

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXIII.—No. 14

Sunday, April 4, 1943

Price Threepence

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Law of God

TO do Christians justice it must be pointed out that, during the whole of their history, Christians have done what they could to carry out the laws against what is known as "blasphemy." The form of punishment for discarding the Bible God may not have followed the exact punishments laid down in the Bible—stoning to death was not always practicable; but the spirit of the laws was followed. Burning and torturing took the place of the original method. When civilisation had so far advanced that these were no longer practicable, imprisonment and slitting of ears took their place; and when this was not advisable, then social and business and political boycott did what they could to keep the old flag flying.

"Blasphemy"—a purely religious "crime," it may be noted in passing—is a criminal offence in this country both by Statute and Common Law. The Statute Law against blasphemy—which replaced the Ecclesiastical Courts—belongs to the reign of William III. (9th and 10th c. 2). The law was made by Parliament in response to a petition to the King for legislation for the suppression of blasphemy and profaneness.

The Act provides that anyone who has either been brought up in the Christian religion or who has made a profession of belief in Christianity, who shall, by writing, printing or advised speaking, assert that there are more gods than one, or shall deny the Christian religion to be true or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority, shall upon conviction be deprived of all office or employment, civil or military, or of any profit arising from them. And if they so offend a second time they shall be disabled to sue or prosecute in any Court of Law, to receive a legacy, to be the guardian of a child or executor or administrator of a will, and shall be

This series of notes is in reply to a question: "What is Christianity?" There are so many forms of Christianity, we declined the task of answering. But Christianity is an historic religion based upon the Bible. The clergy are crying: "Back to the Bible." We take them at their word, and give the essentials of Christianity as presented in the Bible.

deprived of any office for ever and shall suffer three years' imprisonment.

It should be said that no prosecution has taken place under this Act, but under the Common Law prosecutions have been numerous—several in this century; and the House of Commons obstinately refuses to wipe out laws that are a disgrace to people calling themselves civilised.

It must be confessed that the Christians were better equipped to sustain intolerance than were the pagans, particularly the Romans. Pagan Rome was notoriously hospitable to strange gods. They boasted that many of the gods of the countries they had conquered had their place in the Roman Pantheon; and the Rev. Professor Gwatkin remarks that Pagan Rome admitted new gods as freely as Papal Rome manufactured saints. But from the establishment of the Christian domination heresy-hunting became the rule; and the war was not merely against the pagan gods, but also against Christian bodies. The supremacy of the Christian creed was reached under Constantine; and that great authority on the history of the Church, H. C. Lea, points out in his "Studies in Church History" (p. 277):—

"With the exception of Constantine, who was an Arian, and Julian, who was a Pagan, every Emperor from Constantine to Valentinian III. has left enduring evidence of his zeal for the suppression of heterodoxy. The Theodosian code alone (fifth century) has preserved sixty-six edicts, promulgated in little more than a hundred years, which inflict on those who hold aloof from the communion of the Church every variety of disability and penalty to the last degree of capital punishment."

He also points out that the Church "combined the legislative, the judicial and the executive functions," for they were at once the framers, the expounders and the ministers of the law.

This government by terrorism, and absolute intolerance in the interests of "Thou shalt have no other god before me," begins in the New Testament with St. Paul's "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we preach, let him be accursed." That is as far as Christians could go in the first days of their creed. Paul also boasts that he had delivered two men "unto Satan" that "they may learn not to blaspheme." Cyprian (third century), a great authority in the early Church, consigned everyone to perdition who opposed the Church. As the Church at that time had no political power, sending its opponents to hell was the limit of its vindictiveness. But, says Lea ("History of the Inquisition," Vol. I., p. 212), directly the Church had political power, "all heretic and schismatic priests were deprived of all privileges and immunities, their meeting-places were confiscated and their assemblies, public or private, were prohibited."

For a time, once the Church had gained substantially complete control, there was a slackening in the number of people who were put to death, tortured or otherwise punished for heresy; but so far as religion is concerned, the punishment of death for heresy was settled. And both in form and in fact the Church must be held responsible not merely for the number of deaths, but for other consequences with which we will deal later. But there is one point that needs stressing because it well illustrates the close connection between deliberate lying and the hypocrisy that characterised the conduct of the Church when it was most powerful.

The Catholic Church has always demanded control of religion, morals and marriage—a claim that could be made to cover almost anything which the Church cared to claim fell within their interests. But the lives of the people came within the scope of the secular power, and with its usual falsity the “great lying Church” has not failed to deny that it ever put anyone to death for a religious offence. Technically this is true, but it did try and condemn for heresy or other religious offences and then handed the offenders over to the secular power for execution. But the question of guilty or not guilty rested with the Church.

H. C. Lea well puts the situation thus:—

“From the emperor to the meanest peasant, the duty of persecution was enforced with all the sanctions, spiritual and temporal, which the Church could command. Not only must the ruler enact rigorous laws to punish heretics, but he and his subjects must see them strenuously executed, for any slackness of persecution was, in the canon law, construed as favourship of heresy.”

When the beliefs of the Christian Church began to be threatened more seriously (from the fifth century onward), the ferocity of the Church with regard to the destruction of heresy became more pronounced. To again cite Lea:—

“St. Thomas Aquinas, whose overshadowing authority superseded all his predecessors’ . . . lays down the rules with merciless precision. Heretics, he tells us, are not to be tolerated. The tenderness of the Church allows them two warnings, after which . . . they are to be abandoned to the secular power to be removed from the world by fire.”

Even the great Bishop Bossuet could, as late as the 17th century, regard the forcible suppression of heretics as a religious duty. Looking at the liberty of thought and speech that then existed in Holland, he says sarcastically:—

“Happy country where the heretics are treated at least as well as the orthodox, where vipers are preserved like doves and innocent animals, where those who compound poisons enjoy the same tranquillity with those who prepare remedies. Who would not admire such a State.”

The reply to the lying plea that the Church cannot be held guilty for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people for the crime of heresy because it was the secular State that alone had the power to inflict the death penalty—the burning at the stake was quite an idea of the Church—is authoritatively dismissed by Lea in the first volume of

his “History of the Inquisition.” He points out that when the Church—

“could influence the monarch and procure from him edicts condemning heretics to exile, deportation, to the mines and even to death it felt that God had put into its hands powers to be exercised and not to be neglected. . . . Whenever the State or any of its officials lagged in the enforcement of these laws the Churchmen were at hand to goad them on. The African Church repeatedly asked the intervention of the secular power to crush the Donatists. Pope Leo the Great insisted with the Empress Pulcheria that the destruction of the Eutychians should be her highest care; and Pelagius I., in urging Narses to suppress heresy by force . . . assuring him that to prevent or punish evil was not persecution, it was love.”

There are two other citations we will give before moving to other ground. The first is by the late Lord Acton, a professed Christian and an eminent historian, whose reputation rests rather more upon what he could have done than what he actually did.

“The Inquisition is peculiarly the weapon and peculiarly the work of the Popes. . . . It was set up, renewed and perfected by a long series of Acts emanating from the supreme authority in the Church. No other institution, no doctrine, no ceremony is so distinctly the creation of the Papacy except the dispensing powers. It is the principal thing with which the Papacy is identified and by which it must be judged.

“The principle of the Inquisition is murderous, and a man’s opinion of the Papacy is regulated and determined by his opinion of religious assassination.

“If he honestly looks on it as abomination, he can only accept Papacy with a drawback, with precautions, suspicion and aversion for its acts.

“If he accepts the Papacy with confidence, admiration, unconditional obedience, he must have made terms with murder.”

And of the influence of the Inquisition and its power in checking the growth of better laws and manners, H. C. Lea (a writer whose books have challenged severe criticism, but never yet met it) says:—

“It came a time when the old order of things was giving way to the new—when the ancient customs of the barbarians, the ordeal, the wager of law, the wergild, were growing obsolete in the increasing intelligence of the age, when a new system was springing into life under the revived study of Roman law. . . . The whole judicial system of the European monarchies was undergoing reconstruction, and the happiness of future generations depended on the character of the new institutions. That in this reorganisation the worst features of the imperial jurisprudence—the use of torture and the inquisitorial process—should be eagerly, nay, almost exclusively adopted, should be divested of the safeguards which in Rome restricted their abuse, should be exaggerated in all their evil tendencies and should, for five centuries, become the prominent characteristic of the criminal jurisprudence of

Europe, may safely be ascribed to the fact that they received the sanction of the Church. . . . Of all the curses which the Inquisition brought in its train this, perhaps, was the greatest—that until the closing years of the 18th century, throughout the greater part of Europe, the inquisitorial process, as developed for the destruction of heresy, became the customary method of dealing with all who were under accusation; that the accused was treated as one having no rights, whose guilt was assumed in advance, and from whom confession was to be extorted by guile or force."

We fancy we can hear someone, having read so far, muttering, "What has this to do with the Bible?" Well, in that case we ask him to turn back to his Bible and read Exodus xx. 3, Exodus xxii. 20, Deuteronomy xiii. 1, 2, 5 and Deuteronomy xiii. 6-10.

We are really illustrating our subject. The Inquisition, or something like it, is an expression of God's orders in action. If Christianity be true, then I think the Roman Church may make out some sort of a plea in self-defence—Christian self-defence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued)

IT'S A TWIST!

MOST of us are familiar with the classic example of the young man, away from home, who wrote:—

"Dear mother, I am sending you five shillings—but not this week."

Many of us have also seen that other evasive classic, which appears on certain inn signs in various parts of the country:—

"Free beer here—to-morrow."

There are many other forms of "twisting" people by means of the written and spoken word, examples of which will occur to most readers. Word-twisting, in fact, is almost as old as organised language itself. It is a method chiefly employed by those who seek to gain an advantage, or to create an impression, without being committed to backing up their words by honest action; or by those who seek to varnish deceit with a false gloss resembling truth.

In view of the part played by religion in human society, it is natural that we should find that men of religion in general, and professional priests and parsons in particular, are adept at this form of verbal and written cheating. So we need not be surprised when the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool (Dr. Downey), among others, makes a statement in which he "wonders why it is that penalties should be imposed on definite religious teaching in schools."

This remark (reported in the "Catholic Herald") is typical of Christian misrepresentation in one of its more subtle forms, for it is calculated to lead a very privileged minority (the R.C.s) to think that they suffer from a serious educational injustice. The reverse is the case. Christianity generally is supported by no more than 20 per cent. of the people of this country, and the R.C. variety by only about 5 per cent. On the other hand, education is supported by 100 per cent. of the people. Any subsidy from the public purse, therefore, for the teaching of the Christian religion, whether "definite" (which means sectarian) or otherwise, if there be such a form, is a penalty upon the 80 per cent. and a privilege for the 20 per cent., as the 80 per cent. have to pay, to the extent of the subsidy, for the teaching of a creed for which they clearly have no further use.

So Archbishop Downey's statement is just another "twist."

The Archbishop also says, in his Pastoral, re the religion-in-

schools squabble, that "a wise statesman, one would think, would be eager to inculcate religious principles (in education) if only as a basis for good citizenship."

But a wise statesman, with any knowledge of the effects of religion upon "good citizenship," would avoid the subject like the plague that it is. A wise statesman would know that there is no such thing as a religious principle; there are merely conflicting sectarian "principles," and it is these that have brought us to the present sorry mess, in which there is a savage struggle for "the rights" of everybody—except the children.

It certainly looks as if, under a Christian education system, the child has no "rights" of its own in the matter, for there seems to have been no reference by the Church interests to such rights. It is left entirely to the secular education advocates to concede a right to the child—the right to be educated unhampered by the discredited and decaying ideas of those who have forgotten, if ever they knew, what education means.

It would be a grand idea to get the children's own views on this matter by taking a census to discover the order of popularity of lessons at school. Provided that honest people took the census, I fancy we should find the religious lessons well towards the bottom of the list. Of course, parsons, priests and the B.B.C. would have to be rigidly excluded from any connection with the census.

Returning to the main point again, it seems that one way to settle this vexed question of the so-called "rights" of Christian parents would be for *all* denominations to take up the argument used by the Anglicans and Catholics—that parents have an unassailable "right" to have their children educated in an "atmosphere" of the parental religious faith. If this right exists, in education, then it must exist for all, as well as for two denominations, and out of the 20 per cent. of Christians I dare say we could manage to raise over 100 sectarian groups, all knocking at Mr. Butler's door, demanding special, subsidised schools for their children.

But this is hardly likely to happen because (with some exceptions, of course) the further away a sect is from the Anglican and R.C. gangs, the more misty becomes the spirit of the authoritarian Christ and God, and the more well-defined the spirit of common citizenship; with greater willingness to merge into the secular common pool on matters outside of private belief. After all, Dissent was a form of progress away from the totalitarian conceptions of the older Churches, and many dissenting families have now evolved further still, having discarded even the diluted doctrines of their grandfathers and fathers. Many have actually "crossed the line" into Secularism in recent years.

In addition to this, the "simple Bible teaching" of the State schools has lulled the more Jesusy dissenters into a satisfying sleep, as the formula suits them quite nicely, thank you. It might be possible once again to rouse their interest in the secular solution under the threat, otherwise, of a complete subsidy for the older Churches, with their special schools; and I frankly admit that I live in hopes that Nonconformist sensitivity to the pocket might produce sympathy for the secular solution when the final showdown comes.

Of course, there is still another way out. Mr. Butler and the Government could pack up the whole business. They could tell the sectarians that, if they will not accept the principle of common citizenship in education (not "uniform regimentation," as is untruthfully suggested by the Churches), the Government will wash its hands of the business altogether, and put upon individual parents the duty, and the expense, of educating their children privately, according to present standards, with whatever embellishments they want in addition, as Christians. That would settle all the problems—except the problem of education. A ridiculous solution, I agree, but one that would be thoroughly deserved in the present ridiculous position, created by the Christians.

(Continued on page 140)

ACID DROPS

IN the "Sunday Graphic," the Rev. W. H. Elliot says: "Ninety per cent. of the population don't go to church. . . . The majority of intelligent persons nowadays don't give a thought to it (religion). It does not interest them. I can't tell why. It beats me." And yet the position is not difficult to understand. The key is to be found in a single sentence. The clergy have been found out. And by way of a postscript we call in Abraham Lincoln: "You can fool all the people some of the time. You can even fool some of the people all the time, but you can't fool *all* the people *all* the time." Mr. Elliot has had his innings—save for the dwindling minority. You cannot fool all the people *all* the time.

Mr. Robert Donat, whose only claim to public notice is that he is a film actor, writes to the "Daily Telegraph" that as far back as 1941 he "stressed the importance of defining Sunday opening as a wartime issue." Mr. Donat would have been better advised had he remained silent. But perhaps he will spend some time in meditating a simple question. This—we will put it as plainly as we can—if it is undesirable to have numbers of young men and women lounging about the streets on Sunday, is it less undesirable for young people to lounge about the streets, with nothing to interest them, during peacetime? Mr. Donat will surely not hold that those young men and young women in uniform are of a weaker moral or mental type than are civilians. But on what other grounds can he justify Sunday entertainments as a mere "wartime measure"? In advance we protest against the assumption that the men and women in the Forces are of poorer material than those in civilian clothes.

The Rev. L. B. Ashby helps us to an understanding of Christianity by explaining in the "Daily Telegraph" that when the Bible says "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God" it does not mean a foolish person, but only that when one is doing wrong he wishes to get rid of the thought of God, whom he finds unwelcome. Wonderful! But perhaps Mr. Ashby will explain how one can get rid of something merely by saying it isn't there. The recipe would be quite useful—one might try it on the tax collector.

From stupidity, Mr. Ashby proceeds to impudence, if it is not intentional. As an example of personal insolence, he says:—

"In spite of declining outward religious observance, the majority of our people still have somewhere within them a real consciousness of God."

In that way Mr. Ashby gets back to "The fool hath said" philosophy. But suppose one were to paraphrase the Biblical passage, "The priest always has in his heart the make-up of a blackguard, even though it may take the guise of civil language"? We feel there is a solid truth in that, even though it be only in germ.

Canon W. J. Perrett, of Shipley, Yorkshire, has been stoutly denying that the Church of England is subsidised by the State, and in challenging contradiction he insists that a "subsidy" would appear in the national accounts of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This condition is typical of the underhand methods by which the Church disguises facts. It may not be a "subsidy," of course, if we accept that qualification of the word, but it is a lovely "gift" that the Church receives in the way of exemption from rates on Church and Sunday school property. And a rose by any other name will smell as sweet; or, if you like, a quid by any other name will spend the same!

Religious papers, particularly the Roman Catholic ones, are, for the time being at least, very strong on the rights of parents. We have no hesitation in saying that this is little more than a politico-religious dodge. First, because the Roman Church wishes to have its schools paid for by the State, while bringing up the children who attend in an atmosphere saturated with Catholic teaching. It would employ none but Roman Catholic teachers, and citizenship would be subordinated to Roman Catholic teachings. So it repeats, with damnable iteration, that State education must never supplant the rights of parents.

What does the "rights of parents" mean? Does it mean rights against the child? If so, that is nonsense, and damnable nonsense. The child does not select its parents, it has no voice in being born into the world, and whether it owes respect or obedience to its parents depends entirely upon the kind of treatment it receives. And even when the treatment received is of the best kind, the respect and gratitude that should be shown is that which a worthy person should always command, rather than due to an individual as parent. In fact, the parent has no natural rights against the child, but he and she have many responsibilities. Such rights as are enforced, and even expected, are social rights which the parent, in theory, undertakes in the act of becoming such. If this were always appreciated, we might have more really good parents, and greater respect for parents shown by children as they develop.

But the Roman Catholic priest does not mean what he says, and in the majority of cases he knows—unless we credit him with being more or less a nit-wit—that he says one thing and means another. The Church is not concerned with the "rights" of parents or of children. It is concerned only with the formulated rights of the Church. It claims, as against the alleged rights of the parent, to dictate the kind of education the child shall receive under the pain of spiritual punishment. As we have so often said, the wrangle is not for the rights of the child or the rights of society as a whole, it is a squabble for the aggrandisement of this or that Church.

The Rev. Lawson Perry, of Leominster, writes to the "Daily Telegraph" giving the information that probably less than 10 per cent. of the population are "worshipping Christians." Still, if the Churches can get control of the schools—with the help of the Minister of Education, the Churches may make a better show in the future. You must catch the young if they are to remain—religiously—stupid when they grow up.

The "Catholic Herald" is not pleased with Professor Harold Laski for saying that being a Roman Catholic "is something of a passport in our diplomatic and foreign service." We believe this is a statement that would be endorsed by those who have some knowledge of what goes on behind the scenes. We also believe that the number of Roman Catholics who hold "key positions" in a great many of the public services is out of all proportion to their numbers. Of course, if the R.C.s are where they are in virtue of their superiority there is nothing to be said against them—at least not in these columns. But there is no evidence that this is the case, and there is such a thing as religious and social influence.

Sad news from the Presbytery of Hamilton, Scotland. The annual report of the Presbytery is that Sunday schools have lost 1,167 attendants, and there is a drop of 75 in the number of communicants. We do not wish to shock the Presbytery of Hamilton, but we prophesy a still further drop when the figures for 1943 appear.

Bishop Shino says: "Our world to-day is pagan and godless." In fact, of course, it has always been godless; the great trouble has been, and still is, that so many people will bring in that unthinkable number, God, and so make things more messy than they otherwise would be. Our troubles are bad enough when we have to deal with man's blunders, but when we add to these the blunders of God, there seems, sometimes, no way out of our difficulties.

For example, Archbishop Williams (R.C.) offers us the not very original consolation that "the war is an opportunity sent by God to bring us nearer to him." Bring *who* nearer? Is it the millions who have been tortured and killed? If so, why are we denouncing the Nazis as criminals and promise them that when the Allies have won the war they will be treated as common malefactors? Really, Hitler is doing God's work—if Williams is correct. We really ought to thank Hitler and company for bringing a few millions nearer to God than there would have been had the war never happened. Perhaps we have made a mistake and ought to shout "Heil, Hitler"—at least at every church service.

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- D. SMITH.—Thanks; will be useful.
M. WILSON.—Sorry our restricted space prevents opening a discussion we feel sure would follow publication.
V. MITCHELL.—Will try to deal with the matter next week. Hope soon to hear of better health. Meanwhile, best wishes.
J. P.—Shall look forward to meeting you at this year's Annual Conference. Thanks for offer of "Key," but we already have a copy. Don't bother about other matter.
WAR DAMAGE FUND.—Dr. W. H. Gilliers (South Africa), £2 2s.

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, E. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

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

SUGAR PLUMS

MR. COHEN lectures to-day (April 4) at the Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street, Glasgow. Subject: "Rocks Ahead." Chair taken at 3 o'clock. Doors open at 2-30.

At a meeting of the Council of Civil Liberties on March 27 a resolution moved by D. N. Pritt was carried suggesting that anti-Semitism and Fascist propaganda be made criminal offences. Pritt was right in counting these as, in present circumstances, working together; but it must never be forgotten, in spite of the opposition to anti-Semitism given by some of our leading clerics, that the persistence of the persecution of Jews through the ages is due to the activities of the Christian Church. In modern (recent) times many professing Christians have professed disapproval of the most ignorant form of bigotry that European history presents; but it would be to shut one's eyes to the plainest of historic facts: that anti-Semitism was built on and sustained by Christian intolerance. But for Christian bigotry, anti-Semitism would not have existed and even the Jewish religion might have disappeared. We owe this blot on civilisation to the most contemptible thing that ever existed—in spite of its support by mob ignorance and highly placed bigotry—to the Christian Church.

The series of articles now appearing under "Views and Opinions" have "caught on" to a greater extent than we anticipated. A large number of letters of appreciation have reached us, with many requests that when complete they should be reprinted in book form. This will probably be done, but in that case they will be enlarged. There will, however, be the question of paper—that has become a nightmare, and at a time when the demand for our literature and the "Freethinker" is greater than it has been for some years.

Mr. Churchill's speech on the world after the war, good as it was, left us a little anxious. We ought to register at this point that Mr. Churchill is a politician, and we distrust politicians, whether red, white, blue or any other colour. But if the world after the war is to continue on the same conditions that prevailed before the war, then in a generation or so we

shall have a repetition of the present state of affairs. For that reason we would rather not have heard the stress on the necessary burden of paying back all that has been taken from the working man in the form of investment or a transient tax. The pledge made to these willing and unwilling investors must, of course, be observed, but it will be a bad thing if there is put before the people the alternative, repayment of their loan and a delay in improvements, or delay in repayment and some reforms made. That will be a very easy way of shelving needed, but to a great many undesirable, reforms. It will be an ill thing if the shillings of the poor are used as a guarantee of the heavy investments of the multi-millionaire. To some degree they are that as they stand.

What was said in connection with the state of the world must also be read with Mr. Churchill's "What we have we hold," and the official statement that Britain will manage its own colonies, without interference from anyone. The day of the "holding" of various parts of the world, and its inhabitants, and the resources of different territories as private possessions should be brought to an end as early as possible. This has always been one of the causes and sources of war. The wealth of the world should be open to the world, not by the goodwill of those who will hold what they have, but in the interests of a common humanity. If we hold ours while others hold theirs, with each one regarding it as a necessity for each to have as much as he can get, then the first move after Germany is beaten will be for each to get ready for another war on a much larger, or at least a more brutal scale. What the Allies can do during war they should do during times of peace. If they can pool their resources to conduct a war, they should be able to do so to make wars impossible. The Council of Europe, to which Mr. Churchill referred, must become a Council of the World, sitting in Europe, and its business should be to open the world to all on equal conditions.

Mr. Churchill made it quite clear that he was on the side of the Churches with regard to the schools. We said, when the Archbishops first published their manifesto, with an air of venture and innocence, that they would never have had the impudence to advocate a reversion to pre-seventy conditions unless they had received encouragement and a promise of support from the Government. Mr. Churchill's remarks on religion in the schools proves we were right. The plot was planned, the arrangements were made, and under cover of a war and the need for reform, the Churches can see to it that the schools are drenched with theology.

There was one other remark made which, in kindness, we may put down to an outburst of mere rhetoric. Mr. Churchill referred to "our ancient monarchy, that bulwark of British liberties, that barrier against dictatorships of all kinds," etc. Let us hope he meant the people, not our kings. For we did have wars between rival kings, who certainly did not put the interests of the people first. And we did chop off one king's head because he wished to play the tyrant, and yet another king was turned out, while I am sure that no one can picture any of the Georges filling the place of a bulwark protecting British liberties. Kings and queens may be decorative institutions, and in themselves may be quite admirable individuals. We have not a word to say against them from this point of view. But they really have not been, for some time, endowed with superabundant wisdom, and the power they are even supposed to wield is no greater and of no other kind than that wielded by a High Court judge. They wear the crown of heredity, and heredity cannot guarantee the best in any direction. The King of England carries out the will of the people. The people of England do not carry out the arbitrary will of the King.

The recently held Church Assembly discovered things, some of which we have already dealt with. The Rev. E. N. Goff, Provost of Portsmouth, discovered that 50 per cent. of the people do not believe in prayer. That is not enough. If not more than 5 per cent. prayed, that should be enough to disgrace the intelligence of a country.

The "Stockport Express" says that Mr. T. J. Quin, writing on behalf of district members of the Stockport Rationalist Press Association, asks that there should be granted in Stockport "a reasonable measure of Sunday opening of cinemas and theatres. We do not like the qualification implied in the phrase 'a reasonable measure.'" In practice, that means cutting the provision of theatres to shorter hours and creating special restrictions that would satisfy the Churches. What is needed is the same rights for theatres and cinemas to be open on Sundays on the same conditions that govern the opening of places of amusement on other days of the week, subject only to the safeguards that govern hours of labour, etc. There should be absolute equality between religious and non-religious groups. To ask for less is to abandon all principle, and to grant many of the ridiculous claims set up by religionists. Sabbatarianism was not weakened by making concessions, but by a robust determination to break down one of the most stupid of superstitions. This taboo day should be ended, not merely pacified.

Once more the forces of religious reaction have achieved a victory over scientific development. The Bradford City Council, by 36 votes to 27, have strangled Mrs. E. M. Henshaw's report on juvenile delinquency by rejecting the report as it stood, and making it "the basis for further investigations." This means, of course, that if anything further is done in the matter of juvenile delinquency it will be done in such a manner as to conform to the well-embedded ideas of the religious bigots, who could not stomach Mrs. Henshaw's facts that twice as many delinquent children came from Church schools as from State schools, and who could not face her scientific deduction (on the facts) that religion was a much over-estimated factor in character training.

For nearly three months the blind prejudices of the religious interests have sought to achieve the destruction of a report that is one of the finest things every produced as a factual examination of delinquency in children—altogether apart from its damning evidence against the "moral" value of religion. Finally, these interests triumphed, and the progressive outlook was defeated by means of the dishonest subterfuge described above.

It is only just, however, to add that Mrs. Henshaw received a square deal from the local press, her case being fairly and adequately stated.

THE WISDOM OF CLEMENCEAU

I.—Our Life and Death

CLEMENCEAU describes birth as "the continuation of an ordained interplay of energies in perpetual flux and change." Life he regards as "the sensation of an imaginary permanence amid the elusive whirl of that eternal Wheel of Things." To die, he says, is "to continue forever in eternally changing forms."

Indeed, our birth is a very insignificant occurrence in the universe of a million million births. Our life, too, is insignificant, and even the bishops are able to concede that life is only a momentary flash. Yet, when we come to the matter of death, we meet with a desire to add grandeur to insignificance by postulating eternal personal survival. Why?

I suppose it is because man is afraid to die. Or at least, because he is afraid of eternity, of what, among the many horrible suggestions made by theologians and others, may be his lot for ever and ever.

This fear of death or of "eternal life" is a most damnable fear. It breeds cowards and dwarfs, and never good men. In the case of small children such fear is altogether to be discounted, and those who teach children to believe in gods, devils, heavens and hells ought to be penalised as offenders against the individual child and the common good. Cursed are the parsons

and Sunday school teachers who seek after the souls of little children as an Indian might seek scalps.

Clemenceau is right, and the sooner we adjust our thinking to the fact of the littleness of life and the naturalness of death the better. Then like men we shall face life and death safely and sanely.

A man's life, as Clemenceau shows, is one among the many phenomena of life, and "the adventure of his life has the same relative value to the whole as any other organic or inorganic activity of the infinite world." But life loses its value to the race in the case of the individual who is only living with his heart set on another world. He becomes a nonentity. This life becomes unimportant to him. Men may live in slums, but then there will be no rent in heaven!

Says Clemenceau: "Read the story of those who have dared. Compare with that story the peaceful atrophy of those who bask in the charm of fairylands easily accessible to childishly emotional minds." That is why Freethinkers are of more use to society than Christians.

Let us live as those who dare; and let us die as those who dare. Says Clemenceau: "Men who have withstood the many buffetings of life without faltering, but also without looking beyond, are panic-stricken, and tremble at the restful vision of the release into forgetfulness.

"Suppose they had tried to find out? No, for they dared not take the risk of knowing! Too long did they reject the Satanic suggestion to comprehend; and they cursed, persecuted and tortured those who came to offer an answer. They preferred to align themselves, like a queue at the box-office, waiting to see a drama of heaven, the fantastic scenes of which seemed to them all the more marvellous because each of them could hope to get no more than the satisfaction of an elaborately staged dream devoid of all reality; and yet, as the moment of anticipated joy draws near, does not everyone, for some unknown reason, use every effort to postpone the raising of the curtain. What a confession!"

Those who regard death as an eternal sleep from which there is no waking have nothing else to hope for, and nothing else to fear the loss of. In the light, and in the hope, of such a death they live undisturbed by either the threats or the bargains of the God of Jacob (the crooked), and disinterestedly (in so far as this may be deemed possible) apply themselves to goodness and the progress of humanity.

They know not the purpose of life, but as Clemenceau remarks: "The spirit of adventure preceded any compass," and then contrasting the life of scientific knowledge with the disciples of revelation, he asks: "Shall I buzz in empty air, or shall I enter the ordered development of which knowledge shows me to be a transient episode?"

Which? I have made my choice. Have you made yours? You should, for to sail without a true compass when one is available is the height of folly.

A compass. A true compass. This we have in science. Let Clemenceau speak again on this point, as he does so vividly, contrasting revelation with scientific experiment. He writes: "Generally, men have merely accepted automatically an authority that permits of no questioning. For superior minds, it will be the sorrowful story of the scientific spirit tossed in the waves of ignorance. Galileo, take the witness stand!

"'Why do I offend no one,' a philosopher asked, 'if I question the postulates of Euclid or the law of Mariotte, but am shouted down if, seeking the absolute like everybody else, I fail to find it?' Why is it that the effort of human knowledge clamouring for nothing so loudly as for experimental proof, whereas the divine reply to our timid questionings is a sentence of death, rounded out with the torments of eternity?

"The scientist invites contradiction; the pontiff has one governing principle—the destruction of heresy; that is, of any opinion opposed to his own; and primitive emotional minds

escort him with much pomp. 'Sancta simplicitas!' cried John Huss, as he saw a little child fetch faggots for the stake at which he was suffering martyrdom. Show yourselves, then, in the full light of day, all you who are eager to replace the labour of knowing with the magic amulet of words, and thus to end human exploration of the rugged path of scientific observation! Let the sinister coalition of false thought, of weak character, of slavish imitation, of the blind urge of organic atavism, of the furies of disguised self-interest—universal league of all failures, banded together for the sole purpose of forcing human reason to abdicate—let it, I say, appear in the light of noon!"

What conclusion, then, shall we reach? Clemenceau says: "Simply to draw up a balance sheet." That's right! Let each man make out his own balance sheet, and if he is in debt to society let him pay his debt; and if he is not, then let him contribute nevertheless to the common good.

LLOYD COLE.

THE MEANING AND MISSION OF "RATIONALISM"

I.

"Rationalism (from Lat. *rationalis*, pertaining to Reason, *ratio*), a term employed both in philosophy and theology which sets up human reason as the final criterion and chief source of Knowledge."—"Ency. Brit."

THE term "rationalism" is one which, though it has a general connotation in the field of religious and cosmic dialectic, is used by protagonists in a varying sense. Hence the charge of ambiguity by some, who prefer a more positive term to denote their attitude towards these concerns. Be this as it may, it is not without a certain advantage from a comprehensive view. All words and terms meant to distinguish a particular school herein lack something from the immensity and illusiveness of the subject under examination. Recent discussion in this journal (and elsewhere) on fundamental issues remaining when orthodox explications of the "world-riddle" are rejected, invites further consideration from a particular regard: wherein, of course, allowance must be made (as always) for the personal equation.

Let us at the outset note its root. It is connected with "reason," and this word itself is open to arbitrary usage and needs clarifying. We find it employed in an absolute sense as a mental attribute determining all else so that its possessor is necessarily on the right track. Thus we get the definition that rationalism is at one with the "supremacy of reason." While *per contra* we have the denial of its supremacy as a safe guide to truth from another quarter dubbed the "flight from reason," which involves a dubious estimate on either side, and further considerations respecting the human mind *in toto*. Though here its everyday use is suggestive in such phrases as "it stands to reason," "it was most unreasonable of you to object," etc., all implying that reason is a common-sense faculty, immanent in the conduct of our ordinary affairs. Its extension to flights of cosmic speculation, or analysis of natural phenomena is simply its exercise over wider or subtler questions and problems. This again is related to our whole mental constitution and theories pertaining thereto.

The first European interpreters of mind belong to a pre-scientific age when physiology and comparative anatomy were in their infancy. Thinkers like Plato and Aristotle make assumptions that have been taken for granted in much subsequent dissertation, as with the notion that spirit, intellect, or *nous* is an emanation from the divine *nous*, is independent of the body, as such, and exists therein as a separate entity. This view also links with that primal animism which associates

personality with every living thing and phenomenon on earth, in air and sea; leading to theories of the immateriality of the "soul," and its immortality under one form or other.*

(Continued on next page)

*The only source of our knowledge of consciousness is that faculty itself; subject and object are one and the same unit; the perceptive subject mirrors itself in its own inner nature, which is to be the object of our inquiry. Thus we can never have a complete objective certainty of the consciousness of others; we can only proceed by a comparison of their psychic condition with our own. As long as this comparison is restricted to *normal* people we are justified in drawing certain conclusions as to their consciousness, the validity of which is unchallenged."—E. Haeckel.

CORRESPONDENCE

CARLILE AND BIRTH CONTROL

SIR,—I received my "Freethinker" this morning and note the third part of Mr. Cutner's "life" of Richard Carlile. The reference to my "life" needs this correction: The 1923 "life" was revised and republished in 1941. It is true that there was no reference to Carlile's "Every Woman's Book" in that biography, but I had referred to that work in my essays on Carlile in "The Spur." Also, "Every Woman's Book" is reprinted by me in Carlile's "Jail Jottings," recently issued and reviewed in "The Freethinker." I will send Mr. Cutner a copy gladly, with my compliments, if he will write.—Yours, etc., GUY A. ALDRED.

FREETHOUGHT AND WAR

SIR,—May I protest against the Pacifist propaganda conducted in your columns by Mr. C. G. L. du Cann? No Freethinker enjoys war. Freethinkers, unlike religionists, do not believe in any supernatural or transcendental obligation to inflict pain on themselves or other people and regard well-being on this earth as the supreme good. But well-being on this earth would not be furthered by passive submission to crime and aggression. In drawing no distinction between aggression and defence, between a war for domination and a war to resist domination, Mr. Du Cann is working not for Freethought, but for universal slavery.

Mr. Du Cann may plead that he is merely exposing the inconsistency between the non-resisting maxims of Jesus and the active belligerency of Christians to-day. That plea will not wash. His articles (e.g., "The Bleed-and-Burn Brigade" in your issue of March 28) make it clear that he regards non-resistance as the ideal and that he condemns modern Christians (and by implication modern Freethinkers, too) for resisting evil. At this juncture that is playing the Nazi game and downright dangerous.—Yours, etc., ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1): Sunday, 11-0, Prof. G. KEETON, M.A., LL.D.—"Canada in the Modern World."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. Meetings every Sunday at Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, 6-30 p.m.

Glasgow Secular Society (Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street, Glasgow): Sunday, 3-0, Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN—"Rocks Ahead."

Rosendale Branch N.S.S. (N.S.I., Scoutbottom): Sunday, 2-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON—"The Road to En-Dor."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Burnley (Market): Sunday, 6-45, Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

THE MEANING AND MISSION OF "RATIONALISM"

(Continued from page 139)

But if the connection between thought or consciousness and matter or the organ of thought is difficult of interpretation, evidence in the light of modern biology that the quality of thought and consciousness is linked with its associated brain and nervous system is viridical. This varies in different persons. "The human soul as we medical men know it depends solely on the brain; the brain must be alive; it must be supplied with energy; it must transform that energy to live, think, feel and be conscious. The human brain is beyond compare the most wonderfully complex and elaborate of all living structures known to us. In the arrangement of its parts it is inconceivably intricate; we know something of its manner of working even now, but it will take many centuries of continuous effort before we can become masters of its detail.†

Among theories of the unit of consciousness the cellular theory may take high place. To cite some words of an eminent biologist: "The application of the cellular theory to every branch of biology involved its extension to psychology. Just as we take the living cell to be the 'elementary organism' in anatomy and physiology and derive the whole system of the multi-cellular animal or plant from it, so, with equal right, we may consider the 'cell soul' to be the psychological unit, and the complex psychic activity of the higher organism to be the result of the combination of the psychic activity of the cells which compose it. . . . The conviction that a large number of animals—at least the higher mammals—are not less endowed than man with a thinking soul and consciousness prevails in modern zoology, exact physiology and the monistic psychology. The immense progress we have made in the various branches of biology has contributed to bring about a recognition of this important truth. We confine ourselves for the present to the higher vertebrates and especially the mammals. That these most intelligent specimens of these highly developed vertebrates—apes and dogs in particular [also the elephant]—have a strong resemblance to man in their whole psychic life has been recognised and speculated on for thousands of years. Their faculty of presentation and sensation, of feeling and desire, is so like that of man that we need adduce no proof of our thesis. But even the higher associational activity of the brain, the formation of judgments and their connection into chains of reasoning, thought and consciousness in the narrower sense are developed in them after the same fashion [relatively] as in man; they differ only in degree, not in kind. And we learn by experiment there is the same reaction to external stimuli."‡

The stage of consciousness and idealism reached by man alone can be shown as due to a peculiar line of evolution or causation; to reactions set up by the very progress and development of material civilisation, stimulating to further invention and practical activity. Language, too, as a mode of expression expands with the acquisition of widened wants and means of satisfying them. A higher stage is reached with the attainment of a mode of writing, and the setting forth of ideas and experiences in an ordered (grammatical) form. "The higher the conceptual faculty advances in thoughtful, civilised man, the more qualified he is to detect common features amid a multitude and embody them in general concepts, so much the deeper and clearer does his consciousness become." Thus the attribute of reason or capacity of reasoning, in itself, is affected by this evolving process, as with all psychic qualities, and is related to the total endowment, experience and knowledge of each individual person. . . . "The whole man thinks!" Logic,

† Sir A. Keith.

‡ E. Haeckel.

again, as an entity closely connected with the above considerations, may be defined simply as a method of consistency, derived from experience, applied in the course of a line of reasoning from certain premises to conclusions. Much of the fallacious ideation which has won credence, as we shall have occasion to illustrate, springs from the unsound premises on which it is based.

AUSTEN VEKNEY.

THE STARS LOOK DOWN

The stars look down, our war-wrecked world they see;
Their upward gaze beholds the angels bright;
They see us best upon a frosty night:
I wonder why they look at you and me.
What do they seek: when Vega's golden eye
Can pierce our planet's clondy atmosphere,
Does she see aught her questing mind to cheer,
Or her proud stellar conscience satisfy?
And those bright angels, who can say they are
More happy, and less tedious, than we?
Since star-bright Lucifer the Heavens did flee,
Do they bring joy, can they content a star?
If angels bore, mankind must make them weep;
They should put out their lamps and go to sleep.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

IT'S A TWIST!—(Continued from page 135)

What can we do, then? Where are we getting? We pay for education, but the black militia are for ever on the backs of our children, like Sindbad's Old Man of the Sea, trying to increase their strangling grip. There's no doubt that it's a twist!

Well, to be candid, I don't think there is a great deal to worry about. The inevitable law of "god eat god" is still at work. The Anglicans and the R.C.s are busy trying to achieve their ends, but like good Christians they are each scheming quietly and separately to cut the throat of the other. And when thieves fall out honest men sometimes get their own.

I think the scheming of the Churches must result in failure, so long as a virile opposition exists to promote the real interests of the children, which lie in the direction of less dogma and more scope for using their own brains. Only agreement among the differing sects would produce a fully Christian "education"; and as the sole object of each sect is, in the end, its own sectarianism, there can never be such agreement. So while the Churches scheme, honest educationists continue with their work, and our children progress further and further from the reach of the holy horrors.

The work of the Freethought movement during the past 60 years or so, since we have had a system of national education, is now manifesting itself at a cumulative pace, and the most outstanding tribute to the value of that work is paid by the children themselves—for it is the general experience throughout the country that the schools in which there is least religion (therefore, a greater disposition to the Freethinking idea) produce a better average type of child than the schools where there is that abomination known as a religious "atmosphere."

The results of the work of Freethought are slow to show themselves; but in the unfolding of social evolution there are distinct indications that some impression has been made on the coagulated ignorance from our religious past, and there are being produced in the present generation of young people many who exhibit the marks of a better type of human being, both mentally and physically.

That is why our work is worth while, and must go on.

F. J. CORINA.