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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Raw Material of Religion

All discussions on religious education in State schools the words "Rights" plays a prominent part. We hear much of the rights of the parent, the rights of the citizen, the rights of the teacher, and the rights of the community. In the quarrels of the adults the child has, so to speak, been mislaid. We have been so concerned in discussing who shall give the education that we have almost forgotten what it is we are educating. Perhaps when we are all fully alive to the fact that there is a child involved in the question, even that the child is *the* question, a saner view of the matter may obtain. We may then realise that a religious instruction is that—quite apart from the question of whether religion is true or false—it is obviously and demonstrably unfitted to become part of a child's school education.

In a sinister sense it is true that professional religionists do not forget the child. On the contrary, they are keenly alive to its existence, and—from their point of view—rightly regard it as one of their most important assets. For apart from the child the future of religion is positively hopeless. I do not think that a case can be cited anywhere of a person brought up without religion, who has received a fair education, and who on arriving at maturity has embraced religion. Where the "conversion" of mature individuals occur it is traceable to the power of early influences, or to emotional forces operating upon a mentally ill-equipped or essentially ill-balanced constitution. To secure itself a future religion must effect a lodgment while each individual is young. There is an infection period for religion as for certain infantile diseases. And the religious germ, once introduced, opens the organism to recurrent attacks from germs of the same or from kindred species.

There is an underlying reason, deeply embedded in human nature, why a susceptibility to religion should characterise the immaturity of the individual. It lies in the fact that religious ideas are characteristic of the immaturity of the race. A civilised people never create a religion. At most they perpetuate it; and it is nearly a perpetuation with modification. Its function is critical and monoclastic. The origin of all religious ideas have to be sought amid conditions that are known only in uncivilised communities, or in civilised ones so far as they applicate the mental stages through which their ancestors have passed; and this duplication occurs more or less with each of us. In a rough and ready way one may say that each child is, in the earlier stages of its mental development, a picture in miniature of the one normal condition of the average adult. The fear of a child in face of the unknown, the indistinct sense of causation, the readiness to ascribe

life to inanimate objects, the strong tendency to read its own feelings into all around it, bring us face to face with the mental conditions from which religion springs and to which religion still makes its most fervent appeals.

Childhood thus offers a natural opportunity for the inculcation of religious ideas. A child's mind is normally in the fetishistic stage, and to it, one readily admits, religion is so far natural. But with us a child is not destined for life in a savage community, but in a civilised one. And the normal and vital forces of its environment make of necessity for the destruction of fetishism and of supernaturalism in all its forms. Nor, under proper conditions, would there be any need to trouble over this fetishistic stage of mental growth. A perfectly healthy expression could be found in fairy tales or poetry, while the pressure of a properly organised social life would prevent its perpetuation beyond the years suitable to its expression. But this natural and proper growth is not permitted. Professional religion feels that once the child escapes its control it is for ever free. And so, by means of parents with a mistaken sense of duty, and a professional priesthood with a keen sense of self-interest, this passing mental phase is seized and by artificial stimulation strengthened and perpetuated through life.

One need go no farther than these simple considerations to understand the anxiety of priests of all creeds to force religion upon the child. Childhood is the most favourable period—practically the only period—for the inculcation of religion. It is when the sense of the mysterious is strong, and it is enforced by a feeling of helplessness and a consciousness of ignorance that religion grips its devotees strongly. At other times it may strike one here and there as a plausible speculation, but it fails to rouse a strong sense of conviction, and the belief that religion is of all things the most important to a right ordering of life. The priest is thus driven to fight for the possession of the child as the one means of perpetuating his power. Whether the child is captured in school or out of school matters little. If school, home, and Church combine so much the better. But captured the child must be if religion is to live. In a very special sense the child is the raw material of religion.

It may be said that the priest is only doing what we all do more or less—training the child in the direction we would have it go. This is true, although there are one or two important distinctions to be made. In the first place, I do not believe that anyone is justified in giving a child as truths what are at best merely speculations, however valuable they may appear to us. Children should have their individuality respected equally with that of adults, and there are few adults who would not resent a lecturer putting before them as unquestioned truths things that were no better than speculations, and were, in fact, hotly contested. Not less care, but infinitely more care should be exercised in this matter towards children. The respon-

sibility of the adult is increased by the helplessness of the child. And in the next place a distinction must surely be drawn between training in social habits and instruction in mental and moral teachings as to the value of which we are all substantially agreed, and which in the form in which they are given are suitable to the child's understanding, and teachings that are subjects of the keenest dispute, and which are far beyond the child's comprehension. At any rate, we do see that the reason for social and moral instruction and mental training becomes clearer to the child as it grows older. With religion the mystery remains to the end, or if the mystery goes the religion usually goes with it.

But the more serious objection to religious instruction is that it does not constitute a part of real instruction at all. To confuse the understanding is not to instruct, nor can mystification be transformed into enlightenment. A good teacher seeks to make a pupil independent of him; a priest to keep one dependent upon him for guidance. Rational education seeks to convince, religion, at most, instructs. In the one case, proof or disproof is available. In the other case, nothing of the kind exists. The former aims chiefly at training the reason and exciting a love of inquiry; the latter lulls reason to sleep, exalts faith, and treats critical inquiry as more or less reprehensible. Examination and criticism is foreign to the truly religious mind, and is never submitted to without protest. And, after all, the most valuable part of a child's education is not *what* it learns, but *how* it learns. It is the development of capacity that is of importance, not the loading with knowledge. Given the first, knowledge may be acquired at leisure. But without the development and training of capacity all the knowledge in the world is only so much unusable lumber. The value of any education lies in the temper of mind induced, the habits formed, the custom of finding reasons for beliefs, the cultivation of a habit of sane criticism, the development of the power to examine opinions with the minimum degree of prejudice. Given all this, and the child becomes a valuable social asset. Without it, he becomes the dupe of all who are acute enough to prey upon his weaknesses.

The child is the raw material out of which church and chapel create their future patrons. This is the bottom fact of the situation. In church and chapel habits are developed, the seeds of which were sown in the impressionable years of childhood. Hence the efforts of the priests of all religions to get control of the child. Having secured this the rest is practically easy work. Without this nothing is possible. The tenacity of early impressions is notorious. The man dying in delirium babbles of his childhood days; the condemned criminal thinks of the time when he learned his lessons at his mother's knee. The religious lessons learned during childhood seldom completely disappear. Their effects lurk in the innermost recesses of our being, ready to assert themselves when we are most completely off our guard. We may not always be conscious of their presence or of their power, but they are there like the scar of a wound long since received.

The child is not only the raw material out of which religion makes its clients, it is also the raw material from which the citizen of the future is fashioned. Consequently, the struggle between the priest and the social reformer is far more than a mere contest of opinions, it is a struggle for the directions of civilisation. To religion the question

is one of life and death. In a modern civilised State it cannot hope to control the adult mind in virtue of the power it derives from the vital forces of art, literature, science, or sociology. For all these inevitably clash with the teachings of religion and undermine its authority. Its only chance of living on is to mould the plastic mind of childhood to conformity with a set of doctrines that it shrinks from placing before the liberated adult intelligence. If religion is to rule, it can only do so by imposing the past upon the present. The issue is, therefore, a simple and yet a profoundly important one. It is, in a word, whether the developing mind of the child is to be directed by agencies which, however imperfect, have at least served to raise mankind from savagery to civilisation, and placed him a monarch where he once cringed a slave; or by a priesthood which, under all its forms, and whether consciously or unconsciously, has had the effect of retarding the development of the mind and placing an embargo upon much that is most dignified and lovable in human nature.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

PIONEERS OF SOVIET RUSSIA

IN the light of all that has happened since in Muscovy, the experiences of Stepniak the Russian revolutionary in Czarist days are well worth recalling. In his narrative, "Underground Russia," Stepniak furnishes first-hand information concerning his country's revolutionary agitation, with biographical sketches of the leading Russian reformers.

In 1883, when his work was issued, much had been published outside Russia relating to that then largely unknown State. But, as Stepniak's friend and translator, Peter Lavroff, states in his preface, and he speaks not as the scribes, but as one clothed with authority: "It must be confessed that, for the most part, this literature has not the slightest value. The authors know nothing of the facts related by them, having taken them at second or third hand, without the possibility of verifying the authenticity of the sources from which they derive their ideas."

Again, the writings of Russians themselves, unless published abroad, were severely censored or even suppressed if they ventured to criticise the authorities. As Lavroff avers: "The authors who write for the Russian press, that is to say, under the Imperial rod, are compelled from mere considerations of personal security, to weigh every word, every sentence, that issues from their pens. In undertaking, therefore, to write upon Nihilism, they knew that they must pass over in silence many questions which relate both to the movement itself and to the Russian political and social system which is the cause of it." Consequently, most works dealing with Nihilism were written by zealous supporters of the Imperial Government. Hence, the importance of Stepniak's study, which is temperately written and is decidedly not the creation of a blood-seeking monster with which its author was frequently compared.

In the decade 1860-70, so-called Nihilism began as a philosophical and literary movement for the mental and moral emancipation of the individual from political and religious oppression. It was, indeed, very similar to the Secular movement in England. Among the Russian intellectuals, all faith in the current creed collapsed. By the spoken word and by means of the secret press, Christianity was assailed. Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, Mill and other eminent Rationalists were rendered into Russian and Freethought flourished like a new revelation. Stepniak recalls that: "Buchner's 'Force and Matter' in which the German philosopher directly attacks the Christian theology, was translated and lithographed. The book was secretly circulated, not without a certain amount of danger, and

was highly successful. Some pushed their ardour so far as to carry the propaganda among the young pupils in the schools."

Although Alexander II emancipated the serfs in 1861, the subsequent policy of the Government made all constitutional efforts for reform nugatory. A system of terrorism replaced the pacific proceedings of the early Nihilists, and culminated in the assassination of the Emperor in 1881. But the earlier movement permanently improved the position of women, several of whom became prominent martyrs to the cause.

In 1872, working men assembled in secret in a hovel near St. Petersburg to listen to Prince Peter Krapotkin's expositions of the principles of the Social Revolution. Other intellectuals gathered as workmen, carried their message to the proletariat and peasantry.

Krapotkin was of illustrious lineage. As Stepniak states: "The family of the Princes of Krapotkin is one of the few which descend in right line from the old feudatory princes of the ancient royal House of Rurik. In the circle of the *ciaikowzi* to which he belonged, it thus used to be said jestingly of him that he had more right to the throne of Russia than Alexander II who was only a German."

Trained in the most exclusive Court college, he obtained high distinction, but he soon deserted the Court and proceeded to Siberia to conduct geological studies. He joined many scientific expeditions and amassed an enormous amount of information, which he later utilised in collaboration with Reclus, the celebrated geographer.

Once again, in St. Petersburg—now Leningrad—he became secretary to the Geographical Society. He also wrote several works much esteemed by scientists and, later, projected an elaborate study of Finland's glaciers, which he was permitted to complete after he became a political prisoner. In the early twenties, Krapotkin visited Belgium and Switzerland, where his views, already advanced, assumed a revolutionary form. He became a fervent Internationalist and embraced the theories of anarchist communism, which he earnestly advocated throughout the rest of his life.

On returning to Russia, he joined the Revolutionary Party, the programme he drew up, with the rules of the organisation. He delivered secret addresses, explaining the history of the Internationale. These lectures attracted large and appreciative audiences whose members spread Krapotkin's teachings among their fellow workmen. The meetings became so well known in the Alexander Nevsky district that the police at last resolved on all costs to discover the identity of the notorious Borodin, which was the name under which Krapotkin gave his lectures. By bribing a workman, they ultimately effected his arrest, and their astonishment discovered that Borodin and Krapotkin were one and the same.

Naturally, this arrest created consternation in Court circles. The Czar was bitterly annoyed to discover a rebel in the highest aristocracy. So, Krapotkin was imprisoned for three years in the gloomy fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. He was never robust and his detention so completely weakened him that he could scarcely eat or take exercise. Then he was transferred by the physician's orders to St. Nicholas Hospital, where he made a rapid recovery, which he made every effort to conceal. Stepniak testifies that Krapotkin "walked with the step of a dying man; he spoke in a low voice, as if merely to open his mouth were a painful effort. The cause was very simple. He learned, through a letter . . . that an attempt was being organised to effect his escape, and as in the hospital the surveillance was much less strict than in the fortress, it was essential to prolong his stay there.

In July, 1876, Krapotkin escaped in accordance with a plan devised by himself, and, a few weeks later, was safely abroad.

At a gathering of exiles at Geneva in 1880, Stepniak suggested that Krapotkin should tell the story of his escape. He demurred, on the ground that he had been compelled so many times to relate the circumstances of his flight that he was tired of the

subject. Then, complying with the wishes of the gathering, he said that from the moment of his arrest, the determination to recover his freedom never left him. When he was sent to the hospital, he convinced the attendants that he was at death's door. Given daily exercise with a sentinel ever by his side, the prisoner projected a plan of escape. Various schemes were suggested by his friends. It was essential that a conveyance should be ready outside the gates. For many days in his cell, Krapotkin rehearsed the action of rapidly divesting himself of his hospital clothing once the signal was given by his friends, to dart through the gates to the waiting vehicle outside.

The signal for the flight was to be given by the playing of a violin from the window of a hired room facing the prison. After some delay, in response to the signal, the prisoner made a dash for freedom. "On reaching the gate," he said, "I saw a vehicle; but for a moment I was in doubt whether it was ours, for I could not recognise my friend in the officer who was on the alert in the street. To make him turn round I clapped my hands, to the surprise of the friends who were observing the scene. The officer turned round. I recognised him, and in less time than it takes to say these words, I was inside the vehicle, which went off like a flash of lightning, and I was wrapped in a military cloak which my friend had in readiness, as well as an officer's cap."

The prison officials raged in vain. The bird had flown and was soon safely over the frontier. Until the Soviet Revolution, Krapotkin lived largely in London, where his unselfish devotion to the political and social causes he cherished continued unabated. But, contrary to popular belief, while he was a refugee in foreign lands, he exercised no authority in Russia herself. Stepniak, who knew the facts, declares that when he left Russia, Krapotkin's influence in that country ended.

Three of his writings in exile won wide attention both in Britain and abroad. His "Fields, Factories and Workshops" "The Conquest of Bread," and, above all, his "Mutual Aid Among Animals," gained marked influence with biologists and economists. "Mutual Aid" stresses the truth that co-operation largely alleviates the hardships of the Darwinian struggle for existence.

T. F. PALMER.

MORALITY AND RELIGION

(Continued from page 323)

IT has often been said that there are no new jokes, only re-hashes of old ones. The same might be said of philosophical arguments about morality. Joad once said that the history of philosophy told us a lot about philosophers and nothing about reality. Cynicism, scepticism, idealism, mysticism, and the rest, are different points of view. The history of theological and metaphysical controversy follows the acquisition of knowledge, and shows the confusion of law with cause, cause with reason, and reason with motive. Each step in the process arises in the need for restatement, and forms part of our intellectual inheritance. The various stages are reflected in our personal attitude towards social life. We still have with us the simple "It isn't done," and the "they say," the religious "thou shalt not" and "believe or be damned," as well as the metaphysical "must," "ought," and "should." Not only can we discover ourselves rationalising but we can also trace the historic development of the methods by which this is achieved. And we can say that whatever is sanctioned by custom is moral at any time or place. The incongruities and contradictions of dream phantasy are seen in rationalisation; in precept in relation to practice. The age of reason has not dispelled the illusion; the categorical imperative is the moral "thing in itself." Morality is as fickle as fortune. Like religion, it has sanctioned the blood feud, persecution and torture, honour among thieves, and my country—right or wrong.

It has justified the poverty of the many and the luxury of the few. It has reconciled the chains of slavery with the ideal of freedom; the imbecilities of the cenobite and the power of the imperial juggernaut; mystical acquiescence and the fury of fanaticism. It has sanctioned negative restraint and positive coercion.

Reason as cause or rationalisation as excuse both relate to the feeling of effort in action; the relation of theory and practice. The illusion of power in magic is the expression of feeling, and the feeling of effort or force is the basic concept in dynamic science. The confusion of force or power with law was characteristic of the period of the inception of dynamics. Customs of masquerade and mystery became pomp and pageantry; the visible symbol of power; shown also in public executions, hangings and quarterings; public exhibition in stocks and pillory. The possession of power and the power of possession have both a religious and a political significance. Power is there philosophically in Leibnitz' moral Final Causes, and the Machiavellian ends and means of power politics; in Spinoza as well as Hobbes. The curse in theological anathema takes practical form in action. Projection is not merely visualisation; there is projection of feeling of force in the delegation of authority and power; projection of personal feeling in power politics; there is vicarious heroics in the "Glory of God," and in the glorification of the State; vicarious satisfaction in the scapegoat; in the delegation of responsibility. Lord Acton said that power corrupts, but, the power is our own and not a separable entity. The religious wars involved the question of liberty of conscience. Out of the religious and political exhibition of power arose the philosophical dialectic concept, and later, Spencer's biological struggle for existence. The psychological bankruptcy of the old introspective metaphysical ethics led to Schopenhauer's escape from pain and the Nietzschean madness of the Superman; the desperation of the doctrine of live dangerously has led to the further expression of feeling in Sartre's idea that human life begins on the far side of despair. Sublimation may be delirious and violent; the desire for freedom arises in restraint and coercion, and the desire for power arises in the feeling of frustration. The struggle for existence involves survival, and, in thinking of the atom bomb we might well wonder whether the curse is the power or the power the curse. We are concerned with both the exhibition of power and the power of inhibition.

The soul as a misinterpretation of the dream! The dream characteristic in verbal visualisation in rationalisation! The Vedic Atman as the "That" in the "Thou shalt not"! The mystical tradition is to be traced to the Vedas. There is a connection between mystical practice and magic initiation ceremonies. Mysticism is practical psychology. The various methods may include self torture, such as the discipline of flagellation, or self denial. And there is a connection between mystical meditation and evangelistic and corybantic mediation; between fasting or sexual abstinence and the fury of fanaticism; the land of unfulfilled desire and righteousness satisfaction; the delight of beautiful vision and satisfaction in verbal visualisation. There is wish-fulfilment and the expression of feeling.

H. H. PREFACE.

(To be concluded)

FOR CLERICAL BORES

A round hole should be made in the top of the pulpit, or in the shelf, to hold a watch, even if there is a clock in the church; for some men are short-sighted. Better still is a horizontal clock fitted into the top of the pulpit, with a movable third hand that can be set by the preacher at the minute when he ought to stop. In most small churches, a plain round clock on the west gallery or wall will also be a convenience. The congregation will often have cause to be grateful if there is a clock within sight of the preacher.—From "The Parson's Handbook" (1943), by Percy Dearmer, M.A., D.D.

THE ARAB EMPIRE AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO OUR MODERN CIVILISATION

III

AFTER Egypt had been annexed (circa 641), the Egyptian fleet became the nucleus of a great armada, which repeatedly attacked Greek Constantinople, but they were repulsed on each occasion by the Byzantines' very effective employment of the famous "Greek Fire," corresponding more or less to our own flame-throwers. One gathers that the only direction in which the Christians of those centuries were the equals of the Saracens was in this matter of infernal engines of war. Had it not been for the timely invention of greek fire it is extremely probable that the whole of Europe would, via Constantinople, have fallen and become part of the Mohammedan Empire, since it is highly improbable that we would have been able to hold the Arabs at the Balkan end and at the same time over the Pyrenees from Spain, which had, at this time, about A.D. 800, been occupied by the Moors, as they were called in Spain, for over a hundred years.

All advances on Constantinople from overland were equally unsuccessful, though for many years the Byzantine emperor found it expedient to buy the enemy off with a huge annual subsidy.

I suggest that we now leave the Eastern Arab empire which flourished and disseminated its culture for about 600 years, and turn our attention towards the West.

Nine years after the death of The Prophet Alexandria fell to Omar the second Kalif, and this great leader founded a new capital, El Kahireh, the present Cairo. I believe the famous "Citadel" mosque which appears in every picture of Cairo is the original built by him thirteen centuries ago (?). It is quite different to all the others, and so, not at all characteristic of Egyptian architecture.

And here presents itself for solution the question: did these Arabs destroy the world-famous library at Alexandria or did they not? Early Christian writers, bitterly jealous of the more civilised Mahomedans, have claimed that this quite out-of-character crime was committed by the pagan followers of a false prophet, but Gilmore, probably the greatest authority on the Saracens, states that this accusation has never been substantiated by any worth-while evidence, and we know that evidence was not the strong point of these primitive fanatics in any of their writings. Such an action certainly seems utterly inconsistent with all their later history, marked by a passionate love of and respect for books of every description and language.

In 711 the Saracens, after occupying the whole of the North coast of Africa, as far as Ceuta, and enlisting many of the conquered tribes in their victorious armies, including Bedouins, Berbers and Greeks, and Romans from Alexandria and Carthage, sent an army in which were included a very large proportion of "Moors" across the Straits of Hercules, and named their landing place Geb-el-Tarik—the Hill of Tarik (Gibraltar)—after their Moor general, Tarik.

The Spanish peninsula, the decaying Roman province of Iberia had at that time been occupied by the Goths for about 250 years.

This country surrendered to the inspired emissaries of Allah in a remarkably short time, and the Moslems crossed the Pyrenees and advanced towards the English Channel, half way across France. Fortunately however, or unfortunately, according to how one chooses to regard subsequent history, they were eventually defeated at Poitiers, near Tours (A.D. 732), by Charles Martel, a Duke of Austria.

The Saracens retired over the Pyrenees into Andalucia, as they called their new province, and never again seriously attempted the invasion of France. This was one of the most—perhaps the most momentous battle in the history of Europe, but the present writer was kept so busy at school memorising the names of the wives of Henry the Eighth and such like balderdash that

so hint of its significance, of how near we came to being forcibly civilised by these wicked pagans ever reached me. It is safe to conjecture that no such idea ever penetrated the pious skulls of my masters either, and even had it done so they would never have dared to mention it. In teaching history it is more important to teach children what is considered good for them to believe than to inquire too closely into possibly not-so-pleasant fact. One should constantly bear in mind the fact that probably the great majority of our historical records were compiled by fanatical Catholics, if not actually priests, and keep a supply of salt handy when studying our history.

Had not Martel won his battle at Poitiers, we Europeans would now perhaps be all devout Mahomedans, or, what is more likely, we should be so far ahead of our present state of civilisation that religions of all sorts would long ago have been relegated to museums and students of anthropology, and, incidentally, the "Holy" Inquisition would never have tortured its 350,000 martyrs through 350 years of bloody religious tyranny.

Thus, in the space of a paltry hundred years, the Arab influence came to be flung across the world all the way from Spain to China. Wells writes: "The intellectual stimulation of the whole world West of China, the break up of old ideas and the development of new ones, was enormous."

These warriors, wherever they went, carried with them their translations of scientific Greek literature (geometry), Egyptian astronomy, Buddhist, Confucian and Zoroastrian philosophy, Indian mathematics, etc. They introduced the manufacture of paper, making printed books possible, and encouraged active speculation and discussion of all branches of human knowledge, where they had found only a deathly superstition-ridden stagnation. By this time, there were efficiently organised educational institutions throughout the whole Mahomedan empire, in which the intellectually vigorous and racially allied Jewish element wholeheartedly co-operated. Long after the disintegration of the Saracen empire this intellectual activity was producing valuable results from which the whole civilised world today is all unconsciously and ungratefully benefiting, with the single exception, of course, of the Churches, to whom all such intellectual activity is, and always has been, anathema.

Remarkable advances were made in mathematics, medicine and physics. The clumsy Roman numerals were replaced by our present-day Arabic ones and the sign for zero was invented, this latter an achievement in itself which, however, perhaps only a mathematician can fully appreciate by trying to imagine himself deprived of this now indispensable cypher. Our words algebra, zero, chemistry (Arab; kimia, from Khem, Egypt), alcohol, sugar, almanac, and scores of others now so common we never notice them, all words for things or ideas new to Europe. Many of the stars most used by navigators have Arabic names—Aldebaran, algol, Vega et al.

M. C. BROTHERTON, Comdr., R.N.

A SACRED BARD

CHRISTOPHER SMART, who entered this world at Shipbourne in Kent on April 11, 1722, and departed therefrom at the King's Bench Prison in London on May 18, 1770, wrote the following poems: "The Eternity of the Supreme Being" (1730), "The Omnipresence of the Supreme Being" (1752), "The Goodness of the Supreme Being" (1756), "The Song of David" (1763), "The Psalm of David" (1765) and "The Parables of Our Lord" (1766).¹ Such a list certainly establishes Smart's claim to be an enthusiastic and industrious producer of religious verse, whatever might be the literary value of his productions. Smart studied at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and held there—1745 to 1753—a Fellowship worth £140 a year, quite a respectable sum in those days. But he behaved wildly, and contracted debts for which he was bound by his creditors to assign them

£50 per annum till final settlement. Gray, a contemporary Fellow of Cambridge, who was well acquainted with the conduct of Smart, predicted that it would lead him to either a prison or a madhouse! In 1753, resigning his Fellowship, Smart came to London, and married the stepdaughter of Newberry, a well-known bookseller and publisher. There, in company with others, Smart ran a monthly named "The Universal Visitor," to which Johnson, who for more than one reason regarded him with sympathy, contributed a few pieces.² Smart was also connected with a periodical entitled "The Old Woman's Magazine," for the pages of which he would appear to have enjoyed a special qualification. Boswell, in his "Life of Johnson" under the date 1763, cites the following remark made to him by that famous author: "Madness frequently discovers itself by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the streets, or any other unusual place." Boswell then reports the following conversation, occurring between Burney and Johnson at another time. "B.: 'How does poor Smart do?' J.: 'It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease, for he grows fat upon it.' B.: 'Perhaps, sir, that may be from want of exercise.' J.: 'No, sir, he has partly so much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement he used to exercise to walk to the alehouse, but he was carried back again. I did not think he ought to have been shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as anyone else. Another charge was that he did not love clean linen: and I have no passion for it.'"

Chambers, in the afore quoted work, preserves Smart's "Song of David." This has 86 stanzas of six lines each. The service due from authors to their readers compelled me to go carefully through that poem; and I cannot recall ever to have had a more wearisome task. If this resembles his other religious³ lucubrations, the treadmill would be a pleasure compared with their perusal.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

¹ R. F. Sharp's "Dictionary of British Authors," London, 1897, Third Edition. Campbell, in his "Specimens of the British Poets," says that Smart termed himself "the poet of his God."

² Chambers' "Cyclopaedia of English Literature," Edinburgh, 1845.

³ His prose version of Horace (text and translation on opposite pages) is excellent.

SOVIET KOW-TOWING TO THE CHURCH

The envoys from the "atheist" Soviet Union, who came to New York to attend the International Peace Conference, did not stop at the office of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. They went instead to St. Patrick's Cathedral, there to pay their respects to high functionaries of the Roman Catholic Church. It was more befitting, they thought, to be seen shaking hands and smiling in that den of superstition than to consort with those who are fighting the religious racket.

Why, in the interest of "peace," they did not go to Harlem first and there visit Father Divine's Church and meet God in person, remains a diplomatic mystery. It would have been more satisfactory, it seems, to have dealt with the Deity direct than with his mere underlings in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Politics is always politics—and in any language. Expediency is its first concern and honesty its last. Left Wing diplomacy can be as oily and gushy toward the Church as anything of which the Right Wing can be accused, and together they can fly anywhere on a mission of hypocrisy.

It may be another Reptilian Age before anyone can look to high officialdom in politics for anything resembling integrity in matters of religion.—"Truth Seeker," New York.

ACID DROPS

A story that is real, and the moral of which should run wide and deep. During the war, an officer on active service noticed a native in uniform who took no notice of the religious service. He asked for the reason of not attending service. He was met with the question: "Is God black or is he white?" The officer hesitated and the native retorted: "You do not know. I asked that question at my Durban college and they could not answer me." The officer was wise in his silence, although many would have counted the coloured soldier as insolent. Colour means much. It is laden with injustice and backed up with ignorance. Yet if there is a God there seems no reason that he should not be black, or blue, or any other colour. It is hard to determine the colour of *something*; how hard it must be to determine the colour of *nothing*? The whole of religious history may be described as turning nothing into something.

"The Lord's Day Magazine" says that our bodies require rest as well as our brains. We agree that one's brain may be strained with foolishness as well as with wisdom. The poorest parson may end his sermon as tired as a brilliant Atheist discoursing abstract science. We can conceive nothing harder than that to make a lengthy sermon sound like a philosophic discourse. We do read of souls in heaven singing songs, but never do we hear of angels holding a discussion of something sensible and great.

The path of science is littered with the bodies of dead theories; but they are buried beneath monuments of established truths. The paths of religion are also covered with worn-out ideas; but they are enshrined in thousands of Churches, and there are multitudes of guardians who pretend that these dead ideas are still alive. Gladly science recognises the mistakes made and with fresh determination searches for a deeper and deeper truth. But religion enshrines a lie and holds it to the world as the truth of God. They fight for the fabrication of a lie.

A man must be very cautious when he sets forth as a world director. To begin with, he must be in touch with everything and understand everything. He must be more than a mere law-giver, he must be a law creator. But the odds are heavily against him. A world director may mistake a fancy for a fact, and develop a desire for execution. Withal, it is not a very easy post to hold. It is easy to announce that things are going wrong, because things are always going wrong, things are never satisfying for all. The law-giver has a fairly comfortable job—for the time—for by the time that it is declared his followers have forgotten all about what it foretold.

Here is an example of what we have said. Mr. J. B. Priestley has been asked by the Editor of "John Bull" to answer questions given to the paper named. The first question—or questions and answers—run as follows:—

"Superstition grows when true religion decays. Life is a mystery, and when we refuse to recognise that profound truth with our conscious minds, then our unconscious minds begin to offer us superstition. The human soul rebels very soon against a narrow materialistic and too-rational view of life. Notice how Nazism, which denounced Christianity, soon became a hotbed of gross superstition and created a sinister atmosphere of black magic."

There is more, but we think that gives the essence of Mr. Priestley's mixture of mere sounds and very, very childish outbursts. We call it an "outburst" out of kindness, for what he says must have been written in a hurry, or he was desirous to show what kind of rubbish a section of the public will take. We will take a rapid examination of Mr. Priestley's method of instructing his readers.

Superstition, he says, grows when false religion decays. But, bless the man, superstition is expressed in religion, it only becomes false when the other fellow disagrees. A is superstition, a false religion to B. That is all there is in it. All the words about true religion are part and parcel of the common jargon of professional hawkers of religion. Mr. P. is saying it over and over again. Swap one religion and another of the same

kind is waiting for you. On the confession of religious leaders, no one knows what God means. It is a mere agitation in the air.

The second step of enlightenment is that "Life is a mystery." But that is simply not true, and Mr. P. goes at once to the level of the uneducated street preacher. Life is not a mystery to science. In fact, science never admits a mystery. It may admit ignorance, but that is not a mystery. It is a problem, and it is the business of the scientists to regard it as such. Mystery gives nothing—save to the priest. But science knows no such term. No scientist talks about life as a mystery. It is a problem. And that is the difference between intelligibility and God. The first carries the registration of knowledge and power. God and religion stand for perpetual ignorance. "Mystery" is the gaping of a fool to a fool. If Mr. P. insists that he has no knowledge or understanding about life, well and good. That is a plain statement of fact. It is honest. But if a man says that I believe God because I know nothing as to what he is like, or what he does, and, therefore, will not be led by the knowledge that lies before him, he is of small value to himself and to others. Of course, in actual life Mr. P. does not adopt the stupid attitude that we know nothing of God. As a matter of fact we do. We know how the gods came, how they live, and how they ultimately drop back into nothingness. "God" means nothing that is useful, or thinkable.

Mr. Priestley is as curious in his history as he is in science. He says, probably to make his religion indestructible, that in the eighteenth century "Most educated men regarded religious belief as so much nonsense." That is sheer exaggeration. It is true that in the eighteenth century there was a drop in the Christian religion, but it was still powerful. There was a great development of actual unbelievers, but what came also was a development of a God without Jesus as a God. The rapid growth of avowed Atheism came with the opening of the last century. Mr. Priestley is quite wrong. The great feature to-day is that Atheism is on the march. And when individual retreat happens it is not soon suppressed. It would be foolish to ignore the power of Christianity, not so much intellectual as social, of the Christian religion in this country. Religion is far from dead. But amongst intelligent people we cannot picture Mr. Priestley serving a very profitable aid to the defenders of the faith.

A religious gentleman called Shipton tells us in the "Church Times" that "The nation is only now discovering, after half a century of Secularism, that morality and religion cannot be divorced." It certainly is news to us that the "nation" has had half a century of Secularism. We gladly admit that a few Secularists have, for a hundred years at least, advocated Secularism and quite a number of people have responded; but to say the "nation" was under Secularism for half a century is just another Christian lie.

As for the impossibility of divorcing morality from religion, it would be most interesting to learn from Mr. Shipton how comes it that so many—the big proportion—of the inhabitants of our prisons are so thoroughly religious? In fact, special prison chaplains have to be provided for them, while the Home Office refuses to appoint a Secular "chaplain" on the grounds that there are too few Secularists in prison. That Secularism is slowly but surely spreading is, of course, quite true, but it will take a long time before, for instance, the majority of our representatives in Parliament will dare to stand up and proclaim their faith in such an anti-Christian creed.

Two Dublin sisters received "Holy Communion" one morning and later, coming home from a dance, were drowned when their car plunged into the sea. We call attention to this simply to show that taking Holy Communion is no more a guarantee of safety from accidents than taking a nip of whiskey at a pub or playing darts. Even the Mumbo-Jumbo of an African witch doctor is equally effective—or ineffective.

Alas, even the heaven inspired "Universe" is not quite sure who was Peter's successor as Pope. An anxious reader wants to know how he was elected as there were no Cardinals at the time, and the answer is: "We do not know."

"THE FREETHINKER"

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SUGAR PLUMS

We take the following from "The Northern Scot." It is worth noting:—

AN INFIDEL'S CREED.

From a Scottish Manse.

I was taught in my early boyhood to think of Tom Paine with a feeling of horror. As Bradlaugh and Voltaire, he was an infidel! That was equivalent to being an assassin or something else equally wicked. Openly he declared his contempt for the Christian gospel. A native of Norfolk, born over 200 years ago, his mind was influenced by the doctrines that were gaining currency in the days of the French Revolution. Perhaps it was at the same time poisoned against a Church that was reactionary, opposing dogmatically both liberty and progress.

His book, "The Rights of Man," had a great circulation, but a certain Thomas Muir got 14 years transportation for aiding in that circulation. Such was the mind of the powers-that-be so far as Paine was concerned. Yet I give a sentence from his writings and I ask if it doesn't compare with the teaching of Christ. "The world is my country, mankind are my brothers; to do good and love my neighbour, that is my religion." Space is growing scarce these days, so I won't enlarge, but read these words very carefully. There you have the breadth of view, the intensity of emotion, the simplicity of thought, and the humanity that is associated with the New Testament. Would it were the creed of all men these days of rancour and narrow prejudice. Give me those words rather than the Nicene or Apostles' creed. And it is the creed of an infidel!

So the marvellous miracles of Fatimah are going to be filmed and fervent believers all over the world will have their faith strengthened when they see the sun and the stars chasing each other all over Heaven on the screen as visual proof that the Virgin actually did talk with some Portuguese children. With Bing Crosby as the priest in charge—singing, perhaps, "Would you rather be a Fish?"—and Mae West as "Our Lady", the film ought to be a huge success. But we do sometimes wonder what our great intellectual converts think of the heavenly fireworks, and particularly what the Catholic scientists—if that is not a contradiction in terms—who are attending the meetings of the British Association, really believe about these "miracles." Would they dare to address the other scientists on the matter?

The Church managed to get a very good hand in at the Edinburgh Musical Festival. There were the usual idiotic processions with solemn priests trying to look "reverent," as if they had induced "God" to shower his blessings on all the participants, and the credulous grovelling before bishops as if the more one grovelled, the better the Lord was pleased. The news-reels showed up this sickening superstition in all its glory—and perhaps even a cinema audience can be moved to shame sometimes. But the point to note is how the Church, willy-nilly, gets its claws into so many of the big things, and it is time somebody protested.

PERHAPS it was a mistake to announce that on August 31 my wife and myself would have completed fifty years of married life. I wrote a few words in "The Freethinker," and that brought an avalanche of praise and kindness. I take that to be genuine, for no one was compelled to write. The letters have been pouring in ever since. I hope that this note will be accepted as an acknowledgment for the kindly things that were said. Better still would it have been if all could have been present at the proceedings at the Waldorf Hotel on September 1. I should like to have shaken hands with all those whom I know mainly from afar. I might also have introduced my wife, to whom I owe so much, in helping me forward in my work. Those who are interested in me should give full appreciation to one who has done so much to make my work possible and enjoyable.

As to the proceedings at the Waldorf Hotel, that was one stream of enjoyment. There was time and space for talking and—above all, listening—to such a pianist as Mr. Lionel Bowman, and artists like Miss Hazel Douglas, Miss Therese Carroll, and Mr. Peter Cotes, who provided a rich dish for all.

My wife has been with me in most of my active work. I think it would suit both of us if we could be fortunate enough to end our careers together. There was something beautiful and timely when the wife of that great man, J. G. Frazer—to whom I owe so much—saw his wife die in his presence, followed by his own death in the course of a few hours.

The gathering was a private, not a public one.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

CATHOLIC EXPERIENCES

SOME little time ago there appeared in this paper two articles describing their writer's experiences whilst boarding with a Roman Catholic family. That narrative (which was not very favourable to the Catholics) prompts me to give some of my own experiences among people of "the old faith." My narrative shall be strictly objective, descriptive, non-controversial, and impartial; and, as nearly all the people (save those at Walthamstow) alluded to are dead, there is no need to conceal or disguise names.

I became a convert to the Roman Catholic religion in 1907, at the age of 22. Previously to taking that step I had been greatly affected by the very militant anti-Christian campaigns of Robert Blatchford (Editor of the Socialist weekly, "The Clarion") in his books "God and My Neighbour," and "Not Guilty," and in his paper; and of the then newly-founded Rationalist Press Association, by its "Sixpenny Reprints" of Haeckel ("Riddle of the Universe"), T. H. Huxley, Samuel Laing, Joseph McCabe, and others. The effect on me was to destroy belief in the dull Nonconformist religion of my family; but the destruction of the "definite belief" did not mean also the destruction of the "desire to believe."

I longed for some definite creed; and I turned to John Henry Newman, William Hurrell Mallock, and other advocates of Catholicism. In due course I made up my mind to accept that faith as the infallible teacher of which I was in quest, and I was received as a convert at St. Benedict's, Ealing, West London. At the time, I was living with my parents, but soon afterwards they moved to Walthamstow, in Essex, and I accompanied them. I became a member of the congregation of St. George's Catholic Church, Shernhall-street, and found myself in what to me was a strange and "magic" atmosphere.

In those days the "Irish Home Rule" controversy was at its height, and there was great bitterness between the Catholic Irish and England as regards that dispute. The congregation of St. George's was to a considerable extent of Irish extraction, and to me, a Puritan-reared Englishman, this was a vivid, strange environment. The ardent zeal of the Irish for freedom; their vivacity and gaiety—all these soon had me in their grip. Here I must mention a curious paradox. The Roman Catholic Church is regarded commonly by its opponents as being opposed to liberty and as a friend of tyrants. I shall return to this later on: but my present concern is with what I called "a curious paradox" encountered by me at Walthamstow. It was this: the Catholic Irish at St. George's were ardent advocates of political freedom and were deadly haters of tyrants. The reason, of course, was that they sympathised with their fellow-countrymen in Ireland, who were then fighting for Home Rule against English domination. I did not realise, then, that the enthusiasm for freedom had this particular local cause, and did not necessarily mean a general love of liberty by Catholicism as a whole. This distinction, however, was to show itself some years later, with sad consequences. At this point I merely allude to it in passing, and turn to the subject of the general religious atmosphere in which, in 1907 and after, I found myself, as a new Catholic convert.

It may be described as a sort of "spiritual fairyland." Do not let me give an impression that all Catholics live in such an atmosphere. Many are merely "nominal," and even amongst the more zealous there are of course endless degrees of devotion. Many, however, really enter into the full essence of it: and a convert, being inevitably enthusiastic would do so. It comes to this: to the devotional Catholic, the "supernatural world" is a very real thing. In Holy Communion; in prayers; in devotions like Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary and the like, he (or she) has a "transcendent world." It is a very remarkable phenomenon. It gripped me tightly. It has an indescribable fascination.

In September, 1908, in International Eucharistic Congress was held in Westminster. These Congresses are gatherings in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, and the one at Westminster was remarkable for the great assembly of Catholics—archbishops, bishops, clergy and laity, with a special Papal Legate—from all quarters of the world. It was a scene of splendour as the great procession wound round the outside of Westminster Cathedral; but, owing to Protestant protests and a resultant intervention by Asquith (then Premier), there was no ceremonial carrying of the Sacred Host. The scene, however, was magnificent, and made a vast impression on me!

In 1914 came the First Great War. I was never in the Army as I received "total exemption" on two counts: 1, conscientious objection; 2, medical unfitness. Before, however, going into events of this time, let me give a brief description of the religious life of a practising Catholic. The ruling maxim is that life must be governed by "the Commandments of God" (the Ten given in Genesis) and "the Commandments of the Church." Arising from the latter, the Catholic must (a) be present at Mass on every Sunday and every Holy Day of Obligation; (b) go to Holy Communion at least once a year, and that at Easter, but "frequent and even daily Communion" is advocated as the real ideal; (c) go to Confession at least once a year, but it is advised to go weekly if possible, and at any time when conscious of having committed a "mortal sin"; (d) say morning and night prayers; (e) contribute according to one's means, to the support of the clergy as one's spiritual pastors; (f) practise acts of devotion, such as the Rosary. With regard to Confession, there is a distinction between "mortal sin" (which "kills the soul by depriving it of divine grace, and deserves hell") and "venial," which "is more easily forgiven." It is obligatory to confess the former, but not obligatory to confess (though optional) the latter. The penitent enters the small Confessional Box in the church, the priest being separated from the penitent by a partition with a wired opening sufficient for speech. Mortal sins having been described in detail, the

penitent makes an "act of contrition" (expression of sorrow and determination to amend) and the priest imposes a penance, generally the saying of the Rosary, or some other devotion, and gives absolution—"Ego absolvo te a peccatis tuis"; "I absolve thee from thy sins, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

The Rosary is a form of prayer said with a string of beads, and is divided into "fifteen mysteries"—events chiefly of the New Testament. To each of the three divisions ("sorrowful," "joyful," and "glorious" mysteries) there are one "Pater-noster" (the Prayer, "Our Father") and ten "Hail Marys" (the prayer "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Pray for us, Holy Mother of God, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.")

Catholics are expected to belong to some devotional guild. The most popular are (a) The Guild of the Blessed Sacrament, for men, and (b) The Children of Mary, for girls. There are frequent processions in churches, the most solemn being that of the Blessed Sacrament, when the priest carries the Sacred Host; another popular procession is that of Our Lady (the Blessed Virgin) when a statue of Mary is carried. On the Sunday within the Octave of (i.e., the eight days after) the Feast of Corpus Christi (the great midsummer Feast of the Blessed Sacrament) it is customary to have outdoor processions in the grounds of the church—even, nowadays, in some places in the public streets.

Such is a brief and, I fear, inadequate sketch of what I called "the magical (or mystical, rather) life" into which I entered fully at St. George's, Walthamstow, as a convert at 22, in 1908. In 1914 I left that district and went to Stamford Hill, North London. The Catholic Church there is the large one built by the Jesuits—St. Ignatius'; it has a college attached. I took lodging with a Catholic family and associated myself with the congregation of St. Ignatius' Church.

J. W. POYNTER.

(To be Continued.)

PANES ET CIRCENSUS—SEMPER EADEM

"BREAD and Circuses"; "Forever the Same." These two old Latin tags passed through my mind on reading the July 14 issue of the American "Life," which splashes across seven pages of photographs and reading matter the story of the Roman Catholic Congress held in the Ball Park, Ottawa, in June.

It cannot be said of the Catholics, what was said of the Bourbons, who "learned nothing, neither did they forget any thing"—in fact, the Church in its long existence has learned much, and has, indeed, improved on the Roman "Bread and Circuses" in that the bread has become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and the circus has certainly reached its zenith in the Ball Park, Ottawa.

At this monster Congress, where Mass was celebrated before 65,000 people, the Church dignitaries in all their usual pomp and panoply made the most of the occasion, even to charging admission fee to the best seats. It is reported that nine Cardinals, 19 Archbishops, 120 Bishops, and over a quarter of a million of the faithful attended the Congress to do honour to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom the Catholics hail as the Mother of God.

It appears that nothing was left to chance, not only were there rows and rows of Confessionals—well organised with one priest to two Confessionals—but there was also a special Dispensation—from the Pope?—to all the faithful to enable them to eat meat on the Friday; there were processions in honour of the Blessed Virgin, tableaux in fireworks depicting scenes from her life; even the catering for the inner man was not forgotten, for besides Holy Communion, Hot Dog stands were studded all over the Ball Park, and to round off, even the once famous Dionne quintuplets were on show singing in the choir.

No miracles have been reported yet, despite the fact that long queues formed to kiss the feet of the statue of Our Lady of Cap until the paint wore off her toes. I am, however, ready to believe that a gastronomical miracle was performed. Think of it—Hot Dogs for 250,000! This may not be in quite the same class as the feeding of the 5,000, but from a quantitative angle—well, let anyone work out how many miles these hot dogs would stretch if placed end to end.

But seriously, the Roman Catholic Church does not stage these spectacles for the sake of doing so, whether it be an Auto da Fe, a procession through the dingy streets of Stepney, or a Congress in Ottawa. It should be remembered that almost half the population of Canada is Roman Catholic, in the U.S.A. the Church claims 25 million members, 900,000 of these are new members of whom 100,000 are said to be converts in one year. The Church knows the effect of these spectacles on the people; some are impressed by the show of power of Holy Mother Church, to others, the psychological effect and emotional appeal is predominantly effective.

To repeat. The Church does not stage these spectacles for anything, and the latest "circus" adds point to the oft-repeated assertion that the centre of power is shifting—to the North American Continent. It is a thankless task to prophesy, but trends seem to indicate that the next custodian of the Keys of Peter will be an American.

The Church in America is the financial mainstay of the Vatican and we may be sure that the main significance of the Ottawa Congress was to impress the faithful, indeed, the whole world, that the Roman Catholic Church is the "Bulwark against Communism."

It should be remembered in this connection that when the Church speaks of Communism, it means also all progressives and intellectuals, from idealistic Socialists and Liberals to Freethinkers and Freethinkers. The Church has always frowned on liberals and progressives, even though certain liberal Catholics have been held up as an example of how progressive Catholicism can be. I have in mind among others, Abbe Lamennais, or Rosmini, but these "left wings" may only progress so far. For the real Catholic attitude one has only to read some of the Papal Encyclicals, particularly "Rerum Novarum," "Quadragesimo Anno," "The Syllabus" of Pius IX, or the "Atheistic Communism" of Pius XII.

The slogan "a Bulwark against Communism" must strike a chord, and will be fresh in the memory of all, for it was Hitler's best slogan, and was used to great effect by his Jesuit trained mouthpiece, Goebbels. There is no doubt that the Nazis were helped considerably by the Catholic Centrum Party, who hated and feared the comparatively liberal Weimar Republic. The real difference between Nazi-ism and Catholicism, is not so much a difference in ideology, but the fact that there cannot be room for two Authoritarian systems to exist side by side.

The Church is the most adaptable organisation the world has known, its philosophy is a breeding ground eminently suitable for the uncritical, emotional, nazi-trained masses. In fact, the Nazis can be termed Catholics in the economic sphere, and the Catholics can be labelled Nazis in the "spiritual" sphere with the addendum that to the Catholic the "spiritual" overlaps the economic.

It has been suggested that the Church is becoming increasingly political—as if it were not ever thus—that it is losing its spiritual hold over the masses in this modern age. But this is hardly borne out by the facts when we read of 900,000 new members in one year, or when we consider the Church's hold over the many "independent" almost wholly Catholic nations of Ireland, Spain, or Portugal among others, or consider the many influential key positions held by Catholics, not only in Britain, but all over the world, who use their positions to further the interests of the Church.

The Papacy has ever opposed the emancipation of the masses, who are, according to Church teachings, not here to be happy,

but ought to renounce all material benefits, and devote all efforts to saving their souls.

The Church aims at nothing less than the Temporal and Spiritual domination of the world, and it is the duty of every Freethinker to fight with all the means in his power, this most powerful instrument of oppression the world has ever known.

Dictatorships come and go, but the dictatorship of the Vatican "Forever the Same" will go on for ever unless we fight every advance by the Church, holding in our mind's eye the fighting slogan of Voltaire—"écrasez l'infame."

JOHN SEIBERT.

HUMAN OR ANIMAL?

"MAN IS KILLED FOR WEARING GLOVES."

("Daily Express," 16th August, 1947.)

Johannesburg.—Two Europeans complained that an African in a bus queue was too well dressed because he wore gloves. They knocked him down and killed him with a stone, then disappeared.—Express News Service.

"RABBIT BITES JUDGE."

A small rabbit at a Southampton show bit a judge's thumb and kicked one of the stewards who had to receive hospital treatment.

The above two items of news which appeared on the front page of the "Daily Express" recently, would seem to illustrate very pointedly the stage of progress now reached in the human and animal worlds.

Apparently it is quite possible for an innocent and inoffensive coloured man to be murdered by two whites in a big city in the presence of other whites waiting for a bus. That the two white men were able to disappear would seem to indicate that no one attempted to restrain or detain them, in which case the onlookers must have been completely unconcerned or—more probably—vastly amused at the spectacle of two white men stoning a negro to death for *daring to wear gloves!* This, mark you, in the highly respectable city of Johannesburg, recently visited by our Royal Family. How very fortunate for the City Fathers that this diverting episode took place *after* the Royal departure and not during the festivities. Such a tragic and disgusting occurrence should be enough to open the eyes of any intelligent person to the state of affairs now existing in South Africa despite all the camouflage of flag-wagging and professed patriotism. Surely, only the blindest of fools could be deceived in this hot-bed of racial hatred and colour prejudice where the superior white invaders can only maintain their dominance by such brutal exhibitions of Western culture. At all costs the African must be made to realise that Africa is now a White Man's country and that the natives are merely dirt!

But what a refreshing picture the second item of news presents. The high and mighty Lords of Creation daring to pass judgment on the merits or demerits of the common little rabbit are unceremoniously bitten and kicked for their presumptuousness!

What a blow to the White Man's pride and prestige to be kicked at all—but by a rabbit! No! It just isn't done!

It would seem then that although we may still kick natives in South Africa, in England rabbits may still kick us. Unfortunately we are not told if the rabbit in question was awarded a first prize by the injured judge, but in our opinion it should have been given a special medal for Distinguished Service to the whole rabbit race.

If there is a moral in all this, it must be that while civilised humans still behave like animals—animals, at least have now learned to treat humans with the contempt they deserve.

W. H. WOOD.

HOW THE TWELVE PERKINS LOST THEIR SOULS

THE origin of all the trouble related below was the fact that a certain Pauline Perkins, pupil at St. Mary's R.C. School, Shoreditch, had been certified by the Schools Medical Officer as mentally deficient. As was usual in such cases, the Council sent an inspector to inquire into the home conditions of the child. The inspector in this case was a Miss Burke, a Dublin woman, and incidentally, a Roman Catholic. On completing her inquiries, she reported officially; that the parents were criminals (they were both pickpockets) and that the children, of whom there were eight, were dirty and neglected. But her unofficial findings and report to Miss Long, the headmistress and Fr. Donovan, the priest in charge of the Parish, were of much more interest. Horror of horrors! The parents of the eight children had not been legally joined in Holy Matrimony, nor could they ever be, as Mr. Perkins had a legal wife living. The three held a conference in which they decided that, as the couple were living in sin, they must be induced to separate. Work and lodgings could be found for Mrs. Perkins and then Mr. Perkins' true wife must be installed in the home. The disposal of the children presented no difficulty; they could be placed in Roman Catholic Industrial Schools. The rates would pay for their keep, that was just a matter of filling up and falsifying a few forms. A collection was made in the Parish to help on the scheme.

Fr. Donovan, armed with the money received, was forthwith dispatched to put the proposal before the two sinners. They, seeing the advantage of being relieved of the maintenance of their offspring, gladly consented to all arrangements.

The children, after much ado, were all placed in Industrial Schools. But, alas! The parents lingered on together, seeming loath to part.

After a few weeks, Miss Long rushed to the home to find the reason for the delay. She was met by Mrs. Perkins, who now blushingly whispered to her that in a few months she was hoping to be delivered of another baby—the ninth. She consequently wasn't feeling well and couldn't undertake the work which they had so charitably found her. But the holy trio, being nothing daunted in their pursuit of the Lord's work, again made an appeal to the Parish for more money to help the Perkins in their new difficulty. All was again arranged, and a solemn promise extracted from the pair that they would immediately separate. Another few weeks passed, and one still saw no signs of the promised parting. The trouble was Mr. Perkins this time; he complained that he couldn't possibly ask his true wife to return till all his debts had been paid. Another appeal was made to the long-suffering Parish, but as Mr. and Mrs. Perkins were now attending daily mass and the sacraments, all had confidence in them, so they again opened their hearts and their purses and gave generously. But it wasn't till a final threat had been delivered by Miss Long, whose patience was becoming exhausted, that she would order all the children to be sent home again, that the troublesome ones separated. Then what joy in the Parish; what prayers of thanksgiving to God for the fact that the two erring sheep were now on the right path.

Two years passed, during which cheering letters (obviously dictated by the dear nuns) arrived periodically at St. Mary's: Pauline had been confirmed; Marie had made her First Communion; Tommy, with the aid of prayer, had been almost cured of his pernicious habits of spitting and swearing, little Johnny no longer wet the bed (probably also in answer to prayer). All were praying for dear papa and mamma, whom I'm sure sadly needed prayers, as I found that their separation had lasted but a few weeks. They were again living together safely tucked away in Silvertown, far from prying eyes, while the tenth little Perkins was gaily on the way.

When the eldest two children arrived at an age when they could work and earn, and so add a little more comfort to the

lives of their fond parents, who surely by this time had finished the proceeds of the church collection, they were recalled home by them. A notice of the departure of the two children was sent to Miss Long. The fact that the father and mother were again living together came to light. It at last dawned on Miss Long how she and her two associates had been fooled. In a rage, she immediately ordered that the other six children should be returned home. Great was the fury of Mr. and Mrs. Perkins when their eight darlings were again thrust on them. They stormed the school and heaped abuse, not only Miss Long and Fr. Donovan, but on the Catholic Church in general. They said that they had been disgracefully treated and swore that neither they nor their ten little ones would ever darken the doors of a Catholic church again.

They were as good as their word: a few days later they were welcomed into the Protestant fold.

But the wrath of the Perkins was as naught in comparison to the wrath of the Parish, when its members turned on Miss Long, pointing out to her that, in trying to save two souls, she had been the means of losing twelve. Fr. Donovan, in true priestly style, joined in the abuse of Miss Long (Miss Burke was safe away by this time on another mission), stating that if he had been allowed to manage the affair in his way, all would have been well; nor was he appeased till Miss Long had given him an offering of £5 for masses.

So were the souls of the ten Perkins lost to God and to the Church—but the greatest loss was to Miss Long, who by every unscrupulous means in her power was trying to increase the number of pupils in her school with a view to a rise in salary.

NAN FLANAGAN.

PARENTS, BEWARE!

IT has often been stated, that for unmitigated impudence professional Christians are well-nigh unsurpassed, and more often than not they get away with it.

From the use of parishioners' clothing coupons for church vestments, to black market building repairs; from attempts to close Sunday cinemas and theatres, to attempts at holding services in them, attempts at closure having failed! A new impudence has come to light.

This time, Christianity's tout, the Salvation Army, broaches the subject. Having got its way with the day schools (through the well-remembered Tory Education Act) so that children attending under the compulsion of the law may be more thoroughly doped with religion, Christianity speaks again.

Commissioner Dalziel, of the S.A., advocates compulsory Sunday school! He infers that, as day school is compulsory and the Gospel transcends the three R's, parents should be compelled by law to send their children to God's school on Sunday!

Thus, the barrow-boys of Christianity, the monarchs of the squeaky concertina, the exploiters of the down and out, are seeking to re-kindle one more brand from the age when grown men and women worshipped in fear of law and torture. Of course, none of the Church dignitaries dare openly advocate it, but the Salvation Army, being used to dirty work, becomes, apparently, a ready tool. It may well be that Commissioner Dalziel's suggestion is the beginning of a new campaign, and educational authorities up and down the country (how many of them have co-opted clerical members) may foster the idea.

When one reviews the many set-backs religion has suffered in recent years, especially those in connection with the Sabbath, it is obvious that no attempt can be made at present to put the shackles on adults. They are voters, and to order voters to church is more than any elected government dare do. That must be stealthily led up to! However, be it noted, the voters as a body have shown little objection to the church gaining a greater hold on their children attending day school. Quite naturally one would think, then, the Commissioner and his sponsors realise

what an important point they can make concerning the very few withdrawals of children from religious instruction in day schools. Millions of parents attend shows and games on the Sabbath, and vote with alacrity against the religious domination of Sunday. Well, what is this great majority prepared to do about its children's Sunday? What did it do to prevent increased Church control in day schools? What is it doing now? The answer to these questions is, apparently, "Next to nothing!"

Get a compulsory Sunday school and compulsory church for all fellows is its wake. This idea of enforced school attendance on Sunday is only born of the easy passage the clerics had in the matter of the day schools! In France, Spain and Eire, for instance, worship for old and young is practically compulsory. At least one service of worship must be attended on Sunday, and confessions are also enforced. There is latitude, but it is very little, as the Church is the real ruler.

But," you may say, "those are Vatican dominions, Popes do not rule here." Quite so, but although Pope Pius disagrees with Commissioner Dalziel on doctrinal interpretation, and the Archbishop of Canterbury disagrees with both of them on the same subject, the one thing about which they all agree is that, Jehovah, the Virgin and the Lamb must survive at all costs. In fact, this seems to be the only point nowadays upon which nearly 400 Christian sects can agree. Many of the laws made centuries ago to enforce religious observance by all and sundry are still on the Statute Book. One cannot help feeling very strongly that when, as Bradlaugh predicted, the final show-down between Atheism and Rome comes, these old Statutes can be again invoked, unless the people see to it that in the meantime they are well and truly weaned from the records. It may be argued that this is scare-mongering, but observant Freethinkers have seen for years the growing tendency for religion to exert a stronger grip on our child

The first real opportunity since 1870, came when this nation strained to the utmost in a war for survival. It was at the height of this tension that influences which only a short time before had deposed a British King-Emperor, forced through Parliament as a major issue, a Bill which had no bearing on the national war effort whatsoever. At that time this country was governed by an Imperialist gang, which had functioned for years previously to build up Vatican sponsored dictatorships. It fought then in the end, unwillingly, but skins had to be saved. It conscripted everything except wealth, and almost everybody except the dead. Nowadays, figuring as the Opposition, one harbours little doubt concerning its full support of anything the lay-preacher of the present Government may suggest in the cause of preserving the legend which has done so much in the past to cultivate the beast in man, and to degrade as sin the high and the finer thought. Christ is in a hurry. All Christian sects now admit the growth of Atheism, and what may appear to be merely a burst of fervour from a fanatical Salvationist, might well be in fact, a curtain raiser to an act of Christian dictatorship comparable to that which culminated in the sacking of a king following a simple remark on his religious outlook in the sermon of a Yorkshire bishop.

Let the millions of non-worshipping parents take heed. Fascism and racialism are gaining ground in Britain, with a lay-teaching Home Secretary shutting his eyes. Where you see Fascism, Pogroms, Colour-bars, you will see the cross of Christ. Look more closely and you will see the Pope.

Withdraw your children from religious instruction now. Make repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and the Lord's Day Observance Acts, an issue at every Parliamentary election, and approach your present sitting members. Agitate as much for the complete disestablishment of the Church as you do for higher wages.

Commissioner Dalziel of the Salvation Army, is telling you that your children are to be prepared for their part in the next War of Extermination. The extermination of Atheism by Roman Catholicism, the Cannibalism of Religious Philosophy.

G. L. C.

SLAVES, OBEY YOUR MASTERS!

From the "Quadragesimo Annxxx of Pope Pius XI: "Let the working man and employer make free agreements, and in particular let them agree freely as to wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner."

From the "Rerum Novarum" of Pope Leo XIII: "Let it be laid down, in the first place, that humanity must remain as it is . . . Unequal fortune is a necessary result of inequality of condition . . . To suffer and endure is, therefore, the lot of humanity; let men try as they may, no strength and no artifice will ever succeed in banishing from human life the troubles that beset it."

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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Read.—Wednesday, September 17, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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