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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Again Religion

It may have occurred to many that the concern of the Churches for the "education" of the children of the "common" people as social factors is a comparatively new phase of social life. One might also reflect that the very appearance of the "common" people is a thing of recent growth. Of course, the common folk always existed, but they were something vague, a necessary but not a very important feature of the social landscape. History, it is true, mentions them, but not as a social phenomenon that demanded careful and sympathetic study. In modern European history the "people" came to life with the French Revolution, and in England in the latter part of the eighteenth century. How recent that growth is may be gauged by the fact that when John Richard Green wrote his "Short History of the English People" it was regarded as almost a heresy. There had been plenty of histories of England, histories of the reign of King this or Queen that, but the arrival of a history of the whole of a community summed-up in the one word "people" was a phenomenon that caused many a shudder in select circles.

But the revolution had to come, and its development brought another of those silent revolts that mean so much in a scientific study of history. This was the arrival of the child as an important factor in social evolution. Of course, children were always recognised as something that had to be, also as accepted carriers of this or that family ideal, but their main duty was to follow in the footsteps of their forbears. That view is very common even to-day; but to have voiced, at a not very remote period, the idea that children should know more than their parents, should see farther and give more to their successors would have been sheer heresy. In my own early years the expression among working people "What is good enough for me is good enough for my children" was very common. To-day the rule is running towards "What was good enough for me is *not* good enough for my children," and is frequently exhibited in practice even when it is not recognised in theory.

And in religion? In what way has the rapidly changing environment developed, or to what extent has it affected religion? Apart from the direct attack on religion by adults, the change of attitude of the Churches is marked and interesting; it is mainly expressed in the altered attitude of the Christian Churches with regard to education. For a very lengthy period the established Church, whether Catholic or other, showed but small interest in the religious education of the child. It was not necessary, because there was little chance of children escaping religion in an environment that was saturated with superstition. Then, little more than a century and a half ago, new ideas began to filtrate into the social environment, and if they were not always desperate ones they were

charged with dreams of change, visions of new ideas, the possibilities of a new and better world.

It was this new development of life that roused the Churches to the need of controlling whatever education existed. It was, of course, always part of the avowed policy of the Roman Catholic Church that education must be under its control, and with the "reformation" in this country the State Church inherited the monopoly. The theory was effective. This was God's world, and the clergy stood as his acting representatives. But the altering environment bade them exercise greater care about the training of the child. The environment was not working wholly for the Churches. Religion was being forced on the defensive. Christian parents, instead of seeing in the future a continuation of their own religious beliefs, realised that the changing social environment was working against them.

In passing it may be noted that the Christian teaching of the duty children owe to their parents has always been a strong feature of Bible religion. The duty of parents to children is not stressed, but if there is one thing of which I feel certain it is that the chief duties and the most important ones are those of parents to children. So long as parents regard children as mere carriers of *their* ideas and beliefs so long they are proving themselves unfit for parentage.

Conscience and Cant

To-day we are in the midst of a struggle that centres round this theory of the sacred character of parental control. The Government has promised great reforms in many directions, but most of them will depend upon the state we find ourselves in after the war. One promised alteration is to be made at once. This is with regard to what is called religious education. Of the larger schemes connected with changes in our educational system we are told plainly that much will depend upon the economic conditions that prevail after the war. But one phase of this so-called educational change is not to wait to see what the economic state of the country is in the post-war period, it is to operate at once—that is if the different religious bodies can agree upon the plan that is to be put into operation.

Take as a sidelight on what is intended a statement made the other day at Colchester by the Minister of Education, Mr. Butler. He gives us this delightful mixture of falsity and nonsense:—

"The Government," he says, "attaches particular importance in preserving freedom of conscience. No child would be forced to receive a form of religious teaching which offended its parents' beliefs."

Now what on earth does the Minister of Education mean by "freedom of conscience"? It is a phrase often used and most frequently abused. There is no doubt whatever that among those who have been imprisoned "for the

duration" there were many whose conscience told them that Britain would be better under some form of Nazism; but it was the general opinion that nothing could be worse than to permit these men and women to have free expression of conscience. And as Mr. Butler is an avowed Christian, he will recall that passage in the New Testament which runs: "That if anyone be sick, the Elders of the Church shall be called in, they shall pray and lay hands on the sick, and the prayer of faith shall cure the sick person." But the law of this country says very definitely that if a parent has a sick child, and if the parent, instead of calling in a doctor calls an Elder, and the child dies, then the said parent may be sent to prison. There is evidently a limit to the freedom of conscience. One wonders whether even Mr. Butler would have this law altered and permit the parent to cause the death of the child because his conscience guided him. If not, why not? Shakespeare must have had a politician of Mr. Butler's kind in mind when he wrote:—

"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale."

"Conscience" can give us no guarantee of accuracy; it can only indicate honesty of conviction. Christians swore by the dictates of conscience when the different sects were burning or murdering each other. The good Christian of to-day is acting as his conscience dictates when he tries to ruin a man in business because of opposing religious views. They were mostly conscientious men who created the Inquisition, who persecuted Jews or sent Catholics or Atheists to prison. There are more crimes committed in the name of conscience than are committed by men who never think of what conscience dictates. Put not your trust in the man who always babbles "conscience." Conscience may indeed speak with any one of its thousand tongues. It may practise a love that is worse than hatred, and die for a truth that is more dangerous than a lie that the most expert politician ever invented or the most conscientious preacher put into circulation. It is not freedom of conscience of which we stand in the greatest need, but recognised freedom of expression. And Mr. Butler's plans, on the religious side, mean depriving the schools of many of their best teachers and installing hypocrites in their place.

I remember, many years ago, in one of my prowls round the slums of London, hearing a drunken man—obviously one who had a conscientious belief in everyone having freedom of conscience, on the Butler plan—calling out to his wife: "You may say what you like, go where you like, and do as you like, but if I ketch you, gawd 'elp yer." I feel certain that if this man could have heard Mr. Butler's praise of conscience he would have said to him "Shake hands, old man, we both believe in freedom of conscience." For Mr. Butler believes that the State should saturate a child with religion if the conscience of a parent says that he must act in that way. I think there must have been more lies told, more intolerance manifested, more crimes committed in the name of conscience than under any other sanction. To know what a man's conscience is like is good as all knowledge is good, but to take his "conscience" as either a sufficient justification for what he does or as an evidence of right judgment is to write oneself down a fool.

Parent and Child

Now take Mr. Butler's second clause, and notice its insidious character—misleading almost to actual dishonesty:—

"No child would be forced to receive a form of religious teaching which offended its parents."

But unless *some* children had differed from the religion of their parents the Christian Church would never have existed. Progress really depends upon children having the opportunity of differing from their parents, and the parents who will not give the child that chance are really an enemy of the better life of the State. Progress in opinion depends upon the very thing that Mr. Butler announces as the most sacred of rights and the most valuable of aims. If that policy could be properly practised progress would be impossible. We should never have heard of 75 per cent. of the men who have made us understand the world if they had not departed from the beliefs of their parents. Parents are not always, not even usually, the best guides for the mental development of their children. But I hasten to say that in this respect there are, I believe, a greater number of men and women to-day better fitted to be parents than there were a couple of generations ago.

In one of his early essays Robert Louis Stevenson remarks, on this question of parental control:—

"As a matter of experience and in nine hundred and ninety cases out of a thousand, a father will instil into his wide-eyed brat three bad things: the terror of public opinion, and flowing from that as from a fountain, the desire of wealth and applause. Besides, or what might be deduced as corollaries from these, he will teach not much else of effective value."

I think that very truly illustrates the quality of Mr. Butler's ideal educational system, so far as religion goes. The child must be trained to tread faithfully in the footsteps of its parents. Of course, we *may* be forced to make certain concessions to parental control, but if these must be made, we should at least have the honesty and courage to say boldly that it is a concession made under pressure and because the majority of parents, thanks to their own lack of real education, believe that to create copies of themselves is the best contribution they can make to the progress of civilisation.

Very lightly we all avow that the children of to-day are the citizens of to-morrow; but we have yet to recognise that if the children are to be taught nothing concerning religion that will offend the opinions of parents, then the outlook for to-morrow will not be a very hopeful one. Children will reach maturity with a formal recognition of the value of honesty—within certain limits; sobriety, because its opposite may lead to not "getting on"; industry, which usually means working hard and saving much, cleanliness, etc. But of the higher intellectual qualities little or nothing, and there are few men and women who have reached these higher stages who have not had to ignore much and recognise things that would have shocked their parents. Courage and self-respect lie at the root of most that is good in a civilised society, and neither can flourish healthily with children who are taught to consider that the opinions of others are of primary importance. Every man and woman owes a duty to their

fellows, but it may be that man's first duty is to himself, for it is in the flowering of self that the true communistic life is to be found. It is true that we cannot make a philosopher out of a fool or develop a genius out of a mediocrity, but we may, if we go the right way to work, leave a fool less foolish, and so help to cultivate a pride in opinion and courage displayed by independence of mind.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE CRADLE OF EUROPEAN CULTURE

THE long and elaborate researches of Sir Arthur Evans in the island of Crete revealed the remains of a splendid civilisation in the Mediterranean, previously unsuspected. The ancient Greeks, so generally regarded as the pioneers of European culture, were dethroned from their pre-eminence, while these relatively recent discoveries have stimulated archæologists in the extensive excavations which were still in operation when the war broke out, and had revolutionised our concepts concerning the dawn and development of civilisation in the Near East.

Crete stood in close touch with Asia Minor, whose trade channels connected the Ægean Islands, now the kingdom of Greece, with the fertile crescent of Western Asia which lies between the northern uplands and the southern desert. The term "Fertile Crescent" was coined by Professor Breasted to denote a region which has played an important part in human history, and his designation has been widely accepted by historians, including Dr. Toynbee. "This fertile crescent," writes Breasted in his "Conquest of Civilisation" (Harpers, 1926), "is approximately a semi-circle with its open side towards the south, having the west end at the south-east corner of the Mediterranean, the centre directly north of Arabia, and the east end at the north of the Persian Gulf." This fertile soil with its rich pastures and arable abundance amid arid and highland surroundings, naturally became coveted by contending peoples as a possession.

This fertile crescent became the link between the Ægean and Mesopotamia on the one hand, while it immensely influenced the attitude of Egypt on the other.

The Ægean Islanders were members of the Mediterranean race, and the earliest torchbearers of civilisation in this region were the Cretans. The late Stone Age villages of Crete, with their rude dwelling of sun-dried bricks, were yet the importers of copper from Egypt as early as 3,000 B.C. and, a little later, the alloys of tin and copper inaugurated the Age of Bronze in the island. The potter's wheel and the closed oven, the Cretans adopted from their Nilotic neighbours. Rude picture writing was slowly superseded by a script which is unfortunately not yet deciphered. As Dr. Breasted states: "Under the influence of Egypt these picture signs gradually developed into real phonetic writing, the earliest writing of the Ægean world (about 2,000 B.C.)."

By this time the ancient Cretans had attained a high civilisation and their island had become an important trading centre. The cultivation of cereals was extensively pursued and the excellent pastures provided rich herbage for the flocks and herds. At Cnossos, the site of a derelict Stone Age settlement, the Cretan kings erected an imposing royal residence in the Egyptian style, while at Phæstus another splendid palace was built.

These magnificent structures and the towns that adjoined them were unfortified, but the Cretans were not entirely destitute of military defences, as the armour and weapons found in the ruins of Cnossos clearly indicate, while naval protection was also available.

The arts and crafts of Crete now flourished exceedingly, and the beautiful decorated pottery of the period has perhaps never been excelled in its artistry. "The many coloured Cretan vases," notes Breasted, "were so highly prized by the Egyptian nobles

of the Feudal Age that they even placed them in their tombs for use in the next world. In these Egyptian tombs modern excavators have recovered them, to tell us the story of the wide popularity of Cretan industrial art in the 19th and 20th centuries B.C."

An immense number of clay tablets, inscribed in some still undeciphered script, have been recovered from the ruins of the palace. These tablets were enclosed in chests and were evidently treasured as records, so when their hidden meaning is revealed our knowledge of the details of Cretan life will become greatly extended.

Crete's Golden Age occurred in the century, 1600-1500 B.C., when Cretan activities expanded in every direction. The original palace at Cnossos was superseded by a far more palatial and commodious building which is considered the earliest architectural achievement of the northern Mediterranean lands. "The palace walls," Breasted avers, "were painted with fresh and beautiful scenes from daily life, all aquiver with movement and action; or by learning the Egyptian art of glassmaking the Cretans adorned them with glazed figures attached to the surface of the wall." Nor was sanitation disregarded, and the copper drain-pipes of ancient Egypt were replaced by pottery pipes 2½ ft. in length and from 4 in. to 6 in. in diameter. Indeed, the sanitary system installed in the palace at Cnossos appears paradoxical when we reflect that Athens, centuries later, even in the days of Pericles, was still an insanitary city. Apparently, Europe had to wait until Pagan and Imperial Rome established a system of sanitation with its attendant—an adequate water supply—amenities of civilised life which were destined to disappear in Christian Europe until quite recent times.

The lethargy of the departed Neolithic Age was succeeded in Crete by the emergence of a vigorous and progressive life. Deeply indebted, as they doubtless were, to the culture of the Old Nile, the Cretans nevertheless struck out an independent path upon which they proceeded until they were finally overthrown by the encroaching Greek Archæans from the northern mainland.

From this habitat the then rude Archæans marched southwards to the Peloponnesus, and the city communities of Tiryns and Mycenæ became their prey. This vanguard of Greek nomads was followed by another horde—the Dorians—about 1500 B.C., who apparently appeared in the Peloponnesus and subdued their Archæan predecessors, as well as the native Ægean population. So much seems certain, although our present knowledge of the period is extremely scanty.

Still, it is evident that these hardy and adventurous Dorians soon learnt the secrets of the sea and sailed from their Ægean settlements into Crete a century later. There they rapidly overcame unfortified Cnossos and occupied the island. Then they seized the southern Ægean archipelago and, from 1300 to 1000 B.C., the Greek tribes extended their dominion until they embraced all the hitherto unannexed islands of the Ægean Sea.

In consequence of these invasions, the native Ægean communities, save those that were probably enslaved by the intruders, fled or attempted to flee to adjacent territories. That many of the Ægeans crossed the sea and landed in the Nile Delta is evident. Some reached the harbours of the Phœnicians, while those who voyaged to Northern Africa and fought a naval battle with the Egyptians, although defeated, still seriously weakened the already tottering Egyptian State. In Palestine alone the fugitive Cretans succeeded in establishing a permanent foothold. These refugees seem to have been the remnants of the Cretans, who were worsted in the naval engagement with the Egyptians which was fought near the Syrian coast, and it is interesting to note that this sea fight is portrayed on an ancient Egyptian relief.

The Cretans who founded their colony in Asia Minor bore the tribal name of Philistine. They established several flourishing

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ACID DROPS

THE fine statue of Garibaldi occupies a commanding position in Rome. To Italians, it stands for an emblem of national freedom, and to lovers of liberty all over the world as a symbol of independence. But, in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, had his good qualities been ten times as numerous they would have been cancelled by one consideration. He was an Atheist, and that is a "crime" the Church never forgets or forgives. It may be taken for granted that could the Vatican have had its way, the monument to Garibaldi would not have been so placed that it looks down over the whole of the city of Rome. And it is worth noting that when historians speak of the greatness of Rome it is pre-Christian Rome that they have in mind. For many centuries *Christian* Rome illustrated Gibbon's scathing description of Christianity as a triumph of barbarism and religion.

So when a broadcaster (Algiers) calls upon Italians to "welcome the liberating forces, as your forefathers welcomed the liberating forces of Garibaldi," the "Universe" calls it "crazy," which it explains is a kind word to use, since it avoids charging the man with an insult to the Holy See, which is, of course, the greatest of all crimes. And it suggests that if people wish to use the name of Garibaldi as an incitement to patriotic action they should call attention to "the Atheist's grandson—General Giuseppe Garibaldi. He is a Catholic, and was received into the Church last year."

It evidently does not matter that this convert did *not* save Italy from foreign rule. He bears the same name, and a lie, more or less, does not count with Roman Catholic propagandists. The Church opposed the real Garibaldi, but if the name is of service this grandson, a mere nobody, will serve. And what impresses us most is the profound faith Roman Catholic leaders have in the absolute docility of their followers. And this, it may be, is one of the outstanding threats to any programme of radical social reform that may be attempted.

"Democracy without religion leads to tyranny," says Dr. Barry, Bishop of Southwell. For impudence that statement should be placed very high. What one would like to know is when and where has the Christian Church been in power without practising tyranny on a very wide scale? Protestants are not slow in pointing to the tyranny of the Roman Church wherever it possessed power enough to tyrannise over others. And where and when did the Protestant Church possess power without denying freedom of speech and publication to those who were opposed to the prevailing creed? If there has been less open tyranny exercised by the Protestants than with Roman Catholics the explanation lies close to hand. The lack of unity with the "reformed" Churches prevented their intolerance reaching the degree of organised persecution practised by the Mother Church. But they did their best. And of the two, the open and declared intolerance of the Roman Church was less devastating to character.

Against openly expressed intolerance a man may yield with the minimum damage to character. The penalties for independence of speech and action are open, and the reason for silence lies before all. But the tyranny exercised by a system that pretends to be on the side of freedom, which stabs in the dark, boycotts by stealth, and slanders by suggestion, is a form of demoralisation against which only the few can stand. What are our Sunday laws, our blasphemy laws, the boycott in business and in political and social life but forms of persecution that to-day in this country work far more effectively than declared intolerance could ever accomplish?

Bishop Barry himself offers, unconsciously, evidence of his unfitness to serve as guide for anyone but a bigot. He says: "The real danger of modern democracy is that it should think it democratic to claim that any opinion is just as good as another." But that is just nonsense, and Bishop Barry must know it is rubbish; but he knows that he must feed his flock on falsity if he would hold them. It is the right of *expression*, whether the opinion expressed be wise or foolish, for which a real democracy stands. It is the Churches that say, always in practice, and sometimes in words, that only *right* opinion should be

expressed, and it is the Churches—certainly where religion is concerned—that claim the right to decide what opinions should be tolerated. One need not go far to find examples of the evil of this in social intercourse, in politics, in business, and in other branches of life. We cannot be sure that even Bishop Barry believes what he says. We can only be certain that he says he believes in freedom of speech. But we should like evidence of it.

The Rev. H. Sanders writes in "The Times" that "highly though a Church may value its own specific tenets, the value of national Christianity as a whole is higher still." Sounds well, but what is national Christianity, and what is it like? The only ghost of a reason we can think of is that we have that survival of the Dark Ages—an Established Church with a King as its head. But while legally the people owe, technically, loyalty to the King, a British citizen owes no loyalty whatever to the Established Church. Therefore to talk of national Christianity as a whole is the most palpable nonsense. There is no such thing, nor has there been any such thing in England for several centuries. The "national religion" is a mere phrase, as dishonest as are the many preachers of the Established Church who take money to preach one thing and then gain popularity by preaching something else. Christianity has for long been absurd; it is now become openly dishonest in the person of a large proportion of its preachers.

With all this talk from the Government side that the desire of the Board of Education is to provide children with instruction in religion as the parents desire, how would it be for some of the non-Christian members of the House of Commons, backed up by those who desire freedom for all, to arrange that those parents who wish their children to be instructed in the natural origin and development of religion, to have a Freethinking teacher to be appointed who will carry out the parental desires? If "liberal-minded" Christians desire to meet the desires of the parents, here seems a reasonable way of doing it.

But, of course, these Christians do not wish to see justice done all round. What they want is everybody to agree that the State shall have the religion of certain Christian sects branded on the minds of their children at the public expense. That, they consider, is doing their duty to children. It is no more than an exhibition of egotism of the most unreasoning kind.

But the actual result is that a vast number of children who are forced to swallow the religious opinions of their parents do not, when they reach maturity, think the better of their parents for what they have done. They realise the value of the religion that has been taught them at their mother's knee—enforced by their father's threats. Their natural affection for parents is shot through with a good-humoured contempt for those that gave so much to unlearn. One finds that expressed with a "My dad was a very fine fellow and I was very much attached to him, but he was very old-fashioned in many of his views, so I just had to humour him." There is a stage when the child discovers he has been fooled, and no one likes to have that feeling.

The "Church Times," in an editorial note, says the most striking feature of the Day of National Prayer was the number of priests who led the service and the "eager welcome" afforded by the factory workers. Rubbish! The priests went fishing for patrons. That is their trade. And 90 per cent. of the factory hands went because to them twenty minutes rest and a kind of sing-song was welcome. If they had taken a rest of *ten* minutes in the factory they would have got into trouble. But a waste of twenty minutes per head was sanctioned because the clergy engineered it.

The truth is so palpable that the "Church Times" has to put in a proviso that the attendance at the services must not be taken as implying a revival on the way. The nation was "ready to obey the King's call." That is double-barrelled rubbish. The King has nothing to do with it. It is those who "advised" him who are responsible, and his advisers do not care a brass button so long as they can now and again stage a show that fools will mistake for a revival of religion, and rogues will make what profit they can.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

- J. M. MOSLEY.—Pleased to hear from you, and that the good work is going on. Please send notices of meeting on open letter or postcard—it will better secure their appearance.
- F. A. ROGERS.—The story of a number of the members of the Royal Society being "favourable" to Christianity is a very old one. We came across it, we should think, about fifty years ago, and even the people named were rather old. Your friend would do well to ask who are these men, when did they live, what is their real standing in the scientific world, and are the reasons given worth anything? In any case, belief in the Bible is not based on genuine scientific reasoning, nor is it to-day. The leading men of science to-day are either opposed to religious ideas, coldly polite to them, or very, very unscientific in their reasoning.
- MRS. LEVOR.—Thanks, we shall be pleased to accept your offer. We do not know what the legal costs will be in America, but if they equal those here they will be stiff. We have a maxim that the law is the same for all, and to all. Quite so, but there is just a difference between a poor man wishing to vindicate his rights and a wealthy one. The law is the same to all—except that the poor man cannot always use it.
- E. O. BROWN (Victoria, Aus.).—Thanks for very interesting letter. There seems little difference between Christian countries with regard to religious influence. Christian influence has no small responsibility for the humbug and untruthfulness of modern politics.
- L. PASSETT.—We should like to see Freethought propaganda in Liverpool more active than it is. But the war has disrupted the situation. Still attempts are being made to set the public propaganda going again. We shall be glad to give any help we can.
- TAB. CAN writes: "May I add to Mr. Palmer's very interesting review of Havelock Ellis a fact which may not be generally known. In the concluding years of his life, Ellis was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians."
- G. SKINNER.—Thanks for cuttings. We agree that with the alteration of a few leading words the absurdities of astrology are equally applicable to orthodox Christianity, but there is not as much money behind astrology as there is behind Christianity.
- A. HUORR.—We find it rather difficult to say just what is the "artist mentality" and doubt if there is any such thing. It may involve a greater sensibility in some directions, but artistry takes so many forms. We have never yet met an artist, in the flesh and otherwise, who was sufficiently different from others to be placed in a separate category. Thanks for donation.
- H. G. McNEILL, in sending his donation to the "Truthseeker" fund, says: "Never yet have I given a guinea more willingly." That is the right spirit.

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

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

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

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

THREAT TO FREEDOM

WE have no further news to hand concerning the action of the New York Customs which refused to permit the entrance into the U.S.A. of Freethinking works that have hitherto, and for many years, been freely admitted. As we have announced, the New York "Truthseeker," to whom the books were sent, has taken the case into the courts, and there for the moment the matter rests. The legal proceedings promise to be expensive, and on behalf of "Freethinker" readers we guaranteed a subscription of at least £100. We asked for promises only in the first instance, but now that the case is in the courts we are asking for remittance from those who responded. We did not accept in full all the individual amounts promised, as we preferred to have the contributions spread over as wide an area as possible. But we greatly appreciate those who offered a guarantee of a large part of the sum required, one even going so far as to contribute the whole amount if necessary.

Up to date (September 20) we have to acknowledge the receipt of the following sums: P. Foster, £10; F. S. B. Lawes, £5; J. F. S., £5; F. Barwick, £1; F. Kenyon, £1; J. Boulting, £2 2s.; C. Hollingham, £1; J. G. Burdon, 5s.; H. R. Clifton 10s.; Mrs. Wood, 10s.; F. W. Kirton, £1; D. W. Allen, 10s.; H. G., 2s. 6d.; H. Irving, 5s.; R. West, £1; L. Hawkes, £2; G. Skinner, 5s.; C. Williams, 2s. 6d.; E. Henderson, £1; C. F. Budge, 5s.; J. Close, £1 1s.; T. Owen, 10s.; C. McCall, £1; J. L., 2s. 6d.; F. A. Hornibrook, £1 1s.; A. Huorrt, 5s.; H. G. McNeill, £1 1s.; J. Davies, 5s.; J. McCartney, £1 1s.; P. H. M., 10s. 6d.; W. Morehead, 5s.; F. S. Doherty, 5s. 9d.; F. H. M., 10s. 6d.; R. A. Bolt, 5s.; J. Pablo, £2; T. H. Burgess (Birmingham), £15; R. Kilpatrick, £10; F. Terry, £1; R. Lewis, £1; A. Halliday, £1; R. Mosley, 10s.; W. L. English, £10; Sgt. R. Bott, 5s.

A few acknowledgements are held over till next week. We shall be obliged if any inaccuracies are pointed out at once.

Since writing the above we have received a cablegram from New York:—

"Court granted defence extension (of time) for replying. (Later.) Customs officials delivered to us books (seized). Case (substantially over) but technically still pending. Apparently no additional funds will be required."

We take it that in surrendering the books the officials concerned have thrown up the sponge.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

SUGAR PLUMS

WE get a fair number of letters from Christian readers of this paper, and we like to be as gentle as possible with their ignorance, they so often having nothing else to live on but their ignorance of many things, prominently that of religion. For instance, a letter just opened charges us with laughing at serious things. We plead guilty, and in defence ask what else is there but complete justification for laughing at serious things? They are the only things that really deserve laughter. Trivial things may justify a grimace, but not laughter. Therefore we plead not guilty to the charge of laughing at the virgin birth of Jesus, the feeding of thousands with a few loaves and a handful of fishes; we laugh at the people who can really believe such things. Nor should we laugh even at them but for the fact that their belief is part of a religious system in power with its reactions for evil. Then we laugh.

Further to the issue raised, No one laughs on reading the stories of the Greek or Roman, or even the Egyptian, gods. We find them interesting and speculate concerning the type of mind that once accepted them as realities. But if we had lived at the time—with, of course, our present outlook—we should have laughed at the people who worshipped them. Rabelais laughed at the Roman Catholic religion, Voltaire laughed at Christianity, but these were also great things in their day. It is when we find absurdity accepted as reality that we have occasion for laughter.

We see that a deputation of English clergymen is to visit Russia. They are not going to convert Stalin or the chiefs of the Russian State, but to confer with their brother priests about the

position of Christianity in Russia. If these churchmen had not taken so active a part in poisoning the minds of the British people with regard to the facts of the Russian Revolution, the English Christians might have kept in close contact with their fellow primitives in the country they now praise so much.

It is worth noting as to the quality of what is called Christian civilisation that the movement which strove so hard to lift nearly two hundred millions of people from the misery and degradation into which Christian rule had brought them, received nothing but opposition, while the Russia that showed itself great in war has brought great praise. It is the Russia that could fight, not the Russia that could plan for better social life, that brought a more friendly tone from the Churches in this country. All the same, it will be well to keep an eye on our Christian organisations when the war is over and the question will be not what fighting Russia can do, but what can be done to check the influence of a Government that is openly Atheistic.

We like to see fair play—even to the clergy. So we protest against a Marchioness, writing in the "Spectator," that if "all do not go to church it is because their churches did not tell them firmly enough that they owed it as a duty to God that they ought to go more often." That we regard as a calumny on the clergy, for they have never ceased, by hook or by crook—and with more crook than hook—to get people to go to church. More than telling them, the clergy have tried all kinds of inducements to get them to church. They have, as they say, brightened the services; they have induced cricketers, boxers, politicians and actors, with an eye to the value of publicity—in short, anyone whose name or occupation might have advertising value to appear in the pulpit, and on their own behalf the clergy have promised the public that if they will only come to church the sermons shall be short. What else could they do, save the presiding parson promising to stand on his head while reading the lessons and turn somersaults at five-minute intervals? The clergy have done their best; it is the times that are against them.

If one wishes to get a bird's-eye view of the present position—perhaps one ought to say "a position"—of the Bible there is a very good summary in Mr. A. D. Howell Smith's "In Search of the Real Bible (Watts and Company, 2s.). Ranging through the whole of the Old and New Testaments, Mr. Smith gives us the conclusions of many authorities, with useful comments of his own. It is a book that one cannot criticise in the space at our disposal, and it would be unfair to criticise it in nibbles. Mr. Smith accepts the actual existence of the New Testament Jesus, although if the New Testament Jesus did not exist as the veritable Son of God, then the theological Jesus is in substance a myth. No ideal teacher will fill the gap. But we can with confidence commend it to our readers. They will at least realise the poor foundations on which historical Christianity is built.

HOW BLOWS THE WIND?

"THE Catholic Vote" is a phrase perhaps more feared by members of the Labour Party than by others. It is natural, therefore, that many Labour M.P.s are anxious not to give offence to that 5 per cent. weathercock block of votes, which swings according to the windy words of the priest. Watching, which way the wind blows is one of the oldest political traditions, but it has been well absorbed by the youngest of the big parties.

It is also natural, politicians being what they are, that some Labour Members become extremely sensitive to the niceties of democracy when the Totalitarian Church is howling for its "rights." This anxiety about the weathercock, and this sensitivity to democratic nicety, are apt at times to produce some curious conceptions of social justice, and some strange arguments, and to put "democratic" politicians in incongruous situations.

In such a situation, many Labour M.P.s are now trying to reconcile their democratic outlook with the claims of the Catholic

Church for "justice" in education. One cannot help a smile when one remembers how, many years ago, the Labour Party stood firmly for the secular solution; when one recalls the splendid pre-1914 words of Ramsay MacDonald in support of this solution as the only just one; and when one contrasts the old clear-cut policy with the present-day shilly-shallying.

But many humbugs have been sucked by the Labour Party since those brave days of old, and the Catholic humbug is the biggest of them all—so big, indeed, and so difficult of digestion, that it has produced much intellectual dyspepsia among the little men who have tried to play the priests at their own subtle game.

Having abandoned the old honesty of purpose which led the pioneers of the party to declare that religion had no part in a national education system, and having adopted the religious idea in principle in order to secure the former Liberal Nonconformist vote, the party went a stage further, with a power-drunk eye on the more consolidated Catholic vote. What value they saw in a vote that is influenced by priests, and dominated by Vatican policy, I do not know, but the harm this policy did to the democratic movement in this country is plain for all to see.

In regard to education, it checked for many years the progressive development of our national system, and on Christian altars modern sacrifices of our children's best interests were made to appease the gods who do no good. Bound up in a religious mesh in which it had deliberately and foolishly entwined itself, the Labour Party had perforce to concede something to purely denominational claims upon education. This was an inevitable result of the vote-catching policy, and Secularist warnings uttered at that time are now proving to have been justified, for the Catholic Church is making every effort to ensure that its reward for electoral favours (past and future) shall not be denied it without a struggle.

As all false compromises do, the one in which Labour became entangled with the Roman Church has put both its participants "on the spot" now that the question of education is to the front once more. Matters of real educational reform are tending to be overlooked and neglected in the heat of the religious upshot, and many fully-fledged M.P.s in the Labour Party are finding themselves fully-pledged M.P.s with subtle and cunning promises to be redeemed.

So the sophistry of Roman religion and Labour politics has set to work to justify an awkward situation by hysterical shouts of "parents' rights" and "justice for minorities," and to-day we have some Labour Members supporting Catholic claims for free schools maintenance on the basis of the following specious argument.

"The Nonconformists," it is argued, "have religious instruction in State schools of a form which satisfies them, at the cost of the whole community. Why, then, should not Catholics have the same right to a form of religion that satisfies them, also at the cost of the whole community?"

Now I am no more a respecter of Nonconformists than of Roman Catholics, but I feel it necessary here to defend the Nonconformist position. I agree that if the Nonconformists had had the courage of their convictions years ago the present situation might not have arisen. With despicable abandonment of previously held views, they left the secular solution cold and flat when they saw a chance of getting a form of religion in schools that did not favour the older denominations. Vulgarly, and in brief, they rattled.

But it is not true to suggest that the "simple Bible teaching" of the State schools is comparable with the denominational position of the Catholic (and Anglican) schools. Unless a man be an utter fool, or ignorant of the whole subject, it is deliberate deceit to suggest this.

In Catholic schools (I select Catholic schools because they are the real root of the continued struggle in this matter) there is no real public control, although they are already heavily subsidised from public funds. Managers rule the roost, chosen primarily for

their churchmanship. Teachers, who must be Catholic, are appointed by the managers. The priest has right of entry; the nun has right of entry. But the non-Catholic citizen, who is asked to foot the bill, has no rights in such a school, however much he be interested in educational welfare. The atmosphere is Catholic, whatever that may mean, and I suppose the very air will be Catholic, these schools being for those who believe in Very God of Very God. There is no room for anything that is not Catholic—even the books have a Catholic "atmosphere."

I am not quarrelling with this. If people are so ridiculous that they wish to segregate their children, as a breeder of animals might segregate some of his stock from the rest, though it's hard lines on the children I don't see what we can do about it, beyond trying to educate them into better ways. So if they like it this way, let them have it. But let those who call for special tunes pay the piper above his ordinary fee.

Now compare the State schools. Here we find no denominational teaching in the sense of favouring any special Church. Certainly the Nonconformist is not favoured. His minister has no right of entry, there is no religious test for the teacher, the children are not segregated souls, but enjoy that mental variation which is productive of intellectual progress. We all pay, and we can all share. A Catholic child may attend just like any other (so long as the priest doesn't hear about it), and a Catholic adult may be a teacher, in charge of the children of Nonconformists, Atheists and Calathumpians. Nobody cares very much, because it is education they are seeking, to help this world along—not salvation for the next world, which God should be perfectly capable of managing himself.

What religious element there is at least bespeaks a solitary, decent word for Christianity by suggesting to the children peaceful unity of worship by all, as distinct from the cut-throat hatred displayed in the segregation policy of Church schools. The State schools are publicly controlled, and in no way could they be said to represent Nonconformist denominationalism.

The religion might more accurately be described as a "pool" form of Christianity, to which all subscribe, though hardly any believe, and even for those sincere believers who hold that religion must be retained in our schools (they are quite wrong, of course), this is the only tenable form of religion if they are truly interested in education as well. Christians hate each other too fiercely to allow them to go on fighting their battles in our schools, especially when it involves the use of public money, subscribed mainly by people who have no real use for religion.

But as the very few Christians that are left are more interested in their propaganda than in education, there is but one effective solution for the educationist. That is the secular solution, which would remove from education all religious influence, and free it from a bondage that has levied heavy toll on public time and money, and hampered intellectual development by doping the minds of the children and stifling the quality of honesty in teachers.

More than that, the secular solution would remove the Labour Members aforementioned from their bondage to the Church of Rome. In the fall of Italy, and coincident events, there may be a happy augury for the future of this non-Papal country of ours. But some M.P.s will never learn.

F. J. CORINA.

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

"BIBLE ROMANCES." By G. W. FOOTE. Witty, Scholarly and Devastating. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

"THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH." By COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

CHRISTIANITY

The practical end and object of Christianity is solely heaven, i.e., the realised salvation of the soul. The theoretical end and object of Christians is solely God, as the being identical with the salvation of the soul. He who knows God knows all things; and as God is infinitely more than the world, so theology is infinitely more than the knowledge of the world. . . . How frivolous, therefore, are modern Christians when they deck themselves in the arts and sciences of modern nations as products of Christianity! Christians of old knew of no other Christianity than that which is concerned in the Christian faith, faith in Christ.

L. FEUERBACH.

CORRESPONDENCE

THIS TRYPHO BUSINESS.

Sir,—In "The Freethinker" of August 29 Mr. Cutner, for the first time, gives the exact text of Trypho's remarks about "Christ," which he stoutly maintains to mean that Trypho denied "the whole caboodle" of an historical Jesus.

But Trypho says: "Christ if he is come, and is anywhere, is unknown, nor doth he know himself, nor can he be endued with any power till Elias come and anoint him and make him manifest to all men." What in the name of A.B.C. has this got to do with the Gospel Jesus? A man who does not exist cannot be described as "not knowing himself." Knowledge and ignorance are qualities of real people, not of figments. And why bring "Elias" into it?

Plainly, the sentence refers to a "Christ" whom "Elias" is going to anoint at some time to which Trypho looks forward as future. Trypho, in fact, is contrasting *his* Christ, the future Jewish Messiah, with Justin's "idle story" of a Christ already come.

I am not here attacking the myth theory. There is a lot to be said for it. But nothing is gained by bolstering it with bad arguments.—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. Parliament Hill Fields, 3-30 p.m.: Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. E. C. SAPHIN and supporting speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m. Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A. I.L.D.: "The Beginning of the Fifth Year."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Burnley Market.—Sunday, September 26. 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Cliviger.—Saturday, September 25, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Glasgow Secular Society (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3-30 p.m. Meetings held weekly, weather permitting.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Church Street).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. J. W. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. W. A. ATKINSON: A Lecture.

Padiham (near Tennis Courts).—Sunday, September 26, 3 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Key Bookshop, 115, Dale End).—Sunday, 3-30 p.m. prompt. Mr. TOM MILLINGTON: "Religion—What Will You Put in its Place?"

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. F. J. CORINA: A Lecture.

THE MODERN MUSE

WHAT do you make of this?

A soldier passed me in the freshly-fallen snow,
His footsteps muffled, his face unearthly grey;
And my heart gave a sudden leap
As I gazed upon a ghost of five-and-twenty years ago.

Do you think that it could have been written by the same man who wrote this?

Ragged ends
are the world's ends; land in water, wind-woven branches,
sea-spray, star-fret, any atmosphere.

I am sure that the majority of those who may have been reading in these columns my discussions of the work of our modern poets will see what I mean. The first quotation above is that of a traditional poet, facing the present war and comparing it with his own experience of the last. The second quotation is that of an aggressive "modernist," requiring careful analysis before its very meaning becomes manifest. Yet both of them come from Mr. Herbert Read's "Thirty-Five Poems" (Faber; 2s. 6d.), which has recently made its appearance.

The conclusion to which one is driven is that Mr. Herbert Read is a born experimenter, who will try anything which he thinks may possibly lead to satisfactory results. But it is, I think, as a result of the increasing political and economic tensions of our time that he has been driven from the rather "precious" modernisms of his earlier work into a more vital connection with the activities of everyday life. Certainly the Spanish War, when the people of Spain were bullied into submission by the combined might of Germany and Italy, drove him, quite suddenly, into a more progressive camp than would, a few years earlier, have seemed possible.

His book of selected poems contains several good and one truly magnificent piece of work, which I offer no apology for quoting here, as I am sure that many readers of "The Freethinker" will find it a real recommendation to buy "Thirty-Five Poems" for themselves. Here it is:—

The golden lemon is not made
but grows on a green tree:
A strong man and his crystal eyes
is a man born free.

The oxen pass under the yoke
and the blind are led at will:
But a man born free has a path of his own
and a house on the hill.

And men are men who till the land
and women are women who weave:
Fifty men own the lemon grove
and no man is a slave.

That piece of fine, declamatory verse is entitled "A Song for the Spanish Anarchists," and one can understand when one reads it the reason for the great fight put up by the Spanish people against the aggressors. Mr. Herbert Read, indeed, is in himself a living example of the way in which a writer or other artist is set aflame by a political enthusiasm. It may be quite against his conscious will, but when he is really seized by some such enthusiasm he is quite powerless to fight against it. That is the secret of many literary renaissances. It may be the secret of the "New Writing" movement in our time, and of that sudden uprising of poets in the past twenty years or so, which it is the business of the present series of articles to bring to the attention of the readers of these pages.

I am sure that anyone who reads carefully the poems contained in the book recommended above will feel that eventually he will occupy a position fairly high in the hierarchy of modern verse.

S. H.

PAPIST THEOLOGY ABOUT OATHS

ALPHONSE LIGUORI was made a "Saint" by the papist Church because he was a holy man, and he was also made a "Doctor" of the Church, which means that he was used by God to teach the Church; which means further that all his writings are theologically absolutely correct and inspired. Here are some of the things he stated:—

(Vol. I. p. 189): "It is certain that the Pope and his prelates (bishops) can dispense vows since herein they hold the place of God on earth." (Vol. IV. p. 256): "The power of dispensing belongs to all prelates who have jurisdiction *in foro externo*, or the privilege of doing so from the Pope. Hence the following persons can grant dispensations: (1) The Pope, to all the faithful, from all vows whatsoever. (2) Bishops, to their own subjects. (3) Exempt superiors of religious to their own religious and novices; and this is to be understood of vows which they may have made either in the world (of marriage, allegiance, etc.) or in the novitiate. (The term 'exempt' means that the 'superior,' e.g., abbot of a monastery, is independent of the bishop of the district.)"

As regards equivocation, Liguori says (Vol. IV. p. 151): "Amphibology may be threefold: (1) When a word has a double meaning, as *volo*, which means both 'I fly' and 'I will.' (2) When a sentence has a double principal meaning, as 'This book is Peter's' may mean that the book belongs to Peter, or Peter wrote it. (3) When the words have a double sense, one literal, the other spiritual. Thus, if one is asked about something which he wishes to conceal, he may answer, 'I say no'—that is, 'I say the word no.' Cardenas doubts of this (good for Cardenas, whoever he was) but, saving his better judgment, he seems to do so groundlessly; for the words 'I say' truly have a double sense—it signifies to assert as well as to utter, and in my meaning 'I say' means 'I utter.'"

In Vol. IV. p. 160, he says: "It is certain and commonly held by all divines, that with a good reason, it is lawful to make use of equivocation in the ways above explained and to confirm the equivocation with an oath. The reason is that we are not deceiving our neighbours but, for some good reason, letting them deceive themselves. A witness, interrogated by a Judge whether he has co-operated with the accused or defendant, may deny it, meaning that he has not spoken with him by way of co-operation and crime."

In Vol. V. p. 265, he says: "It is certain a witness is not bound to tell the truth to a Judge not legitimately questioning him; he then may lawfully answer even with an oath that he is ignorant of the crime; that is, in such a way as to be obliged to declare it unto him . . . (but, of course, he does not speak that last bit aloud). (It is also evidently understood that the witness is to judge the Judge on the question as to whether the questioning is legitimate or not.)"

Says the Jesuit Suarez: "To confirm an ambiguous expression with an oath is not perjury."

We hope to give more examples of papist theologians' peculiar ideas of honesty in future papers.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

(Concluded from page 379)

cities in Southern Palestine about 1200 B.C. "Curiously enough," remarks Dr. Breasted, "it was these fugitives from the Aegean world who gave to Palestine its present name, for 'Palestine' is simply a later form of the name 'Philistine.'"

This is one example only of the many instances in which stately communities, having painfully arisen from poverty and obscurity to affluence and authority, and enjoying a brief interval of security and repose, were then checkmated and overthrown by better-armed but far less cultured peoples than themselves.

T. F. PALMER.