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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Concluded from page 18)

The Christian Tradition

WE do not know who was responsible for the general title of "Humanism" given to the three talks by Professor Julian Huxley, Dr. Gilbert Murray and Mr. Oldham (Editor of the "Christian Newsletter"); but we could give a shrewd guess, for it bears all the artfulness that must accompany a declared policy of not permitting anything that attacks "the Christian tradition." By all sorts of tricks and falsities that policy has been carried out ever since it was practised by Reith. But the B.B.C. spider that invited two big flies to walk into its parlour deserves at least a modicum of praise; although the atmosphere must have been dulling to the intellect when a man such as Julian Huxley, who can write a book of the quality of his recently issued "Evolution," can be induced to say, after pointing out that gods are all man-made, that "the idea of a single personal god has been of immense value to man's upward progress." As a matter of historic fact, the most intense opposition to scientific development has come from the belief in a single personal god. Polytheism is by its very nature not essentially antagonistic to a few gods more or less. A god more or less does not matter. Trouble begins only when established gods are not treated with courtesy. Intolerance in its worst form accompanies "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." It was a pagan people who said that the best god a man could have was the god of his own country; and the ancient Romans, with what one may call "religious hospitality," had a habit of placing an effigy of the chief god of a conquered people side by side with their own collection. Polytheism has and had its faults, but a lust for persecution is not one of them.

The real issue to-day is Atheism or Theism. The goodness or badness of an assumed god is beside the issue that is before the educated mind. If there is something existing that falls into the category of "god," then we must put up with it whether the god be good or bad, loving or brutal. The existence of a thing and the quality of that thing are two distinct questions. Of course, the issue does get very muddled where the believer is concerned, but the man whose brain is not fogged by modern versions of a very primitive kind of religion should be more upon his guard. The real issue was never raised. It was not intended that it should be raised. Two of the party were very polite; the other was too artful.

But the term "humanist." One wonders what it meant in the mind of Professor Huxley and Mr. Oldham. If used in its historical sense, it is a term that belongs to a past phase of European history. It was, some centuries ago, a term that characterised a revolt against the Catholic Church and indicated a belief that man might

shape his own destiny by his own efforts and understanding. There is also a "humanism" which is a name for a philosophic outlook such as was held by William James in America, and by his follower or co-worker in England, Mr. F. C. S. Schiller. Substantially, that philosophy might be expressed by a term that carries us right back to the ancient Greeks: "Man is the measure of all things." A vital truth even if it is not the answer to all problems. And humanism in the sense of acting wisely and kindly to one's fellows is, in however distorted a sense, common to the human race, and beyond that to the higher animal world. Man is, after all, a social animal, and his feelings, ideas and actions must have some reference to his fellow humans. To some extent every human being is a "humanist"; and when Huxley called himself a "scientific humanist," and Oldham decided that he was a "Christian humanist," in the eyes of many both might have written themselves down as "humanists," even though belonging to the unconscious variety. What really divided these two was a belief in God: not in the nature of God, but in his existence. And for purpose of clarity the issue should have been stated as "Atheism versus Theism." But that would never have been permitted on a B.B.C. platform, which practises our Prime Minister's plan, "What we have we hold." But we see no objection to the term "humanist" being applied to everybody from dustman to duke and from fool to philosopher.

The Renaissance

But the reference to the Renaissance leads us to say something that needs saying. First of all, readers must bear in mind that it means re-birth; but it was not given a new religion, nor did it stand for a strengthening of an established one. It was essentially an attempt to break the paralysing control of the Christian Church and an attempt to establish a new world of science, art, literature and philosophy on a basis of human knowledge and effort. It was not necessarily an anti-religious movement, but there was plenty of anti-religious thought mixed up with it. It involved an opposition to the rule and practice of the Christian Church.

There is one other point to be borne in mind. Of men who have written on the Renaissance, the majority date the revival from the 14th century. That is far too late and can refer only to the Renaissance in Italy. But the movement as a whole clearly requires a much earlier date. A mere glance over the names of such men as Avicenna (980-1037), Averroes (1126-1198) and Roger Bacon (1214-1294), and the development that took place in France, added to the establishment of universities there and elsewhere, with the philosophy, the science and the art of the cultural work of Mohammedan Spain, should make it clear that the re-birth of ancient pagan learning and the influence of Spanish Mohammedan science was in full swing before the Italian Renaissance. The Italian

phase belongs to the culmination of a movement rather than to its beginning.

To understand the situation we must cram a volume—a big volume—into a few paragraphs. We must consider the position of the Christian world in the 12th century. From the time of Constantine the Great the Christian Church had been steadily accumulating power. It could make and unmake kings. It would allow nothing to be written or spoken that questioned its teaching or threatened its power. It demanded, and obtained, supreme control over religion, morals, the family, and the right to suppress anything that ran counter to its ruling or teaching. The terrible weapon of excommunication could be wielded against the monarch on the throne or the serf in his hut. The philosophy and science of the ancient world had been substantially destroyed. The art of the ancient world, its social developments, had gone; its literature existed only in fragments. Transfer the effects of Hitlerism on the culture or well-being of the peoples he trampled underfoot and you will have a not unlike picture of the rule of the Church and its influence on the life and culture of the European world.

When improvement did come it was by way of a recovery of the fragmental remains of the culture of the ancient world—to the philosophy and science of Greece, the civic and legal philosophy of Rome. Progress was resumed by a substantial setting on one side of the Christian teachings of nearly a thousand years. The story of human development had to be taken from the pre-Christian world. There had to be a re-birth; the current Christian-controlled life had become impossible. How did this relief come to Europe?

Light came from the East. Ever since the conquests of Alexander the Great, Alexandria, named after him, had become a growing centre of culture. East and West met there, and with ultimate benefit to the West. There was a halt in this cultural development when Egypt fell under the control of the Christian superstition. Then came the conquest of the East by Mohammedanism, and in consort the Jew and Moslem became the trustees for a time of the philosophy and science of the Greeks, with the result of creating a culture that could not be found in any part of Christendom. (A brief outline of what was accomplished, and how much we owe to the Moors in Spain, will be found in the "Legacy of Egypt" and the "Legacy of Islam," published by the Oxford Press.) Then in the eighth century a large part of Spain fell into the hands of the Mohammedans, and the story of the development in science and philosophy and art reads like a story from the Arabian Nights. In medicine, in astronomical science there was nothing in the Christian world that could compare with it. In Cordova alone there were 900 public baths. The first one appeared in this country in the middle of the last century. There were 70 public libraries. In England in the 12th century a handful of books here and there sufficed. Centuries before Gallileo was forced by the Church to recant his teaching that the earth revolved round the sun the Mohammedans were teaching astronomy with the use of globes. For centuries Mohammedan Spain played the part of the European vanguard of science. The Christian New Testament has nothing to equal the teaching of the Mohammedans that the pen is greater than the sword. Mohammedan Spain was the one spot in Europe where for centuries men went

to study science and philosophy. With the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, not merely the scholarship of Spain, but also skill in agriculture and general industry went by the board. A full account of that disastrous outcome of Christian intolerance will be found in H. C. Lea's "The Morescoes in Spain."

In late years there has been a growing acknowledgment of the debt the world owes to the brief but brilliant development of Mohammedan Spain. She was an intellectual fertiliser to the Western world—and beyond. I think it was G. H. Lewes who said that between the 9th and 12th centuries there was not a single man of note in England who had not either studied under the Mohammedans or who had studied under one who had attended the Spanish schools.

Yet even to-day full justice has not been done. Most modern writers of history pass the work of Moorish Spain by or pass this chapter of European history by with a few words, an example that is, of course, followed by that bulky but very inadequate "History of Europe," by H. A. L. Fisher (1936), a history that carries a heavy weight of things that do not matter, and very little about the things that are of consequence. An excellent history for a teacher who does not wish to run risks, but of small value to those who really wish to understand history. And H. A. L. Fisher was our Minister of Education. But one may safely say that but for the influence of Mohammedan Spain the Dark Ages would have been much darker and would have lasted much longer. The "Christian tradition"—suppression and boycott—dies hard, as the B.B.C. proves where Christianity is concerned.

But of late there has been a tendency, even a desire, on the part of many writers of standing to do Mohammedan influence credit for what was done. That this was needed will be seen when as far back as 1860 Dr. J. W. Draper wrote in his "Intellectual Development of Europe":—

"I have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has contrived to put out of sight our scientific obligations to the Mohammedans. Surely they cannot be much longer hidden. Injustice founded on religious rancour and national conceit cannot be perpetuated for ever."

And that is accompanied by several pages detailing how much we owe to them in astronomy, in agriculture, in mathematics, in medicine, and scores of other things. One may add that the debts we owe that burst of scientific greatness is the greater because it led to the re-birth with which we have been dealing.

Again to quote Draper—

"The Arab has left his intellectual impress on Europe, as, before long, Christendom will have to confess. He has indelibly written it on the heavens, as anyone may see who reads the names of the stars on a common celestial globe."

I have run a little away from our opening text, but I fancy that it will yet serve the purpose of reminding readers what the "Christian tradition" really is in operation. And although a great many employees of the B.B.C. repeat that tradition in practice, we believe the best of them feel that it is anything but a praiseworthy manner of earning one's food.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

LET US PRAISE THE LADS

IT is surprising how much common-sense can be read, even in religious journals, when they temporarily leave God out of account.

The "Catholic Herald," writing of the Prime Minister's recent illness, said:—

"Happily, the latest news is good, and it seems that modern science and Mr. Churchill's own remarkable vitality will pull him through with ease."

Such a statement has a much healthier ring about it than the usual religious gush, invoking God's help, and sneaking cheap advertisements for the power of prayer.

Indeed, the statement is purely Atheistic not only in form, but in the expression of its sentiments, for it expresses confidence and hope in the only factors that man can ultimately depend upon in any such situation—modern science, or knowledge, and one's own vitality, or one's own capacity, to struggle with the problem; plus, of course, the help and kindness that can be shown by one's fellow humans.

Let us hope the "Catholic Herald" will write more of its readers' fare in similar strain, for the effect of that kind of writing upon minds well-soaked in the religious idea of dependence upon a God, about whose first or any quality they know nothing at all, can only be a good effect. To teach self-dependence, whether mental or physical, is a desirable thing.

Reviewing the general trend of comment in the Press on Mr. Churchill's illness, a rather similar tendency all round is shown to speak more of the man, and of the science involved, than of metaphysical influences; and it must be a good sign of the times that one of the greatest (present-day) figures of the whole world is able to endure and to recover from a rather serious illness without much prayer and invocation to God.

Time was when, with such a figure lying ill, he would have been hauled back to health by a tremendous outburst of sanctimoniousness, and a pandemonium of praise to the Lord.

But the most ironical fact of all is that the Prime Minister not only got better without the Lord, but that he did so on territory, and among people, necessarily to be regarded as heathen by truly Christian Christians. That must be a sad fact for some of the simple-minded believers; though no doubt it will be compensated by the fact that (nominally) Christian doctors attended the Prime Minister.

Personally, I should be very pleased to see an extension of this idea of leaving the Lord alone in human affairs. To blame him, by implication, for getting us into a mess is the only logical interpretation that can be put on most forms of praying; and to ask him to get us out of our difficulties, on the one hand, seems like gratuitous insolence when, on the other hand, we credit him with knowing what is best for us. The whole thing is so apt to muddle both us and the Lord that it would be better if we could do our respective human and divine tasks without badgering each other to the point of irritation.

Some of the generals, for instance, might do better if they credited God with a little divine-sense, and allowed him to use it as he thinks best, while they employed the common-sense with which humans are endowed, but which they rarely use.

In the coming "big push" which seems to be indicated by the recent reshuffling of commands, the ends of efficiency and success might be better served if our soldiers keep to soldiering, and leave the task of the angels to the angels—and to the padres, of whom there are more than ample.

I know that God saved Malta, and that God was behind the movement that turned the Germans out of North Africa. I know that God saved Britain, and again at Dunkirk (haven't we been told so many times over by those who are in close communion

with him?) I know that it is intended that God shall give us the final victory which we hope will come after the next big push.

But the trouble is that most of the men in the fighting forces don't worry very much about God, and they have a silly idea that they, too, had a good deal to do with our past successes, and will have a good deal to do with the final victory.

Stupid as this idea may be, it has to be taken into account, among other things, and it seems to me that if we just keep God around the corner a little more, and let the fighting forces think that it is their spirit of dependability, plus the scientific method, that is winning the war, we shall maintain better relations with them than by splattering about God. Let us praise the Lads instead of the Lord.

After all, we can easily forget what the lads (and lasses) have done when the war is over; but we can go on praising the Lord for years.

F. J. CORINA.

CREDULITY IN THE SADDLE

THERE is a picture of the Virgin in a Catholic church at Quito. The picture represents "Our Lady" wearing her heart outside her clothes, with seven swords piercing it. To this church on April 30, 1906, there came four small boys, and one of them, the youngest, saw the Virgin slowly open her eyes—both eyes, otherwise it might have been a wink, and holy ladies do not wink. With adults she might be misunderstood. The children explained to their elders what they had seen, but only one man believed them. He was a priest and above suspicion.

But the miracle was repeated more than twenty times, and on one occasion the church bells rang "without anyone having touched them." The Virgin was evidently getting impatient, but the winking of the eyes continued.

The prodigy was repeated many times and many were converted, including a well-known "unbeliever," who was too modest to have his name published. "Our Lady" renewed her eye-wash—or movement. The congregation sang "Turn towards us thine eyes of pity" and the "Blessed Virgin moved her eyes." She lifted them so high towards heaven that the pupils disappeared." But eyestrain was avoided, and "the Blessed Virgin resumed a serene face." Afterwards, "Our Lady did not manifest any signs of suffering"—the eye-strain had been overcome.

But the Roman Church is very, very careful to have unimpeachable evidence for a miracle before it is established and docketed before it is accepted. The Archbishop heard the evidence of forty witnesses and a Commission "proceeded scrupulously with the scientific examination of the fact in question." "No natural explanation was possible." The finding was unimpeachable. (1) The facts were historically certain. (People had seen the maid with the twinkling eyes.) (2) The fact cannot be explained by natural law. (Agreed.) (3) The fact . . . but what followed cannot be attributed to any diabolical influence. Satan stands without a shade on his character. So does "the lass with the delicate eyes."

Those who wish to get the story in full may purchase it from the Benedictine nuns, Stanbrook Abbey, Worcester, at the low price of 3d.—a farthing a wink. It is printed by Kitchings, Ltd., Preston.

"QUONDAM."

"WE ARE SIXTEEN"

By F. J. CORINA.

This popular sex-education book for young people was sold out within three weeks of publication, but further copies are now available. Cloth 5s., paper 4s.; postage 3d. From "The Freethinker" office, or Clegg & Son, Ltd., Publishers, Bradford.

ACID DROPS

THE Bishop of Chelmsford has sent a circular letter to his flock in which he says: "We have in the past year been crowded with mercies and the plainest tokens of God's favour towards us." We think this "us" ought to be printed in large capitals; otherwise we fail to see just where God's favour comes in. The war is still on; there will be lots of suffering and demoralising before the war ends. And if we are still alive to thank God for our safety, we suggest that he is carrying his favouritism just a little too far. Of course, we have only the word of a bishop that God has anything to do with the progress of the war. But we may observe that if a commanding officer could have won the war in the twinkling of an eye and did not do so he would certainly be kicked out of his position—unless he had good friends at headquarters; and even then he might be court-martialled.

The way in which our Christian guides struggle to impress upon the people the idea that Christians are more human than non-Christians is interesting and very instructive. The ordinary man and woman, when he or she lends a helping hand to another human, does it without any fuss or bother, and is not aware of having accomplished any feat worth noting—certainly he does not feel that he has accomplished so great a feat that it requires supernatural help for its performance. Personally we do not agree with this assumption. We believe that the average Christian would behave as well without God as others do with him, and that with the exhibition of the common acts of life God has nothing whatever to do. Modesty may be a virtue, but often virtues that are carried to excess become vices.

For example. In the "Glasgow Herald" there recently appeared an account of a "preachment" by Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. Fraser. The title does not indicate that this officer had ever taken part in military manoeuvres in any way whatever. He was an Assistant Chaplain-General, with a fairly good payroll. But he advised the world generally that when this war is over there will be large numbers of those now serving with the forces who will be in need of much help and advice. Therefore there would be much need of help and advice. We may grant that, but that surely is not dependent upon the belief in God or the Churches. It is a fact that after any war there is dislocation of social relationships, and men have to shake off the customs of war in order to play a really healthy part in social life. All that may be admitted, but where does God and the Churches and the parsons necessarily come in? Non-Christians can help to restore normal social conditions and to awaken normal feelings without bothering about gods. Obviously large numbers do, and we decline to believe with this Chaplain-General that Christians cannot behave in this matter as well as many non-Christians behave. In other words, we believe that most Christians are capable of being as good as Atheists—if they will only try.

It is reported that there is another case of a soldier's life being saved by a bullet striking a Bible he carried. It is also stated that the Bible in question had a steel covering. But it would be foolish to imagine that the steel had anything to do with this minor miracle. It makes one wonder that no one has suggested covering the roofs of churches with Bibles. We make no charge for thinking of this; but a great many believers appear to be struck by the easy way in which the houses of God have been ruined. Such reflections are dangerous—to God.

Representatives of 30 nations are to meet at St. Paul's Cathedral to pray for a speedy finish of the war and the return of peace. Really, it is enough to make God Almighty drop a few bombs on London in order to show his disgust at being advised what to do by these 30 nations. There must be limits even to the Christian deity.

We are pleased to find teachers making a stand against this plot of the State schools under cover of a desire for improve-

ment. As we have said over and over again, the teachers can command the position if they will; and parents may assist if they will withdraw their children from religious instruction. That would make the teaching of religion look ridiculous in many instances.

It must be remembered that, while the clergy may march into the schools directly the Bill becomes law, the boasted improvements are to take place only when the Government thinks we can afford them. Finally, no move is to be made towards making entrance to public and other high schools, up to the universities, depend entirely and exclusively upon the fitness of pupils. By no other plan can we establish a democratic system of education.

We see there is a move in the U.S.A. to create a huge store of food, ammunition, etc., to the end that should war occur the country will be ready. We also believe that something in that line is suggested for this country. And if that idea gains ground with the big fighting countries the outlook for this war ending all war is very, very black. For it is useless having these stores unless we have trained fighting forces behind them, and all the talk about ending war is just bunkum.

Nothing short of nations resolving once for all to make national wars impossible will prevent another world war occurring so soon as the nations have recovered from this one. The way out is an international armed force, with international courts to decide differences between peoples. National armies inevitably lead to national wars. We can make "never again" a very real thing if we will.

Even before the outbreak of war we insisted that the Nazi movement in Germany was essentially a religious one. And it has been growing more and more pious since the war started. The latest religious declaration from Goebbels runs: "History has assigned to us in this war one of her great missions for centuries to come. In the fulfilment of this mission we are in God's hands." That again strikes the real religious note. The only nations that do not feel they are in God's hands are China and Soviet Russia.

Another Week of National Prayer is being urged. This time it is for "unity"—that blessed word so often mouthed by Christians and so often shunted directly any approach is made towards realising it. The Chairman of the Council of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as this precious body is called, invites all Christians—Roman, Orthodox and Protestant—to "unite with their Anglican brethren" in imploring God to make them all interpret Christian doctrine in precisely the same way, in the ultimate hope, no doubt, that all Christian sects will unite with their "Anglican brethren." We can see our "Roman brethren" doing it, or our Protestant Alliance brethren falling on their knees and adoring the Pope! Why, even God Almighty would have to confess himself beaten.

The Pope of Rome is appointed by God—at least, it is believed that God guides those who elect him. And the Catholic Church can produce thousands of miracles to prove that God, through his angels and saints, works numberless miracles in the protection of his Church. But the Vatican has an armed guard—armed with guns, not Bibles. And now the news comes that the Vatican military forces have been increased by 1,500 armed men. Evidently the trust of the papacy in God has diminished by 1,500 points.

We noted in one of the papers an advertisement of a book by Howard Spring with the title "Heaven Lies About Us." But surely that is not nearly so bad as the lies that children are told about heaven.

It was rather clumsy of the Pope to send greetings to Franco and express his appreciation of the Spanish Government's "essentially Catholic policy," particularly when we remember that Franco is running a Fascist Government and appears to have been giving Hitler all the help he dare, and that in view of the fact that his conduct is "essentially Catholic," and that Poland is one of the strongholds of the Church, the greeting looks like a decided blunder.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

G. N. PEATE.—Thanks for reference and interesting letter.

F. COLLIN.—A very good specimen, but a lengthy experience has taught us not to marvel at the output of folly that very pious people are capable of. Consider what the B.B.C. can do in the shape of foolishness where religion is concerned.

E. H. MATHESON.—What you say is very flattering, but we are compelled to place first things first, and lecturing at any distance from London involves three broken days. That is a good slice out of a week. We can assure you we miss meeting friends at least as much as old friends miss us. When conditions become normal we may alter our plans. At present it is a course of first things first.

C. WILLIAMS.—There is no cheap edition of the works of the Hammonds; but it would be a very good thing if there were. We do not know whether they profess belief in any religion. But it requires a more powerful microscope than we possess to discover any.

"WORKING COMPOSITOR."—Pleased to have your congratulations on the make-up of "The Freethinker." We have little faith in the type of intelligence that lives on headlines.

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

S. BETTS.—Thanks for letter; book safely to hand.

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—J. O'Connor, £1.

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SUGAR PLUMS

EX-DEAN INGE appears to love a dig at his brother clerics, and we can quite understand his hardly disguised contempt for his brothers in Christ. Taken by and large, the present-day clergy are a very poor lot—and the trend is in the direction of their becoming poorer. So we are not surprised at his giving, in the "Evening Standard," a hearty trouncing to the clergy for their foolish allegiance to the "Christian Sunday." Our religious Sunday, improved as it is, still remains one of the most foolish of all our many stupid customs. People need a day of rest, or more, per week, but that day loses a great deal of its value thanks to the Christian Churches. What an evil thing religion can be is shown by the Lord's Day Observance Society frightening a large number of Members of Parliament into supporting a Puritan Sunday by threatening them with the loss of their seat if they refuse. We are a great people, and our foolishness appears to be proportionate with our greatness.

This year celebrates the centenary of the death of Robert Taylor, who died in 1844. The "Devil's Chaplain," as he was called, had a strenuous career and, for his uncompromising

opposition to Christianity, was given three years' imprisonment as a "blasphemer." It is timely that a lecture on his life and work will be given to-day (January 23) by Mr. H. Cutner before the Leicester Secular Society at Humberstone Gate. This should prove of great interest, and we hope will draw a good audience.

Canon Raven, one of the very few men of ability who are left to the Established Church, has given a new formula for the Trinity. It is that "Creation is incarnation, and incarnation is sanctification." That is doubtless satisfying to that select number of believers with sufficient intelligence to be dissatisfied with the historic religious meaning, but who are mentally uneasy when they try to understand the orthodox Christian creed. Consider. An Atheist may accept such a term as "creation" so long as it is applied to the appearance of new forms, for that is part of the philosophy of evolution; but the religious interpretation of the word is undiluted nonsense. It belongs to the religious "And God said let there be light" as an explanation of light. "Incarnation" may also be accepted if it equals the sum of qualities that goes to make up a new form of being—again an evolutionary fact. "Sanctification" is hopeless because it has no other meaning than "sacred," and that is a completely religious idea. It is a pity that Canon Raven does not throw the whole system of religion overboard. He must feel very lonely among his brother clerics.

With regard to the moaning of the clergy that people do not attend church as the Church demands, close search would reveal the fact that there never was a time when the mass of the people went to church in large numbers, if we place on one side periods of plagues—the bodily, not the clerical kind, distress, etc. That does not apply to recent times. The need for laws compelling people to put in so many appearances under the threat of punishment is further evidence to the same end. No people, as a whole, have ever been able to stand the real Christian creed for long.

Here are some lines dating, we think, from the latter part of the 17th century, which have bred the above reflections:

Some go to church to take a walk,
Some go there to laugh and talk,
Some go there to meet a lover,
Some go there their sins to cover;
Others go to take a nod,
But few go there to worship God.

It is rather curious to note that with regard to the Government plan—or plot—to hand over the schools to the Churches, to just as great an extent as it dares, that meetings of headmasters are rather in favour of creating a religious atmosphere, with the clergy doing the pumping. From what we know of headmasters of the State schools, we should be inclined to put it down to the feeling of superiority felt by the "heads." If the arrangement goes through, they may experience that feeling in personal contact with the distinguished clergy, and then we are almost certain they will discover the error of their ways.

On the other hand, the teachers' (common fellows) associations are growing more restless. Probably they are realising that not merely will the standard of general education tend to be lower, but teachers will find themselves forced to a continuous hypocrisy to secure appointments and promotions. A number of resolutions against the new plan with regard to religion have been passed by teachers' associations; and at a meeting of assistant masters, as reported in the "Manchester Guardian," there was a strong protest against interference with the present arrangements for religion in the schools.

Some very plain speaking was indulged in, and it was very plain that teachers are recognising the danger that faces them. One delegate said: "The provisions in the Bill for certain reservations and for a test for teachers was nothing but setting a premium on hypocrisy." Another said that if religious instruction was to be given by the Church of England it should be given to Mormons, Jews and Freethinkers. And one can quite agree with the speaker who protested against "children having one side of religion crammed down their throats."

MORE ABOUT THE LACHISH LETTERS

EXACTLY what value will eventually be given to the discoveries made in the site of the ancient city of Lachish, in Southern Palestine, it is impossible at the moment to declare. There may be far more important finds yet to be unearthed. But it is difficult to say why Professor Torzcyner, who has translated the Phœnician script written on the Lachish potsherds, should herald them as "the most valuable that have yet been made in connection with the Archæology of the Bible." Fortunately, Sir Charles Marston has given us the translations in his book, "The Bible Comes Alive," and we can form some kind of a judgment for ourselves.

The Letters appear to be personal ones—that is, from one man to another—but the order given in the translation is purely arbitrary, as no one knows which follows which. Here is a specimen from Letter VI. :—

"To my lord Jaush. May Jahweh let see (us) my lord (while) thou (art) even now in peace. Who is thy slave, a dog, that my lord has sent the (lett)er of the king, and the letters of the offic(ers) saying Read I pray thee, and (thou wilt) see the words of the (prophet) are not good, (liable) to loosen the hands (to make) sink the hands of the coun(try and) the city. . . ."

Now it surely is not unfair to ask in which way this brings the Bible alive, or proves it is true? There must have been some means of communication between peoples even in those far-off days, and it is quite reasonable to imagine that cutting hieroglyphics, Babylonian or Egyptian, on stone was a pretty slow way of sending an urgent message, and that therefore when such messages had to be sent, some script was gradually evolved. Why such a script shows that the Bible is literally true is quite beyond me.

How Sir Charles does it is quite intriguing. It appears that after the word "city" in Letter VI. (last word above), a whole clause is indecipherable, so he quotes Jeremiah xxxviii. 4, where it says: "Let this man be put to death." Sir Charles then suggests that the indecipherable sentence should be, "Let this man be put to death"—and thus you see the Bible is once again vindicated!

Letter III. seems to be of a kind of military dispatch—it has something about the commander of the army and orders to take some men somewhere. Sir Charles quotes Jeremiah xxvi. 20-23, which he says is distinctly related to the Letter. To make it all the stronger, he says that "the scribe who wrote Letter III. has clearly made a clerical error" in writing some of the names! Thus again the Bible is proved to be literally true. I admit this kind of proof leaves me breathless.

"Suppositions" on the part of Professor Torzcyner and Sir Charles also go a long way in these proofs, and I am quite sure will be accepted by Bible believers—who, anyway, would believe without any proof whatever. At all events, their belief is not actually strengthened by excavation.

It would be useless to go more into detail and give the whole of the contents of the Lachish Letters for, as far as they are decipherable, they only make sense if read with the eye of Faith. The translations have been vigorously contested, and many of them are admittedly "tentative," which means that you may or may not accept them, just as you like. And all we are entitled to say from them is that some sort of script was used in writing about the year 600 B.C., and that some sort of religion and no religion at all was then prevalent in Lachish. Jahweh was certainly worshipped, but no one has ever claimed that some kind of worship of Jahweh was not in evidence at that date.

On the other hand, there is a lot of evidence from these excavations—negative evidence if you like—to show that the Bible story is not true. Take as an instance the Fall of Jericho. No

letter in any kind of script or hieroglyphics has been unearthed showing that the walls of this famous town were blown down by the trumpets of Jewish priests. Sir Charles evidently felt this omission was too obvious, so he supplies a reproduction of an old German line engraving depicting Jewish priests in perfectly fitting robes of ample proportions, blowing beautifully-proportioned trumpets, with the walls of Jericho tumbling conveniently down. The artist responsible for this masterpiece used his imagination as well as he could, and this imagination has just the same significance and worth as have Professor Torzcyner's "suppositions" or Sir Charles' speculations. But have the excavators proved that the Walls of Jericho were blown down by trumpets? Not a bit of it. Even Sir Charles has to admit that the walls came down "through the agency of an earthquake." This fact will not shake the faith of the average Bible believer, and to see that it does not do so the engraving described above is reproduced so that once again one can take one's choice. Yet all the while Sir Charles insists that the Bible is true!

And here is another point. A dagger with an inscription down the centre of the blade was discovered at Lachish. The inscription had only four characters, but Mr. Starkey claimed they belonged to the Sinai Hebrew script. Other authorities said they were either Minoan or Cypriote or Hittite characters. Here again you can pay your money and take your choice. But how does this variety of opinion prove that the Bible is true?

For me I can only see in a great many of the "discoveries" at Lachish and elsewhere more and more difficulties for Bible believers. Let me give a final example.

A red bowl was discovered at Lachish with, according to Sir Charles, some "Sinai Hebrew" letters upon it. It is dated 1295-1262 B.C. Dr. S. Langdon (a thorough believer) wrote a letter to "The Times" calling attention to the inscription, which he said was "in archaic Canaanite letters, similar to the Sinaitic script, now recognised to be the oldest known form of the West Semitic alphabet, the so-called Phœnician alphabet." It will be noticed that Dr. Langdon does not say "Sinai Hebrew." The language of the inscription is "identical with the Canaanite gloss in the Armana letters." The translation is, "His righteousness is my hand and . . ." and Dr. Langdon, to connect it with the Bible, points out that "the Lachish bowl employs the Babylonian word for 'hand' in precisely the same manner as Isaiah xxxiii. 2 employs the Hebrew word for hand in 'Be thou their arm.'" He also admits that he "can do nothing with the last word on the Lachish bowl; the letters are, in fact, not entirely certain." And also that he would date the bowl about 1500 B.C. So once more is the Bible proved to be true, and the Higher Critics completely wrong.

What a relief it is to come out, after all this "scholarship," into the fresh air of Freethought. For it is that which is vindicated by all this archæology and excavation.

H. CUTNER.

HOW THE CHURCHES WORK

I THINK the following may be of interest to your readers.

As a linotype operator who for over 30 years has been engaged in typesetting of every variety, I have no hesitation whatever in stating that members of the clergy, and others connected with the Church and religious organisations generally, are the most illiterate section of the community. Not only is this my own opinion, but it is that of the majority of other members of my trade with whom I have discussed the matter.

While, of course, typesetters do not expect to receive perfectly written copy at all times and are prepared for different individual styles of phraseology and punctuation, yet the average manuscript sent by Church folk to printers has to be seen to be believed.

This is usually a barely intelligible scrawl, written on the oddest pieces of paper, plastered with alterations and deletions, and the whole resembling something like a flypaper in August. The spelling is usually atrocious, while as for punctuation: commas, colons, parentheses, hyphens, exclamatory marks, etc., appear in the most absurd places. Periods (full stops) are rarely seen but the freest use is made of the comma, and this is usually inserted after about every fourth word. Few of these people appear to have any idea as to the correct use of quotation marks, these being dotted all around, anywhere but in the places where needed, while the most insignificant words appear with capital initials and it is not unusual to see many proper nouns without them. Apart from all this, the average contributor to a Church magazine seems to be quite incapable of forming the simplest of sentences, and the typesetter has to endeavour to get into the mind of the writer, decide what it is he is intending to convey to the reader, and try to make some sense of it. (Freethinkers will no doubt appreciate this difficulty if, as in the present case, the typesetter happens to be an Atheist.)

Now one might be able to forgive all this when one has accomplished the job and sees the drivel looking as grammatically respectable as the matter will allow. But more is usually to follow. This is when the author's proof is returned before final printing takes place. Then another flypaper is presented. More alterations, deletions and insertions, very often whole paragraphs having to be scrapped and reset. Further, it is not unusual to have authors' proofs returned with marks which insist upon their misspelt words, incorrect punctuation, misuse of capitals and quotation marks, while if an operator's mistake does happen to have got through (usually due to a mechanical fault) a notice to this effect is plastered in no uncertain manner, often accompanied with, for example, such words as "Can't you spell so-and-so?"

In case it should be thought that the writer of this article is quoting an isolated experience, I would add that in the course of a month I set up the type for no less than eleven different Church magazines. Not much of a job for a Freethinker, perhaps; but this is my particular war job, and keeps me out of participating in that other evil—the manufacture of war weapons. (Better, I think, a dope-dealer than a death-dealer.)

Besides, there is always the hope that the more religious driven one reads the less one believes. At any rate this was my own experience; for I was formerly employed as a linotype operator on a well-known religious weekly journal, and was thus led first to scepticism, and then to deliberately seek the opposite point of view—with devastating effect on any previous ideas I had on the subject.

"A WORKING COMPOSITOR."

CORRESPONDENCE

A REJOINDER

SIR.—Mr. Brockway, while objecting to what he calls my "wild inaccuracies," says he doesn't want to intervene at length in the controversy. I'll bet he doesn't! But he has said enough; sufficient to expose himself in the eyes of your readers.

At the I.L.P. Conference last year, when the war in the East was in the balance, one of the branches put forward a resolution proposing that the I.L.P. should support the campaign for aid to the Soviet Union. This resolution was thrown out. Now Mr. Brockway presents us with the miserable evasion, "We are not against aid to the Soviet Union," but, "We take the view that the Churchill Government cannot be trusted to aid Soviet Russia in any permanent way."

For sheer mendacity was there ever anything to equal that? The Soviet Union is battling, as never a nation battled before, for its very existence. Is the Churchill Government giving aid to the Soviet Union while it battles against all the frenzied might of the Nazis and their Fascist allies? Yes. Is Brockway and the I.L.P. giving aid to the Soviet Union in the time of its

terrible extremity? No. But see the typical "Trotskyite" touch that comes into Mr. Brockway's letter. We cannot support "aid to the Soviet Union," we don't trust the Churchill Government, but when we have a "Socialist Britain," then we'll get busy doing things.

As I pointed out in my earlier letter, the issue in Russia, following the October Revolution, was the restoration of capitalism or the building up of Socialism.

Trotsky didn't say "Let's have capitalism." That would have been too crude. But he opposed the building of Socialism. "You can't build Socialism," he said, "the peasants can never be won for Socialism. Wait till we get revolution in the other European countries, then we'll build Socialism in Russia." Many shallow-witted "intellectuals" thought he was a "great" revolutionary, when he was actually with the Mensheviks for the restoration of capitalism.

Now Mr. Brockway provides a glaring example of this method of trying to cover up a degenerate and bankrupt policy by high-sounding phrases. The issue before us is clear. For or against the victory of the Red Army in the terrific battles raging in Eastern Europe. "We are not supporting the Red Army." "We refuse to make a campaign or to assist in any campaign for aid to the Soviet Union." That is the attitude of Mr. Brockway and the I.L.P. in this great moment of crisis. Dare Mr. Brockway deny it? I don't think he will. No, he'll try to take away attention from that by empty talk of what is going to happen when we have a "Socialist Britain." Talk about "Pie in the sky"! Just imagine Mr. Brockway explaining this to those brave lads of the Red Army. Or just imagine him relating the story to Joseph Goebbels, and the nice pat on the back he would get.

As for not trusting the Churchill Government, that comes strange from a party—my mistake, it doesn't come strange—that was wholeheartedly in support of the Chamberlain Government, when that Government assisted the Nazis by the treacherous betrayal of Czechoslovakia.

It was with the Chamberlain Government in its policy of "Aid to Nazi Germany." It is against the Churchill Government and its policy of "Aid to the Soviet Union."

I can understand Mr. Brockway desiring to avoid controversy.—
Yours, etc.,
WM. GALLACHER.

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 a.m. A. D. HOWELL SMITH, B.A.: "The Myth of the Holy City."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanic's Institute, Bradford).—
Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. JIM BACKHOUSE: A Lecture.

Failsworth Secular Sunday School.—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.—
Mr. C. McCALL (Manchester): "The Spirit World."

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.
Open meeting.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday,
6-30 p.m. Mr. H. CUTNER: "Robert Taylor, the Devil's
Chaplain (1784-1844)."

Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Cafe, Old Arcade,
Pilgrim Street, Newcastle).—Sunday, 7 p.m. Mr. J. T.
BRIGHTON: A Lecture.

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STUPID BRITONS

"BRITONS, as a nation, are becoming more and more stupid," says Surgeon-Commander Roberts, F.R.S.; and he gives the reason supporting this assertion as: "The most intelligent members of the community have only one-third the number of children born to the least intelligent."

As the Commander's position, learning and experience give a certain weight to his words quite apart from their worth; as such audacious assertions and gigantic generalisations are often readily accepted as truth; as the proposition itself may directly interest free thinkers; and as Freethinkers are probably in the very best position av'a to weigh such statements in the balance, perhaps this subject will stand a little more "inward digesting" than it seems to have already been given.

Is it true that we are growing increasingly stupid? Is it true that we are so doing because the "intelligent" classes are two-thirds "light" on babies? What standards of measurement were used to ascertain and separate "the sheep from the goats"? What standards used to "count the flocks" of each? Were these standards real or artificial? Were they built up from real ideas or from a series of false ideas?

The decision that the "intelligent" suffer a three-to-one minority of children, and the "stupid" a similar majority, seems to have been as arbitrarily settled as the Roman Catholic Church arrives at its own total membership. As the Vatican never takes us into its full confidence over this, neither does the Commander. Insufficient evidence produces magical verdicts.

It is a fact in nature that the stupidly named "stupid classes" have always and ever produced more children than the so-called "intelligent classes." This may be somewhat accounted for by the fact that it is the so-called "intelligent classes" who have done the classification and counting. If the facts are as stated, then it follows that Britons, in company of every living race under the sun, have been consistently "growing more and more stupid" every generation down the ages.

It is, therefore, intensely interesting to learn that we are not abysmally more "stupid." If we are not quite so stupid as the very Dawn-men were, it can only be because the Commander's "intelligent" classification must be, in its essence, just a little "stupid."

It appears a common fault for godists, politicians or the military to class as "stupid" any who are wilfully uninterested in, or deliberately neglectful of God, or policies, or military affairs. It is a common fault of the orthodoxies to class the unorthodox as "stupid."

It is a common fault for the orthodox to classify as "stupid" those who have neither time, energy, desire nor money to develop their critical faculties after their daily struggle to meet the demands of a terrific and swellingly horrific Bureaucracy which Church and State breed and foster and then spew amongst the people.

It is a common fault for the orthodox to mistake this wilfully and deliberately bred condition of doped bemusedness in the body politic for inherent "stupidity"; and equally, to classify those who assist Church and State to produce this condition as "intelligent."

It is a common fault for the orthodox to assume that the "intelligent" classes are those who can find answers to all the questions that are not worth the asking. A sort of "Brains Trust" this. Also, for them to presume as "stupid" anyone who will not answer the questions that are not worth answering. A sort of "means test" this.

It is a common fault for the orthodoxies to presume that anyone relying upon their own minds and understandings is of the "stupid" class, despite the high intellectual courage 1

requires to ignore the orthodox questions and answers that are blandly considered "intelligent."

Howsoever these classes are sorted and sifted, it remains a fact that if the "intelligent" classes of the Commander do not breed enough children to preserve their own class, then they are not intelligent at all, but are really "stupid." This is not mere argument, it is self-evident.

Contrariwise, if the "stupid classes" breed fast enough to over-crow the intelligent, they are not stupid at all, but are sheerly "intelligent."

Also, it is not to be acknowledged as either a fact or a probability that the "intelligent" breed intelligent children, or the "stupid" have stupid progeny. The myriad of degrees in "stupidity" and "intelligence" therefore tend to keep the balance about even as between these classes.

There is a factor that the Commander does not seem to have taken into due account, even if at all. There are, and ever have been, a very few super-intelligences in each age. A few who are superior to the orthodoxies. A few upon whom the orthodox "intelligent" vent their spleen in one age, and worship as heroes and gods in the next age. A few, highly intelligent to a degree unknown by the orthodox "intelligent." A few whose vision is as far beyond, and superior to, the "intelligent" classes that they are looked upon as dangerous, as heretics, as numbskulls, as daft, as mad by ordinary "intelligence."

This class are so few as to be ever but the sport of the "intelligent" classes of their own generation, but they have a very peculiar property that the "intelligent" have not yet classified, or even recognised.

It is truly said that "The heterodox of yesterday is the orthodox of to-day." "Intelligence" is so smug in its own consciousness that it becomes stupid. "Stupidity" is aware that it has to follow some course other than its own. It chooses the best. Hence the "super-intelligent" have a following of "stupidity" whom they are for ever leading out of the morasses into which the "intelligent" land and leave them.

It should be apparent that if the Commander's "intelligent" classes speed up their breeding to consciously keep ahead of the "stupid" classes, then they are, logically and morally, below the level of the Dawn-men. They breed merely as "Class-Haters." Nature knows nothing lower or more vile than this.

If they are conscious and yet do not breed against the "stupid" classes, they are not intelligent, for they commit "Class Suicide."

These "intelligent classes" appear to lack exactly what the Commander did not seem to measure them with: Imagination.

It is hard to believe that the "stupid" wish or seek to go back to the despotic rule of Church and State. The world is "stupid" for still settling its differences by war; but the "stupid" are aware that these differences are ever on a higher moral ground than previous wars; they are aware that these differences are getting whittled down and down.

They know war is the ultimate expression of "stupidity"; yet are aware that the stupid reasons of the past would not move them to even pick up a bow and arrow to-day.

To show that "Britons, as a nation, grow more and more stupid," it is necessary to exhibit that we would war for as low or lower reasons than any in the past. This is not possible. No Crusade could now be engineered to fight for the tomb of Jesus. The Church could neither buy us with "indulgences" or sell us by "excommunication." Mussolinis are kicked out; Hitler's found out; Church ceases to function. God is silent. Politicians are forced to help their satellites if possible. Economists have to prepare the way willy-nilly; and so, Sir Commander, "Britons, as a nation," led by the super-intellec[t]s, are growing "more and more" intelligent; "more and more" unorthodox; "more and more"—wise.

B. B. B.