

the failure of the Supply Departments to deal adequately with the black-out problem and their disregard of the ventilation difficulties that arise shows that Government Departments themselves are not free from fault. It would appear that here is yet another field in which lack of scientific knowledge is proving detrimental to the war effort. The Chief Inspector's observations should receive careful consideration by individual scientific men in a position to take action, and if necessary by their representative associations.

## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE SCHOOLS

THE rise and spread of popular education in Great Britain during last century naturally came about in close connexion with religious bodies. For reasons that lay far back in history, the established Church regarded itself as responsible for any education that might be given to the common people. This claim was disputed by the Dissenters, so that when in 1833 the State definitely stepped in with its little building grant of £20,000 a year, both parties had to be recognized. The general direction in which the wind of progress blew at that time is indicated by the fact that the same Parliament in the same year granted £30,000 for the improvement of the royal stables. Still, a beginning was made in State intervention in education. With that beginning, however, there began also the 'religious difficulty' which has dogged the footsteps of educational reformers ever since, and which, as is plainly to be seen, is with us to this day. That difficulty may be envisaged as a difference between Church and Chapel, or as a difference between definite doctrinal instruction and 'simple Bible teaching', or as the question whether Christian education should mean the inculcation of the Christian ethic or Christian doctrine or both.

Another legacy from the nineteenth century is the so-called conflict between religion and science, about which books were written and arguments warmly propounded in Victorian times. This conflict, which has close affinity with the religious difficulty in the schools, is beginning in our day to look more like a reconciliation than a dispute, partly because scientific method is being applied to religious problems, and partly because the inapplicability of strict scientific method to questions of belief and faith is more widely admitted.

This brings us to the point of asking what is the attitude of men of science at the present time towards religion in education. There is no simple answer to that question. It is probably true to say that men of science differ as much in opinion as any other class of intelligent people. For, as Pascal said long ago, "the heart has its reasons, of which reason itself knows nothing". The matter may also perhaps be put in terms of common sense. T. H. Huxley described science as nothing but trained and organized common sense, but in doing so he limited the meaning of common sense. Wendell Holmes called science a first-rate piece of furniture for a man's upper chamber,

if he has common sense on the ground floor. In any event the deliverances of common sense are not so constant and uniform as the deliverances of scientific method. Men of science can be found both within and outside the ranks of professed rationalists.

Since, however, science is the sworn foe of ignorance, besides being, as Adam Smith remarked, the great antidote to the poison of superstition, the man of science as such may be expected to make certain demands upon the advocates of religious instruction in the schools. He will be apt to demand that the results of genuine and unprejudiced scientific investigation shall be respected and accepted wherever scientific method is applicable. In the matter of Biblical criticism, for example, his sympathies will be with the modernists, who apply to the Bible precisely the same methods of research as are applied to other ancient literature, these methods being strictly scientific in the sense that reason alone is employed without the intrusion of feeling. It is scarcely necessary to add that the main conclusions, at any rate of the less drastic critics, have by this time found their way even into the junior school, where the teachers, unlike their grandparents, are not troubled about the literal inerrancy of the stories of creation and Noah's flood. Recently, the assured results of New Testament criticism have also found their way into school editions, one of the best commentators remarking that "the truest reverence is not unintelligent acquiescence, but sound criticism". As for the creeds, the man of science, though he may have reasons of the heart for attending church services, cannot but feel uncomfortable when he hears phrases recited just because they are old, though both parson and people take them with all manner of mental reservations. That being so, he can scarcely regard them as suitable material for child education.

The modern study of child nature is certainly pursued on strictly scientific lines, by a goodly array of eminent representatives of science, as the literature of the subject will show. Whether or not the subject of religious education has received special investigation, it is safe to say that doctrinal instruction in religion for the young child is quite out of keeping with the general character of their findings. This point has been urged forcibly by Dr. David, Bishop of Liverpool, who, by the way, is an old teacher, and in this matter surely has the common sense of the teaching profession on his side. He recognizes the child, not the subject-matter, as the real centre of gravity in modern education, and he contends that formulated doctrine is not for children, at any rate at the pre-adolescent stage. At that stage, he declares, the issue between simple Bible teaching and definite or doctrinal instruction is no longer a live issue. The latter may be added at a later stage, but for the younger children the learning of a catechism can only amount to a species of psittacism, a parrot-like repetition of words without much meaning. This position, based on scientific research, has an obvious bearing upon the teaching of religion at the junior stage.

Another field of scientific inquiry relevant in the present connexion is that of comparative religion,

the total omission of which in any course of religious instruction for senior pupils would be hard to justify at this moment in the world's history. Here again we are glad to be able to quote a dignitary of the Church. So long ago as March 3, 1941, *The Times* published a letter from Bishop Palmer to the effect that this War is not a war on behalf of Christianity, but a war on behalf of the rule of right against the rule of might. The unanimity of all British people, Christian and non-Christian, is, he wrote, not for "Christian civilisation", but for "the very bones, the mere framework, of civilisation itself", for that "which alone raises human society above bestiality". Similarly, Sir Richard Gregory has reminded us that Mohammedans, Buddhists, Hindus, Parsees, Jews and other non-Christians, are fighting on the side of good against evil. The good is a common factor of all the higher religions. The Christian struggles to preserve a way of life of which the historical expression is for him to be found in the New Testament. More and more is he recognizing, however, that the aim of millions who are on his side cannot be so described. Hence the interest that is being taken in other faiths. That interest is exemplified in a recent addition to the popular "Penguin" series, a small book on "Comparative Religion", by Dr. A. C. Bouquet, formerly lecturer on the history and comparative study of religions in the University of Cambridge. His own personal convictions are honestly stated, but he writes, "not as an advocate, but as a scientist". Other men of science will approve of his dispassionate search for truth, and will agree that such truth will do good and not harm to our growing youth.

Our spiritual relations with the United States being now closer than ever before, the position of religious education in that country is a matter of special interest. Many of the older American colleges are religious foundations, and maintain a religious tradition, whereas the curricula of the State universities and colleges do not include religion, though voluntary religious societies are numerous and active in them. In the schools, mostly of course provided by the State, the 'religious difficulty' as we know it does not exist, for the simple reason that the United States has adopted what we call 'the secular solution', not because of the triumph of any religious party, but because the unexampled mixture of races and religions has made any other solution impracticable. No doubt this arrangement accounts for the fact that we have had nearly everything to learn from the United States as regards the right organization of Sunday schools. Still, some of the most thoughtful Americans are not satisfied with the too exclusively matter-of-fact character of the school curricula, and regretfully admit some justice in the taunt that their 'go-getting' compatriots know the price of everything and the value of nothing. After all is said and done, however, we have to admit that the mighty republic which unreservedly stands at our side in the fight of good against evil has no system of religious education such as ours. Yet the American teachers are clearly doing more than we are towards inculcating in their youth the duty of service to their fellow-men.

We are thus reminded of the fact, too often ignored in current discussions about education, and especially about religious education, that there is a psychology of the teacher as well as a psychology of the child. The relation between teacher and taught, with the consequent moral atmosphere of the school classroom, is a subtle and a powerful entity, perhaps fully comprehended only by the trained psychologist. If the teacher does not welcome outside interference, the last person in the world to blame him should be the person who, whether as master or as boy, has enjoyed the freedom which the public schools of Great Britain seem determined not to part with. The teachers as a body are a selected group of normal men and women, who, with occasional exceptions, stand well in the estimation of parents. When, for example, the children of London had to be evacuated in their thousands, the mothers of London showed their absolute trust in the teachers of London—an impressive fact which tells its own story. It is because the teachers are so generally trustworthy that 'the religious difficulty' is so little felt inside the school. "Tests of orthodoxy imposed on teachers", writes Dr. Hensley Henson, "are impracticable, and even if they were not, are futile, for they conflict with democratic liberty. . . . You can multiply hypocrites, but you cannot guarantee interest and efficiency by those means". So Mr. Brockington, the very experienced Director of Education for Leicestershire, writes: "I say, and say again, put your trust in the teachers". Even an 'agreed syllabus' takes you nowhere, unless you can trust the teacher, who can quietly drive a coach-and-six through such a document, if he desires to do so. We have seen no evidence that he has the least desire to do so. All the evidence suggests that he (or more commonly she) desires to do his or her best for the children, as if they were his or her own children. That, we believe, is the simple psychological situation that prevails in the vast majority of class-rooms. The great William James once said that psychology was not a science, but only the hope of a science. That remark was no doubt justified in his time, but the case is different now, notwithstanding the existence of contending schools of thought. We believe that no responsible psychologist would deny the strong probability that our account of the usual class-room situation is correct.

From our point of view, perhaps the most important thing of all remains to be said, though it need not be laboured. Whatever is done in the schools should be done well, and it cannot be done well unless the teacher is adequately prepared. There is no sense in asking the teacher to give a certain kind of instruction without providing him with opportunities of being duly informed in the subject. If religious instruction is to be given based upon the Bible, he should know something of the light that has been shed upon the Bible by modern scholarship. In most cases he will, we believe, find such a study a real eye-opener. The efforts which are being made to help the younger generation of teachers in this direction are therefore to be cordially commended.