

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXV.—No. 30

Sunday, July 29, 1945

Price Threepence

· VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Civilisation and the Cross

THE world war is not yet over, and if Japan had been completely annihilated that would only bring us a few possible steps towards peace and goodwill. The Allies repeat—with all the solemnity of a priest going through his sacred *hocus-pocus*—that we must build up a new world, when already there are talks of making more deadly weapons than we now have, and behind the curtain of goodwill there are going on plans of which people know little but which are intended to “benefit” one nation at the cost of others. No one of influence has the courage to say plainly and openly that the only way to end national wars is to plan for all nations to forswear the power to make local war, and to create an international guard which will see that justice is done to anyone who shall break the peace. There is and there always will be a great and deadly difference between an alliance of certain peoples and a resolve to put beyond the power of any one nation to declare war on another. It is idle to say that we should run a great risk. Could any risk be greater than that which is contained in the existence of large countries each plotting in secrecy, and preparing for an even more deadly conflict than that we have been facing since 1939?

Of course all sorts of morals have been deduced from the war and the existing state of the world. And as one would expect the Churches have all drawn the same conclusion. But to those who are not blind the one thing that comes clearly out of this world war is the decisive disproof of Christianity—or any other religion—as a peace-making force. This remains true even though we were to accept the ultra-foolish excuse that the world is as it is because it has never really adopted Christianity. That merely gives another aspect to the situation without making the case against Christianity any weaker. It admits failure clear and distinct. For Christianity is not a thing of yesterday. It has a lengthy history behind it, and it has exercised a power before which nations trembled. Where its own interests were at stake the Church fought tooth and nail. But it did not fight for the abolition of war, it fought for control, and when that control meant war the Church was ready to bless it, and with the blessings of God on all who helped in the slaughter. After all, the first business of a religion is to get itself adopted, and if it has been unable to do this in the course of nearly two thousand years it had better be cleared out altogether. After all, the war has almost brought civilisation to the ground. The situation could hardly have been worse than it is had Christianity never been heard of.

The case against Christianity becomes still stronger if it is argued that what we have had in actual operation is

a Christianity that has been distorted and utilised in the interests of selfish Powers. On that, one may well ask: “What is there in or about Christianity that it should so readily lend itself to schemes of government tyranny and brutality?” For there is no doubt that from the time of Constantine the Christian Church has been so used. Nor can it be denied that the adoption of the Church by Constantine was eagerly welcomed by the Christians. They saw advancement, and Constantine saw security for his throne. A well-known historian, Professor Seeley, has said:—

“Constantine was influenced by a wise policy when he extended his patronage to the Church. By so doing he may be said to have purchased an indefeasible title by a charter. He gave certain liberties (to Christians) and he received in turn passive obedience. He gained a sanction for the oriental theory of government. In return he accepted the rule of the Church. He became irresponsible with respect to his subjects on condition of being responsible to the Church.”

The Christianised Emperor willingly admitted his responsibility to Christ, but he repudiated it in the only direction in which his belief might have been socially useful. I cannot, indeed, recall any time in which devotion to Christ by a ruler ever made for national well-being. In the last world war the Kaiser declared himself, as did Hitler in the present one, to be an agent of God. Up to date there are only two countries that have left God out of the picture. These are China which worked on the Confucian rule “Respect the gods, but keep them at a distance,” and Russia which gave liberty of belief to all religions—so long as they did not interfere with Secular control.

Having successfully done nothing to prevent war occurring, and doing much to stir up ill-will between peoples, our spiritual guides are now loudly proclaiming that if there had been enough Christianity in the world the war would never have occurred. But whose Christianity is it that is to bring peace to the world? Clearly the Christianity of Germany did not prevent it; and it is worth remembering that until we fell out with the Germany of the Kaiser, that country was held up to us as one of the most Christian of the leading nations of Europe. Will the Christianity of Spain, or of America, or of this country, prevent war? Clearly not. Where is the country that has openly and categorically declared that Christians can give no sanction to war? In every country where war has occurred the Christian leaders have been foremost in declaring that in going to war we have been carrying out God's will. They have blessed war and have prided themselves on the share they have taken in it. The Churches everywhere have given their sanction to war. We admit that if all Christians in every country were agreed upon the futility of war it would become a practical impossibility. Up to date the function of the

Churches has been in every country to bid God-speed to marching armies.

Let us take an example from history and contrast godless Buddhism with godly Christianity. Somewhere in the "eighties" the English Government discovered there were reasons for our annexing Burma. There was a little matter of mines, etc., but our reason for going to war was to benefit the Burmese people. But the Burmese were overwhelmingly Buddhist, and Buddhism teaches that the law of cause and effect is unbreakable. So when the Burmese were ordered to war some of them went to their priests. They said, "You have told us we must not take life. Moreover you have told us that every offence we commit we must pay for in our reincarnation. But we are ordered to fight for the protection of our country. What are we to do?" Of course that would have been a very simple problem where Christian ministers were concerned. They would have turned away from the "love one another," "thou shalt not kill," and similar texts, and turned to another page of the Bible which says that "God is a mighty man of war," to the great Christians who have been great soldiers and would have said their seat in Heaven will be the more secure by dying on the battlefield.

But the Buddhist priests took a different and un-Christian point of view. They said: "We cannot alter the moral law. We did not make it; it is our duty to teach it. If you must kill in the protection of your country then you must do so. But no man can take life without suffering the moral setback that taking life involves." And these Burmese soldiers went out to fight knowing that for every life taken they had to pay the price their conduct demanded. Look at the courage and philosophy of the Burmese priests and people, and the attitude of our Christian clergy in the handling of the same problem.

What reason then have we to look to the clergy of our own country for a cessation of war as a method of settling national quarrels? Will religion bring people together? We doubt it. Consider but one fact. That is that war actually does more to bring together the people of a country than does religion. Consider the fact of the vast proportion of our people that have been taken into the Armed Forces on the sea, in the air, and on the land. In their work religious distinctions disappear. Political differences are overlooked. The men live together, eat together, fight together and die together. The only thing that separates them is religion. Jew and Christian, Mohammedan, Catholic and Protestant, the men with several gods and the men with none fraternise until the question of religion is raised and then divisions show themselves. And let it be specially noted that it is not the force of religion that brings these people together, it is a unity that has been established by the social, not the religious factor that has done the trick. No amount of religious belief can establish union among groups of men and women.

There is no need to multiply instances. It is the social factor that brings men together. It is the religious factor that separates them. Religion, even in the act of union, is a separative force. As a mere social force Christianity has never been able to bring two nations together. On the other hand, it is Christian-bred nations that threaten the peace of the world. However much other factors are operative the separative quality of religion is conspicuous.

It is a Christian-bred nation that has provided the greatest horrors that humanity has known. A very prominent Christian leader had, some years ago, the courage to write:—

"The Roman Empire far more nearly succeeded in giving unity of life, culture, government, and intercourse to the entire body of civilised men—European, Asiatic and African—that we in our wildest dreams could ever imagine possible to-day. A common unity for Christian Europe is infinitely less conceivable now, eighteen centuries after Christ, than it was in pre-Christian. It is Christian Europe which gives us the spectacle of race divided against race by implacable enmities. . . . Racial differences grow more intense, and let us note that Christianity itself which tends to sharpen them."

Two thousand years ago a Roman citizen might travel from Rome to Britain under the protection of Roman law and Roman civilisation. To-day, if that Roman traveller could be resurrected and attempted the journey he would have found millions of men—and women—engaged in the bloodiest war the world has seen. Christian countries watch each other with deserved mistrust. The Cross is still held aloft, while below, slaughter, lying, greed and mistrust is everywhere manifest.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ROME—AND A ROMANCE

FOR the highest and noblest examples of humanitarianism, for inspiration in the purest and most beautiful of human ethics, for guidance in the gracious paths of human brotherhood and sisterhood, commend to me the holy, uplifting, and ennobling religion of Christianity; the religion which, preaching human brotherhood, tears men's hearts apart; the religion which, preaching of matrimony as holy and blessed in the sight of God, bursts asunder the bonds of youthful affection; the religion which, lisping lies about love and devotion, stirs up the muddy pools of human hatred; the religion which, snivelling about the sacredness of souls, casts them adrift at the mere disturbance of a single theological thought.

Yes, for sheer, downright, damnable iniquity, decorated by doses of contradictory cant and humbug, give me Christianity. And the older and more original the variety, the viler it will be. No wonder modern Christian apologists may be found condemning "Humanism" in the most vigorous terms, for in practice their creed possesses neither the scientific nor the social attributes of Humanism, while the very name is foreign to the real nature of the creed.

Says "The Daily Mail" for July 9, 1945:—

"The shattered romance of a Scottish girl who married a French-Canadian soldier and went to Canada with their baby has set British and Canadian authorities a new problem in war-time weddings."

But "The Daily Mail" does not point out that the same shattered romance, besides setting a new problem, emphasises a very old one concerned with religion and marriage. This girl, aged 19, who had crossed the Atlantic to be with the man she loved, taking her baby with her, was, at the time of "The Daily Mail" report, apparently stranded and deserted, her husband gone, and more than 3,000 miles of ocean between herself (and her baby) and everything with which she was

familiar, as well as everybody from whom she might gain comfort in her desperate plight.

Stranded in Canada as a direct result of a Roman Catholic's loyalty to his religion, which was greater than his loyalty to the woman who loved him, and without the money to return to the comfort and compassion of those in Scotland who might find more to love in a human being than in a useless creed!

It appears that the husband was responsible for divorce and annulment proceedings, which resulted in the marriage being pronounced invalid by the Superior Court in Montreal, before a certain Mr. Justice Forest. Whether there was any preliminary initiative by Roman Catholic influences we can only conjecture, but it is clear, in any case, that Roman Catholicism was the root cause of the trouble.

The girl's mother, in an interview with "The Daily Mail," said: "My daughter was perfectly happy with her husband until the baby was born, and it was then disclosed that he was a Roman Catholic. We had never known that. He wanted the baby to be brought up in the Roman Catholic faith. Now my daughter is in a terrible plight. She is stranded in Canada and so far as I know has no money to get her home."

From this statement we may guess that the young woman had a peculiar notion that, although she was not a Roman Catholic, she had some rights, as well as her husband, in deciding the child's future faith. Freethinkers at least will know that such absurd ideas cannot be countenanced by Roman Catholics, who are the only people who enjoy parental rights. Such rights come from God—via the Vatican, of course—and are so "inalienable" that it is better to smash a romance than to stir even a single brick in the theological structure of God's Holy Home of Rome. So the marriage was smashed, the romance ended, and the bonds of human affection were shattered to the extent of about the most shameful domestic desertion I can recall—a lonely girl and her baby cast adrift from the one tie upon which she had depended (her husband) in a land of strangers thousands of miles from home.

But we must not—dare not—criticise, for it was done in the sacred name of God and the holy cause of Romish superstition.

Two legal points were allowed by the court as valid grounds for the annulment, but Mr. Justice Forest gratuitously provided a third ground, which seems to stamp him as being at least as clever a Catholic as he is a judge. Says the newspaper report: "Mr. Justice Forest also ruled that the Roman Catholic law forbids the marriage of a Roman Catholic with a person not baptised according to their rites."

Now I know nothing of Canadian law, and it may be that in that country the poverty of intellect and the misconception of justice is such that there is, in fact, what is described as "Roman Catholic law" as part of the Canadian civil law, or supplementary to it, with legal validity. If this be so it is a sad commentary on the state of affairs in Canada, for the idea of one law for the Catholic and another for those who do not is even more deplorable than our own alleged one law for the rich and another for the poor. If this be the position, however, Mr. Justice Forest was within his duties as a judge in pointing out the fact, for he was there to administer the law, pitiable though the law may be, judged by civilised standards.

But if Mr. Justice Forest was merely making his observation on the grounds that Roman Catholic theology has "laws" of its own, as distinct from the laws of the country, his interposition on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church was nothing less than damned insolence, for if marriages in Canada are decided by civil law, as in this country, the civil law, and that alone, is the law that matters, and to allow such tin-pot imitations as "Catholic law" even to enter the question was well outside the British conception of judicial fairness.

But let us see if we can make up for Mr. Justice Forest's shortcomings. Assuming that he was right in referring to the

fact that "Roman Catholic law forbids the marriage of a Roman Catholic with a person not baptised according to their rites," could he not have proceeded a little further, and pointed out that although the Catholic law was so rigid on this point, it was not so rigid on others.

For instance, he might have pointed out that evidently there is nothing in Roman Catholic law that forbids a follower going abroad (say from Canada to Scotland) and there seducing a young girl without first discovering whether she is also a Catholic. That there is nothing to forbid him in his seductive activities even though he knows full well that he can never legally marry her if she happens not to be a Catholic. That there is nothing in Roman Catholic law to forbid his making a false promise of marriage to the girl to bring about her seduction, knowing such a promise to be false in intention because no such marriage would be valid. Nor is there anything in Roman Catholic law to forbid the girl having a child from the seduction, though the seducer knows that such a child, by the "laws" of his church, must suffer illegitimate status.

Again, Mr. Justice Forest could have pointed out that there is nothing in Roman Catholic law which forbids a Catholic from bringing a trusting woman across 3,000 miles of ocean, and then using the Canadian courts to desert her, half across the world, with a baby in her arms. Indeed, the judge might have made it clear that Roman Catholic law would actually help him to carry out this disgusting act of desertion. The judge might even have stressed that there is nothing in Roman Catholic law which could compel the perpetrator of these moral offences even to provide the fare to get his victim back to her home and family.

And finally, he might have shed his judicial calm and indignantly pointed out that there is nothing at all in Roman Catholic law that is worth a tuppenny rap to any man or woman who puts moral sanity higher than religious insanity.

Here was a situation in which every feature called for sympathy for the woman, and in which a sane system of justice, as distinct from a code of religious barbarities, would have refused to bring down the scales on the side of the Rome-ridden husband, who was either an ignorant fool for not knowing the "laws" of his church (until the priests got busy with him in Canada) or a calculating criminal who kept his religion secret to bring about a seduction. Whichever way, it was he who deserved to suffer, rather than the mother and child, at the very least by being compelled to make some restitution by way of damages to right his wrongs.

But there is no "law of the Church" on that point—so this iniquity must continue to offend decency until such time as a broken heart has healed, and a certain Scottish lassie is able to appreciate the even worse plight that she fortunately escaped when she lost a husband who put the Mother of God before the mother of his child.

F. J. CORINA.

THOMAS PAINE and THETFORD

Six postcards illustrating Paine's birth-town
including a portrait of the great reformer

Price 9d.

Post free

ACID DROPS

It is quite interesting news to learn from Dr. Woods, Bishop of Lichfield, that "we have good news for Europe—the Gospel." But we have had that news for many centuries, and the result is—the world as it is. Meanwhile, we may note that the plans put forward for improvement have no necessary connection with any kind of religion. The likelihood of building a better world is slim indeed if we have to depend upon the Churches for succour. But to show he is in earnest, Bishop Woods asks for £130,000 for reconstructing churches and church halls in his diocese.

Three hundred assistant head teachers and parents gathered together at Epsom to discuss methods of teaching religion. And that was just bunkum. The meeting was between teachers, parsons, Nonconforming preachers, and other odds and ends. The parents were there, as they said, to look after the children, but with no guarantee of efficiency. The preachers were there to see by what tricks they could make sure of customers in their Church or Chapel, and the teachers—well, some might have known what they ought to ask for, but very few had the courage to speak out boldly on the matter. The children, who were not really represented, were not there.

The proof of what we have said is seen in a review of a book written by Canon Brailey. He commends the new Education Act on the ground that it "establishes a religious basis for a national system of education." But that is a basis that should not exist. There is, in the first instance, no agreement as to what is the true religion, and there is no attempt to prepare the students for an understanding of religion when they reach more mature years. It is not extravagant to say that the majority of pupils either put religion on one side or they entertain views that are an insult to an—avowed—educated people. The clergy know this, and their only reply is to tell the "lie of religion" to children while they are unable to "talk back," and so give the Churches a little longer life.

The Catholic Church is a political power in a sense that our own established is not. Only bearing that in mind will help people to understand the bitter and generally untruthful attacks on Poland. It will be remembered that when it was found that the organised Poles in this country were treating some of their prisoners much on the lines of Hitlerism, there was not a word of apology or regret expressed. The Catholic papers simply dried up—in public. "The great lying Church" runs true to form.

Another stronghold of the Vatican is Spain—one of the most important in Europe. But with full religious impudence Franco, whom Churchill was rash enough to praise, has now formed what the "Standard" for July 14 calls Spain's Magna Charta. It begins with the declaration that "All Spaniards are equal, irrespective of their social status." But there are qualifications. For example: the Catholic religion enjoys official protection, but only Catholic rites may be observed in public. And a final clause grants them the right to suspend temporarily these clauses. We fancy that Hitler might have agreed to a liberal state on those terms. They are actually the kind of things he did. Another clause forbids divorce.

Those who cannot see the hand of the Vatican in this must indeed be blind. And those who wish to understand what is the real spirit of Catholic Spain should read that remarkable book "An Interlude in Spain," by Charles d'Ydewalle, on the condition of Spanish prisons, and the general treatment of those who do not hold the "right" ideas. Christian Spain remains Christian Spain. But the possibility of Spain becoming a great country is still there—after Franco and his crew and the influence of the Vatican are things of the past.

The following from one of the Russian newspapers appears to hit the mark:—

"Judging by what the Pope and those close to him have stated, it is not hard to reconstruct the picture of the post-war world which the Vatican heads are conjuring up. The

essence of the Vatican post-war programme is a throw-back to the time when Fascist or pro-Fascist reactionary regimes existed in a good many countries. Rejecting the post-war plans adopted by the United Nations, Catholic reaction, led by the Vatican, has plans of its own, aimed at weakening the foundations of future world collaboration among the nations."

Meanwhile we may note that the Catholic papers in this country never stop sowing whatever ill-feeling they can nourish between America, England and Russia. As plainly as it dares they sing the song that Britain and the U.S.A. are mere puppets in the hands of Russia. Their position, they tell us, is that of humiliation. Stalin expects Britain and America to come "cap in hand," and so forth. Never hesitating at lying, the Papacy appears at present to be going to the limit. We are not surprised. It has never stood lower than it does to-day.

Bishop Poskitt, Leeds, R.C., does not believe men should work for the State. Well, it all depends upon how the "State" is formed and how it behaves. But when we bear in mind that this Catholic bishop wishes all to obey the commands of the Church we do not see the benefit of discarding the State. At any rate, there is the possibility that the State may carry out the wishes of intelligent citizens. But with the Church there is no such possibility. The Roman Catholic teaching is that God speaks through the Pope, and the result of following that plan is written in the history of the world. Sooner or later the State will be compelled to take methods to cut the rule of the Church short.

The Bishop says that Roman Catholics will never give up fighting for the schools. We believe that to be the truth. The salvation of the Church depends on that. But there is not a country that has been, or is, that has not sooner or later been compelled to curtail the activities of the Papacy. At the moment it would be well to keep an eye on the Papacy with regard to Poland. Substantially pre-war Poland was essentially a Fascist State with the Church in power. And the Church cannot go losing control of one State after another. At the moment it is busy doing what it can to prevent the Poles in this country from going home.

Some one—obviously a Christian—has been good enough to send us a lengthy list of what certain men have done in war and in peace. We have not the slightest desire to question the accuracy of the list, but suggest a question that has been overlooked. Christians have done some very good things in war, in peace, in the home, and in the open field of civil life. But reflection should show that there is not a thing done by the people on the list which has not been done by people who are not religious, and if one goes back far enough he will find that these deeds, good and bad, could be traced always occurring.

So we come to this point. If Christians can do some things with the help of God, what are we to do with those who have done the same things without God? What, then, are we to make of it? Are we to say that Christians are made of such poor stuff that they need a miracle to force them to live a decent individual and social life, or must we assume that Christians are humanly inferior to Freethinkers? We do not believe it. We do not believe that if we take Christians and Freethinkers as a whole Christians may be just as good as Freethinkers. Many Christians have tried it, and have been able to get along without gods. So we suggest that our Christian friend need not despair. He can be at least as good a man without a religion as he is with it. Millions of men and women have proved it.

Says the Bishop of Chichester: "To-day, Hitler is destroyed and the Church goes on." That is true in a sense. But the Church was never so weak as it is to-day, and there is no indication that it will not get weaker with the passing of the years.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

D. K. KILLARNY.—We have read your letter with great interest. Of course the majority of the Russian people are still believers in some kind of a god. The important thing is that the Russian State makes religion a matter for each man to select what he wants. And the certain thing to note is that once an Atheist always an Atheist, and that the Russia minus God is infinitely better than the Russia with one.

C. ATTFIELD.—We agree with you that to give a sketch of Thomas Paine and leave out the "Age of Reason" is astonishing—would be if we were not acclimatised to the fear that newspapers have of offending religious folk. So soon as we get over the paper shortage we shall re-issue a new edition of that work, and at a very cheap rate.

G. A. AVEY.—There is no substantial difference between Monism and Materialism, so long as one understands both. Broadly, we can raise no objection to the statement that "Mind is a function of the body."

G. REATE.—The right to affirm in place of taking an oath applies to all cases where usually an oath is necessary. Police, soldiers and sailors come under that general rule.

W. JONES.—Thanks for enquiry. Mr. Cohen is quite well, but he could do with more spare time than he has. And at present there are matters connected with the N.S.S. that require increased attention and a little anxiety.

A. KRAN.—We have read your letter with considerable interest. We are, we think, almost as much indebted to our readers as they are to us. The feeling of so many friends is in itself a reward for work done.

J. McKECKNIE.—We quite agree with what you say, but for the time being it is the paper shortage that prevents our doing much we should like to do.

A.S.—"Jew" has no reference to nationality. There are Indians, Italians and many others who are "Jews." It has the same significance as "Christian." Thanks for paper.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of £1 5s. from Mr. H. Zolkwer to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

Our binders have just delivered a fair supply of "Ingersoll and Bradlaugh," and outstanding orders have been despatched; will any reader who has not yet received his copy please advise us.

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.

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 following appeared in the "Eastern Evening News" for 5th July:—

"THOMAS PAINE HONOURED."

"The New York suburb of New Rochelle conferred posthumous citizenship on Thomas Paine, English-born writer who fanned the flames of the American Revolution and died here shunned and hated in 1809.

Before a statue of Paine, who was born at Thetford, Norfolk, the Mayor made formal amends for the town's failing to permit the arch-patriot to vote in the local election 139 years ago.

He said that Paine, whose revolutionary doctrines became part of the Declaration of Independence, 'did more than any other single individual to make this a free and independent nation.'—Associated Press.

Poor Paine? No, let us rather speak of illustrious Paine, for he will live when his enemies are dead and forgotten. We were almost saying that Paine was a great Englishman. He was greater than that, he was a great *man*, one to whom medals would have been but the toys of children and titles the treasure of men who are here to-day and gone to-morrow. And to-day, with all meaningless chatter around politicians who are but froth thrown up by the accidents of the moment, he still cannot be completely ignored. The schools ignore him, and politicians are silent. And the clergy, true to their tradition, having lied, and lied about him, are mum. But still he lives, not merely by name, but by the love of freedom that urged, and still urges daring spirits to do him public justice.

We were interested to find the following passage in the July issue of "Light"—always the most level-headed of Spiritualist publications—saying:—

"It must be confessed that Spiritualists are not given a great deal of help from the other side with cases of an order to which some scientists at least might be disposed to pay attention. Consider, e.g., Sir Oliver Lodge's promise to read through a medium or mediums a document that before his passing he sealed and deposited with the S.P.R. Sir Oliver has been dead during a number of years, but we have had no reading. As was said to me the other day, 'If the Spiritualists' claims are true, why did not their leader complete his test within a few weeks, or even a few days of his death? The communication of a few thoroughly memorised sentences should be a simple matter.' What is the answer?"

There are two features that have always struck us. One is the reticence of the dead to come into contact with the living. The other is the fact that so important a matter has not by now been completely established. There are probably more believers in "Spiritualism," but the "more" does not lead us to an unquestionable demonstration of the truth of Spiritualism. Analytical psychology has made great strides of late years, and dual personalities are an everyday experience.

At Vereeniging, Johannesburg, a Dr. J. C. van der Merwe was found guilty of witchcraft and sentenced to three months. That is rot; sentence should, according to the Bible, have been stoning to death, or by the Christian method of England, burned to death. The eighteenth century saw this form of Christian belief, and long after the legal practice was abandoned, the belief in witchcraft persisted. The authority of God stood behind the belief, religious foolishness and brutality carried out the practice; and that superstition was backed by clergy of the time. Even the founder of Methodism did what he could to keep the belief alive. He said that giving up witchcraft was giving up the Bible, and he was correct. Parsons nowadays forget this example of following the Bible.

The French Government even under a Catholic like General de Gaulle has at last decided to stop the grant given to the Catholic private schools since 1940—instituted by Petain and his Vichy government. The French Hierarchy are most bitter about it, as it gave French parents, it declares, an assurance that their children would have a Christian education. Considering that most of the Vichyites like Petain himself, Laval, and other members of their gang, were most devout Catholics and many have been shot as traitors to France, perhaps some French parents are wondering what was the worth of the "Christian" education which the French Hierarchy want to re-introduce into French schools. Needless to say, the French Catholic organisations are working hard to reverse the decision as the final resolution will rest with the French Parliament to be elected later in the year. But they probably know there is very little hope for them.

SECULARISM AND ATHEISM

II.

IT can be admitted that the word Secularism has nothing about God in it, and the word Atheism just negatives the existence of a Deity. But a Secularist or an Atheist is not just a word, but a human being. To limit the word Secularism then, in the way Holyoake did, and to insist that an Atheist was nothing but a "negationist," became quite absurd directly we left the airy theories which Holyoake put down so well on paper, and began to deal with flesh and blood. It was here that Charles Bradlaugh stepped into the arena, and he found that, when he began his great work of organising Freethinkers into a body with rules and regulations and a voice in the conduct of their Society, Atheists were all Secularists, and that it was almost impossible for a man to be a good Secularist without being an Atheist.

Of course it was possible to have a vague, gaseous sort of a Deity (like Mansel's) who never did anything, and who was honoured by some such name as the "Absolute," and still be a Secularist; but in the main, a man had to be without God—a God of any kind—really to be a good Secularist.

I have never been quite clear as to why Holyoake always so violently opposed this view except on the supposition that he objected to Bradlaugh, and to Bradlaugh's championing of an Atheism not disguised under such names as Cosmism or Agnosticism or Rationalism. Although an Atheist himself, Holyoake seems to have become in his later years positively frightened of it. At all events, Freethinkers on both sides thought perhaps the air would be cleared a little and harmony restored between the followers of the two leaders if they had a debate, and eventually one took place in 1870 at the Hall of Science on "Secularism, Scepticism, and Atheism."

Whatever the audience may have thought, Holyoake himself appears to have been quite unimpressed by Bradlaugh's arguments, for he says in his Preface to the published Debate:—

"Mr. Bradlaugh and myself appear—though the public would not expect it—each to have prelatival affinities. He takes the view of Dr. Magee, the Bishop of Peterborough, who holds that the Secular is Atheistic. I hold the opinion of Dr. Thirwell, Bishop of St. David's, that the Secular is not even irreligious."

I do not think that Bradlaugh cared two hoots for any "prelatival affinity," for he generally went his own way, thinking himself into any position he had to defend. But Holyoake was always a fine example of the proverb, "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." He insisted that his object in the Debate was to make it clear "that Atheism, like Theism, having for its subject of speculation the unknowable and untraceable, must be distinct from, and can never be made the basis of a Secular philosophy of life, which is limited by time and regulated by human experience."

Bradlaugh, on the other hand, was always conscious that Freethinkers were often ready to disagree among themselves on almost any subject under the sun and yet were firm in their Free-thought. "I hold," he says in the Preface to the Debate, "that Atheism is the logical result to all who are able to think the matter out, but I do not hold that every person with whom I come in contact is, or need be expected to be, so advanced . . . There is no narrow church, or hard-and-fast-line-creed for those who enrol themselves as co-workers. The only worship we teach is work for human redemption." Thus, he vigorously contested the idea that to be an Atheist was merely to deny a God, and to leave it at that. For him, Atheism meant "work for human redemption"—that is, Secularism. And this work could only be properly accomplished "without" God—you had to be an

Atheist. This was the only logical conclusion, and from this view he never wavered.

Holyoake refused to allow the Secularist, as a Secularist, to discuss the "other world." He said: "The Secularist concerns himself with this world without denying or discussing any other world, either the origin of this, or the existence of that"—and this fatuous remark was actually cheered. Why, I simply cannot see. Speaking particularly as a Secularist, I claim the right to discuss anything under the sun and fail to see any reason whatever in Holyoake's contention.

Needless to say, a debater of the calibre of Bradlaugh had very little difficulty in putting his opponent properly in his place, so to speak. He said:—

"The position which he himself chooses to maintain is, that the principles of Secularism do not include Atheism. Certainly I am an Atheist. I have been one for the last eighteen years of my life at any rate, and if the principles of Secularism do not include Atheism, then I am—supposing Mr. Holyoake's definition to be a proper and conclusive one—excluded from the Secular ranks."

This brought a vigorous "No, no," from the audience. But Bradlaugh contended that that was exactly what Holyoake meant—and of course it really was his meaning. And later on, when the subject for discussion was that "Secular criticism does not involve Scepticism," Bradlaugh insisted that it is not true that "Scepticism is merely negation. You cannot destroy the habit of faith in the attributes of Deity without building up the thinking faculties of man. You cannot destroy the belief in the constant interference of the Theist's Providence without teaching that there is very much more useful work for human providence to do." Holyoake, however, merely shook his head and kept on repeating that Atheism was a waste of time discussing, that Secularists who followed Bradlaugh in declaring that Secularism was Atheism were "unadvanced," that it was "an obsolete policy," and so on. Holyoake, of course, could talk well and debate, but his fear of Atheism, and what the clergy thought of it, and how it impeded our movement, and similar arguments, got the better of his thinking. And he never came to grips with this clear statement of Bradlaugh:—

"Although at present it may be perfectly true that all men who are Secularists are not yet Atheists. I put it to you as also perfectly true, that in my opinion the logical consequences of the acceptance of Secularism must be that the man gets to Atheism, if he has brains enough to comprehend."

That seems to me to put the matter as clearly as it can be put, and I hope that any new reader who may have been slightly puzzled as to our use of the two terms will now understand them. He can call himself, if he feels like it, a good Secularist, without going as far as Atheism; but a logical Secularist must eventually become an Atheist. Bradlaugh made that point seventy-five years ago and it still stands uncontroverted.

H. CUTNER.

JUST PUBLISHED

A Pioneer of Two Worlds

THOMAS PAINE

BY CHAPMAN COHEN

An Essay on Paine's Literary, Political and Religious Activities

Price 1s. 4d., post free

WARNING TO BOOK LOVERS

"YES," says the little man, "I am a bit off the map. But now you're here, I hope you'll want to look round. If you'll excuse me, I have some business to attend to. I'll be back later, I promise you." Somehow he makes it sound like a threat; and as he slips out of the front door, which seems to be the only door to this curious book shop in the wilds, I have a nasty feeling that the lock snaps behind him.

Well, I take a quick look at the books. They are strange enough. They are all large tomes and have been rebound in a uniform black with scarlet lettering . . . "Rats, Lice" . . . surely the binder has made a mistake? Surely the title of that book is "Rats, Lice and History?" Why, I've read the book myself. And yet was there an edition as large as this one? I reach up for it, and then I discover that it really is a box like one of those cigarette boxes which pretend to be a volume of sermons and are sold as novelties. Perhaps, then, all the books are novelty boxes? I open the lid . . . red eyes, fierce living eyes, and they leap at me. I can't move as I watch in terror the two black rats scuttle across the floor and disappear behind the book case. And . . . and there are other things, things small and grey, things like lice. I see them before I shut the beastly box-book and thrust it back into the shelf.

What is it? an elaborate joke? ought I to laugh? But, good heavens, I'm nearer to hysterics. Yet, I feel hypnotised . . . Another book . . . "Birds of the Amazon." I don't know what prompts me to do it, but I find my fingers tapping at the spine of this imitation volume. And then I hear—or do I imagine it?—the cheep-cheep of some bird imprisoned.

This is no joke. This is monstrous! Look at the titles. If all these "books" have creatures, things inside according to the titles, it's worse than madness—it's a mechanism to drive people mad. It isn't only the books on natural history, the snakes and poison spiders, there are books about . . . See—the largest book of all—the scarlet letters on the back . . . "The Brain of the Master Jesuit" . . . Oh God, the door. I must get out . . . The door . . . the door is locked.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE TRUTH ABOUT "S.H."

SIR,—I am very grateful to your correspondent Mr. E. H. Simpson for his over-complimentary remarks as to my contributions to your columns. I trust that the reviews and discussions of sundry books which I have in recent years written for you (and hope to be able to continue) have been of some assistance in letting fellow Freethinkers know what I have found interesting and readable.

I should, however, like to dispose of the rumour, which may gain further credence owing to Mr. Simpson's letter, that I am the shade of Sherlock Holmes come back to life. I know that the great man from Baker Street, had he ever seen fit to turn his deductive abilities to religion, would undoubtedly have been a Freethinker, but I regret to state that I am in no way related to him. Would I were, for then I might perhaps be a far more convincing analyst of theological nonsense than I can now claim to be.—Yours, etc.

S. H.

LUTHER—AND OTHERS.

SIR,—I was much gratified to read the excellent review in the "Freethinker" of Mr. P. Wiener's book on Martin Luther as a forerunner of Hitler. It is a masterpiece of debunking. But why stop at Luther? I have made a suggestion to the author—some two thousand years ago. There is quite a long line of religious egomaniacs requiring and deserving the healthy debunking process.

An excellent though small beginning has been made by Mr. C. G. L. DuCann's pamphlet "The Faults and Failings of Jesus Christ," but the cleansing process should be continued.—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR HANSON.

A PAINE PILGRIMAGE.

SIR,—My enthusiasm for that grand fellow, Thomas Paine, and of whom you write with your accustomed ability and to the delight of all those who have any regard for historical facts, causes me to send you the enclosed paper for your inspection. When I was at Thetford I made it a point to see the Editor of the "Eastern Evening News" to ascertain why so little was done in Thetford to show its townfolk what a grand possession they had in the fact that one of the world's greatest men was born in the place his paper enjoyed wide circulation. I found him very sympathetic and he, in fact, introduced me to the local mayor and as a result Paine's bust was again installed in the Council Chamber in a better position than it had been privileged to occupy for many years. The mayor himself was good enough to say that Paine lived 100 years before his time. When liberty-loving folk go to Thetford they can visit the local museum and they will find several things of interest connected with Paine and it will help some of our countrymen to appreciate the debt of gratitude we owe to this noble fellow who will one day come into his own in spite of the opposition that is encouraged by pseudo respectable people. What a great day it would be if Chapman Cohen would head a pilgrimage to Thetford of thousands of Freethinkers to honour the birthplace of a man who had the courage of his convictions. Personally, I would like to see an annual visit made, and I would willingly foot the bill to pay the expenses of, say twenty-five, enthusiasts who may not be in a position to enjoy the thrill of seeing our president and our worthy secretary out-doing New Rochelle.—Yours, etc.,

JOSEPH H. DEACON.

To be published shortly. "Your Bible." What it is and is not. Post free 7d., from The Factual Knowledge (Education) Bureau, 35, Doughty Street (top floor), London, W.C.1.

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, 6 p.m., various speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., JOSEPH McCABE: "The Failure of the Twentieth Century."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Room 13, I.L.P.).—Sunday, 3.30 p.m., Mr. and Mrs. O. MELTON and various speakers; tea 5 p.m.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bristol Branch N.S.S. (Durdham Downs).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. G. THOMPSON will lecture.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. HAROLD DAY, and various speakers.

Crawshawbooth (Lancs.).—Friday, July 27, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m., Mr. A. REILLY will lecture.

Higham (Lancs.).—Monday, July 30, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Kingston Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. W. BARKER will lecture.

Lumb-in-Rossendale.—Wednesday, August 1, 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON (Burnley) will lecture.

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

MANY INVENTIONS

I.

INVENTIONS during the past two centuries can be seen to have definite trends. In the latter half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth the tendency was to devise useful machinery. Contemporaneous with rapidly increasing coal mining Arkwright, Cartwright and others devoted themselves to fabricating factory machines, chiefly for manufacturing textiles. Hence the population increases and huge towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire.

This necessitated increased transport facilities better than the existing roads, calling into activity engineers like Brindley and Telford constructing a network of canals with much road improvement and bridge building. The call for greater power than wind and water as prime movers gave impetus to the steam engine plans of Boulton, Watt and Murdock.

Consequence of all this was a demand for transport again, faster and carrying heavier loads than roads or canals could. So along came Stephenson and the succession of railway engineers who set the pace for the world.

All was strictly utilitarian and for profit-making. Nevertheless it must be admitted the inventors of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries did deliver the goods, enabling increasing millions of populace to be fed and clothed and housed as they never were before, as well as lightening manual labour.

The nineteenth century saw inventions flow forth. Coal and steam-engines led to gas and steamships, to highgrade steel and other metals, to bulk production of electricity, to locomotives and turbines, to pipes and tubes for water supplies, drainage, sanitation and cycles; so the interlocking inventiveness proceeded, each new discovery necessitating dozens more. Gas residuals led to dyes and chemicals. Paper-making and printing shared in the output of improvements, as did agriculture with the mower, thresher, reaper-binder and a host of other mechanical implements.

Rubber and the bicycle came together following road construction, more leisure and desire for travel. The stationary internal combustion engine gasfired was precursor of the petrol automobile, the latter made possible by the exploitation of petroleum. Telegraph, telephone and typewriter became necessary adjuncts to commerce.

Mechanical and other inventions of the nineteenth century can be numbered by thousands, nearly all practical and useful, highly profitable, devised and controlled and exploited by private enterprise for profit, though profit-making was not the sole motive. Doubtful if it was the chief one. The spirit of the age drove men on to fresh feats of inventiveness. It seemed as if they could do naught else; could not stop; were unable to repress the fertile and flexible ingenuity of their minds and fingers.

II.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century changes in inventions became noticeable. Wars led to many of them. Civilised and Christian governments of Europe grew dissatisfied with the limited destructiveness of the weapons at their command. The slow musket and solid cannonball followed by hand-to-hand fighting smacked too much of the days of chivalry. Conscription raising huge armies needed swifter and surer means of decimating them. Rapidly came the percussion cartridge and magazine rifle, Maxim and Gatling and many other machine and automatic guns, till we arrive at the position of to-day, when armies consist mainly of engineers and mechanics, as a warship is a box of machinery.

Still the process did not stop. The chemist had to be called in for poison gases as well as explosives of astounding power.

Aviation had barely passed the experimental stage before it was pressed into the service of destruction and death-dealing. Similarly automobiles transformed into tanks.

The Navy would not be behind land and air forces in ingenuity of inventiveness. Floating, anchored and magnetic mines, torpedoes and bombs and hundreds of other tricks superseded gunfire, as the old battleship became a museum piece.

Surely of all useless inventions the submarine is the limit! It has no civilian or peace-time use at all. It is the coward's weapon, the stab in the back, the rapier of the Condottiere, the assassin's dagger, outvying "Murder with her silent bloody feet."

Yet much the same must be said of all military and naval and air weapons. Civilians more than soldiers and sailors are victims of inventors' fertility, urged on and paid for by Governments which pretend to protect them.

III.

So far has invention brought us; from better tools and vehicles and machines to high-speed and high-pressure multiple killing.

Occasional qualms of conscience and doubt assailed mankind during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. As though to salve that conscience and quell other people's doubts another group of inventors threw themselves wholeheartedly into devising amusements.

Results have been somewhat dismal. Old fashioned fairs became mechanised, as did vehicular traffic for holiday travelling. Even the questionable pleasure of betting has to be done by Tote machines as stupid dogs chase electrically propelled imitation hares. Are they stupider than the spectators. In fun palaces are hundreds of machines for gambling and garish entertainment, aimless and joyless. The gramophone succeeding the phonograph becomes the arbiter of dancing and the dispenser of music, so listeners increase while performers decrease.

Radio, a marvellous invention for helping shipping and communication generally expands into broadcasting. No need to expatiate on the pros and cons of this. At its best it is wonderful, but one must not forget its spate of propaganda. Often one is tempted to say radio has added a new burden to life, so misused is it.

Perhaps more abused is the cinema. A process which can appeal to the whole world, which might reveal to mankind the best in each other, which could be ennobling as well as entertaining and enlightening—

Echo answers: Hollywood!

Let us ask the young inventors: Where and what next? Are you continuing to create instruments of destruction for Governments to slaughter each other's subjects, alternately inventing dope machines to lull those victims into acceptance of their fate, or—What?

Maybe humanity will some day revolt against the mass production of mechanism for slaying itself and for making feverish unthinking entertainment.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

MATERIALISM RESTATED, by Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS, by C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 4d.; postage 1d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.