

F O R U M and Century

[III]

The Magazine of Controversy. Its method is to give a fair and friendly hearing to both sides, all sides, of important questions of the day. Its practice is, in an age of shifting authority, of relativity and specialization, to apply common sense both to threadbare tradition and to glittering novelty. Its object is, by stimulating independent thinking, to promote sound individualism in a democracy.

HENRY GODDARD LEACH, Editor

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Editorial FOREWORD

MR. FABIAN FRANKLIN is a veteran prosecutor of fallacies in popular logic. His seventy-eight years have not blurred an iota of the mental alertness of his college days or the time when he held a chair of mathematics at Johns Hopkins University. In this issue of THE FORUM he deplores soggy thinking on the part of our political and financial leaders in these hard times when, of all others, we have a right to expect keen analysis and hard-headedness. During the depression our government at Washington has promulgated the doctrine that unemployment should be relieved by hastening the construction of public works. This has been pretty well accepted, and wisely, by the country at large. At the same time Washington has acquiesced to another doctrine that seems to conflict with the first — that such works should not be allowed to assume proportions great enough to increase the national debt. But if we float bonds in the urgency of war, why not in economic crises? Perhaps history will judge that we have placed the wrong emphasis on thrift. Thrift would seem to be better as an antidote for periods of inflation than a practice designed to hoist us out of the depths of deflation.

SINCE Mr. Franklin wrote this paper for THE FORUM ninety of our leading economists have endorsed a plan for a one-billion-dollar "prosperity loan." The program is designed to give thousands of our unemployed jobs on public works and to put into their pockets the wherewithal to buy freely, thus breaking the general consumers' strike. "It seems only logical," reads the statement of these economists, "that the Federal Government, which has been urging these expenditures by business men and local governments, should now do its part in restoring the purchasing power of the masses of the people by an extensive expansion of such public works as post roads, reforestation, elimination of grade crossings, reclamation and flood control projects, and other improvements that do not compete with private industry and can be undertaken promptly."

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WOODROW WILSON

After Ten Years

by HAROLD J. LASKI

I

NO SERIOUS observer of modern times could look upon history in Carlyle's fashion, as the biography of great men. The institutions by which our lives are molded have become so impersonal that, in sober fact, the real rulers of society are undiscoverable. Men who at the moment of their activity seem to loom large over their epoch pass away without seriously disturbing the scene of their labors. The death of Stresemann has far less importance than the maldistribution in the supply of gold; the defeat of either Signor Mussolini or Mr. Ramsay MacDonald would produce less change in the disposition of the world's forces than the discovery of coal in Italy or a new technique of organization in the Lancashire cotton trade.

To those of us who remember the intensity of passion which surrounded President Wilson during his tenure of office, the difficulty now is to see concrete meaning in its urgency. With or without him, the progressive movement would have stayed for a brief moment the growth of American plutocracy. With or without him, America was destined to enter the World War and to dominate the fortunes of Europe in its

aftermath. Every piece of legislation which he urged upon Congress in the heyday of his authority was the outcome of impalpable forces which he neither shaped nor controlled. The whole character of his policy in foreign affairs was marked by ideas and purposes common to innumerable thinkers both in America and Europe during his time.

It was his fortune to represent the American people at a moment when the principles of liberalism found a ready and eager echo in the war-weary nations. He gave to them an emotional expression more rich and profound than any other leader of his time. But he was unaware that, as he formulated them, they had already been made obsolete by a changing economic technology, on the one hand, and the vast implications of the Russian Revolution on the other. Soberly considered, his eight years of power look now like the ablest effort of the period to translate the ideals of an individualistic liberalism, conceived in almost the classic terms of the nineteenth century, into a social structure too highly developed to receive them usefully. With higher purposes and

Christianity and Liberty

A Challenge to the "Modern Mind"



Drawings by Lloyd Cox

by **J. GRESHAM MACHEN**

WHEN I WAS honored by an invitation to contribute an article to *THE FORUM*, it could only be because the Editor is broad-minded enough to accord a hearing to a humble representative of a very unpopular cause. To be an adherent to-day of that religion of supernatural redemption which has always hitherto been known as Christianity, and to be at all in earnest about the logical consequences of that conviction, is to stand sharply at variance not only with the world at large but also with the forces which dominate most of the larger Protestant churches.

Whatever may be thought of such an unpopular position as that, it can hardly be any unworthy motives of self-interest that lead a man to take it. It is not easy to stand against the whole current of an age, and the sacrifice which is involved in doing so is far from light. Why, then, do we adherents of the religion of the Bible insist on being so peculiar? Why do we resist in such perverse fashion the pronouncements of the "modern mind"?

Perhaps, for one thing, it is because we do not think so highly as some persons do of the modern mind — of the modern mind and of the modern world which it has produced.

It is not the incidental defects of the modern world of which I am thinking just now. Those incidental defects are surely plain enough even to the most enthusiastic disciple of modernity.

I suppose my experience is similar to the experience of a good many men. When I was a

student in Germany in 1905-1906, the argument from modern authority seemed to me to be a very powerful argument against the supernaturalistic Christianity in which I had been brought up. I was living in an environment where that Christianity had long been abandoned, where it was scarcely regarded even as being worthy of debate. It was a very stimulating environment indeed, dominated by men whom I admired then, and whom I still admire. And the world in general might have seemed to a superficial observer to be getting along very well without Christ. It was a fine, comfortable world — that godless European world prior to 1914. And as for anything like another European war, that seemed to be about as well within the bounds of possibility as that the knights should don their armor and set their lances again in rest. The international bankers obviously would prevent anything so absurd. But we discovered our mistake. Our comfortable utilitarian world proved to be not so comfortable after all.

In some directions, indeed, there was advance, even in warfare, over conditions that had prevailed before. Antiseptic surgery no doubt had accomplished much. But in other directions there was a marked decline. The notion of the nation in arms — that redoubtable product of the French Revolution — was carried out to something approaching its logical result. Even more logical and even more damnable, no doubt, will be its results in the next war.

Modern scientific utilitarianism, in other words, did not produce the millennium prior to 1914; and there is not the slightest evidence that it has produced the millennium since that time, or that it ever will produce the millennium in the ages to come.

In further incidental indictment of the age in which we are living, I might point to the brutal injustices and enormities of the peace that followed upon a war which was supposed to be waged for justice and liberty. And I might point also to the appalling spiritual decline which has come over the world within the last fifty years. High poetry, for the most part, is silent; art is either imitative or bizarre. There is advance in material things; but in the higher ranges of the human mind an amazing sterility has fallen on the world.

THE LOSS OF LIBERTY

BUT SERIOUS as are such incidental defects of the age in which we are living, it is not of them that I am thinking just now. After all, there has been advance in some directions to balance the retrogression in others. Humanitarian effort has no doubt accomplished much; war has been declared against the mosquito and the germ, and some day we may be living in a world without disease. I doubt it, for my part; but at any rate the possibility cannot altogether be denied.

What, then, if it is not found in incidentals, even so stupendous an incidental as the World War, is the really obvious indictment against the modern world — an indictment that will appeal even to those who do not share our Christian point of view? The answer seems to be plain enough. The really obvious indictment against the modern world is that by the modern world human liberty is being destroyed.

At that point, no doubt, many readers will only with difficulty repress a smile. The word "liberty" to-day has a decidedly archaic sound. Modern historians are writing it in quotation marks, when they are obliged to use the ridiculous word at all. No principle, they are telling us, was involved in the American Revolution; economic causes alone produced that struggle; and Patrick Henry was indulging in cheap melodrama when he said: "Give me liberty or give me death." Certainly liberty is out of date in modern life. Standardization and efficiency have very largely taken its place.

Even nature is being made to conform to standard. In the region that I have visited in Maine off and on for the past thirty years, I have seen the wild exuberance of woods and streams gradually giving place to the dreary regularities of a National Park. It seems almost as if some sweet, delicate, living creature were being destroyed. But that is only a symbol of what is going on beneath. The same ruthless standardization is also being applied to human souls.

That is particularly true in the all-important field of education. If, it is said, we allow all sorts of queer private schools and church schools to confuse the mind of youth, what will become of the welfare of the state? How can we have a unified nation without a standardized school?

I know that this process of standardization has recently been checked in America here and there. The Supreme Court of the United States declared unconstitutional the Oregon School Law which simply sought to wipe all private schools and church schools out of existence in that state, and it also declared unconstitutional the Nebraska Language Law (similar to laws in other states) which made literary education even in private schools a crime. The preposterous Lusk Laws in the State of New York, one of which placed private teachers under state supervision and control, were repealed. The bill establishing a Federal department of education, despite the powerful interests working in behalf of it, has not yet become a law. The misnamed "Child Labor Amendment" to the Constitution of the United States, which would have placed the youth of the country under centralized bureaucratic control, has not received the requisite ratification from the states. But I fear that these setbacks to the attack on liberty, unless the underlying temper of the people changes, are but temporary, and that the process of standardization and centralization will go ruthlessly on.

FREEDOM THROUGH REDEMPTION

IN SOME SPHERES, no doubt, standardization is a good thing. It is a good thing, for example, in the making of a Ford car. But it does not follow that it should be applied to human beings; for a human being is a person, and a Ford car is a machine.

The typical modern experts deny the distinction, and that is our fundamental quarrel

with the "modern mind." What sort of world is it to which we are tending to-day? What is really the modern ideal? I suppose it is a world in which the human machine shall have arrived at the highest stage of efficiency. Disease, I suppose, may be abolished; and as for death, although we shall not have abolished it, we shall at least have abolished its terrors. Vague childish longings, pre-scientific speculations as to a hereafter, will all be gone; and we shall have learned, as reasonable and scientific men, to stand without a pang at the grave of those whom in a less scientific age we should have been childish enough to love.

What is to be thought of such a mechanistic world? I will tell you what we Christians think of it: we think it is a world in which all zest, all glory, all that makes life worth living will have been destroyed. It will no doubt have its advantages. In it, no doubt, the span of our life may be extended far beyond the previously allotted period of threescore years and ten. Experts appointed by the state will always be by our side to examine our physical and mental condition and keep us alive upon the earth. Perhaps they may be successful in keeping us alive upon the earth. But what will be the use? Who would want to live longer in a world where life is so little worth living?

From such a slavery, which is already stalking through the earth in the materialistic paternalism of the modern state, from such a world of unrelieved drabness, we seek escape in the high adventure of the Christian religion. Men call us devotees of a Book. They are right. We *are* devotees of a Book. But the Book to which we are devoted is the Magna Charta of human liberty — the Book which alone can make men free.

At this point I am particularly desirous of not being misunderstood. I do not mean for one moment that a man ever became a real Christian merely through the desire to attain civil or political freedom or even the very highest of worldly ends. But what I do mean is that the defects of the modern world, though a realization of them will never in itself make a man a Christian, may yet lead him to a consideration of far profounder needs. He may begin by seeking escape from mechanism and go on to seek escape from sin. In the Bible we find a liberty that is far deeper than the civil and religious liberty of which I have just spoken.

It is a liberty that enters into the depths of the soul.

In the Bible we find, in the first place, God. Back of the stupendous mechanism of the world there stands, as the Master of it and not as its slave, no machine but a living Person. He is enveloped, indeed, in awful mystery; a dreadful curtain veils His being from the gaze of men. But, unlike the world, He is free; and He has chosen, in His freedom, to lift the veil and grant us just a look beyond. In that look we have freedom from the mechanism of the world. God is free; and where He is, there is liberty and life.

In the Bible we find, in the second place, man; we regain that birthright of freedom which has been taken from us by the "modern mind." It is a dreadful birthright indeed. For with freedom comes responsibility, and with responsibility, for us, there comes the awful guilt of sin. Gone for us Christians is the complacency of the "modern mind"; gone is the lax, comforting notion that crime is only a disease; gone is the notion that strips the ermine from the judge and makes him but the agent of a utilitarian society; gone is the blindness that refuses to face the moral facts. Our attitude at this point will receive little sympathy from the experts of the present day; they will doubtless apply to it their usual method of dealing with a thing that they do not understand — they will give it a long name and let it go. But is their judgment really to be trusted? There are some of us who think not. There are some of us who think that the moral judgments of sinful men, even when they are the judgments of experts, are not always to be trusted, and that the real pathway of advance for humanity lies through a rediscovery of the law of God.

In the third place, in the Bible we find redemption. Into this world of sin there came, in God's good time, a divine Redeemer. No mere teacher is he to us, no mere example, no mere leader into a larger life, no mere symbol or embodiment of an all-pervading divinity. No; we stand to Him, if we be really His, in a relationship far closer than all that. For us He gave His life upon the cross to make all well between us sinners and the righteous God, by whose love He came. Thus does the ancient burden fall from our backs; thus do we become true moderns at last. "Old things are passed

away; behold, they are become new." Thus, and thus only, do we have true freedom. It is a freedom from mechanism, but the freedom from mechanism is rooted in a freedom from sin.

THE ALTERNATIVE

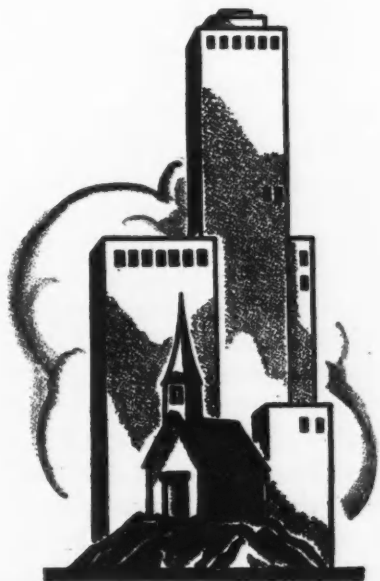
AT THIS POINT I think I know what some of my readers may say. "Do we not agree," they may ask, "with much that has just been said? Do we not reject behaviorist psychology; do we not believe in the freedom of the soul; do we not believe in God? But need such beliefs be connected with such very doubtful conclusions in the sphere of external history; may we not believe in the eternal worth of the human soul, and enter into communion with God, without insisting upon the external miracles of the Bible? May we not have a true Christian experience without believing in the Empty Tomb?"

This attitude lies at the basis of what may be called, by a very unsatisfactory and question-begging term, "Liberalism" in the church. It is a very imposing phenomenon. I hope I do not approach it without sympathy. I have listened with high admiration to many of its representatives during the last twenty-five years — ever since I sat in Herrmann's classroom at Marburg and obtained some impression of the fervor and glow of that remarkable man. I can quite understand how men desire to escape, if they can, the debate in the field of science. I quite understand how they seek to avoid disputing about what happens or has

happened in the external world and fall back upon an internal world of the soul into which scientific debate cannot enter. It seems to be such a promising solution of our apologetic difficulties just to say that science and religion belong in two entirely different spheres and can never by any chance come into conflict. It seems to be so easy for religion to purchase peace by abandoning to science the whole sphere of facts in order to retain for itself merely a sphere of feelings and ideals.

But in reality these tactics are quite disastrous. You effect thus a strategic retreat; you retreat into a Hindenburg line, an inner line of defense whence you think that science can never dislodge you. You get down into your pragmatist dugout and listen comfortably to the muffled sound of the warfare being carried on above by those who are old-fashioned enough to be interested in truth. You think that whatever creedal changes, whatever intellectual battles there may be, you at least are safe. You have your Christian experience; and let science and Biblical criticism do what they will!

But do not comfort yourselves. The enemy in this warfare is good at mopping up captured trenches; he has in his mechanistic psychologists a very efficient mopping-up squad. He will soon drive you out of your refuge; he will destroy whatever decency and liberty you thought you had retained; and you will discover, too late, that the battle is now lost, and that your only real hope lay, not in retreating



into some anti-intellectualistic dugout, but in fighting bravely to prevent the initial capture of the trench.

No, the battle between naturalism and supernaturalism, and also between mechanism and liberty, has to be fought out sooner or later; and I do not believe that there is any advantage in letting the enemy choose the ground upon which it shall be fought. The strongest defense of the Christian religion, the truly scientific defense, is the outer defense. A reduced and inconsistent Christianity is weak; our real safety lies in the exultant supernaturalism of God's World.

At the center of that supernaturalism there stands the supernatural figure of Jesus Christ. It is a figure that bears the mark of truth; against it criticism ultimately will fail. But it

must be taken essentially as it stands. Gone is the day when men thought that a few miracles could be removed from the Gospels to leave a "Liberal Jesus," a mere preacher of the "fatherhood of God" and the "brotherhood of man."

Recent New Testament criticism has tended strongly against any such easy solution of the problem as that. Increasingly the real question is becoming clear: give Jesus up, confess that His portrait is forever hidden in the mists of legend; or else accept Him as a supernatural Person, as He is presented by all the four Gospels and by Paul.

We have chosen the latter alternative for ourselves; and we believe that only in that alternative are true progress and true liberty to be attained for mankind.

White Man's Town



Drawings by Esther Bruton

by **LOWRY CHARLES WIMBERLY**

YOU DON'T LIKE a small town? Well, now that's odd. You can give me one every time. In a big place you can be born and grow up and marry a fortune and then die maybe and leave it all, and nobody is any the wiser or gives a damn. But in a little burg you've got everybody spotted and they've got you spotted. If there's a low-down buzzard in town, you know it. Or if there's a good man or a saint, you know that, too. You can bank on just how each person will act at a revival or a dog fight or an election. There was Deb Gurney. You always knew he'd vote Democrat and go clear off his base at a fire but show the levellest head on earth at a funeral, especially if he was related to the corpse.

Deb's grandmother on his father's side, and

as nice an old lady as you'd want to see, was hit by a car and passed away the next morning without coming to. She was buried on Sunday. The church was jammed at the funeral, particularly with old-timers, and everybody bawled and bellowed and blew their noses until you couldn't help joining in. And you couldn't catch a cussed word of the sermon, for all the preacher was laying into it in a way that was enough to make the old lady rise up out of her coffin. But Deb, who was her nearest of kin and not five feet from the corpse, just sat there calmer even than the undertaker himself and didn't bat an eye. There was a stranger in town at the time, and Mell Rascom got up a bet with him on how Deb would act at the funeral. It was an ornery thing to pull on