me to offer an answer to Pilate's question and to define truth as something which is made known without any concealment and without distortion. The preacher's answer to a question, in the example which I quote, is knowingly incomplete in a material particular; it is of a puzzling character instead of being secular.

A professional conjurer who entertains performs that which he undertakes to do, but a preacher of dogma, on the other hand, whose clear duty is to present the truth, only succeeds in fogging his hearers. To draw an analogy, he tenders a currency note minus the essential signature, and therefore it is of no value. For how long will he labour on these lines to achieve the enlightenment and the ethical betterment of the vast human family?—Yours, etc.,

J. EDWARDS.

TRYPHO

SIR,—As regards "This Trypho Business" (see "The Freethinker," September 26), it may be of interest if I quote some passages from Mr. Howell Smith's book, "Jesus Not a Myth," on the subject. On page 20, after stating his ground for his position, he writes:—

"... Many who quote Trypho's words give their readers the impression that the Jesus of the Gospels was not recognised by the Jews as belonging to history, and that they taunted the Christians with having invented him. A more careful scrutiny of the passage and a better knowledge of Jewish Messianic lore should have made it quite clear what Trypho means. He says that even if the Messiah is living anywhere he cannot know what his status is until Elijah comes and reveals it to all, having first anointed him for his office. The Jesus whom Christians follow, whose historicity Trypho does not deny, is only a fictitious Messiah."

Mr. Howell Smith's book was "first published in 1942."—Yours, etc.,

MAUD SIMON.

STALIN AND THE BISHOPS.

SIR,—Mr. Hanson's unhappy phrase that "Stalin . . . can now . . . invite religion into the open" seems to imply that religion has been kept in the dark, i.e., suppressed. The assertion that Stalin received the Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church because he is confident of the end in view is flattering—to Stalin. Is it possible that he, on his part, wishes to be flattering to certain contiguous small states, and, especially Poland?—Yours, etc.,

S. GORDON HOGG.

The old argument that if Christianity is a human fabrication its authors must have been either good or bad men, takes it for granted that there are but two classes of persons—the good and the bad. There is at least one other class—the mistaken, and both of the other classes may belong to this.—INGERSOLL.