ON THE VALUE OF SCEPTICISM

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I wish to propose for the reader's favourable consideration a doctrine which may, I fear, appear wildly paradoxical and subversive. The doctrine in question is this: that it is undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no ground whatever for supposing it true. I must, of course, admit that if such an opinion became common it would completely transform our social life and our political system; since both are at present faultless, this must weigh against it. I am also aware (what is more serious) that it would tend to diminish the incomes of clairvoyants, bookmakers, bishops, and others who live on the irrational hopes of those who have done nothing to deserve good fortune here or hereafter. In spite of these grave arguments, I maintain that a case can be made out of my paradox, and I shall try to set it forth.

First of all, I wish to guard myself against being thought to take up an extreme position. I am a British Whig, with a British love of compromise and moderation. A story is told of Pyrrho, the founder of Pyrrhonism (which was the old name for scepticism). He maintained that we never know enough to be sure that one course of action is wiser than another. In his youth, when he was taking his constitutional one afternoon, he saw his teacher in philosophy (from whom he had imbibed his principles) with his head stuck in a ditch, unable to get out. After contemplating him for some time, he walked on, maintaining that there was no sufficient ground for thinking he would do any good by pulling the old man out. Others, less sceptical, effected a rescue, and blamed Pyrrho for his heartlessness. But his teacher, true to his principles, praised him for his consistency. Now I do not advocate such heroic scepticism as that. I am prepared to admit the ordinary beliefs of common sense, in practice if not in theory. I am prepared to admit any well-established result of science, not as certainly true, but as sufficiently probable to afford a basis for rational action. If it is announced that there is to be an eclipse of the moon on such-and-such a date, I think it worth while to look and see whether it is taking place. Pyrrho would have thought otherwise. On this ground, I feel justified in claiming that I advocate a middle position.

There are matters about which those who have investigated them are agreed; the dates of eclipses may serve as an illustration. There are other matters about which experts are not agreed. Even when the experts all agree, they may well be mistaken. Einstein's view as to the magnitude of the deflection of light by gravitation would have been rejected by all experts not many years ago, yet it proved to be right. Nevertheless the opinion of experts, when it is unanimous, must be accepted by non-experts as more likely to be right than the opposite opinion. The scepticism that I advocate amounts only to this: (1) that when the experts are agreed, the opposite opinion cannot be held to be certain; (2) that when they are agreed, no opinion can be regarded as certain by a non-expert; and (3) that when they all hold that no sufficient grounds for a positive opinion exist, the ordinary man would do well to suspend his judgment.

These propositions may seem mild, yet, if accepted, they would absolutely revolutionize human life.

The opinions for which people are willing to fight and persecute all belong to one of the three classes which this scepticism condemns. When there are rational grounds for an opinion, people are content to set them forth and wait for them to operate. In such cases, people do not hold their opinions with passion; they hold them calmly, and set
forth their reasons quietly. The opinions that are held with passion are always those for which no good ground exists; indeed the passion is the measure of the holder's lack of rational conviction. Opinions in politics and religion are almost always held passionately. Except in China, a man is thought a poor creature unless he has strong opinions on such matters; people hate sceptics far more than they hate the passionate advocates of opinions hostile to their own. It is thought that the claims of practical life demand opinions on such questions, and that, if we became more rational, social existence would be impossible. I believe the opposite of this, and will try to make it clear why I have this belief.

Take the question of unemployment in the years after 1920. One party held that it was due to the wickedness of trade unions, another that it was due to the confusion on the Continent. A third party, while admitting that these causes played a part, attributed most of the trouble to the policy of the Bank of England in trying to increase the value of the pound sterling. This third party, I am given to understand, contained most of the experts, but no one else. Politicians do not find any attractions in a view which does not lend itself to party declamation, and ordinary mortals prefer views which attribute misfortune to the machinations of their enemies. Consequently people fight for and against quite irrelevant measures, while the few who have a rational opinion are not listened to because they do not minister to any one's passions. To produce converts, it would have been necessary to persuade people that the Bank of England is wicked. To convert Labour, it would have been necessary to show that directors of the Bank of England are hostile to trade unionism; to convert the Bishop of London, it would have been necessary to show that they are "immoral." It would be thought to follow that their views on currency are mistaken.

Let us take another illustration. It is often said that socialism is contrary to human nature, and this assertion is denied by socialists with the same heat with which it is made by their opponents. The late Dr. Rivers, whose death cannot be sufficiently deplored, discussed this question in a lecture at University College, published in his posthumous book on *Psychology and Politics*. This is the only discussion of this topic known to me that can lay claim to be scientific. It sets forth certain anthropological data which show that socialism is not contrary to human nature in Melanesia; it then points out that we do not know whether human nature is the same in Melanesia as in Europe; and it concludes that the only way of finding out whether socialism is contrary to European human nature is to try it. It is interesting that on the basis of this conclusion he was willing to become a Labour candidate. But he would certainly not have added to the heat and passion in which political controversies are usually enveloped.

I will now venture on a topic which people find even more difficulty in treating dispassionately, namely marriage customs. The bulk of the population of every country is persuaded that all marriage customs other than its own are immoral, and that those who combat this view do so only in order to justify their own loose lives. In India, the remarriage of widows is traditionally regarded as a thing too horrible to contemplate. In Catholic countries divorce is thought very wicked, but some failure of conjugal fidelity is tolerated, at least in men. In America divorce is easy, but extra-conjugal relations are condemned with the utmost severity. Mohammedans believe in polygamy, which we think degrading. All these differing opinions are held with extreme vehemence, and very cruel persecutions are inflicted upon those who contravene them. Yet no one in any of the various countries makes the slightest attempt to show that the custom of his own country contributes more to human happiness than the custom of others.

When we open any scientific treatise on the subject, such as (for example) Westermarck's *History of Human Marriage*, we find an atmosphere extraordinarily different from that of popular prejudice. We
find that every kind of custom has existed, many of them such as we should have supposed repugnant to human nature. We think we can understand polygamy, as a custom forced upon women by male oppressors. But what are we to say of the Tibetan custom, according to which one woman has several husbands? Yet travellers in Tibet assure us that family life there is at least as harmonious as in Europe. A little of such reading must soon reduce any candid person to complete scepticism, since there seem to be no data enabling us to say that one marriage custom is better or worse than another. Almost all involve cruelty and intolerance towards offenders against the local code, but otherwise they have nothing in common. It seems that sin is geographical. From this conclusion, it is only a small step to the further conclusion that the notion of "sin" is illusory, and that the cruelty habitually practised in punishing it is unnecessary. It is just this conclusion which is so unwelcome to many minds, since the infliction of cruelty with a good conscience is a delight to moralists. That is why they invented Hell.

Nationalism is of course an extreme example of fervent belief concerning doubtful matters. I think it may be safely said that any scientific historian, writing now a history of the Great War, is bound to make statements which, if made during the war, would have exposed him to imprisonment in every one of the belligerent countries on both sides. Again, with the exception of China, there is no country where people tolerate the truth about themselves; at ordinary times the truth is only thought ill-mannered, but in war-time it is thought criminal. Opposing systems of violent belief are built up, the falsehood of which is evident from the fact that they are believed only by those who share the same national bias. But the application of reason to these systems of belief is thought as wicked as the application of reason to religious dogmas was formerly thought. When people are challenged as to why scepticism in such matters should be wicked, the only answer is that myths help to win wars, so that a rational nation would be killed rather than kill. The view that there is something shameful in saving one's skin by wholesale slander of foreigners is one which, so far as I know, has hitherto found no supporters among professional moralists outside the ranks of Quakers. If it is suggested that a rational nation would find ways of keeping out of wars altogether, the answer is usually more abuse.

What would be the effect of a spread of rational scepticism? Human events spring from passions, which generate systems of attendant myths. Psychoanalysts have studied the individual manifestations of this process in lunatics, certified and uncertified. A man who has suffered some humiliation invents a theory that he is King of England, and develops all kinds of ingenious explanations of the fact that he is not treated with that respect which his exalted position demands. In this case, his delusion is one with which his neighbours do not sympathize, so they lock him up. But if, instead of asserting only his own greatness, he asserts the greatness of his nation or his class or his creed, he wins hosts of adherents, and becomes a political or religious leader, even if, to the impartial outsider, his views seem as absurd as those found in asylums. In this way a collective insanity grows up, which follows laws very similar to those of individual insanity. Every one knows that it is dangerous to dispute with a lunatic who thinks he is King of England; but as he is isolated, he can be overpowered. When a whole nation shares a delusion, its anger is of the same kind as that of an individual lunatic if its pretensions are disputed, but nothing short of war can compel it to submit to reason.

The part played by intellectual factors in human behaviour is a matter as to which there is much disagreement among psychologists. There are two quite distinct questions: (1) how far are beliefs operative as causes of actions? (2) how far are beliefs derived from logically adequate evidence, or capable of being so derived? On both ques-
tions, psychologists are agreed in giving a much smaller place to the
tellectual factors than the plain man would give, but within this gen-
eral agreement there is room for considerable differences of degree.
Let us take the two questions in succession.

(1) How far are beliefs operative as causes of action? Let us not
discuss the question theoretically, but let us take an ordinary day of an
ordinary man's life. He begins by getting up in the morning, probably
from force of habit, without the intervention of any belief. He eats
his breakfast, catches his train, reads his newspaper, and goes to his
office, all from force of habit. There was a time in the past when he
formed these habits, and in the choice of the office, at least, belief
played a part. He probably believed, at the time, that the job offered
him there was as good as he was likely to get. In most men, belief plays
a part in the original choice of a career, and therefore, derivatively, in
all that is entailed by this choice.

At the office, if he is an underling, he may continue to act merely
from habit, without active volition, and without the explicit interven-
tion of belief. It might be thought that, if he adds up the columns of
figures, he believes the arithmetical rules which he employs. But that
would be an error; these rules are mere habits of his body, like those
of a tennis player. They were acquired in youth, not from an intellec-
tual belief that they corresponded to the truth, but to please the school-
master, just as a dog learns to sit on its hind legs and beg for food. I
do not say that all education is of this sort, but certainly most learning
of the three R's is.

If, however, our friend is a partner or director, he may be called
upon during his day to make difficult decisions of policy. In these de-
cisions it is probable that belief will play a part. He believes that some
things will go up and others will go down, that so-and-so is a sound
man, and such-and-such on the verge of bankruptcy. On these beliefs
he acts. It is just because he is called upon to act on beliefs rather than
mere habits that he is considered such a much greater man than a mere
clerk, and is able to get so much more money—provided his beliefs are
true.

In his home-life there will be much the same proportion of occa-
sions when belief is a cause of action. At ordinary times, his behav-
ior to his wife and children will be governed by habit, or by instinct
modified by habit. On great occasions—when he proposes marriage,
when he decides what school to send his son to, or when he finds reason
to suspect his wife of unfaithfulness—he cannot be guided wholly by
habit. In proposing marriage, he may be guided more by instinct, or
he may be influenced by the belief that the lady is rich. If he is guided
by instinct, he no doubt believes that the lady possesses every virtue,
and this may seem to him to be a cause of his action, but in fact it is
merely another effect of the instinct which alone suffices to account
for his action. In choosing a school for his son, he probably proceeds
in much the same way as in making difficult business decisions; here
belief usually plays an important part. If evidence comes into his pos-
session showing that his wife has been unfaithful, his behaviour is likely
to be purely instinctive, but the instinct is set in operation by a belief,
which is the first cause of everything that follows.

Thus, although beliefs are not directly responsible for more than
a small part of our actions, the actions for which they are responsible
are among the most important, and largely determine the general struc-
ture of our lives. In particular, our religious and political actions are
associated with beliefs.

(2) I come now to our second question, which is itself twofold:
(a) how far are beliefs in fact based upon evidence? (b) how far is it
possible or desirable that they should be?

(a) The extent to which beliefs are based upon evidence is very
much less than believers suppose. Take the kind of action which is
most nearly rational: the investment of money by a rich City man. You
will often find that his view (say) on the question whether the French franc will go up or down depends upon his political sympathies, and yet is so strongly held that he is prepared to risk money on it. In bankruptcies it often appears that some sentimental factor was the original cause of ruin. Political opinions are hardly ever based upon evidence, except in the case of civil servants, who are forbidden to give utterance to them. There are of course exceptions. In the tariff reform controversy which began several years ago, most manufacturers supported the side that would increase their own incomes, showing that their opinions were really based on evidence, however little their utterances would have led one to suppose so. We have here a complication. Freuds have accustomed us to "rationalizing," i.e. the process of inventing what seem to ourselves rational grounds for a decision or opinion that is in fact quite irrational. But there is, especially in English-speaking countries, a converse process which may be called "irrationalizing." A shrewd man will sum up, more or less subconsciously, the pros and cons of a question from a selfish point of view. (Unselfish considerations seldom weigh subconsciously except where one's children are concerned.) Having come to a sound egoistic decision by the help of the unconscious, a man proceeds to invent, or adopt from others, a set of high-sounding phrases showing how he is pursuing the public good at immense personal sacrifice. Anybody who believes that these phrases give his real reasons must suppose him quite incapable of judging evidence, since the supposed public good is not going to result from his action. In this case a man appears less rational than he is; what is still more curious, the irrational part of him is conscious and the rational part unconscious. It is this trait in our characters that has made the English and Americans so successful.

Shrewdness, when it is genuine, belongs more to the unconscious than to the conscious part of our nature. It is, I suppose, the main quality required for success in business. From a moral point of view, it is a humble quality, since it is always selfish; yet it suffices to keep men from the worst crimes. If the Germans had had it, they would not have adopted the unlimited submarine campaign. If the French had had it, they would not have behaved as they did in the Ruhr. If Napoleon had had it, he would not have gone to war again after the Treaty of Amiens. It may be laid down as a general rule to which there are few exceptions that, when people are mistaken as to what is to their own interest, the course that they believe to be wise is more harmful to others than the course that really is wise. Therefore anything that makes people better judges of their own interest does good. There are innumerable examples of men making fortunes because, on moral grounds, they did something which they believed to be contrary to their own interests. For instance, among early Quakers there were a number of shopkeepers who adopted the practice of asking no more for their goods than they were willing to accept, instead of bargaining with each customer, as everybody else did. They adopted this practice because they held it to be a lie to ask more than they would take. But the convenience to customers was so great that everybody came to their shops, and they grew rich. (I forget where I read this, but if my memory serves me it was in some reliable source.) The same policy might have been adopted from shrewdness, but in fact no one was sufficiently shrewd. Our unconscious is more malevolent than it pays us to be; therefore the people who do most completely what is in fact to their interest are those who deliberately, on moral grounds, do what they believe to be against their interest. Next to them come the people who try to think out rationally and consciously what is to their own interest, eliminating as far as possible the influence of passion. Third come the people who have instinctive shrewdness. Last of all come the people whose malevolence overbalances their shrewdness, making them pursue the ruin of others in ways that lead to their own ruin. This last class embraces 90 per cent. of the population of Europe.
I may seem to have digressed somewhat from my topic, but it was necessary to disentangle unconscious reason, which is called shrewdness, from the conscious variety. The ordinary methods of education have practically no effect upon the unconscious, so that shrewdness cannot be taught by our present technique. Morality, also, except where it consists of mere habit, seems incapable of being taught by present methods; at any rate I have never noticed any beneficent effect upon those who are exposed to frequent exhortations. Therefore on our present lines any deliberate improvement must be brought about by intellectual means. We do not know how to teach people to be shrewd or virtuous, but we do know, within limits, how to teach them to be rational: it is only necessary to reverse the practice of education authorities in every particular. We may hereafter learn to create virtue by manipulating the ductless glands and stimulating or restraining their secretions. But for the present it is easier to create rationality than virtue—meaning by “rationality” a scientific habit of mind in forecasting the effects of our actions.

(b) This brings me to the question: How far could or should men’s actions be rational? Let us take “should” first. There are very definite limits, to my mind, within which rationality should be confined; some of the most important departments of life are ruined by the invasion of reason. Leibniz in his old age told a correspondent that he had only once asked a lady to marry him, and that was when he was fifty. “Fortunately,” he added, “the lady asked time to consider, and I withdrew the offer.” Doubtless his conduct was very rational, but I cannot say that I admire it.

Shakespeare puts “the lunatic, the lover, and the poet” together, as being “of imagination all compact.” The problem is to keep the lover and the poet, without the lunatic. I will give an illustration. In 1919 I saw *The Trojan Women* acted at the Old Vic. There is an unbearably pathetic scene where Astyanax is put to death by the Greeks for fear he should grow up into a second Hector. There was hardly a dry eye in the theatre, and the audience found the cruelty of the Greeks in the play hardly credible. Yet those very people who wept were, at that very moment, practising that very cruelty on a scale which the imagination of Euripides could have never contemplated. They had lately voted (most of them) for a Government which prolonged the blockade of Germany after the armistice, and imposed the blockade of Russia. It was known that these blockades caused the death of immense numbers of children, but it was felt desirable to diminish the population of enemy countries: the children, like Astyanax, might grow up to emulate their fathers. Euripides the poet awakened the lover in the imagination of the audience; but lover and poet were forgotten at the door of the theatre, and the lunatic (in the shape of the homicidal maniac) controlled the political actions of these men and women who thought themselves kind and virtuous.

Is it possible to preserve the lover and the poet without preserving the lunatic? In each of us, all three exist in varying degrees. Are they so bound up together that when the one is brought under control the others perish? I do not believe it. I believe there is in each of us a certain energy which must find vent in art, in passionate love, or in instinctive hate, according to circumstances. Respectability, regularity, and routine—the whole cast-iron discipline of a modern industrial society—have atrophied the artistic impulse, and imprisoned love so that it can no longer be generous and free and creative, but must be either stuffy or furtive. Control has been applied to the very things which should be free, while envy, cruelty, and hate sprawl at large with the blessing of nearly the whole bench of Bishops. Our instinctive apparatus consists of two parts—the one tending to further our own life and that of our descendants, the other tending to thwart the lives of supposed rivals. The first includes the joy of life, and love, and art, which is psychologically an offshoot of love. The second includes competition,
patriotism, and war. Conventional morality does everything to suppress the first and encourage the second. True morality would do the exact opposite. Our dealings with those whom we love may be safely left to instinct; it is our dealings with those whom we hate that ought to be brought under the dominion of reason. In the modern world, those whom we effectively hate are distant groups, especially foreign nations. We conceive them abstractly, and deceive ourselves into the belief that acts which are really embodiments of hatred are done from love of justice or some such lofty motive. Only a large measure of scepticism can tear away the veils which hide this truth from us. Having achieved that, we could begin to build a new morality, not based on envy and restriction, but on the wish for a full life and the realization that other human beings are a help and not a hindrance when once the madness of envy has been cured. This is not a Utopian hope; it was partially realized in Elizabethan England. It could be realized tomorrow if men would learn to pursue their own happiness rather than the misery of others. This is no impossibly austere morality, yet its adoption would turn our earth into a paradise.

ON YOUTHFUL CYNICISM
(Written in 1929)

Any person who visits the Universities of the Western world is liable to be struck by the fact that the intelligent young of the present day are cynical to a far greater extent than was the case formerly. This is not true of Russia, India, China, or Japan; I believe it is the case in Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, and Poland, nor by any means universally in Germany, but it certainly is a notable characteristic of intelligent youth in England, France, and the United States. To understand why youth is cynical in the West, we must also understand why it is not cynical in the East.

Young men in Russia are not cynical because they accept, on the whole, the Communist philosophy, and they have a great country full of natural resources, ready to be exploited by the help of intelligence. The young have therefore a career before them which they feel to be worthwhile. You do not have to consider the ends of life when in the course of creating Utopia you are laying a pipe-line, building a railway, or teaching peasants to use Ford tractors simultaneously on a four-mile front. Consequently the Russian youth are vigorous and filled with ardent beliefs.

In India the fundamental belief of the earnest young is in the wickedness of England: from this premise, as from the existence of Descartes, it is possible to deduce a whole philosophy. From the fact that England is Christian, it follows that Hinduism or Mohammedanism, as the case may be, is the only true religion. From the fact that England is capitalistic and industrial, it follows, according to the temperament of the logician concerned, either that everybody ought to spin with a spinning-wheel, or that protective duties ought to be imposed to develop native industrialism and capitalism as the only weapons with which to combat those of the British. From the fact that the British hold India by physical force, it follows that only moral force is admirable. The persecution of nationalist activities in India is just sufficient to make them heroic, and not sufficient to make them seem futile. In this way the Anglo-Indians save the intelligent youth of India from the blight of cynicism.

In China hatred of England has also played its part, but a much smaller part than in India because the English have never conquered
the country. The Chinese youth combine patriotism with a genuine enthusiasm for Occidentalism, in the kind of way that was common in Japan fifty years ago. They want the Chinese people to be enlightened, free, and prosperous, and they have their work cut out to produce this result. Their ideals are, on the whole, those of the nineteenth century, which in China have not yet begun to seem antiquated. Cynicism in China was associated with the officials of the Imperial regime and survived among the warring militarists who have distracted the country since 1911, but it has no place in the mentality of the modern intellectuals.

In Japan the outlook of young intellectuals is not unlike that which prevailed on the Continent of Europe between 1815 and 1848. The watchwords of Liberalism are still potent: parliamentary government, liberty of the subject, free thought and free speech. The struggle for these against traditional feudalism and autocracy is quite sufficient to keep young men busy and enthusiastic.

To the sophisticated youth of the West all this ardour seems a trifle crude. He is firmly persuaded that having studied everything impartially, he has seen through everything and found that there is "nothing left remarkable beneath the visiting moon." There are, of course, plenty of reasons for this in the teachings of the old. I do not think these reasons go to the root of the matter, for in other circumstances the young react against the teaching of the old and achieve a gospel of their own. If the Occidental youth of the present day react only by cynicism, there must be some special reason for this circumstance. Not only are the young unable to believe what they are told, but they seem also unable to believe anything else. This is a peculiar state of affairs, which deserves investigation. Let us first take some of the old ideals one by one and see why they no longer inspire the old loyalties. We may enumerate among such ideals: religion, country, progress, beauty, truth. What is wrong with these in the eyes of the young?

Religion.—The trouble here is partly intellectual, partly social. For intellectual reasons few able men have now the same intensity of religious belief as was possible for, say, St. Thomas Aquinas. The God of most moderns is a little vague, and apt to degenerate into a Life Force or a "power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." Even believers are concerned much more with the effects of religion in this world than with that other world that they profess to believe in; they are not nearly so sure that this world was created for the glory of God as they are that God is a useful hypothesis for improving this world. By subordinating God to the needs of this sublunary life, they cast suspicion upon the genuineness of their faith. They seem to think that God, like the Sabbath, was made for man. There are also sociological reasons for not accepting the Churches as the basis of a modern idealism. The Churches, through their endowments, have become bound up with the defence of property. Moreover, they are connected with an oppressive ethic, which condemns many pleasures that to the young appear harmless and inflicts many torments that to the sceptical appear unnecessarily cruel. I have known earnest young men who accepted wholeheartedly the teaching of Christ; they found themselves in opposition to official Christianity, outcasts and victims of persecution, quite as much as if they had been militant Atheists.

Country.—Patriotism has been in many times and places a passionate belief to which the best minds could give full assent. It was so in England in the time of Shakespeare, in Germany in the time of Fichte, in Italy in the time of Mazzini. It is so still in Poland, China, and Outer Mongolia. In the Western nations it is still immensely powerful: it controls politics, public expenditure, military preparations, and so on. But the intelligent youth are unable to accept it as an adequate ideal; they perceive that it is all very well for oppressed nations, but that as soon as an oppressed nation achieves its freedom, the nationalism which was formerly heroic becomes oppressive. The Poles, who had the sym-
pathy of Idealists ever since Maria Teresa "wept but took," have used their freedom to organize oppression in Ukrainia. The Irish, upon whom the British had inflicted civilization for eight hundred years, have used their freedom to pass laws preventing the publication of many good books. The spectacle of the Poles murdering Ukrainians and the Irish murdering literature makes nationalism seem a somewhat inadequate ideal even for a small nation. But when it comes to a powerful nation, the argument is even stronger. The Treaty of Versailles was not very encouraging to those who had had the luck not to be killed in defending the ideals which their rulers betrayed. Those who during the war averred that they were combating militarism became at its conclusion the leading militarists in their respective countries. Such facts have made it obvious to all intelligent young men that patriotism is the chief curse of our age and will bring civilization to an end if it cannot be mitigated.

Progress.—This is a nineteenth century ideal which has too much Babbit about it for the sophisticated youth. Measurable progress is necessarily in unimportant things, such as the number of motor-cars made, or the number of peanuts consumed. The really important things are not measurable and are therefore not suitable for the methods of the booster. Moreover, many modern inventions tend to make people silly. I might instance the radio, the talkies, and poison gas. Shakespeare measured the excellence of an age by its style in poetry (see Sonnet XXXII), but his mode of measurement is out of date.

Beauty.—There is something that sounds old-fashioned about beauty, though it is hard to say why. A modern painter would be indignant if he were accused of seeking beauty. Most artists nowadays appear to be inspired by some kind of rage against the world so that they wish rather to give significant pain than to afford serene satisfaction. Moreover many kinds of beauty require that a man should take himself more seriously than is possible for an intelligent modern. A prominent citizen of a small city State, such as Athens or Florence, could without difficulty feel himself important. The earth was the centre of the Universe, man was the purpose of creation, his own city showed man at his best, and he himself was among the best in his own city. In such circumstances Aeschylus or Dante could take his own joys or sorrows seriously. He could feel that the emotions of the individual matter, and that tragic occurrences deserve to be celebrated in immortal verse. But the modern man, when misfortune assails him, is conscious of himself as a unit in a statistical total; the past and the future stretch before him in a dreary procession of trivial defeats. Man himself appears as a somewhat ridiculous strutting animal, shouting and fussing during a brief interlude between infinite silences. "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal," says King Lear, and the idea drives him to madness because it is unfamiliar. But to the modern man the idea is familiar and drives him only to triviality.

Truth.—In old days truth was absolute, eternal, and superhuman. Myself when young accepted this view and devoted a misspent youth to the search for truth. But a whole host of enemies have arisen to slay truth: pragmatism, behaviourism, psychologism, relativity-physics. Galileo and the Inquisition disagreed as to whether the earth went round the sun or the sun went round the earth. Both agreed in thinking that there was a great difference between these two opinions. The point on which they agreed was the one on which they were both mistaken: the difference is only one of words. In old days it was possible to worship truth; indeed the sincerity of the worship was demonstrated by the practice of human sacrifice. But it is difficult to worship a merely human and relative truth. The law of gravitation, according to Eddington, is only a convenient convention of measurement. It is not truer than other views, any more than the metric system is truer than feet and yards.

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, "Let Newton be," and measurement was facilitated.
This sentiment seems lacking in sublimity. When Spinoza believed anything, he considered that he was enjoying the intellectual love of God. The modern man believes either with Marx that he is swayed by economic motives, or with Freud that some sexual motive underlies his belief in the exponential theorem or in the distribution of fauna in the Red Sea. In neither case can he enjoy Spinoza's exaltation.

So far we have been considering modern cynicism in a rationalistic manner, as something that has intellectual causes. Belief, however, as modern psychologists are never weary of telling us, is seldom determined by rational motives, and the same is true of disbelief, though sceptics often overlook this fact. The causes of any widespread scepticism are likely to be sociological rather than intellectual. The main cause always is comfort without power. The holders of power are not cynical, since they are able to enforce their ideals. Victims of oppression are not cynical, since they are filled with hate, and hate, like any other strong passion, brings with it a train of attendant beliefs. Until the advent of education, democracy, and mass production, intellectuals had everywhere a considerable influence upon the march of affairs, which was by no means diminished if their heads were cut off. The modern intellectual finds himself in a quite different situation. It is by no means difficult for him to obtain a fat job and a good income provided he is willing to sell his services to the stupid rich either as propagandist or as Court jester. The effect of mass production and elementary education is that stupidity is more firmly entrenched than at any other time since the rise of civilization. When the Czarist Government killed Lenin's brother, it did not turn Lenin into a cynic, since hatred inspired a lifelong activity in which he was finally successful. But in the more solid countries of the West there is seldom such potent cause for hatred, or such opportunity of spectacular revenge. The work of the intellectuals is ordered and paid for by Governments or rich men, whose aims probably seem absurd, if not pernicious, to the intellectuals concerned. But a dash of cynicism enables them to adjust their consciences to the situation. There are, it is true, some activities in which wholly admirable work is desired by the powers that be; the chief of these is science, and the next is public architecture in America. But if a man's education has been literary, as is still too often the case, he finds himself at the age of twenty-two with a considerable skill that he cannot exercise in any manner that appears important to himself. Men of science are not cynical even in the West, because they can exercise their best brains with the full approval of the community; but in this they are exceptionally fortunate among modern intellectuals.

If this diagnosis is right, modern cynicism cannot be cured merely by preaching, or by putting better ideals before the young than those that their pastors and masters fish out from the rusty armoury of outworn superstitions. The cure will only come when intellectuals can find a career that embodies their creative impulses. I do not see any prescription except the old one advocated by Disraeli: "Educate our masters." But it will have to be a more real education than is commonly given at the present day to either proletarians or plutocrats, and it will have to be an education taking some account of real cultural values and not only of the utilitarian desire to produce so many goods that nobody has time to enjoy them. A man is not allowed to practise medicine unless he knows something of the human body, but a financier is allowed to operate freely without any knowledge at all of the multifarious effects of his activities, with the sole exception of the effect upon his bank account. How pleasant a world would be in which no man was allowed to operate on the Stock Exchange unless he could pass an examination in economics and Greek poetry, and in which politicians were obliged to have a competent knowledge of history and modern novels! Imagine a magnate confronted with the question: "If you were to make a corner in wheat, what effect would this have upon German poetry?" Causation in the modern world is more complex and remote in its ramifications than it ever was before, owing to the increase of larger
organizations; but those who control these organizations are ignorant men who do not know the hundredth part of the consequences of their actions. Rabelais published his book anonymously for fear of losing his University post. A modern Rabelais would never write the book, because he would be aware that his anonymity would be penetrated by the perfected methods of publicity. The rulers of the world have always been stupid, but have not in the past been so powerful as they are now. It is therefore more important than it used to be to find some way of securing that they shall be intelligent. Is this problem insoluble? I do not think so, but I should be the last to maintain that it is easy.
NOTES AND COMMENTS

By E. Haldeman-Julius

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THE ATOMIC AGE

In history we have had various Golden Ages and Silver Ages, a Dark Age, an Iron Age, a fictitious Age of Chivalry, Ages of Faith, an Age of Reason, and a Scientific Age. Let's be clear what we mean. If we mean the Age of the Atomic Bomb we had better drop the word like a hot potato. Better call it frankly the Return to Savagery. A prominent British Rationalist was permitted to write in the organ of British Rationalism the other day that the atom bomb is no more barbaric than the T.N.T. bomb, merely larger. Such sophistry paved the way for the second World War. But most of those who want us to speak of an Atomic Age refer to its vast industrial promise. There is a certain danger in exaggerating this. As the chief speaker at a recent meeting of an Atomic Scientists Association pointed out, power is only about 1/20th of the productive effort and a great part of its cost is distribution. Based on current knowledge, it seems doubtful if the application of atomic energy will do much more for a national economy than the application of steam or electricity did. It will, however, enable regions with no natural fuel resources to set up vast industries wherever they choose, especially if, as is believed, many sources besides uranium and thorium will be utilizable. It remains to be seen, however, if the atom bomb will not be used first to see that the profit goes into the pockets of the few.

OURSelves AND THE UNDER DOG

Nine-tenths of the letters that stream into this office from readers may be summed up in two phrases: “More power to your elbow” and “Here’s more ammunition for you.” Thanks. But we do occasionally get a letter of a different kind. When this comes from a lady or a minor or an octogenarian who has casually picked up a copy of the paper and writes to tell us that Nature proves that there must be a Supreme Power or a Master Mind it goes straight into he trash-basket. We are not archeologists. But sometimes an habitual reader or would-be reader protests that he does not understand our policy. We reply at once that this publication hasn’t a policy in the sense that it’s the organ of or subsidized by any society of any description. There are such papers for most purposes. The idea is too narrow for us; besides that, as we have often pointed out, a sectarian paper which advocates one aim only or sets out to secure one particular variety of truth or justice deliberately tolerates various varieties of untruth and injustice from fear of “splitting up the movement.”

The Freeman has never had a policy in this sense. It aims to debunk all bunk, to tell the truth about everything as far as it goes, to lend a hand to the under-dog in the fights of our time, to smite all humbugs
and bust up all gas-bags, and the bigger and richer and more blatant they are the harder we strike. We are convinced that a large number of Americans see in this a great social service, and it was never more needed. The organs of public instruction—chiefly the press, radio, the movies, the schools, and the libraries—are dominated by rich and reactionary corporations, lay or clerical. The supply of news and views is tainted at its source. Progressive ideas and minorities are libelled. The basis of life is rotten and the chaos is easily understood. We try to tear off the veil of lies and verbiage and let readers see the realities on which alone the sound conduct of life can be based.

And this explains the fallacy of supposing that we ought to give full information on both sides, pro and con, of every vital question. Take our attitude to religion. Eight of every nine readers who write their encouragement call our attention to some deception of the public by the Roman Church. To say a good word for it when it spends vast sums speaking for itself in its own and the general press (and movies, radio, etc.) and when this terrific power is used for such vile purposes as egging the people to demand war, would be a violation of our own principles. No one wants it.

But the same applies in a less degree to all the churches. A few members of churches would like us to concentrate on Papal religion and be silent about all others. But social sincerity emphatically forbids. Hardly any idea has been more heavily pounded into the public mind in recent years than the idea that we live in a "Christian Civilization" and religion alone can sustain it. We show occasionally that that is, historically and sociologically, a lie: it is one of the bubbles we set out to prick. We believe, logically, that life should be built upon a purely secular basis of proved realities. We point out that in fact, Russia until the war made remarkable progress by building entirely on that basis.

We are not Communists, but as it is the strategy of reaction just now to kindle hatred of Communism on the ground that it is—as it is generally in Europe—atheistic, we speak out. We are democrats, and if Communists outside Russia want to get power by violence we dissent and would denounce them. But in that wide survey of world-literature and journalism to which The Freeman testifies every month we have not yet met any responsible claim outside Russia that Communism should aim to establish itself by revolution. Evidence of such claim by a responsible representative will be welcomed here and inserted at any time. Setting aside the greasy mud of the talk about Communism we see it as an economic ideal which even the Russians locate in the future. What they are trying to set up everywhere is Socialism. At the same time we want folk to understand that democracy is not an ideal shining in a divine light but a social mechanism for securing the people against exploitation; and in its modern form it has been corrupted to suit their own ends to a great extent by exploiters, clerical and political, whose unctuous praise of it as a glorious American Institution is to a great extent opium for the people. Here again we want to help folk to disentangle social realities from verbiage.

Which brings us to Russia. It is our attitude to Russia that a few esteemed critics resent. We don't give both sides, they say. But what is the situation? Every real point against Russia, coupled with a hundred imaginary points, is thundered out by the entire press. Hardly a paper anywhere looks for or mentions any redeeming feature. This situation, with a flood of Catholic poison poured into it in the interest of the Vatican, admittedly threatens the greatest catastrophe of our age. What, on the lines of its own policy, ought The Freeman to do? We have never praised the Russian political system. We have never said, as the Russians do, that it is "a pure form of democracy." It's a form of government evolved in unique circumstances—not born of a bloody revolution—that do not seem in the least likely to occur again. Even that "Bolshevik Revolution" is grossly travestied, and we make no apology for telling the truth about it. The social progress of Russia also is so
grossly travestied that we gladly help to vindicate it. As to the economic system, it’s of the greatest importance to the race that it should have time and space enough for a fair trial, and the slanders of it come largely from selfish interest.

But do we mislead by saying nothing about grave blunders and wrongs committed by Russia? We again remind you that you read them every day in your paper, and our chief business is the truth your paper won’t tell. But are these complaints of Russia just? Mr. Harry Mongold sends us a summary of wrongs that, he submits, we ought to recognize and don’t, and we have pleasure in reproducing them in his words:

The only distinction I can see in the international maneuverings of the Russians and those of Hitler’s Germany is the assumed motives of the Soviet Communists. Stalin absorbed the Balkan States, seeks control of the Dardanelles, refuses international inspections on atomic investigations, dominates Manchuria and Outer Mongolia, claims to his people that the Soviet Union alone defeated Japan, tells the world he wants peace and on the same day sends Turkey an ultimatum threatening armed robbery, puts his face up like a god to be worshiped all over his Europe, ignores the sincerity displayed by the U.S. when we actually offer to international control our best weapon and propose submission to inspections but charges we are seeking to make war with our atomic bomb, shows no gratitude for the participation of U.S. in UNRRA and aid to the Soviet Republic, uses plenty of Fifth Column activity, violates agreements (territorial expansions, robbing Manchuria of heavy machinery, treats with Turkey), teaches a thoroughly militarized hero-worship type of history to Russian children, and even allows the Moskva radio to bring up the “steal” of Alaska as part of its anti-U.S. propaganda.

That is a good summary of what a professedly and bitterly anti-Russian press, in league with the Catholics, is saying every day. If there is any truth in the pretensions of The Freeman its business is to point out the element of untruth or misrepresentation in these charges and set against them truths that the ordinary press will no tell. Any paper that puts a concern for peace and progress above all else must do that, and it’s what we have done. Never for a moment have we represented that Russia, with the whole world again hostile to it and under open threat of a ghastly “war,” makes no mistakes. In that light most of the above charges, reduced to their proper proportions, are intelligible. But much is war-at-any-price talk. We’ve pointed out repeatedly that the Baltic provinces and two east-Poland provinces are purely Slav regions torn from Russia at Versailles for the sole purpose of weakening it. We have pointed out that the supposed parallel of Nazism and Bolshevism is peculiar seeing that the Nazis wanted to conquer, solely for the purpose of exploitation, half the globe, and Russia has merely kept a predominant influence—the recent Bulgarian and Rumanian elections showed how little tyrannical it is—in a narrow fringe of lands on its borders for obvious security reasons in face of an open threat of war. We pointed out that as long as America can, by using the vote of Fascist or dependent small powers, get whatever it wants at the UN Russia is bound to distrust putting the atom bomb under an international control which would be under American control. And so on. All that we ask in the case of Russia is fair play—the truth and an open mind—and as the press comprehensively displays the opposite we are to that extent pro-Russian. Socially and economically Russia is conducting a great experiment. It is to the vital interest of the race that it should be conducted in peace. And when we see the most fanatical of all economic clerical corporations at the core of the opposition we “see red” sometimes.
GOLDEN AGES

Talking of Golden Ages reminds us of a division of history on the ground of real facts that historians fight shy of. There is no ground whatever in facts for the division into B.C. and A.D. Some men of considerable ability, though rather weak in history, have claimed that there never was such a person as Jesus, and all that the historian can say, if he is true to his science, is that the Christian movement and literature of the 1st century probably imply a historical but obscure prophet early in the century. But a real division, based upon important social aspects of the human story, is to make three eras of it. To about the 15th century B.C. the mass of the people in civilized lands (except China, which had then not long been civilized) were reconciled to the hard realities of life, as opposed to the Father-in-Heaven idea, by a legend that the gods had really put man in a Golden Age he forfeited by sin. In the 15th century B.C., Breasted says, the Egyptian priests extended the idea of immortality, or a Golden Age after death, to the mass of the people, while to that time it had been the privilege of the kings (being literally sons of the gods) and perhaps the nobles. The idea spread to Persia, Judaea, Greece, and the new religions. In modern times a mist has come over the battlements of the Golden City, and, naturally, men began to dream of bringing this life nearer to the ideal. You may not think it when you look around but we are supposed to be building the Golden Age.

† † †

SHEER TRIPE

Our oracles are getting bolder. One said the other day in a weekly with a wide and respectable circulation:

"Much of what is said in Congress and most of what is said by Army and Navy men is sheer tripe."

The beginning of wisdom is the recognition of tripe; and it is cheap today. The Freeman, being the chief anti-tripe merchant in America, gladly endorses this statement but it requires amplifying. Talking tripe in Congress is part of the business when it is conducted in a gentlemanly fashion, and the poisonous tripe now openly talked by Army and Navy men is actually un-American and against all traditions of the Army and Navy. Did we fight a great crusade only to put militari in the seat of Jefferson and Lincoln? But are those the only stores in which tripe is served out to the people? It is alleged by many intelligent people that the Churches serve up more tripe than Congress and the Army and Navy leaders put together. Are our professors never mixed up in the trade? Would the journalist who wrote the above say that the American press never indulges in tripe? Are our schools and colleges quite tripe-less? Do radio orators never talk tripe? Ours is the Age of Tripe. The Freeman just boils it before serving it up.

† † †

THE RED WAR ON GOD

A daily which is generally classified as Liberal recently sent a competent and fair-minded representative to Russia, and in a series of articles from behind the Iron Curtain—which, incidentally, he failed to
find—he described the Russian people as laboring industriously and peacefully to restore their devastated civilization. This seems to have been too much for the Liberal readers, and the editor restored the balance, in the Liberal way, by getting three men (one Catholic) who had not been to Russia to say what they thought about it. The correspondent who had spent weeks among the Russian people, talking freely to every type of person had, it seems, failed to perceive that they had aggressive designs against the rest of the world and in particular were preparing for a war on God and America. He had actually said that they were too busy minding their own business and only wished there were an Iron Curtain shutting off the chatter of the world around them. Apparently to see the real Russia you must not go there, but use a telescope from 5,000 miles away. Hence the leprous eruption of banner-headings in the American press about "the Red War on God." Before us is a 2-column article on it from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, which considers itself quite a respectable paper, with a cartoon of a Red soldier sticking his bayonet into someone—not God, we hope—lying on the ground. The Knights of Columbus, who believe in God almost as firmly as in Big Business, are bribing or bulldozing editors all over America to insert this sort of thing.

** THE AMERICAN INTELLIGENTSIA **

F. W. Wakeman, in his recent book "Hucksters," describes what he calls "the American intelligentsia" as "the world's most outrageous example of sterility." Being an expert on selling goods doesn't seem to give the gentleman any particular qualification for passing this verdict, but when you turn "intelligence" into the Italian "intelligentsia" you can always raise a laugh. He has as clear an idea of the people he ridicules as a community of nuns has of the films of Jane Russell or the works of Theodore Dreiser. He lumps all these writers, artists, and students into one and says that this sterile person has "discovered Freud, invented neuroticism, and discarded God—in short he has lost all faith in himself as a man so he pins all his faith on some remote mass of men, possibly as a substitute for his discarded God." I don't propose to bore the reader with an analysis of this mixture of ignorance and twaddle. What I'd draw attention to is the appalling strength of the elements that are combining to stifle critical inquiry and free discussion. They want the intelligentsia of America to be one glorified commercial traveler who mixes bourbon and blue stories with business all week, goes to church on Sunday morning, and spends the rest of the Sunday turning over the pages of Luce's Life or Heart's Cosmopolitan, where the thirsts of cardinals for the blood of Russia mingle with pictorial advertisements of a stimulating character and cheap fiction. What the mass (say, four-fifths) of the people think nobody cares—until they strike. Educated people had better combine in an all-round radicalism about life before it's too late.

** HAROLD LASKI GETS THE WORKS **

The delicate question of the ethic of legal pleading came up in connection with the recent loss of a case for libel by Professor Harold Laski in England. It was said that in a noisy open-air meeting he was trapped by a Conservative agent into replying that the people would be justified in obtaining power by a violent revolution. In the confusion a few men may have thought he did so, but the chief speaker, an air
officer, and others best qualified to hear supported Laski's denial. What's more important is that Laski is one of the Labor opponents of Communism and was fighting an election for a government that loathes every shade of Communism as the devil hates holy water. Laski is disliked by many Socialists and Freethinkers but they agree that he's no more likely to have used the words than Bevin is. Yet the distinguished counsel Sir Patrick Hastings, once a Labor minister, bullied Laski in the box for two days, even dragging in his Freethought ideas to impress the jury, and used all his great ability to impress the court that Laski is a revolutionary and so induced it to accept questionable evidence against him.

BEHIND THE VIENNA TRAGEDY

"Who is behind the Vienna Tragedy?" a paper asks. How many people know that there's a tragedy of Vienna? Yet the Mayor of the city, General Koener, a highly respectable general of the old Austrian army, though now a Socialist, said to a foreign correspondent:

"Vienna, ancient and beautiful capital of Austria, has been condemned to death by the western, mainly the American-occupied provinces of the country."

The fact is that western or American-ruled Austria teems with food and cattle but refused to send more than a starvation allowance to Vienna because it is Socialist. It's absurd to say that these rural provinces frame their own policy. Either America or the Vatican or both dictate it. The stark fact is that the people are half-starved and face a terrible winter. The beautiful city has known only a few years prosperity since 1918 though the Viennese are amongst the most peaceful and attractive people in the world. Their few years of sunshine were when the Socialists controlled Vienna, until the Catholics turned the government troops upon them. Jackson says in his admirable history of Europe between the two wars that under the Socialists Vienna was "a model city," and even the leading British Liberal (and anti-Socialist) daily said that it was "as close to the ideal Platonist Republic as the world has ever seen."

WHEN THE WORLD WAS PIOUS

One of the boldest of modern apologetic strokes is to try to wipe out the phrase "Dark Age" from our history books and they quote several American professors who have supported them in this. Lynn Thorndike, of Columbia, sneers at the phrase in his "Short History of Civilization" and says even in regard to the earlier Middle Ages we merely call Europe ignorant and backward because we lack information about it. Professor G. B. Adams, of Yale, a high authority, said the same in his "Civilization During the Middle Ages" (1923). Professor C. Perkins in his "History of European Peoples" (1927) is as bad. To these learned historians—so different from the "popularizer"—we recommend a document which (with thousands of others) they have overlooked. It's an official document of the Roman See in the 10th and 11th centuries, and it's reproduced in the Museum Italicum of the learned Father Mabillon of the 18th century, when Catholics thought that they were even strong enough to tell the truth about their church in the Dark Age. It describes the procedure at Rome for examining a new priestly candidate for a bishopric that became vacant by death. The archdeacon and the Pope's secretary were to ask him these questions:

If he is a sodomist, which means with a male; if he has relations with a woman who is consecrated to God, or is, as the French
say, a nun: if with a quadruped: if with another man's wife or if he has taken the wife from another man.

That is a polite translation of the gross words used, and the Latin in which it's written is appallingly crude. If this was the state of the Papal court and Italy in the 11th century what was likely to be the condition of Christendom generally? "Dark" is a polite description of it. Such facts suggest the description "uncivilized."

THE RIGHTS OF READERS

It is said that in a discussion of the meaning of the words "freedom of the press" the publisher of the New York Times observed: "I know what it means to me—the right to publish what I like." The last word was not well chosen, for the editor of so responsible and weighty an organ would surely have added if he were challenged: "I mean, of course, after taking every reasonable precaution to see that it is true." But for how many editors and particularly owners of newspapers today is it as specific an instrument of propaganda as the headquarters of the Republican or the Democratic party or of the Catholic Welfare organization? A society of literary men and journalists in Britain some years ago made an inquiry into the ownership and control of the British press. In a substantial work they showed that six millionaires owned and controlled the policy of the papers which were bought by nine-tenths of the reading population. And they are solidly entrenched in their monopoly. When a rather idealistic Liberal, dissatisfied even with the Liberal press, spent more than $1,000,000 in trying to found a new daily he failed within two months and lost all his money. It provokes a smile to see how zealous these American dailies are for freedom of the press in Poland—where, according to the expert and impartial World Press, the opposition has to dailies and three weeklies—Roumania and Bulgaria. The "freedom" of their own readers is peculiar. Their one right seems to be to pass from one despottiely controlled paper to another. Their trust that it gives them the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth is naive. At least they might drop a little of the cocksureness that so many have about what they "read in the paper."

THE FINANCIAL SIDE OF MODERN MADNESS

World War I cost the world, according to experts, more than $200,000,000,000. What World War II will have cost when it is really over we shrink from imagining. The soldiers want the cost of it to go on for at least the next 15 years. They have persuaded the politicians that in order to prevent any new Nazi plots the four great powers must keep 500,000 men in arms in that country, besides bodies of troops scattered over the earth and immense armies idling at home or using badly-needed ships to draft them from one parade ground to another; in spite of the confident assertion everywhere that World War III will be a chemical war conducted by planes and not entered upon at all unless you are sure that the other fellow—to put it Irish fashion—is dead before he can fight. We allow all this because we leave it to military men to settle a point—the possibility of a resurrection of the stinking corpse of Fascism—which we are better able to judge than they are. The best soldier in Europe outside Russia, Marshal Montgomery—and he, incidentally, never won a battle unless he had a far superior force—said the other day that "no good soldier can be a good politician." The statesman who's loudest in supporting them, Churchill, said a few weeks ago that
he didn’t want to see the Labor government repeat the blunder they
made when “the former Socialist Premier Macdonald allowed Hitler to
march into the Ruhr.” It was not the Ruhr but Rhineland that Hitler
invaded, and it was under the Conservative Premier Baldwin. And we
have had a thousand proofs of the cynical indifference of these people
to the general civic health. The latest is that a British colonel in Egypt
in a high semi-civilian post has been courtmartialed for graft on the
heroic scale. He admitted receiving bribes to the extent of $34,000 on a
few contracts and pleaded only that he found himself in a world where
it was usual. So what we airily call our debts pile up. There are whispers
of possible bankruptcy in France, of a coming financial crisis in Britain,
of chaos in most countries of Europe.

“UNTIL HELL FREEZES OVER”

How long will that pious endower of churches, Senator Theodore
Bilbo, of Mississippi, have to wait for “hell to freeze over”? That lover
of human beings born with black skins (?) isn’t expecting the world to
end in 1934, as are Jehovah’s Witnesses, or is he? What a pity he
can’t submit an advance copy of his forthcoming book, “Take Your
Choice—Separation or Mongrelization,” to Adolph Hitler or Alfred
Rosenberg! Alas! Russians and the hangman deprived our great
statesman of that opportunity. The New York World-Telegram, using
the caption “The Bilboist Plague” for an editorial, neglected to put the
blame for the stalling of Senatorial business right where it belonged,
namely, the archaic rules of procedure of our Senate. In an Atomic
Age, a simple majority should be able to stop further debate, provided
one only on each side of the question at issue be able to speak not
longer than an hour following such action. There’s no time for endless
gab now.

WHO ARE THE WORKERS?

At the back of a Prince Albert coat, which was common enough in
the last century and is still common in Europe, there are two superfluous
buttons just at the top of the tails. They are relics of the day when the
“gentleman,” who alone wore a Prince Albert, wore also a long sword.
Retaining the buttons on the coat is hardly more foolish than retaining
the social phrases of those disreputable old times. By divine dispensa-
tion, it was said, the community was divided into two classes; gentle-
men and workers, with professional men vaguely floating between the
two. The gentleman was the superior type of person, much beloved by
the clergy, who earned his bread, or his wines and mistresses, in the
sweat of other people’s brows. The worker was the man who did the
sweating. Some day it will seem the most amazing fact in the long hu-
man comedy that this arrangement of society lasted practically the
whole 6,000 years from the supposed inauguration of civilization. We
have so far grown ashamed of it that by a gentleman we now mean one
who never pays less than $60 for a suit, a dollar for a cigar, or $5 for
a meal, or $5,000 for an automobile. He’s supposed to do his share of the
sweating—as a stock-broker, banker, bishop, corporation director, mem-
ber of Congress, or other superior type of crook. But we still talk of “the
workers,” meaning those who don’t ask much for their work. The label
is as false as the red and white stripes on a barber’s pole, which lost
their meaning centuries ago when the barber ceased to be the bleeder
and on bleeding days hung out the sharp white pole on which the
patient rested his hand, with the bloody tape wound round it. Work should be the identification card of every man. An artist, dentist, organizer, actor, author, or store-keeper ought to be proud to be called a worker.

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LIGHT FROM THE EAST

The Radical Democratic Party of India (30 Faiz Bazar, Delhi) has just published a timely and admirable booklet, "A New Orientation," on the political situation. Too many people still think of India on the lines of Rudyard Kipling, and the demand for an establishment of an Independent Republic puzzled them. Far too much of India is, of course, still in the medieval condition, but the educated minorities with their fine scientific schools and enterprises, show the hollowness of the western cry that they need decades of tutelage. This booklet shows an equal advance in political philosophy. It not only explains the aim of the Indian Radical Party, but is a saner document on the political issue than any of the noisy statesmen of Australia, South Africa, or Canada could issue. It soundly criticizes both the Russian dictatorship of the Communist Party and the defects of the Anglo-American democracy which is being set up in India. Whether or no this will lead, as the writers contend, to a Fascist dictatorship, it is clearly in danger of introducing and aggravating those defects of western democracy which every thoughtful man recognizes. We are reminded, and most Americans need reminding, that Hitler's rise to dictatorship began in effect when the vote of the people gave him the largest party in the Reichstag—and that between elections (which are largely dishonest) the party in power "can legally assume dictatorial power," because under the parliamentary system democracy cannot control the executive. The recent rebellion in the British Parliamentary Labor group will illustrate this. Social Democracy shares this weakness. This third party in India which appeals more and more to the educated, wants to "recover the humanist tradition of modern culture." On the economic side it is collectivist or for a planned economy. It makes no sneaking bargains with religious bodies but issues fine Rationalist works by M. N. Roy and others. It wants a democracy with real power, encouraged to think and criticize, with the right of recall and referendum, and a higher-minded type of representative.

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THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

I've been thinking I was getting thick-skinned from reading so many frigid and calculated inexactitudes in contemporary literature or hearing them crooned on the radio, but I felt a distinct shock the other day. I read this in a book that was redolent with respectability: "Greece has chosen to return to monarchy, and the former king was able to regain his throne without a struggle." The second part of the statement might pass in our age of casuistry. The Greek king did get back his power, his palace, and his puppets without any struggle on his part. He was too busy with his lady friends and his parasites in London to lend a hand. But no struggle! Of course, the British never fired a shot in Greece. There was no such thing as an EAM or an ELAS. The royal ministers and archbishops didn't for a moment countenance any violence against Republicans. The elections at which the Greek people "returned to monarchy" were not like those awful travesties of democracy in Bulgaria and Rumania—about which, by the way, I've never heard any details. There's no struggle about the throne today. Just a
few bandits are up to their usual winter sports in the mountains. In November, 1946, a British Conservative Sunday paper with 4,000,000 circulation told how Marshal Montgomery recently heard from the Minister of War in Athens that these bandits were getting really serious. "It goes on," Monty said. "You must kill 'em, kill 'em, kill 'em." The Greek minister said to a friend: "I don't know how many times he said kill 'em." But no violence. Meantime the king's lady-friend has reached Athens, and the king's son is being openly groomed to marry the British princess.

CHEAP EFFORTS TO BE BOLD

A reader who has apparently picked up a copy of The Freeman casually writes that it impresses him as a "cheap effort to be bold." I've no doubt that William Lloyd Garrison was told much the same when he started The Liberator in 1831 and that since many radical editors have heard the same. I'd not be surprised to learn that "Mark" was similarly snubbed when he circulated the first gospel or that Ptah-Hatope got the same missile flung at him when he wrote the first critical pamphlet known to us 2,000 years earlier. Lenin's first paper Iskra (The Spark) was such a miserable little rag that young Stalin used to hide it in a large potato or a slice of cheese, but it lit a tolerably big blaze. Why, I'm asked, don't I get out The Freeman on art-paper (to take photos of models advertising undies and gladdening the aged glands), sparsely printed, artistically displayed? My critic pays me the compliment of saying that for such a paper as The Freeman I'd get a million readers if I did this. But the explanation doesn't require much space. A capital of at least $200,000 would be needed to start publishing the paper in the style I'd like, even on a moderate scale—five times as much on a full scale—and as there'd still be none of these lucrative advertisements for a paper of this sort, it would run at a heavy loss. As it is, The Freeman gives you reading matter—pungent, fearless, liberal in every respect, not merely in one—instead of the pages of advertisements of most papers. It stands for the free criticism of contemporary life and the supply of information on all aspects of it just because it's not restricted by the narrow aims of any one organization. If you want freedom and truth, don't grumble at the wrapping.

FROM APE TO MAN

Professor E. A. Hooton, of Harvard, has a new book out on the evolution of man. Nothing startling in that line has been covered in the last academic work on the subject, but there's always room for a good summary, bringing up to date the controversies about recent finds of prehistoric remains. The title, "From Ape to Man," is instructive. Less than 20 years ago, most authorities on prehistoric man, scared by the miserable backwash in Dayton, Tenn., were nervously explaining to the public that science didn't say that man descended from an ape. Experts like Dr. H. F. Osborn, of the New York Natural History Museum, even tried to get out of the reproach by saying that the animal stem which was to give rise to the human form separated from the mammal family long before there were even barrel-organ monkeys. But Osborn was one of that dwindling school of good scientific men who still thought that man had a soul and got hopelessly entangled in an effort to show that man could inherit an animal brain but not its function. In fact, I remember a "socialite" New York lady, a friend of Osborn, telling that he shrank from entering drawing rooms as even a remote
cousin of the ape. The mystic (scientific-mystic) school is now nearly dead. It's generally recognized that if we found the remains of one of our animal ancestors of 30 million years ago we'd class it as an ape. We have now a splendid series of skulls and skeletons bridging the gap. It's hardly 20 years since the chief Catholic writer on the subject assured his ignorant readers that all the relevant remains could be wrapped up in a handkerchief. Even then they would have filled a nice little hall. Today they form a large gallery.

SPIRITUAL REALITIES IN INDIA

The trouble in India and the excuse it gives to the British government to hang on to its imperialistic power a little longer are a rich commentary on all the talk about spiritual realities. In plain English this talk always means that, as the clergy more candidly say, religion is the indispensable basis of civilization. That what we call our modern civilization couldn't break out from the chrysalis stage and unfold its wings until the power of the churches was broken, is ignored. That, as every man perceives the moment he reflects, the advance of a modern civilization is in proportion to its secularism and that the religious quarrel in one country after another—France, Italy, Austria, etc.—thwarts the effort at recovery are thrust out of sight. But anybody must smile at the few feeble attempts to persuade us that the struggles that paralyzes the Indian people just when it's given the opportunity to advance is not religious. It is violent sectarian hatred that has reddened the streets of Indian cities with blood and seeks now to split the country. We recognize that Nehru deplores this as much as anybody. It's the leader of what most religious people would call the superior religion, Islam, who is mainly responsible. But the moral is plain. Progress in India must include opening the eyes of the people to their superstitions or the administration will become, as elsewhere, a packet of bread-tickets for politicians with religious influences diverting them from the proper service of their nation.

THE CENTENARY OF CHLOROFORM

Just 100 years ago, in 1847, a small group of Scottish surgeons introduced chloroform as an anaesthetic. News had come from America that bold dentists here and there were using nitrous oxide gas to deaden the pain of tooth extraction. "It is the greatest discovery ever made," said one of them. But it had disadvantages and a few experiments with ether, which was already known to chemistry, showed that it was better than "laughing gas." This was in 1846. The Scottish surgeon Simpson took it up and used it extensively in operations and childbirth, but there were still serious disadvantages and he turned to chloroform. Like many great discoveries in science, it was more or less accidental. Simpson and a few friends met one night in his dining room to try out—on themselves, of course—various chemicals which might serve. They were no good. Then Simpson recollected that he had rejected a bottle of chloroform, which he considered too heavy for the purpose, to his lumber room and thought that they might give it a try. A few friends looked on while they filled up their glasses and plunged into the unknown. One of them describes the result:

Immediately an unwonted hilarity seized the party. They became bright-eyed, very happy, and very loquacious, expatiating on the delicious aroma of the new fluid. The conversation was of unusual intelligence and quite charmed the listeners...
THE BATTLE AGAINST ILLITERACY

The appointment of Julian Huxley as head of UNESCO has been generally, and rightly, applauded. He hasn't the high ability and splendid mental vigor of his famous grandfather but he combines a sound scientific spirit and knowledge with a broad humanism that too many scientific men lack. Will he prove big enough for the job? In theory UNESCO has a formidable and most important task—to raise all nations, as far as possible, to the cultural level of the highest—but it's terribly complicated by political and sectarian interests. More advanced nations say, for instances, that if you educate the people of India or China it means an immensely larger demand for commodities, but they know that it will bring also a demand for industries to supply their own wants. What the religious leaders fear is clear enough. But it is a fool idea to aim only at teaching people to read. Every advance in literacy has been opposed by those who say, with the old Austrian emperor: "I want good subjects, not learned ones." The illiterates are a reproach but not a social danger in any country. It's the millions who can read and won't think or who confine their reading to one class of paper or book that are the great social danger. They are the friends of reaction. So when Huxley announces in his first speech that "the first great battle of UNESCO is against illiteracy" we don't applaud. His organization has, Iready made it clear that it regards any control of the press or other means of creating international hatred as hopelessly beyond its sphere of influence.

A POSER FOR JESUIT EDUCATORS

Are human souls being deliberately suppressed in that paradise of Catholicism, that country which sent missionaries centuries ago to convert the barbarous English? Can some learned member of the Society of Jesus, which persuaded the Church to adopt the ridiculous dogma of the Immaculate Conception late in her history, explain why the birthrate of Ireland has shrunk so much without recourse to the "damnable practice of Birth Control"?

Why has the birthrate fallen below that of Italy? Are Irishmen celibates and Irish women perpetually virginal? As long ago as 1870 the Irish birthrate was 27 per 1,000 compared with 37 for Italy; now it's fallen to 23 compared with Italy's 33. It's only a fraction of that of those "godless Russians." Think of the unborn and unbaptized souls which have been suppressed! But we are told that the Irish only marry late in life, and that 80 percent of men between 25 and 29 are unmarried in Ireland compared with 39 percent here. Either inhabitants of the Emerald Isle are sadly deficient in sex-hormones and should have treatment, or the dictates of religion are being disregarded.

HAVE THEY EARNED THEIR "BRASS CHECKS"?

How about our intellectual prostitutes of the American press—are they earning their "brass checks" and delivering the goods to Capitalism? The January, 1947, issue of a publication called The American Press tells a story which some who do so much yapping about "our
free press,” should take to heart. Only 2 percent—mark that figure—of 1,000 editors of weekly and rural newspapers who were sent a three-page questionnaire, or rather of the 200 who responded, want our present labor laws let alone. Revision of the Wagner Act is demanded by 92 percent, while 80 percent want compulsory arbitration of labor disputes. Outlawing the “closed shop” is demanded by 77 percent.

Only 23 percent, observe, want any big cut in appropriations for armies and navies hopelessly outmoded by the atom bomb. When this attitude is assembled with military commentator George Fielding Elliot’s statement that we need universal military training for American youth to insure “internal security,” one begins to get an idea that the reactionaries who dominate our American press are feeling like the “200 families” of pre-war France who preferred Hitler to Blum or Thorez. Hundreds of divisions (each of 17,000 men) and thousands of new giant tanks might be helpless against showers of atomic rockets, but perfectly wonderful in breaking up the mass-picket lines of a general strike which that dope Ernie Adamson, counsel of our witch-hunting committee who spoke out of turn, dreams will preage a “Communistic revolution” in this country.

Yes, it all adds up! Reactionaries unwilling to accept the dynamism of an atomic age are in the final analysis much more afraid of labor leaders like John L. Lewis and Walter Reuther than they are of Joseph Stalin.

SPEAKING OF SEX PRURIENCY

Isn’t it funny that the authors of “amazing stories” and science fiction almost invariably make the inhabitants of other planets look like human beings and give them two sexes? Arepos “love interest.” It’s possible that in some parts of our galaxy there are beings with a dozen sexes which must get together in reproduction. Right here on this earth there’s one plant with a long name which possesses 10 or a dozen. Have we any right to assume that two-sexed creatures are any more numerous in the universe in proportion than twins in the United States and Ireland. Doubtless asexual creatures are a hundred or thousand-fold more numerous within the confines of our 200 billion sun “island universe” than those with two sexes, and the inhabitant of one of those suspected planets circling the star B. Cygni couldn’t comprehend what all our fuss over sex is about. That genderless animal couldn’t possibly sympathize with our fine lady who reacted to a discourse on Pisciculture by exclaiming, “Gee. I’d hate to be a fish!” Neither would it understand the real urge which inspired Martin Luther to pitch into Holy Mother Church. As for Freud and his “complexes,” both would seem unthinkable.

What was the Good Lord, who yanked a rib out of Adam to create Eve, thinking about to endow his celebate priests with the organs of one sex when he could have gotten plenty of neuters or hermaphrodites in other sections of our galaxy who never would have kept mistresses nor ogled penitents and housekeepers. Fancy allowing this pious vice-regent on earth, Pope Plus X, to acquire a filthy venereal disease!

ATHEISM ON THE ETHER

Following upon the declaration of principles of the Federal Communications Commission radio station RLW allowed Atheist Robert Harold Scott to give out his views on the ether. California readers assure us that he made good use of his opportunity, and the talk must have been a good tonic in so religious a state. The newspaper controversy was still more useful. Some clergymen who at first broke into violent pro-
tests had afterwards to modify their attitude. In the *Stanford Daily*, a Rev. G. J. Hall complained that the radio organizers had no right to inflict upon the public opinions which were "not the result of careful thought or judicious observation of nature"—as his sermons or the usual religious twaddle on the radio are, we suppose—but, whether the shadow of the university fell upon him or not, he next day explained that Mr. Scott had "every right to speak his mind as does every citizen." It was an amusing point that the preacher could express himself best by quoting: "Though I may despise what you say I shall defend to the death your right to say it;" which he ascribed to Voltaire, whom he probably regards as an Atheist. But we fear we cannot regard Mr. Scott's personal success as a significant victory. The telephone-wires to the radio-station were red-hot with pious protests within an hour. The program director said that they tried the experiment in order to find out "whether there is sufficient interest in Atheism in this area to justify time being devoted to future broadcasts." We should like to know the total number of Californians who telephoned or wrote to tell him that they aren't interested—in fact violently not interested—in the subject. Tens of millions are reading articles or sermons weekly on the terrible danger to the world of the great spread of Atheism. They seem to think that the best ground for taking violent action against it is to say that few people take any interest in it. Wake up, progressives. We are more numerous than the members of any church in America. Let them know it.

**SCIENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Our scientific men have lately shown a remarkable proneness to meddle in other people's business—the business of statesmen and military men, for instance—but it's really irritating to read that one of them pleaded lately for a scientific approach to foreign affairs. We imagine Mr. Byrnes smiling cynically and Bevin rolling bovine eyes. What in the name of Jupiter, people will ask in Washington, has the chemist or the physicist got to do with foreign relations? Let them stick to their proper business of making plutonium bombs and diabolical powders. Of course, a cynic might say that if the relations of America to Europe and Asia had been under the control of our great chemists and physicists for the past 18 months they could hardly be worse than they are. The international situation was never so chaotic as it is today and certainly never so dangerous before while the world was still in the penumbra of a great war. But no reader of The Freeman is likely to be put off with this calculated flippancy. If an ignorant man of mediocre intelligence like Bevin can master the foreign affairs of a great nation in three months one of our distinguished chemists could certainly do as much; but it's part of the recklessness that seems to succeed so well today to suggest that when we talk of applying science to life we're thinking of chemists or paleontologists, and economists. Sociology and psychology also are sciences. It's the spirit and method that are common to them all that we want. Applied to foreign affairs this means that the realities of international life—say in Greece or Spain—would first be ascertained with cold objective accuracy, communicated to the public with absolute candor in spite of newspapers, and acted upon with an exclusive concern for the good of the nation and the good of the race.

**WHY ARE AMERICANS DOWN ON MINORITIES?**

Don't blame us for the question. It is the Harvard Psychology Department that recently asked it and tried to get the answer. Naturally
they don't mean that this is any peculiarity of American life. All minorities in all countries have had to fight at one time or another, if not for existence at least for a general recognition that they were as good citizens as any others. It continues. Yesterday it was the turn of the Jews and the Socialists in many countries. Before that it was the Catholics. Today it's the turn of the Communists and the Atheists, and—this is the sharp point of the inquiry—the feeling against them is strongest of all in the land which based its new civilization upon the principle that all men are free and are at least equal in civil rights. There is, however, an academic flavor about this Harvard inquiry which is familiar enough but it greatly weakens the conclusions. That general hostility to minorities which they set out to explore is neither strong nor important. It's a bias with not painful social and psychological consequences. They trace it to direction of the mind in early years by parents and schooling. But the bias against other boys or girls because they belong to a minority (the Unitarian or Congregational church, for instance) in the mind of a boy or girl of 15 is not a serious social matter. It's the bias of people in later ages to enthusiastically support papers which would crush certain minorities out of existence that really matters. A university like Harvard will never tackle that question candidly and effectively. It's a hostility, created especially through the press, the radio, and the sermons by powerful class, political, or sectarian interests, which consider that their wealth and power are threatened by minorities, and they cover their intolerance by cries of danger to the American civilization and lies to prove the danger.

MORE ABOUT INFIDEL DEATH-BEDS

A reader tells us that religious folk are saying that "Robert Ingersoll weakened on his death-bed and asked for forgiveness." He wants to know "if this is true or not, and what is the foundation of it." It is, of course, not true, and the foundation of the story is, as usual, a deliberate fabrication on some parson's part. The myth was first concocted about the death-bed of Voltaire. Next it was the death-bed of Hume, then of Paine. The principal character in the fairy tale changes in each generation, yet millions who hear the latest version of it wonder if there is not at least some fact distorted in it. In the particular case of Ingersoll it is a more brazen than ever. Joseph McCabe, who spent hours of talk discussing the great Freethinker with his widow, her two daughters, and her brother, besides personal friends, has one of his Little Blue Books (No. 1215) on Ingersoll. He condenses the last placid day of Ingersoll's life, in a short paragraph:

Up to the night of July 20-21, 1899, he had no reason to think of death as even near his horizon. Some digestive trouble then gave him a restless night, and he was indisposed in the morning. He sat up at noon and proposed to lunch with the others. "How white your tongue is," his wife said to him. He looked at her smiling, and said: "I am better now." And he sank gently back in his chair and died.

All biographers of Ingersoll tell the same story. The "infidel death-bed" story has been worth millions of dollars to preachers. That is its foundation.

AMERICAN JEWS ARE BEING IMPOSED ON

Two incidents show how small groups are making fools of the Jews in this country. Take first the General Rose incident in Denver. Rose, it will be remembered, was killed in action on the European front. A
Denver group then decided to build a $1,000,000 hospital in Denver (his home town) as a memorial to “the greatest Jewish warrior since Bar Kochba.” Says the circular: “This hospital will be a living memorial that will forever stand as a refutation of vicious anti-Jewish propaganda.” The Freeman has always fought anti-Semitism, but it refuses to support a group that seeks to hoax the Jews of America by the use of false symbols and slogans. The simple fact is that General Rose was a convert to Christianity and a member of a Protestant church. His funeral was conducted by a Protestant chaplain. These being facts, why should Jews be asked to put up $1,000,000 for the General Rose Memorial Hospital? It’s a racket.

Here’s another way in which the American Jews are being hoaxed, this time by the National Conference of Jews and Christians, a stooge outfit that was organized to do the dirty work of the Black International. The Jews are actually giving support to a movement, inspired and financed by the hierarchy, to compel the Yugoslav government to release Aloyius Stepinac, supreme head of the Catholic Church in Croatia and Archbishop of Zagreb, the Croatian capital. Stepinac, who was in control of the press when the Nazis invaded and ruled the country, served Hitler and the Pope as the apostolic chaplain of the army. As a leader in the Nazi movement in his country, Stepinac was a leading collaborator with the Nazi murderers who massacred millions of Jews. Here’s what Stepinac wrote for Hitler’s controlled press: “The movement for the restoration of man’s dignity is the movement for freeing the world from the Jews.” When Hitlerism was crushed, Stepinac was arrested, tried, and sentenced to prison, where he belonged. The Catholic Church then organized protest demonstrations in many countries, but only in the U.S. were the Jews invited to join in the movement to save a mass-murderer from just punishment. Many accepted and joined their voices in the campaign to compel the clerical beast’s release. Hoaxed again. DELAY IS DANGEROUS

Across the continent in an hour—is that fast enough? And for $75, says Dr. Alexander W. Lippisch, one of our imported German scientists and former plane designer for Messerschmidt. He says it will take about three years to produce a practical plane capable of flying faster than sound.

Probably more than one of our stupid countrymen object to the presence of German scientists in the United States. So did some medieval merchants object to the use of Arabic numerals on the ground that they were invented by “infidels.” Looking at a list of Nobel Prize winners, one observes that Germany produced 29 winners in physics and chemistry compared with 10 American, 16 British and 13 French winners. In physiology and medicine, Germany, Great Britain, America and France produced 9, 9, 7 and 4 winners respectively.

We spent $2,000,000,000 for atomic energy development—much more than any country in Europe could have afforded—but when it comes to research, we’d better not get too cocky. Science has no country and no flag, and the sooner economics and politics become international, the better man’s chances of survival. Of course, there are people who argue, as Dr. Philippe le Corbieller of Harvard does, that the reason economic and social progress lag far behind mechanical development is because of their greater complexity. “To solve psychological and social problems,” declares Le Corbieller, “mankind will have to progress another few centuries.”

But mankind cannot wait to improve either biologically or ethically. Getting in step with technological progress is a must. To lag behind five or 10 years longer is dangerous. To wait a generation invites oblivion.
CREATION DE NIHIL VsVERSUS GROWTH

If Topsy was created by a supernatural being and didn’t just grow
from a combination of stuff in a pluralistic universe, why was her
designer so inefficient? Why did he need to waste hundreds of eggs
and billions of sperms in producing one baby? If man’s atomic bomb is
so far only one 10th of 1 percent efficient, the Lord, to whom Topsy
is told to pray, was millions of times more inefficient than atom-bomb
scientists when he made her first ancestor. The optical defects in a
human eye wouldn’t be tolerated in man’s microscope or telescope. As a
thermal machine converting heat to motion, Topsy is barely 20 percent
efficient compared with a gasoline engine’s 35 percent or more. Elec­
trical machinery is usually more than 95 percent efficient. If the Lord
is as wise as Topsy’s pastor says he is—all powerful, omnipotent, etc.—
why did he not provide the creature which he created in “his own image”
with an eye-lens which would have permitted more than a small frac­
tion of incident light to reach the retina?

Man has only progressed a few thousand years beyond savagery, yet,
in the words of Leaver and Brown, discussing “Machines Without Men” in
a recent magazine, we now “have machines which see better than
eyes, calculate more reliably than brains, communicate faster and far­
ther than the voice, record more accurately than the memory, and act
faster and better than hands.” Blasphemous or not, the human biped is
already doing considerably better in many directions than the God
which Holy Writ says created him. But says some Jesuit, or Protestant
Holy Joe, “man hasn’t created life!”

True, Man hasn’t created life yet, or synthesized in the laboratory
the bio-chemical basis of what we call “sensation,” but don’t doubt
for a moment that he will. As for what the religious call “immortality,”
man may even attain that estate within a small fraction of the 10
billion years that science now assigns to his tenancy of our planet.

Catholics indignantly deny that the Spanish church said masses for
the “victims” of Nuremberg. In the first week of November a British
M.P., Noel-Baker, son of the Secretary of Air and a man of the highest
repute, made a secret dash into Spain and brought away one of the
church-bills announcing these Requiem Masses. This black-market
business is really getting shocking. . . . Pardon, perhaps you did not
know that a mass for the dead is a “black mass.”

HOW TO LIVE LONGER

How many oldster readers of The Freeman, and constitutional hat­
ers of religious hocuspocus, realize that Dr. Henry S. Simms, assistant
biochemistry professor at the Columbia University-Presbyterian Hos­
pital Medical Center, has been making discoveries which may eventu­
ally insure unemployment for ministers and priests the world over, In­
cluding both Presbyterians and Roman Catholics?

According to what one reads in John J. O’Neill’s new book, “You and
the Universe,” Dr. Simms has grown artery tissue in test tubes under a
variety of conditions, and Simms and his associates have been able to
produce artificially the fat tissue deposit responsible for arteriosclerosis.
Of five factors responsible for tissue growth a “B” factor found in the
blood causes the deposition of fat on the inside of the arteries, while an
"Anti-B" factor can be produced synthetically. As O'Neill puts it, "The hope that old age can be conquered and that human life in full vigor may be prolonged for, perhaps, several centuries is inherent in such researches. All the more reason that oldsters now alive hold on as long as possible—those who are not solicitous for annihilation. If Congress should be persuaded to appropriate hundreds of millions of dollars to finance this sort of research, some of its members, as well as Freeman readers, might emulate Methusaleh, and George Bernard Shaw become a millennial.

Need science stop further biological research after that achievement? Who says that by the time precious Patsy O'Bang achieves his first 150, we won't know enough more to preserve him as long as this planet is habitable?

**EVIDENCES OF MUDDLED THINKING**

This growth of unsound political thinking, as revealed by the 1946 elections, shows the evil of lack of direction or the wrong kind of direction. Fortunately the Anglo-Americans still keep a firm grip on the central part of Italy. Local elections in November showed the results. In Rome and four other cities the Party of the Common Man (Uomo Qualunque) had made such progress that it beat the Pope's Party (Christian Democrats) and ran second to the Socialist-Communist bloc. Its leaders are thinly-disguised anti-clerical Fascists, the sort of political criminals we hunt down so zealously in other places. It is rumored that millions of democratic voters are so confused by the new political labels that they just vote for the loudest orator.

**"THE GREAT GREEK MYSTERY"**

A European journalist of repute who recently contrived to spend some time in Greece gives the above heading to his report. The subtitle was: How on earth do the people live? A peculiar question, seeing the enormous amount of time and money that the Allies have spent in "helping the Greeks to stand on their own feet." But it appears that the way in which they do stand is just as peculiar. How, in a world of financial chaos, bureaucratic corruption, and widespread misery, does the government balance its budget? He says it is "a mystery in economics that defies adequate explanation even in the multi-syllable-mumbo-jumbo of the professional economist." One thing is clear. The expenditure so far this year was 1,576 billion drachmas, the honest receipts 600 billion, but the budget was "quite healthy." The balance was made up "by the sale of UNRRA goods." The bureaucracy officially and its members and hangers-on unofficially make vast sums out of the sale to "loyal" Greeks, almost the only ones who can buy of the immense volume of goods we have sent to the starving people. The stores of Athens are crammed with goods that would make the mouth of a poor Frenchwoman or Briton water. "Yet," he says, "except for a handful of new rich—most of whom collaborated like mad with the Nazis to a greater or lesser degree—no one can buy any of these things if he is to balance his budget. "Peasants in some districts eat grass. Professional men in the cities are selling off their furniture and little treasures—if they are not in the political swim. He gives a detailed analysis of the budget of a higher bank clerk who gets $60 a month: which is not far off the top price for bank-clerks, civil servants, teachers, etc. His expenses are $180 a month and this does not include any clothing (suit $150, shirt $12, etc.). Civil servants alone in this class number 160,000. Better-off are the 50,000 urchins who swagger about Athens selling, at 60 cents for 20, cigarettes that brazenly advertise
their American or British sources. Over this squalid mess preside a squalid king and an archbishop who preaches that religion is the one possible basis for civilization. . . . The cutest thing that Byrnes ever did was to leave to Bevin the full glory of this achievement. But, of course, Greece had to be saved from the evil influence of Russia.

WHO SAID "EUREKA"?

How many boys and girls are planning to become pioneers of a post-atomic-war world by attending Roger W. Babson's proposed underground Utopia College at Eureka, Kansas? Is Roger getting "dotty" in his old age, dotty because he apparently imagines that a relatively shallow burrowing in the ground will insure safety?

If the old boy were to consult the formulas of explosive effects to be found in Captain C. W. Glover's "Civil Defense," published in London in 1941, and in works of similar character, he could figure out for himself that the 20,000 TNT ton equivalent of our Hiroshima atom bomb should break through a roof of limestone or the best of reinforced concrete 529 feet thick. That bomb is a mere firecracker to possible bombs. The 10,000,000 TNT tons equal to Dr. Edward U. Condon's "possible" bomb would break through 8,635 feet! Under such a bomb, Britain's Gibraltar would crumble like a tiny pile of sand raised by red ants under a giant's heel. Above-ground, college classrooms are just as safe as Babson's are likely to be, should atomic war come.

It would cost uncounted millions for man to burrow 8,000 feet beneath the surface of the earth, and by the time he began to feel really safe some war-monger supplied by cosmic-ray or "meson" bombs probably would be in a position to blast this planet itself into extinction. Playing the mole is nonsense. Only the abolition of war itself will suffice And war cannot be abolished without doing away with the war-breeding system of Capitalism.