

# THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXIV.—No. 20

Sunday, May 14, 1944

Price Threepence

## VIEWES AND OPINIONS

### Education and the Churches

ON October 4, 1943, the Archbishop of Canterbury took off his gloves in the House of Lords, enlightened his friends and surprised his enemies by letting out the truth with regard to the real object of the Church towards education. To understand this unusual exhibition of frankness we must go back a step or two.

Many demands have been made for a radical overhauling of our financial system as a prelude to genuine social reform. To this the reply has been that the present Government is a coalition and drastic measures must await a General Election and the judgment of a new Parliament. What cannot wait is the chance of the clergy regaining some of their lost ground; and in that direction the rule has been set aside. A new Education Bill has been framed and will become law, since the Government would declare its refusal a vote of no confidence and we are in one of the critical stages of the world war. The new Bill is radical in the wrong direction; and the worst of it is that attempts to real reform will be checked with the reminder that a new Act has just been passed. There will be some benefits from the new Act—and that will serve well those who give a little in order to prevent the people taking a lot. The Public Schools and the Universities will remain substantially the haunts of the wealthier and "upper classes" and the hewers of wood and drawers of water must remain content if now and again one of the "lower classes" reaches a comparative degree of distinction.

In the matter of education, ever since the Roman Church established itself on the ruins of the Roman Empire it has claimed complete domination of education. In a true Fascist spirit, it still claims it—and receives a subsidy from our Government. When the Roman Church was deposed in this country the Church of England took over, with other things, the same control of education, although conditions were not so favourable for the new Church as they were for the old one. But the education of the people as a policy had yet to come. It had to wait for the French Revolution and the rise of machine industry. Then some little attention was paid to the education of the common people, although well on in the 19th century our educational system was behind many of the Continental countries.

Still the Church influence remained great, and even the teachers' powerful trade union (I hope the N.U.T. will pardon me for calling its organisation a trade union) often found it expedient to discuss the religious question behind closed doors. It was quite clear to teachers that, quite irrespective of quality, to be known as an unbeliever would certainly stand in the way of promotion and would handicap a man or woman looking for a job. The Churches were, and are, powerful. If any doubt exists on that head one has only to consider the manner in which they manœuvred to

get the present Bill, which gives the clergy greater power over the schools than they have had for more than 70 years. And one need not study the situation deeply to realise that the main aim of the backstairs consultations with the Board of Education, and the many secret meetings held before the Bill saw light, made clear what was afoot. And that brings me to the Archbishop's speech in the House of Lords.

### Our Religious Fascism

My story may seem roundabout; but if the road is crooked the tale, when told, should be quite straight. We must get back to the first great bombing by the Germans of the slum areas in the East of London. Their quality was not unknown to the "upper classes"; we can recall a time when "slumming excursions" were quite common. The afternoon was spent in the slums; then the slummers went back to their dinners and the Churches duly advertised the appreciation of the people. "Rescue work" was not an unprofitable business for the Churches generally. They did at least teach the people resignation. But when the German bombs laid bare the kind of "homes" that multitudes had—after many reforms—the rescue workers, men and women, were loud in their opinion that had it not been for the loss of life the Germans deserved thanks for dropping their bombs where they did. The clergy had profited from their "rescue work"; but now they were "in the soup" something had to be done to divert attention.

Cleverly enough, they diverted attention by concocting stories of the complete ignorance of the children of the slums concerning Christianity. Some did not know what Christmas meant, others had never heard the name of Jesus, and so forth. We tried hard to get a specimen of these wonderful children: wonderful because they had attended schools, they had prayers in schools, and also many fairy tales about Jesus. The clergy never produced these remarkable children—perhaps they did not like to shame them. But they decided on a programme that should give them greater control of the schools. Conferences of the different sects were held, backstairs meetings with representatives of the Board of Education; promises were made, but not published, by the Government, and in the end a new Education Bill was framed. We said over and over again that the united clergy would never have acted as they did had they not had promises from leading members of the Government.

Events proved we were right; and when the White Paper was issued the Archbishop of Canterbury felt sufficiently secure to disclose the full significance of the reinstatement of the clergy in the schools. He told the House of Lords that a mere lesson in religion was not enough. He said—and we agree with him—there can be no real distinction between Religion and Atheism. We could almost hear ourselves chiding those who think that by disguising Atheism by some less "offensive" term one can really escape Atheism. We must be with or without God:

one cannot be half way. Timidity or confusion cannot alter facts. God either is or he isn't; there is no midway term. And if "God" is, then he "is" always. He cannot be brought into school for a few minutes' musical dissipation or vocal exercise; he must, as the Roman Catholics would agree, be there all the time. So, said the Archbishop:—

"All education must be religious or atheistic; there is no neutrality. You cannot have a neutral education to which you append religious instruction as one subject alongside history and geography. It will have its real value only if it is felt to pervade education as a whole."

That is quite plain. It is direct; and with a Government that threatens to resign in the middle of a war if its wishes—and the wishes of the clergy—are not met with regard to an Education Bill, the Archbishop's courage and candour were not so great after all. If he had been as open right along we question whether the Education Bill would have seen daylight. For it is to be noted that the Archbishop counts not merely on there being more religious teaching in the schools than there is at present, but definite religion is to saturate the whole of the school time. Neither teacher nor pupil will be able to evade it.

There is other evidence in favour of this policy of drenching school life with religion, and this comes from a recent speech by the Rev. R. J. C. Lumley, Chaplain to Workshop College. He insists that if Christianity is to continue, if we wish boys to grow up Christians, they must be kept in close touch with Christian influence just so long as it is possible to do so. They must not be allowed to run free so far as their tastes or inclinations might lead them. He says:—

"The case of the public school boy is difficult. He will attend normal church services regularly at school, but unless his parents are themselves practising Christians he will neither go to church in the holidays nor do anything about it after leaving school. This leakage is a serious loss to the Church, and may be greater if the number of boarding schools increases. It is also the loss of some who could be of great value to the Church, since many of these boys will reach prominent positions in business and civil life after leaving school. . . . Whatever we may hope for in the next generation, it seems clear that we must concentrate on bringing boys at boarding schools into active membership in the holidays if we are to hope that they will be members of the Church after leaving school. A boy may take a full part in the church life of the school, but unless he does this same at home the end of his school career may also be the end of his church life."

I think if I were a parent and was told that I must keep a sharp eye on my son, and prevent his relaxing for a moment from devotion to a particular teaching or habit, I should either rank him as a very poor specimen in himself or the thing that he was to watch carefully was hardly worth the harbouring. Boys or girls that need such careful watching cannot be of very high character; and the same principle applies to doctrines. On the other hand, if I wished to turn out a boy a humbug or a weakling I think I should place him under the control of the Rev. R. J. C. Lumley. Mr. Lumley's method appears to be admirably adapted to that end.

Dr. Temple is rather more on the alert than is Mr. Lumley; or one might say more unscrupulous in his plan. Thus, Dr. Lumley takes the children of Christians and tells their parents that if they wish them to continue Christians they must somehow or the other never relax their own personal carefulness with regard to the possibility that heresy may break out. Dr. Temple says you must begin when children are very young and keep up the pressure. When they go to school the Christian religion must saturate all they read, all they think and all they do. He does not say that the children of non-Christian parents must submit to being openly taught the Christian religion, but he does say that the education given in schools must be so drenched with Christian doctrines that not the slightest hint must reach the children that there is any question either of the value or the truthfulness of Christian doctrines. We must leave it to readers to determine which is the most fundamentally dishonest method so far as the training of children is concerned.

But, on the whole, both these preachers unconsciously admit that as a teaching Christianity is at war with contemporary science and life. In past generations the crass superstition of the Christian creed was not so completely in conflict with the life and knowledge of the day; the natural threat to Christianity was not what it is to-day. The social environment was, so to speak, on the side of the gods and of the priesthood. To-day, the situation is different. The natural environment of a civilised people is against religion—and the Archbishop knows it! He knows that, point for point, modern thought—which, even in a clumsy way, is to some extent in line with modern science—is against not merely the Christian religion, but all religions. Preachers of ability and intelligence can no longer afford to tell the truth to the adults that listen to them; they can no longer be honest to the children that are placed in their care. The clergy can no longer be honest to themselves. The "great lying creed," as Heine called it, is dying. That is why the clergy feel that by some method the children must be captured. With all other subjects the teacher can afford to wait until his pupil is able to appreciate the quality of what is being told him; with religion, belief must precede conviction. The pupils of the parsonage cannot wait until development is expressed in understanding.

The worst of it is that you can impress the most ridiculous ideas, and the greatest falsehoods, on the mind of the child. Hitler has demonstrated the possibility of this—and, knowingly or unknowingly, he was following in the lines of historic Christian practice.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## AMERICA'S REACTION TO THE CRISIS IN 1929

THE authors of "The Rise of American Civilisation," Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, have written a very striking sequel entitled "America in Midpassage" (Jonathan Cape, 949pp., 1938; 18s.). This outspoken work opens at the period of peak prosperity in the States and closes with a review of the progressive programme of President Roosevelt.

The sanguine outlook of the "Golden Glow," when all appeared to point to permanent prosperity, was stunned when the financial crashes in Wall Street; the bank failures; the insolvency of countless seemingly sound industrial concerns;

preceded the appearance of some 13,000,000 people unemployed. These disasters necessitated inquiries conducted by Congress which exposed nefarious methods adopted by many commercial, banking and financial corporations in pursuit of profits, however illegitimately obtained.

America's opulent period under Coolidge was succeeded by the terrible crash under Hoover. The majority wrung their hands in despair, while some asserted that economic crises were periodically inevitable, and a few suggested that their prevention might be made possible by scientific management and prevision. Dr. N. M. Butler deplored the unemployment resulting from mass production, and condemned the pathetic conduct of the official class, whose only remedy for the blight that had overtaken America was the passage of sufficient time to restore more normal conditions. But Dr. Butler told these wait-and-see philosophers: "Gentlemen, if we wait too long somebody will come forward with a solution that we may not like. Let me call your attention to the fact that the characteristic feature of the experiment in Russia, to my mind, is not that it is Communist, but that it is being carried on with a plan in the face of a planless opposition. The man with a plan . . . has a vast advantage over the group sauntering down the road and complaining of the economic weather and wondering when the rain is going to stop."

In his efforts to alleviate America's economic troubles the President was at first supported by men of the most diverse shades of opinion. Our author's intimate that: "In the eyes of the unemployed, the poverty-stricken, the debt-harassed farmers and home-owners, he was a prince in shining armour leading the hosts of justice against the powers of darkness and confusion." Indeed, for a time even the Supreme Court displayed liberal leanings. Subsequently, however, the bias of vested interests and the average lawyer's deference to tradition induced the Court to pronounce invalid the President's recommendations. So, in a press interview, Roosevelt outlined the history of judicial excursions into politics, somewhat sardonically. He stated that the Supreme Court had interpreted the Constitution in terms of the "horse and buggy days."

The Judges' retrogressive decisions drew organised Labour to the side of the President and he won the support of John L. Lewis. "A few months later this took the form of a 469,870 dollar contribution from the United Mine Workers of America to the campaign fund for the re-election of President Roosevelt. However powerful they were, whatever their inclinations, members of the Supreme Court could not duplicate that performance." So, although it was customary to regard the Supreme Court as a semi-sacred institution, its anti-reformist judgments were, after all, only the pronouncements of a mere majority, and public veneration steadily declined.

Unperturbed by the Court's antagonism, the President steadily pursued his progressive policy, and when the electoral appeal was made to the country the Democratic leader carried every State in the Union save Vermont and Maine alone, and was accorded a plurality of some 11,000,000 votes. This was one of the greatest triumphs in the political annals of the Republic.

The Beards' chapter concerning America's relations with foreign Powers is replete with information, not always of an elevating character. States, much like individuals, seem victims of the force of circumstances. While the Soviet authorities pursued a policy designed to extend their system to other States, this propaganda was deeply resented in America, but when Stalin decided to confine the Soviet system to Russia, this materially modified public opinion. Also, the immediate overthrow of the Revolutionary Russian Government was confidently awaited until their astonishing five years' plan was successfully accomplished. As our authors aver: "In terms of iron, steel and factories, the achievement was monumental, at least as compared with the economic enterprise of the Tsarist regime."

With the aggression of Japan in the Far East, the future assistance of Russia in any coming conflict could not be ruled out. During and after the First World War, circumstances were favourable for a permanent alliance with Japan, for the Japanese humanists still exercised considerable influence at Tokio. Yet, the naval and military interests had never surrendered their ambition to recover their earlier dominance and then establish a totalitarian State.

But then in 1924 came the very distasteful measure to exclude the Japanese from American domains. Although Japan's Ambassador in the United States warned the American authorities that grave consequences would follow the enactment of the Bill for exclusion, as it would "enable the military party at home to whip up popular passion in favour of Asia for the Asiatics," it was still persisted in.

The reigning Liberal Government at Tokio strove to compromise the matter, and thus "save the pride of its own people." The State Department at Washington suggested a Gentlemen's Agreement, but Congress was adamant and, as Japan's Minister had predicted, his country's humanists and democrats were swept aside in a wave of indignation at the "insult." Then "the military party in Tokio set out to realise ends long in view—dominance over China and perhaps over Siberia to Lake Baikal."

The Beards' approach to the very vexed Labour problems in America is collectivist in tendency, although these writers seem fully conscious of the dangers of bureaucratic control which may easily develop into despotism maintained by military and police authority. Also, they are seriously alarmed at the widespread soil erosion throughout the States, with its bearings on future agricultural production.

Recent changes in the outlook of men of letters are critically surveyed, and the writers who command a wide circle of readers appear, in many instances, to have swung towards the Left. This tendency is displayed in all literary departments, for the economic debacle of 1929, with its paralysing sequel, has left a deep-seated impression on the American mind.

Science is not ignored, and its uses and abuses are judiciously studied and appraised. During the era under review, the planet Pluto was discovered; the Japanese Dr. Noguchi became the martyr of his researches into the causation of yellow fever; in 1928 the Bell Telephone Laboratories evolved a loudspeaker with 300 times the intensity of any pre-existing instrument; while photographs were transmitted by radio across the country and medical discoveries and appliances made remarkable advances. Chemical science made important strides and "Calcium was successfully used to calm excited patients and banish their hallucinations."

Nor was theoretical science neglected and, despite traditional prejudices, realistic interpretations gained ground. There was a distinct decline in the acceptance of metaphysical assumptions. "Among scientists as well as laymen," observe our authors, "developed a suspicion; if nothing more, that these physicists [Jeans, Eddington and others], masterful in their own domains, had read their own theological predilections into the appearances of the realities with which they dealt. The suspicion was deepened when the theologians and even evangelists could seize upon the indeterminism of 'the new physics,' and employ it in fervid arguments for freedom of the will, if not for the whole scheme of innocence, fall and redemption. To be sure, Jeans, Eddington, Whitehead and Millikan were not responsible for the uses made of their declarations, but their successors in physics seemed to grow more cautious."

Later scientists warned the public against an uncritical acceptance of doubtful speculations, and some expressed a pronounced scepticism. One eminent biologist, Professor Conklin, deeply deprecated the indifference displayed by some scientists to ethical considerations, when he reminded them that "free thought, free speech and free criticism are the life of science."

T. F. PALMER.

## ACID DROPS

THE following is from the "Daily Telegraph" for April 27:—

The Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. E. N. Lovett, in his diocesan letter, tells how the late sculptor, Charles Sargeant Jagger, who died in 1934, conceived his design for the figure of Christ on the Cross which now stands in the church at Kelham, Notts.

The sculptor was at work on the figure, writes the Bishop, but he could not render the face as he felt it must be. He tried over and over again, but failed.

At last he flung himself down in his studio, his hands drooping in despair. He could try no more. Then the door quietly opened and Christ Himself came in. They looked each other in the face, and Christ said, "Try again." The sculptor did so.

"The sacred face has a strange beauty, expressing life and intense power," comments the Bishop, describing Jagger's work. He adds that Jagger himself told him of the visitation.

That is quite a good story, and Christian annals are full of such accounts. The Roman Church has similar accounts by the thousand. But, unfortunately for the Bishop of Salisbury, the "Telegraph" appears to have consulted the brother of Charles, and the following was the result:—

Mr. David Jagger, the portrait painter, brother of the sculptor, told a reporter last night that he had not heard the story before. "I do not remember my brother's ever saying that he received inspiration in any unusual way," he said. "His perseverance won him success."

That is rather hard. If Christian miracles are to be treated in this way there would be an end to man getting in touch with the supernatural.

There exists what is called "A Forces' Parliament" in Cairo. As we are a free people, fighting and dying for freedom, the members of the parliament discussed questions of banking, land-mines and transport, pensions, etc., on the assumption that speech was free and opinions might be aired. But they were mistaken, and an official notice has been issued that the name of parliament must not be used—local parliaments are held in various parts of the country at home—and there must be no publicity of any kind, and even newspaper correspondents must not be admitted. Questions are to be asked in Parliament on the matter and, this being a free country, that will end the difficulty. Things will go in accord with the order.

A number of Churchmen have been running a campaign in Kensington. One of the leaders described the movement as a "Religious Brains Trust." We believe the last of these three words should have had the "t" deleted. It was a printer's error—or sarcasm.

We have been saying so long and so frequently that it is not the duty of a parent to see that his children have fixed ideas on religion, or indeed on any subject, that we are pleased to find the editor of the "National News-Letter" re-echoing what we have been saying for years. (The editor used to be Mr. Stephen King-Hall, but we fancy he has resigned.) Here are his comments on those who hold that it is the duty of a parent to turn his child out with a set of ideas:—

The whole spirit of modern education should be to give a child sufficient factual information and a right standard of judgment in order that it might ultimately make up its own mind on issues of magnitude. There is little difference between the Nazi control of a child's political education and some of the protagonists of the Churches who insist that a child's views on the ultimate verities shall be conditioned from infancy."

We cannot think of a time when we were not preaching that gospel. We all agree that to teach a child obviously vicious habits is vile, but is it worse than robbing a child of the capacity, or at least the inclination, to form its own opinions on subjects

that attract its attention? Milton said it was a crime to suppress a book; how much greater is the crime of so dominating a child's mind as to rob it of the sense of daring and independence?

Another comment worth noting is made by a lady teacher, Miss M. Raymonde, at a meeting of the National Union of Women Teachers, in Blackpool. She dwelt on the quality of Church schools in rural areas. She gave many illustrations of the terrible sanitary arrangements, and added:—

"Invariably the rural school is in the shadow of the church, but whereas an asphalt path leads to the church door, the children walk through mud and pools to the school entrance. While the choir hang their coats for one hour in a heated vestry, the children's clothing hangs all day in a damp, unheated cloakroom. The rural child rarely dares to have any future ambitions or aspirations."

But still the dual system, indicted by the vast majority of teachers, continues in the interests of the Churches.

The Roman Catholic papers are doing what they can to protect the Roman Catholic Poles against the charge of anti-Jewism, about which we wrote in last week's "Freethinker." In the "News-Chronicle" for May 5 there is a report of the suicide of a young Polish-Jewish doctor. It came out in the course of the inquest that before the war he had been driven out of a hospital in Poland. Some weeks ago he asked whether he might join the Fighting French Forces. The French authorities consented if the Polish Government here acquiesced. The Polish officials agreed, provided he came before a Polish medical board. He did so and was asked to sign certain papers. Then he was peremptorily told that he was now a member of the Polish Army, and if he did not report for duty he would be posted as a deserter. But the doctor was afraid of anti-Jewism in the Polish Forces. He told the friend who gave evidence that he would rather die than join the Polish Army. It is time that our own Government at least investigated the matter. The Poles are on our territory and should therefore be subject to some sort of surveillance.

Mr. Evelyn Walkden, M.P. for Doncaster, and Captain Whincup, a military welfare officer, after receiving complaints about the conduct of young girls in Doncaster, made a tour one Sunday evening of public houses, Service canteens and cinemas in their district. No one knew they were going, and the result of the tour was a statement that: "We are both of opinion that the standard of conduct in the places we visited was very high. We saw no rowdyism and no drunkenness." In other words, no evidence of the "moral landslide" which Christian Grundys are always talking about.

All the same, there has to be a moral landslide. If not, what will happen to the Churches? They live on it; they save souls from sin. So the Rev. B. M. Shephard, President of the Christian Endeavour Union, embarrassed, like many other land-sliders, by the lack of evidence, declares that: "Even if people are behaving better than in the last war, they are not as good as they ought to be." The Rev. Shephard adds insult to injury by saying that even if people are better behaved he finds nothing to rejoice about. His attitude is quite understandable, of course. No parson can rejoice that people are behaving better than they did—at a time when they are less religious than they ever were.

A Roman Catholic priest has, unintentionally, paid this country a compliment. Mgr. Considine, of the Missionary Fathers of the United States, has decided that while India, Burma, and other places may hold out promises of Christianity gaining ground, in Anglo-Saxon lands it will make but slow progress. Perhaps that is because where religious fooling is concerned, concentration point has been reached. And when one looks at the "Anvil" and the religious douche used by the B.B.C. generally, there appears to be some ground for so believing.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,  
Telephone No.: Holborn 2601. London, E.C.4.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

M. ILLINGWORTH.—Very pleased to hear from a new reader such as yourself. Your meeting a chance copy of this paper is a common way of making our acquaintance; and the acquaintanceship usually lasts.

M. A. CHITTENDEN.—Your experience with the padre is not an uncommon one. We intend to keep up the good work as long as we can. Letters like yours give us every encouragement to do so.

FOR "FREETHINKER" FUND.—P. Turner, £1.

WILMOT HASTINGS.—Thanks for cuttings.

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—S. C. Merrifield, 2s.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, 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.

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

## SUGAR PLUMS

THE Centenary of the Co-operative Movement occurs this year, and it is to be celebrated throughout the whole of the country. It is not surprising that the desperately placed godites have decided to give as great an air of religion (of course, the Christian religion) as possible, forgetting the fact that the main influence a century since owned its chief impetus to Freethinkers. The two men who probably did most to launch the Co-operative Movement were Robert Owen and George Jacob Holyoake. There are many other Freethinkers who might be named, but these two will suffice.

In view of the coming celebrations, and with a desire to do what can be done to place the character of those who were foremost in creating the Co-operative Movement, our wide-awake contributor, Mr. Corina, has written a serviceable pamphlet with the suggestive title: "God and the Co-op.: Will Religion Split the People's Movement?"

The pamphlet is well printed on unusually good paper for these times, price 2d., postage 1d. But we suggest that those who are sufficiently interested should send for a dozen copies, which will be sent post free, and distribute them among their interested friends and acquaintances. This action may have some very useful results.

Manchester and Failsworth Freethinkers are reminded that Mr. J. Clayton lectures to-day (May 14) in the Failsworth Secular School, Pole Lane, Failsworth. That is all the information we have at the moment, but the secretary of the Manchester Branch N.S.S., Mr. C. McCall, 50, Stamford Street, Old Trafford, Manchester 16, may be able to supply fuller details.

Here comes a question from a man who writes as though he has had a good education—as school education goes. We mean by that he has been taught to say certain things in a certain way,

and do certain other things in a way that will not strike anyone as being unusual in either his ideas or his behaviour. He is what the police would call a *good citizen*. Never troubles anyone—except probably those who live with him, who must sometimes be driven wild because he will not do anything that shocks somebody, and never says anything new. Everyone knows what he will say in answer to a given question, and how he will act in a given situation. There are a fair number of that sort about.

We have been led to say this much because we have had a letter from the type of man described who covers four pages of newspaper to say what he might have said in nine words. They are: "How do you know there is not a God?" Well, candidly we do not know, and the main reason for not knowing is because no one yet has been able to tell us how to recognise a god if we met one. One cannot say that he recognises something to be of a certain kind *because* he has never seen anything like it before. Recognition is *re-cognition*, and that means seeing the same thing at least twice. And we have not seen a god once. Neither has anyone else. There was once an authoritative definition of God as a being "without body, parts or passions," but that was just a companion to the Irishman's definition of nothing as a footless stocking without a leg. God is like that stocking; no one knows what he does; no one knows what use he is; no one knows what he is like. He is just something that is like nothing else; he was a something that existed before everything, and did everything until it was discovered that things happened without his interference. No, we really cannot say some undescribed, unthinkable, unrealisable thing does exist. All that we can realise is the very foolish attitude of those who take up any other position.

One of the most striking things ever done by the English Church was in 1923. Until then the preachers of the Church were authorised to pray to God—"That it may please Thee to endue the lords of the Council and all the nobility with grace, wisdom and understanding." Then in 1923 the prayer was deleted. One must assume that it was too obvious that the Lord did not answer that prayer.

But the House of Commons still has a prayer that members will be endowed with wisdom and justice. Perhaps God has not yet given up hope. Or it may be that the reports to the heavenly bookkeeper come from the B.B.C. travelling padres.

Our sympathy lies with the Roman Catholic Press in this country. After publishing a series of articles to prove that no such thing as anti-Jewism existed, that the accounts in the Press and elsewhere were nothing but Atheistic-Communist propaganda, the newspapers for May 6 announced that three officers in the Polish Army have been tried, found guilty and punished for the offence of anti-Semitism, and 20 more officers and soldiers are awaiting trial. It is to our shame that what has been well known to others should have been unknown to our Government officials. The Polish Forces in this country should be told plainly and promptly that what went on in Poland cannot go on in this country.

Not because of what he said, not because of the opinions he holds on politics, religion, or any other subject, we are pleased to see that the official Socialist Party has been compelled to withdraw its intention of dismissing Mr. Aneurin Bevan from its membership. Even though it were true that of the entire population of Britain there is one man only who could carry this war to a triumphant end, still it would be something to be proud of that there is in the Commons one man who would have his say, even though it for ever barred him from office. The air has been ringing since the war began of our deep affection for freedom of thought and speech. It is good to learn that what our leaders may use as a mere war-cry is accepted by others as something that is really vital. In a free, democratic country opposition should receive at least as careful a hearing as approval. We are afraid that people in office are prone to forget this.

## COUCHOUD'S "CREATION OF CHRIST"

### III.

THE reader must turn to Dr. Couchoud's work for a very detailed exposition of both Marcion and his gospel which, he contends, really brought the Christian deity to earth and was the occasion of all or nearly all the gospels which have come down to us both in the Canon and in the New Testament Apocrypha. It contains much that is in these of course, and Marcion allowed his imagination full play in his description of what a God can do on earth given the chance. Did Marcion come to believe it all himself? Did he delude himself that he was writing history, or was his object the teaching of "the Christ life"—whatever this is I do not know myself—through allegory and symbolism?

For Couchoud, one thing is clear. Marcion's "original yet ambiguous book . . . has no historical element. This astounding story of the Son of God who came down to earth in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar is not based on documentary nor traditional evidence. . . . All through we note, in the words of Goethe, 'the greatest amount of verity without a shadow of reality.'"

But just as there are many sects of Christians in these days, so there were many when Marcion came to give "the tiller a decisive direction towards Paulinism." Marcion's gospel was by no means received at first, and later only when duly corrected and revised. In Alexandria, a gnostic philosopher, Basilides, "whose soul was sensitive to the rites of the mysteries," revised Marcion for the Alexandrian Christians, but this revision is completely lost. Some of the well-known parables were in it but Jesus was not, according to Basilides, crucified. It was Simon of Cyrene who suffered in his place (a fact duly noted over a century ago by Robert Taylor). Couchoud gives authority for the statement that the crucifixion of Jesus was denied in the Apocryphal Acts of John, and in the Koran. And one might add that Irenæus, a most eminent Church Father, also denied it—at least he claims Jesus lived till he was over fifty. And as Irenæus lived in the second century, he was more likely to know than a modern Christian theologian or a Rationalist defender of a real Jesus.

In Rome, the writing of a revised Gospel was left to Mark—whoever that nebulous person was. It may have been originally written in Latin, as there is a Latin text "which is preserved for us in two manuscripts better in many points than the text of the Greek manuscripts." Unlike Marcion, many Christians were by no means prepared to give up either the Old Testament or the Jewish God. Only they felt it right to differ in their interpretation of that work from the Jews. These differences of opinion as to what God meant in his revelation to his Chosen People still continue. It is astonishing that the Creator of the Universe (including the stars) should have been unable to make his word clear and unequivocal.

One thing is noticeable in Mark. Like Marcion, Jesus comes from heaven ready made. No puling days of childhood and infancy for him, for right away Jesus was the "Beloved Son," the "Only Son" of God Almighty. Such heresy could never have come from a Jew.

It is not difficult to show how much of sun lore and worship there is in Mark. That fishy sign of the Zodiac, Pisces, must have had something to do with Jesus as a fisher of men, and later, with making him depicted as a Divine Fish. I have not so far read any explanation as to why, if Jesus were a real man, he should have been shown as a Fish by his ardent disciples. And certainly not by those Rationalists who urge that Jesus was a true historical figure. And what about Jesus walking on the sea—an episode which Couchoud calls symbolic

"to reveal the imponderable spiritual essence of Jesus's body." Do even Christians *now* believe that?

Couchoud points out that Mark "puts the finishing touch to the incredible stupidity of the Apostles. . . . It cannot be doubted that Mark sought to raise at their expense the guffaws of the gallery." Does this kind of treatment from an inspired writer prove that the Apostles were real people? Or just myths?

Couchoud describes how the Gospel according to Matthew was written specially for the Aramaic Churches, which had a preponderance of converted Jews. It was to be a more detailed fusion of Marcion and Mark, and was originally written in Aramaic. How far this is true is a matter of speculation, of course, but then anything may be conjectured in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

"The whole of Matthew's Gospel," says Couchoud, "is an attempt to demonstrate that Jesus was not only the Son of God . . . but, in direct opposition to Marcion, the Messiah himself promised by the prophets of Israel." But as Jews have always insisted that their Messiah must be descended from David, the famous genealogy was invented which proved that David must have been the ancestor of Jesus because his *reputed* father was descended from the famous old king. Christians have swallowed this demonstration right loyally, as have Jewish converts, though it is nothing but what may be popularly called downright bilge. Matthew used the Old Testament a good deal, and even made Jesus say that not one jot or tittle of the Law shall pass away "till all things be accomplished"—a prophecy which must have had great weight with converts. In the end it was this Gospel which had tremendous influence in Rome, and helped the Church established there to "vast possibilities."

It was in Ephesus that another Gospel was manufactured, quite different from any written so far—that of John. The "brethren" here were mystics and hated the Marcionites. They refused "the doctrine that the Christ had come in the semblance of a man. . . . They would have it that the body of Jesus was at one and the same time both heavenly and human flesh and blood." But they would have nothing to do with a Virgin Birth, nor the doctrine of Basilides, that Jesus was not crucified.

To Ephesus had come a number of refugee Jews, whence such discussions as we have recorded in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho—who, by the way, is identified by Couchoud as a famous rabbi called Tarphon. I was glad to see Couchoud admits that it was not only Trypho but these refugees who "roundly declared, 'You have readily believed an empty hearsay, you have fabricated for yourselves a Christ. . . .'" And the Ephesians, as shown by Justin, "had to demonstrate that the Christ Jesus had always existed through eternity." There is certainly no question in Couchoud's mind that Justin was talking about some other Christ.

To Couchoud, John's Gospel was a natural evolution from Marcion and the needs of the community at Ephesus; but to Christians it was "divinely inspired by the Spirit." In any case, the way in which all the four Gospels I have dealt with were composed, according to Couchoud, disposes of any theory as to a real existence of Jesus.

My final article will be devoted to a summing-up of "The Creation of Christ"—which is surely a fine example of Free-thought scholarship.

H. CUTNER.

"THE MOTHER OF GOD." By G. W. FOOTE. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

"MATERIALISM RESTATED." By CHAPMAN COHEN. With chapters on "Emergence" and the "Problem of Personality." Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

"FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST." By J. M. WHEELER. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

CORRESPONDENCE

LYING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

SIR,—Lying for the glory of God is as old as Christianity, and we have it on the authority of St. Paul: "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?"—Romans, chap. 3, verse 7; and it was quite refreshing to read in the "The Freethinker" how the Rev. Dr. Torrey, by his bare-faced lies about Colonel Ingersoll, found England too hot to hold him, and had to leave these shores in a hurry for whence he came, thanks to G. W. Foote and W. T. Stead.

But another lie for the glory of God which did good service for a time among Christians was a little book of five chapters entitled: "The Converted Atheist Shoemaker," which was written by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes to boost his "West End Mission." Here again Freethinkers must thank G. W. Foote for exposing this lie. After a great deal of trouble, Foote discovered the "Atheist shoemaker," but found out that he never had been an Atheist. Mr. Foote, with his usual tenacity after he had got all the details and facts, issued a pamphlet (which had a huge sale), "The Atheist Shoemaker: A Lie in Five Chapters," by G. W. Foote, Editor of "The Freethinker"—a reply to the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. That answer was complete, so much so that soon after the "West End Mission" fizzled out and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes died—probably of a broken heart.

Truly one can say with Thomas Paine:—

"It is an easy thing to tell a lie, but it is difficult to support that lie after it is told."— "Age of Reason," page 118.—Yours, etc.,

JOSEPH CLOSE.

MODERN PROPHECIES.

SIR,—In his Introduction to the "Life of Tolstoy," Charles Sarolea has some interesting things to say about the future of Russia—no less significant than those of H. Seton Merriman, as recorded by your contributor, E. Watson. Writing over 40 years ago, Sarolea remarks: "The 20th century will be the century of the Russian. Before it will have run its course, one-fourth of the inhabitable earth, from the frontiers of Germany to the frontiers of China, from the White Sea to the Himalayas, will be occupied by a homogeneous population of three hundred millions of people—the most formidable aggregate of civilised humanity known to history. No race seems destined to a more brilliant future. The strong are coming into their inheritance. The slow, steady advance of Russia is one of the most impressive phenomena of history. The schoolboy will one day be taught the epic of Russian expansion, as to-day he is taught the epic of Imperial Rome. Nothing can arrest the development of the Russian people," etc.

Present events show the speed of progress being made. To parody a well-known hymn:—

Christian, dost thou see them  
Swiftly gaining ground?  
How the troops of Stalin  
Make their way around!

—Yours, etc.,

S. GORDON HOGG.

ACCOUNTANTS want senior with thorough knowledge of book-keeping or professional experience with some knowledge of tax or inclination to handle tax. Provincial applicants interviewed in own town.  
Write S. G. & Co., C.A., 2, Gayton Road, Harrow, Middlesex, or 28, Great Queen Street, London, W.C.2.

Telephone No. : HOLborn 6595, etc.

SECULAR EDUCATION LEAGUE,

43 Chandos House,  
Buckingham Gate, S.W. 1

Send postcard for Objects and Literature.

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: Sunday, 3-30 p.m. Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Messrs. WOOD, PAGE, and other speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m. C. E. M. JOAD, M.A., D.Lit.: "Mr. C. S. Lewis on the Abolition of Man."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blyth (Market Place).—Monday, May 15, 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Various speakers.

Bristol Branch N.S.S. (Durdham Downs).—Sunday, 7 p.m. Mr. G. THOMPSON: A Lecture.

Chester-le-Street (Bridge End).—Friday, May 12, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

Cliviger (Lancs.).—Thursday, May 18, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m. Debate: Rev. GORDON LIVINGSTONE v. Mr. F. SMITHIES: "What Do We Thank God For?"

Enfield (Lancs.).—Friday, May 12, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market, Memorial Corner).—Saturday, 7 p.m. Messrs. T. W. BROWN and J. W. BARKER.

Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. (Bigg Market).—Sunday 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

New Kyo.—Thursday, May 18, 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

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

Read.—Wednesday, May 17, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun): Sunday, 3 p.m. Annual General Meeting.

In Defence of Freethought

Two New Titles:—

**MAN AND HIS ILLUSIONS**

By GEORGE RYLEY SCOTT, F.Ph.S.

A forthright attack upon many of the superstitions of the day.

Cloth, 6s. net.

**A NEW LIFE OF JESUS**

By LLOYD COLE.

A freethought fantasy of the life of Jesus Christ.

Cloth, 5s. net.

LLOYD COLE,  
ROLLS CHAMBERS,  
89, CHANCERY LANE, W.C.2

## "I SWEAR BY ALMIGHTY GOD"

CHARLES BRADLAUGH made one of the greatest contributions to human intellectual rights during the Victorian period when he secured, by the passing of his Affirmations Act, the right of every non-Christian, whether unbeliever or not, to give evidence and to make declarations on the same terms as Christians without having to prostitute their mental honesty by "swearing by Almighty God."

Once and for all, Bradlaugh's Act technically and legally removed the disabilities from which Atheists and others suffered on those occasions when declarations are necessary preliminaries to procedure. It was a great triumph for Bradlaugh personally, and for the Freethought principle generally, sweeping away as it did the offensive implication, supported by the law of the time, that unbelievers were not capable of speaking the truth, and were not to be trusted in their evidence.

As Bradlaugh had himself experienced, so heavily was the law weighted against the Freethinker that he might even be refused a hearing of his evidence, or be non-suited in the courts, without anything being known about his case. This actually happened to Bradlaugh in a case at Wigan, when he was not allowed to take the oath, nor to affirm, nor to give evidence at all, thus robbing him of the citizen's right to seek remedial justice through the court. It was this, and other similar experiences, that led Bradlaugh to ask:—

"Am I outlaw or citizen—which? Answer me, you who boast your superiority; you whose religion makes you better than myself. What mockery to tell me that I live in a free country when it is thus that justice is dealt out to such as I am!"

The effect of Bradlaugh's Affirmations Bill was to benefit all those Freethinkers, and others, who found the Christian oath repugnant, and who had the moral courage to exercise their newly-won right. Bradlaugh's work stimulated a degree of mental honesty the extent of which is perhaps difficult to appreciate to-day, for in those days most Freethinkers would probably avail themselves of the new facility out of sincerity of conviction; while other people, being much more Christian than the "other people" are to-day, would continue to take the oath, also out of sincerity of conviction.

But now things are vastly changed; and it seems to me the time is overdue for a new attitude on the whole question of oath-taking, and for some drastic reform.

Freethinkers are no longer a small band of militant people, willing to risk, at any cost, whatever may be involved in the way of bigotry and prejudice as a result of exposing themselves by affirmations. They are a much larger body now, with more widespread social and business attachments than they ever enjoyed before. In fifty years our movement has grown a great deal, and many Freethinkers consider (perhaps with some justification, though it may seem regrettable) that the price of affirming in these days, when Christian hypocrisy has so largely replaced honest Christian belief, is too high for people who have something to lose.

Some may criticise me for saying this; but I would point out that I am not discussing what I think *should* be, but what *is* the position. And although I can claim to be among those who insist upon making an affirmation, and that I have more than once had "something to lose" by so doing, yet I cannot too harshly judge those who, in similar circumstances, behave with more discretion, if with less honesty.

More than one of my Freethinking friends has said: "Why should I do harm to my case for the sake of miserable swine who cannot understand what principle means?"—or words to that effect. It is the social logic behind such words that drives

home the need for some further reform. It is good, of course, to have mental honesty well exercised; but I feel it is also necessary to have a state of society in which mental honesty may be practised without penalties. It may be answered that the two things are complementary. I agree. But the lack of balance that exists between them, in this particular instance, necessitates an adjustment in the legal conditions rather than in the make-up of the people who may suffer under those conditions. To-day, we who affirm are apt to suffer not because of adherence to our principles so much as on account of the hypocrisy of those who do not share those principles. The only remedy for that state of affairs is the disappearance of the oath.

The steady growth of genuine Freethinkers has corresponded with a rapid decline in Christian believers, giving us at the present time an intermediate mass of people with no real convictions either way, although they are somewhat contemptuous of Christianity. In this mass there must be thousands who daily take the Christian oath, in our courts and elsewhere, as a piece of meaningless mumbo-jumbo, without significance in connection with their evidence, and to be uttered only in the same ritualistic fashion as they repeat the words, "Your Worship," "Your Honour" and "My Lord."

If the oath ever possessed any capacity to reflect dignity upon the god it invokes, or to command the truth which the court desires, that capacity has long since disappeared. Perjury after perjury takes place, every working hour of every working day in British courts of justice, and poor old "Swelpmegawd" is powerless to help either the witnesses or the Court.

A few sittings in British courts would convince any Freethinker of the futility of the oath when it comes to making even devout Christians tell the truth, and would satisfy any honest believer that the Lord's name was perpetually being taken in vain. I can well imagine a sensitive Christian crying out: "For heaven's sake let them tell their damned lies without God's help!"

There seems little doubt, then, if my own observations are typical of the country as a whole (and I have confirmation that they are) that the time is well past for some reform in this respect.

I would suggest that the initiative should have come long ago from the judiciary and magistracy, who are well aware of the general contempt for the oath, and its utter uselessness in impressing upon witnesses the importance of their task, or the seriousness of perjury, which, after all, are the really important points in any declaration prior to giving evidence. But the duplicity of many witnesses is fully equalled by the stupidity of many magistrates, so the farce goes on.

I have even known magistrates order child witnesses to be lifted to the table to have the question put to them:—

"You know God will punish you if you tell a lie, don't you, my boy?"

Usually the reply to this idiotic threat is a nod of the head, the child accepting the statement-by-innuendo that is made in the question. But one bright little fellow I remember was too good for the worn out "beak" who had him lifted to the table. His reply to the question brought human and appreciative smiles from every part of the court—except the bench.

"That don't make no difference to me. I shan't tell no lies," he replied.

What a philosophic lesson for the magistrate in those few ungrammatical words, which bespoke the beginnings of a fearless character. But I am afraid they were lost on a mind which could only repeat the threat, in reply:—

"Well, He will, if you do."

The sanctity of the oath! Ye gods! The futility of the faith would be nearer the mark.

F.J. CORINA.

(To be concluded)