

The Freethinker

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IT is not altogether surprising that the public in general, and in London in particular, should take an interest in the recent excavations of a Roman Temple. People have seen Roman relics, mosaic pavements, and other things, almost ever since museums collected them, but all this renewed interest is no doubt due to the way in which the B.B.C. on the radio and on TV have fostered some splendid lectures and discussions on archaeology. Slowly but surely it is beginning to dawn upon the public that Christianity helped to destroy Roman and Greek civilisation, and with it a great culture and wonderful arts and crafts. This destruction began when Christianity swept Paganism as far as possible

out of existence, and gave us the far-famed "Dark Ages" when civilisation itself was nearly blotted out for ever by a gang of priests and hermits for something like 1,000 years.

Paganism was not exactly swept out of existence, all the same. A good deal of its silliest beliefs re-appeared in a kind of revised form in the new religion of Christianity which many modern Christians devoutly wish were not in it. Immense pains were taken by the early Church to obliterate rival religions and that is why so little has been said about Mithras and Mithraism even by Freethinking opponents of Christianity.

In actual fact, it can be said that it was a very near thing that Mithraism did not become the universal religion in Europe. And it is for this reason that, at least until lately, so little accurate information about Mithraism was available.

What is emerging is that Mithras supplied the Gospel writers with some splendid ideas for Jesus Christ. A head of Mithras was unearthed in the recent excavations, and it proves that this kind of image-worship was just as prevalent among the Romans as it is now among our Roman Catholics. But Mithraic monuments have been found in many parts of England and they never occasioned quite the interest this head of Mithras has aroused—an interest by no means looked upon with favour by the Christian hierarchy.

A Mithraic cave has been found in Northumberland, others have been found in Cumberland, Chester, York, and Manchester. And from the way Mithras is addressed one can see that he was the Sun-God *par excellence*—at Chichester, for example, the inscription reads: "To the God the Sun, the invincible Mithras, the Lord of Ages."

There is no doubt that the worship of Mithras was considerable in England during the Roman occupation for he was the particular God of the Roman army, and he was just as much worshipped in Gaul and wherever the army went. But it is of interest to note that some authorities consider he had reached England earlier, in the time of the Druids, as a Sun-God, for some of their ceremonies were certainly Sun-worship.

Mithras was considered—among other attributes—as a "Mediator" and as a "Redeemer" of the souls of the dead to a better world. Like Jesus Christ, he had many festivals

dedicated to him—baptism to remove sins, anointing, a sacred meal of bread and water with "consecrated" wine.

His birthday took place on December 25 just like that of Jesus, when the Sun is supposed to be a tiny baby growing bigger every day as Spring approaches. A special day, Sunday, was set aside for his worship every week in an organised church exactly as in Christianity. The Rev. Charles Biggs in his *Christian Platonists* adds that Mithras's followers "possessed the ideas of Mediation, Atonement, and a Saviour, who is human and yet divine, and not only the idea, but a doctrine of a future life. They had a Eucharist, and a Baptism, and other curious analogies

might be pointed out between their system and the Church of Christ."

The great Dupuis, the author of *The Origin of All Worship*, never doubted that the Christian Gospel was just an off-shoot of Mithraism; and in his book, he has a lot to say about the Persian Sun-God. Whether Mithras did, however, arise first in Persia is a moot question—he seems to have evolved from other Gods just as Jesus did. One thing is certain—there can be no question here of any priority of Jesus. He was a much later God than Mithras. In any case, the Christian Father, Manes, the founder of the heretical Christian sect, the Manicheans, insisted that Mithras and Jesus were one. Mosheim quotes him in his *Ecclesiastical History* as saying: "Christ is that glorious intelligence which the Persians called Mithras. . . . His residence is in the sun." But, of course, Manes' "heresy" was a hopeless mixture of Gnosticism, Christianity, and Mithraism.

As John M. Robertson points out in his *Pagan Christs*— "And yet with all this testimony to the vogue of Mithraism in early Christian centuries, there ensues for a whole era an absolute blank in the knowledge of the matter of Christendom—a thousands years in which the ancient cultus seems a forgotten name in Europe." Actually it was not till the 15th and 16th centuries that Mithras was again talked about.

Whether we got Mithras from Persia or India really matters very little. He soon became the God of Light or of the Sun, and people prayed to him to come and help them exactly as Christians do to Jesus at this day. In the days of Mithras, people really did worship him devotedly—with altars, rituals, and priests. And naturally this worship was packed with symbols of all kinds. "We may be sure," says Robertson, "that Mithraism was as hospitable to mystic meanings as Osirianism." And further. "In the Mithraic cave-temples have been found images of Juno, Minerva, Apollo, Mars, Bacchus, Mercury, and Venus and especially Sylvanus, who had taken the character of a pantheistic God, doubtless because he was the Latin equivalent of the Greek Pan." The "mysteries" of Mithras took place in caves, but we know little about them.

Solar Gods like Mithras, Osiris, and Horus, were

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Mithras, the God of Light

By H. CUTNER

specially adored at the vernal equinox; and Jesus Christ, who is mostly a Solar Deity, has his worshippers at Easter in exactly the same way. In fact, Justin Martyr, who quite agreed that some of the "mysteries" of Mithras were like those of Christianity, blamed the "wicked devils" for their exact imitation. And so does Tertullian.

Christian writers are forced to say that it was Mithraism which copied from Christianity, but this is absurd. The cry of the early Church Fathers was that Mithraism "anticipated" some of their own ceremonies and beliefs, as Robertson points out. But of course, all religions borrowed from each other in the ultimate.

Even as late as Constantine, "the invincible Sun-God Mithra" was worshipped—the Emperor himself, in fact, never really giving him up even after his conversion to

Christianity. And certainly, if Julian, the (so-called) Apostate, had not been killed, Mithraism might never have died too. But, as Robertson points out, "the fatal weakness of Mithraism, as pitted against Christianity, was that its very organisation was esoteric." And Christianity, with its battle-cry that all men were one with Christ, prevailed.

Mithraism was eventually suppressed and, in any case, much of it re-appeared in Christianity.

The curious onlookers of the excavated old Roman temple in Cannon Street are most unlikely to know much about Mithras. They would indeed be astonished to learn that when Jesus proclaimed himself as "The Light of the World"—he was only copying Mithras, the invincible Sun-God, and thus adding one more Sun-God to all the rest.

Voltaire in Geneva Today

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER
(President of the World Union of Freethinkers)

ON Wednesday, September 8, the World Union of Freethinkers convened a meeting at the Voltaire Institute, Les Délices, Geneva, to celebrate Voltaire the Freethinker and Philanthropist, and to forge a bond of union between the Freethinkers of Savoy and those of Roman Switzerland.

Les Délices was the house which Voltaire bought in the name of his friend Tronchin (he himself as a foreigner to the Canton was barred from owning property in the city) and where he lived for about ten years. He formed a triangle of Ferney (in France), Geneva (independent) and Lausanne (then in Berne) which would in case of urgency offer him bolt-holes. There has for some time been a small museum at Les Délices, but recently Mr. Theodore Besterman, the foremost living authority on Voltaire, offered to Geneva a collection of Voltaire MSS and relics valued at over £35,000 on condition that Les Délices was retransformed from a block of flats into nearly its state as Voltaire knew it, that the collection should be housed there, and that he himself should be appointed the first Director of the Institute (unpaid). This, in spite of considerable clerical opposition, in which Catholics (now constituting a considerable proportion of Geneva's population) and Calvinists combined, was eventually accepted by the City and Canton. The clerical opposition managed to delay the execution of the project for two years, so that the Institute will not be formally opened till this month. However, the first gathering and informal opening held in Voltaire's halls was a meeting of Freethinkers.

It was well attended—in fact extra chairs had to be sought. Two French members had come from Bourg-en-Bresse, a distance of over eighty miles.

The President of the World Union took the chair, and after thanking Mr. Besterman for his generous hospitality in inviting them to meet in his historic and beautiful building, and for his kindness in accepting the invitation to address them, he gave a brief report of the international congress of freethinkers which had just taken place at Luxemburg.

Mr. Besterman opened his address by emphasising the international aspect of a meeting at which two Englishmen held a platform in a Swiss city and spoke to an assembly drawn from five countries (U.S.A., U.K., and Italy were also represented in the audience) and then drew the portrait of the Rationalist Voltaire, the irrepressible critic of shams, the indomitable champion of the wronged, the man who alone wielded an influence greater than emperors and popes, the man who of all men could be termed a free thinker. In reply to questions, Mr. Besterman pointed out that it was very difficult to say whether Voltaire was a

Deist or an Atheist—at times he wrote in terms suggesting that he was a sort of Christian; the speaker had arrived at the conclusion that Voltaire was an Atheist in spite of the Ferney temple with its inscription, "Deo Erexit Voltaire." The conditions under which Voltaire wrote were so profoundly different from those of our times that he could not be judged from our point-of-view. Voltaire was compared with Rousseau, the Man of Reason beside the Man of Sentiment. Sentiment is Man's worst enemy: the *ignis fatuus* which leads him to destruction. Voltaire despite his adoption of an aristocratic "de" was a man of the lower middle-class or even of the people, just as much as Rousseau.

After the discussion Mr. Besterman showed the party round the Institute: among the pictures is a recent find—a portrait of Voltaire as a young man, as well as better known portraits and some of the pictures which Voltaire possessed, also a remarkable collection of books and manuscripts, particularly of letters.

After the meeting a score or so adjourned to the restaurant du Grand Pré at the invitation of the freethinker owner and the Freethought Society of French Switzerland, particularly the Geneva branch, both of which had formerly been very flourishing, and both of which have been dormant for close on twenty years, but now were reconstituted. The joint secretaries appointed were M. Arnoux and M. Frigerio, both of Geneva.

The success of the meeting was due in the first place to Mr. Besterman, and in the second to M. Jean Simond, the schoolmaster of Gaillard, Haute-Savoie (France), and also in some degree to the writer of this report.

Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw

"When Wilde after his imprisonment lived as an exile in Paris, Shaw made it a point to send him inscribed copies of all his books as they came out. Wilde did the same to him. The real thing they had in common was that they both were considered as court jesters and they both resented it. Thus they treated each other as distinguished and important personalities.

Now and then they touched a common chord, as in the case when they agreed they were both more than witty triflers in words. When the Chicago anarchists were sentenced to death . . . Shaw tried to get up a petition for the release of the imprisoned men. Of all the courageous rebels (in parlours) he got only one signature. That was Oscar Wilde's. It won Wilde Shaw's consideration for the rest of Wilde's life."—From *Bernard Shaw* by FRANK HARRIS.

—NEXT WEEK—

RIDLEY ON THE LUXEMBURG
CONGRESS

European Politics and International Freethought

By F. A. RIDLEY

AS the present writer has already indicated in his address to the Luxemburg Congress and as was, indeed, transparently evident at the proceedings of that international gathering, we are witnessing today a sustained offensive, an international counter-revolution, by the Roman Catholic Church on a world-wide scale. As the Vatican is, in essence, a totalitarian policy dictatorship, ecclesiastical fascism, as we have elsewhere described it, this offensive is not currently confined to the "spiritual sphere," but encroaches directly upon the secular and, in particular, upon the political sphere.

Two Sets of Principles

As has been aptly enough stated, the Roman Catholic Church always, when in a minority, demands freedom, in accordance with the liberal principles of its opponents, to suppress such freedom in accordance with its own principles as soon as it attains the necessary power: a kind of "doublethink," to employ the well-known phrase of the late Mr. George Orwell. Examples of this permanent Catholic strategy are not difficult to find in the present-day world. In countries like England and America, which are still predominantly Protestant, the Catholic minorities loudly appeal to freedom of conscience. When, however, as in Franco's Spain, the Church is in effective control, one witnesses a concord between Church and State, such as that concluded between Rome and Madrid last year. The Protestant observer, aptly commented that it would henceforth be difficult for the Vatican to deny that its principles of intolerance, when in power, are in flat contradiction to its demands for toleration in lands in which other religions predominate.

Three Types of Catholic Policy

The map of the Christian world today reveals three kinds of states over which the Catholic Church and, in particular, political Catholicism, exercise varying degrees of influence. First, we have the type of polity over which the Church exercises a control which is absolute, or not far removed from it, Spain, Portugal and (in a rather less degree) Italy, Eire, Western Germany and the Argentine qualify for inclusion in such a category. Next, we have lands where Catholicism predominates and where the Church is actually influential, but without dominating its contemporary society. France, Austria, the majority of Latin-American Republics and the "Benelux" lands, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands, would fall within this second category. Whilst, finally, we have mainly Protestant lands such as America, England, Australia and Switzerland, where the Catholic minorities are energetic and influential and, of course, entirely in favour of toleration—for themselves!

Catholicism versus World Revolution

As the present writer indicated in his Luxemburg address, already published in the columns of the *Freethinker*, the Vatican is, pre-eminently, the spirit, the active genius of counter revolution. Its political influence in this respect has been enormous, and it is much to be regretted that this paramount role of Catholicism has been so much neglected by professedly Rationalist writers who tend to concentrate exclusively on the *logical formulae*. These formulae, at most, are merely the window-dressing of the mighty Catholic arsenal, the French bourgeoisie who, yesterday produced, and formed the reading public of Voltaire and Renan, do not now patronise "Our Lady of Lourdes and Fatima" because they have suddenly been

convinced of the Truth of her Immaculate Conception and of her bodily assumption into Heaven. In our opinion their present conversion is due to their more mundane, but more solid apprehension that, without the potent "opium" supplied by their clerical allies, they will inevitably see their property confiscated by the Communists! To oppose Communism—or, more accurately, the World Revolution "La Revolution Mondiale," of which Communism is the present standard-bearer, represents the core of present-day Catholic *political* strategy, it is a policy, which, particularly in the America of McCarthy, and in the Germany of Adenauer, is, at present, paying handsome dividends, alongside the conservative forces of "fair order and property." None-the-less, this is a two-edged, and dangerous policy. For what will happen to the Church if Communism, if World Revolution, eventually wins? Will "Our Lady of Fatima" then "suffer a sea-change" into "Our Lady of Moscow"? There would be precedents in the chequered history of the Church for so startling a metamorphosis!

European Freethought and Politics

The primarily critical, philosophical and non-political type of freethought, of which the late Mr. Chapman Cohen was the ablest English representative, is predominantly Anglo-Saxon. On the European Continent, the predominant type is *political*, of a markedly "Leftist" character. The long struggle with political Catholicism has made this operation particularly evident in lands where Catholicism is dominant or influential: a Catholic Socialist is as rare as a Conservative "Libre-penseur." No doubt such people exist, but they are not representative. On the European continent, anti-clericalism, in theory (recently not always in practice) is the common badge of all "Left" parties, Liberal equally with Socialist. One must not forget that in present-day Spain the authoritative *Ripalda Catechism* classes the profession of "Liberalism" among the "world sins" which deserve and, without prompt repentance, secure eternal damnation. This political tendency is one of the first things that one notices at International Freethought congresses, such as the recent one at Luxemburg. Without the "Left," now predominantly Socialist political parties on the European continent, there would be no mass Freethought Movement on the present-day European continent. Incidentally, a glance at the present International Executive Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers, would be sufficient to indicate this state of things. It is also shown in a grimmer connection by the heavy list of casualties, the loss of whom has seriously weakened the present-day European Freethought Movement of Freethinkers associated with the Resistance. The brave men who perished at the hands of Hitler and the Gestapo, in one secular despotism in world history (perhaps worse even than the Inquisition), and more opposed to every kind and variety of progress, including all phases of free thinking.

"Where do we go from here"

At present there appears signs that the Conservative-Catholic alliance which has dominated most of Europe since the war, is declining in political influence. Recent elections witness a decline in popular support for the Adenauer coalition of Big Business and political Catholicism. Whilst recent glaring scandals have undermined the clerical-Fascist regime in post-war Italy, which has even used the Fascist edicts of Mussolini to silence Italian Free-

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

It is now computed that each convert from Christianity to Christianity cost the Billy Graham Fund £4 10s. and, the Lord be praised, every penny came back from the sales of hymn books, collections, etc., so that "there is money to spare." This compares very favourably with the £40,000 once spent by the Society for the Conversion of Jews in one year when two Jews were converted—and the Society was not quite sure about them even then. It is of interest to note that the Rev. B. Graham and his team were not paid in Britain—what they got came from "the generous help from the United States"—otherwise this wonderful campaign with its crushing victories for Christ could never have taken place. All the same, has anybody ever seen a true Billy Graham convert?

As so many victorious generals often do, Mr. Graham has now written a book, *Peace with God*, wherein the Almighty is carefully described—with verifiable details. God is not a cold, aloof Spirit, but a Person who hates and punishes and creates; while the Devil (or Satan) is a wicked old Serpent "which deceiveth the whole world." and whose "handiwork is to be seen at every turn." In fact, "we live in a sinful world surrounded by sinful people." This very brief notice must prove the astounding originality of the Rev. B. Graham—and, no doubt whatever, his book will be literally lapped up by all Christians, and especially by those Christians whom he has converted to Christianity.

Another beautiful religion has appeared—this time in Indo-China, and already it has some 2,000,000 followers. It is called Cao-Daism, and its Pope, Mr. Cao Dai, wants Confucianism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism and Spiritualism, all to unite and form one true religion—no doubt with himself as its Spiritual Head. This Movement has our most pious Blessings. It is sure to be thoroughly united. All its various monks, priests, hermits, yogis, bonzes, are sure to agree on everything, especially on rituals. There will be no colour bar, of course, and everything in the garden will always be lovely. By the way, so as to keep his two million followers in order, it should be added that Cao Dai has a private army of 20,000—so that ought to ensure no squabbling in church.

There is now a Churches' Fellowship for Psychical Study, and its Chairman, Sir Cyril Atkinson, bluntly told a meeting the other day that "the Fellowship has no intention of surrendering orthodox religious views in order to embrace Spiritualism." He went on, "We are not another Spiritualist association. We are a Church association." And to prove how little Christianity there is, Sir Cyril added: "The great mass of the people are ignorant of the elementary truth of the Christian faith. Man has left God, not for other gods, but for no God. . . . If death is the end, what is the use of religion?" And to show how completely Christian he was, Sir Cyril referred to something in the *Church Times* as the most "senile nonsense that has ever appeared in print."

At the same meeting, the Rev. F. S. W. Simpson insisted that "we have not one jot of evidence available except psychical research to show to the Secularist and the Materialist that life persists beyond death." What a beautiful confession to make! For nearly 2,000 years Christians have been preaching man's "immortality" and how we all would eternally live with Christ Jesus in Heaven if we only followed him; and here we have a clergyman calmly telling us that there was not "a jot of evidence" that this was true, and only Spiritualism could prove it now. So

let us tell Mr. Simpson that there is not a "jot of evidence" in Spiritualism either to prove "survival"—that it is all just hopeless credulity, as credulous as Christianity, and just as silly.

Another eminent Spiritualist, Mr. H. Leaf, speaking for the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, "played ducks and drakes with some of the most cherished and axiomatic beliefs of materialist thinker," so *Psychic News* reports. Mr. Leaf, in support of this, told his admiring audience that he could actually see "quite clearly" with his elbow, and "between his shoulder and hip," which is not more surprising than when mediums "see" Shakespeare and Bradlaugh and Adam Bede, and no doubt Jesus Christ in "spirit" form just as easily. Sometimes, we wonder how often Spiritualists like Mr. H. Leaf and Mr. Shaw Desmond have literally annihilated Materialism, and why the confounded thing still pops up unhurt and smiling?

Evolution

Nebula-rush of fire-swirl
With matter-nodule thrilled,
Bosoming in a heat-whirl
The Life to be distilled.

Slowly through amphibian slime
Life's sluggish struggle surged,
Laboured through aenoic time
Till first bird's song emerged.

From belly-stride to mountain-height,
Sprites of the air full drawn
From serpent-scale to plumage bright,
And song to greet the dawn.

And Life through Evolution ploughed
Till, swinging from his tree,
The strong-armed gibbon chattered loud
His wild sagacity.

To living matter Java joins
His pulsing purpose blind,
And bearing in his hairy loins
A hope of humankind.

Rough tools by hominids were plied,
Cromagnon left his track,
Till some rude artist glorified
The caves of Aurignac.

G. H. TAYLOR.

European Politics and International Freethought

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thinkers who dared to question the current actions of the Vatican. According to Prof. Crippa, the eloquent spokesman at Luxemburg of Italian Freethought, that astute professional diplomat, Pope Pius the Twelfth, has been the real head of every Italian Government since the war. Meanwhile, Monsieur Mendes France, whose dynamic intrusion into the sphere of European politics, has been the outstanding event in recent months, is stated to be a Freethinker of whom our French colleagues thoroughly approve. The French Jews who recall the celebrated "L'Affaire de Dreyfus," have no reason to have political Catholicism in France! Thus present signs indicate a proximate halt to the present political offensive of the Catholic Church. We hope soon to see European Freethought go over to the offensive in the political as well as in the intellectual sphere.

THE FREETHINKER

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Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

To Correspondents

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed, or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

G. HILBINGER.—See *The Freethinker*, September 3, letter of C. H. Norman and reply.

H. KEMP, W. OSTLER and others.—Letters passed to J. Toudic.

JOSEPH WILSON.—Please send address.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle St.).—Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, October 24, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Second Floor).—Sunday, October 24, 6-45 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "Religion: The Modern Fight."

Conway Discussion Circle (South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 26, 7 p.m., in the Library: ASITON BURRALL, "The Art of Invective."

Junior Discussion Group (South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall).—Friday, October 22, 7-15 p.m.: DR. WEISSMANN, "The Significance of Adlerian Psychology in Everyday Life."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 24, 6-30 p.m.: A. R. WILLIAMS, "Newspaper Religion."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, October 24, 2-30 p.m.: Rev. B. RICKETT, "The Catholic Church and Socialism."

West Ham Branch (Community Centre, Wanstead) Thursday, October 28, 8 p.m.: Open Meeting.

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1, five minutes from Edgware Road Station).—Sunday, October, 24, 7-15 p.m.: L. EBURY, "Science, Religion and Progress."

Notes and News

A cheerful letter from a reader and N.S.S. member in hospital asks, "Isn't it about time that our paper was knocked up to sixpence? I am willing to bet, if you put out a questionnaire on this, you wouldn't find much opposition." We know we shouldn't, but our aim is to win new readers, and fourpence is about the limit they will pay for a journal of this size. In the long run a steady increase in readership will ensure the future of the paper, but for the next year or so readers who would be willing to pay sixpence can work out what the difference will amount to and send it along as a donation to the Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund.

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged: £399 12s. 3d.

G. W. Warner and Family, 10s.; E. Fittock, £2; W. E. Meads, £1; W.H.D., 5s.; S. C. Denning, 10s. 6d.; T. P. Rutherford (Horwich), 5s.; C. McCall, £1 2s. 6d.; Mrs. H. M. Rogals, 10s.; Dr. M. Gompertz, £2 2s.; W. Smith, £1; Dr. A. W. Laing (Manchester), £25; A. Faiers, 4s. G. E. Bond, 2s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; W. Collins (Manchester), £5; J. Roberts, £5 5s.; C. Little, £2; A. H. Deacon, £1; J. H. Popkins, 10s.; L. J. Baker, 5s.; L. Sanderson, 5s.; P. Trower, £1; G. H. Holmes, £1 1s.; P. Victor Morris, £1; T.H.L. (North London Branch), £2. Total to date £453 10s. 9d.

Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

LET the facts speak for themselves.

G. W. Foote founded *The Freethinker* in 1881, went to prison for it in 1883, and carried it on until his death in 1915. It always lost money, but every year he appealed for and obtained enough to meet the loss—a splendid pioneer service to our movement.

Chapman Cohen took over the paper and its liabilities, and kept it going for another 36 years. In 1925 he formed the Freethinker Endowment Trust, thereby obviating the need for further appeals while he was in charge. The debt that our movement owes him for his business acumen as well as for his creative genius is incalculable.

However, before his retirement, all running expenses had rocketed, together with taxes on investments, while interest on the same had stood still. Very considerable losses were being made by G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd., the company owning the paper. From 1951 The Secular Society, Ltd. assumed responsibility for these, appointing a Board of Directors to manage the Foote Company.

The Secular Society, Ltd. exists to deal with legal and business matters that the National Secular Society as an unincorporated body cannot handle. It has made history through the case of the Bowman Bequest, fought in the Courts right up to the House of Lords, whose decision in 1917 gave legal security to legacies to freethought bodies. Since then it has applied itself to helping the movement as necessary; providing and maintaining premises, publishing important books (*Age of Reason* and *Bible Handbook* for example) and, latterly, supporting *The Freethinker*. To do this it has had to sell securities, until barely enough remains to keep the paper going for another year. Sometimes a legacy will ease the position, but this depends upon a death, which the Directors neither desire nor can count upon before the critical moment comes.

The Freethinker is not only a unique educational and inspiring force. It is also the voice of our movement and the medium through which more members can be brought into the N.S.S. If the Directors and Editorial Committee are unable to continue their voluntary work because funds run out, the N.S.S. will no doubt be willing to shoulder the burden; but this must involve a great drain on funds needed for expanding and intensifying the Society's work, which nobody would wish to see curtailed.

I hope that the coming week will see the speeding up of the rate of contributions, to help my friends in their efforts to provide an ever-improving paper. Chapman Cohen deserved that his Memorial Fund should rival the most outstanding of his achievements in a life devoted to freethought. All who realise this and respond through gratitude and loyalty will be more than repaid by the knowledge that they are sharing in a great enterprise. Remittances should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund," and cheques made out accordingly.

A Challenge to Bishop Blunt

A REVIEW of the religious situation in his diocese was recently made by the Bishop of Bradford in the *Telegraph and Argus*, in the course of which he attacks local Free-thinkers. He writes: "We, of course, have our Atheists and Agnostics, some of whom are very vocal, though I doubt if they cut much ice." He also deplores that "there are too many who by-pass all the Churches," and appeals for a great increase of lay readers if the Churches are to be kept open. He sees that "the main issue is not between Church and Chapel, but between Christianity and non-Christianity."

The *Argus* gives him some 2,000 words, prominently featured and heavily headlined. In the foreknowledge that the Bishop would be shielded from counter-attack by his opponents, the Atheists who "cut not ice," Mr. H. Day replied to the *Argus*:—

DEAR SIR,—The writer is addressing this letter to you in the fond hope that in a land where so much lip-service is paid to the idea of equal freedom for all, it may be accorded the same publicity as the privileged episcopal contribution to which it is the retort courteous.

According to the Bishop the "most immediate and pressing problem is a financial one." He apparently hopes to attain the solution of this problem and the associated one of clerical shortage, by an increase of lay workers, which, of course, means non-professional, or unpaid workers. One wonders if it has never occurred to the learned Bishop that the financial difficulties of the Church are primarily contributed to by the necessity of finding the money to pay the handsome salaries of archbishops and bishops and the not so handsome stipends of deans, sub-deans, provosts, rectors, vicars, curates, incumbents, etc., etc. If an increase in lay workers is desirable to relieve the situation, would not the ideal solution be accomplished at one fell swoop by the suppression of all the professional clergy and their absorption into the noble army of voluntary and lay workers, who are at least able to claim that whilst they may be misguided and credulous, they are disinterested and have no "economic axe to grind."

It is noted that the reverend Bishop, in the full knowledge of your connivance and help, makes snappy reference to "our Agnostics and Atheists, who are very vocal," but appear to "cut no ice"; but has to deplore that there are very many who by-pass the Churches and the Church's call to worship. The reverend gentleman might bear in mind that the vocal Agnostics and Atheists who cut no ice *do* at least make public pronouncements of their honest beliefs and disbeliefs, *do* lay themselves open to challenge and debate, but *do not* receive gratuitous publicity in the local Press and *do not* receive a bishop's salary, or even a humble curate's pitiful stipend, for doing so.

It would surely become the Bishop, as the most important and powerful cleric in the diocese to take upon himself the mantle of St. George and the role of dragon slayer and enter the lists against the vocal Agnostics and Atheists.

He would be able to rely upon the support of the local—and even the national—Press to sustain his efforts by reporting him, whatever happened, as having utterly routed, discomfited and demoralised any heretical opponent and could be assured that only the minority who happened to be present at such a massacre of the ungodly would know exactly what had happened. He could rely on the local Press not to disclose for public information those rationalist, agnostic and atheist arguments which your paper has reported the Bishop as being familiar with, but as having no effective counter to other than blind faith. Even with all these advantages on his side, the Bishop has only to

indicate his readiness to champion his cause as infidel dragon slayer and the "joust" could commence. He certainly would himself "cut more ice" than he does at present if, instead of taking advantage of the gratuitous publicity you so generously afford him to make snappy wisecracks and clever quips at the expense of less credulous, more honest and more disinterested opponents, who cannot get back at him through the same medium, he would condescend to meet them, even on his own stamping ground and with his own referee and linesmen, etc., in debate and discussion of some of the more controversial points of religious belief and superstition.

The worthy Bishop, secure and comfortable in his assured and sheltered economic and social position relieved from the necessity of making any sort of useful contribution for his easy living, admits that, "in these apocalyptic days" and times it would be rash to predict the future of religion, and he is, at 75 years of age, "prepared and content to leave to the future the problems of finance and evangelism, which will press harder and harder upon his followers and colleagues." It is to be hoped, that these will learn what, apparently, the Bishop has not yet learned, that religious believers, professional and/or lay, have certainly no monopoly of the human virtues and that profession is not necessarily the same thing as practice.

Amongst other things, the Bishop appears to flatter himself that there has been a dying down of partisan acrimony between believers of the different creeds, sects and denominations and that Anglicans and Dissenters now at least agree to differ and even to talk of unity. Can this possibly be due to the realisation by the more astute of the professional protagonists that it is vitally essential to cover up the dissent and disagreement about creeds and dogmas and that, if the various sects and factions do not "hang together," they are pretty sure to "hang" separately? One imagines that the Bishop himself is quite well aware that the only Christian unity which might ever be accomplished would be the total absorption by Rome of all the schismatics, modernist and fundamentalist, Lutheran and Calvinistic, High, Low and Broad and that such is, to say the least, extremely unlikely.

The Bishop also appears to take some solace and encouragement from the circumstance that the Church fellowships tend to foster youth organisations and to sponsor adult education. Such organisations are, and always have been, far more concerned with doctrinal instruction and indoctrination than with education as such, and simply demonstrate the fact that most Churches are kept functioning as cheap social clubs which provide amenities for social intercourse and physical relaxation which would be more costly elsewhere.

Yours very truly,

HAROLD DAY.

Sportsmanship

A British crowd can always be
Relied on for "Abide with me,"
And never fails to join in "Land
Of Hope and Glory" with the band.
Knowing the words of what they play,
"John Peel" or "Good-bye Dolly Gray,"
A hymn or "Knees up Mother Brown,"
They never let the bandsmen down.

P. V. M.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for Today. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 1s.; postage 2d.

Censorship versus Progress

By JAMES H. MATSON

THE word "Freethought" expresses the fact that our Movement is an organisation one of whose fundamental aims is the fight against censorship, and, especially, that most insidious form of it, namely, suppression before publication. Historically, Censorship represents two aspects of the social system; on the one hand, it is symptomatic of the well-nigh complete control held by Reaction, and on the other hand, as at present, when it suspects that there is a growing feeling against its pretensions. It is now, therefore, making a last-ditch stand, calling up every atom of ignorance and prejudice in a frenzied endeavour to turn back the tide of progressive thought and action. Considering the volume of public interest that has been stirred up by recent attacks on independence of expression, it behoves us to ponder carefully its ultimate aims, aims not publicly announced by their sponsors.

Let us observe the means and methods employed. In the first place, it is generally assumed that sexual morals are the subject with which censorship is concerned. Recent events show the shallowness of this pretension. Sex is the subject chosen for the first moves, because it is easy to arouse those likely to support such attacks, and the earliest victims are such as are likely to find few or no supporters. But it never rests there, nor is it intended to.

Some time ago, a Sunday newspaper published an attack, with quotations from some cheap, obscure trash, calling for suppression. At once I replied pointing out what was likely to follow if this action was taken. My letter, of course, was not printed or noticed. In due course the natural result followed. From all over the country came news of the seizure, not only of useless publications, but of serious educational and scientific books. I need not stress what happened; all who have experience of backward localities will know. It cannot be realised too strongly that the immunity from suppression of any book in one place, or before one judge or magistrate, does not render that book safe before another, and the ruling of judges and magistrates cannot be called in question by a Member of Parliament. The remedy, in cases in which Members are interested, and against which they wish to protest, is so complicated and difficult as to render the most outrageous sentence immune from public criticism and control.

Libel laws are also a source of suppression, the amendment of which is long overdue. A case reported very fully in the Press, on September 18 last, should be noted. In this particular case it is true that sex was made the alleged motive of an action in which Messrs. Hutchinson's (the well-known publishers) were fined heavily for publishing a satire on the lives of the wealthy at a famous foreign seaside resort. *September in Quinze*, the book in question, was suppressed after two years of highly popular success. It will be remembered that recent exposures of scandals in high-life in a Mediterranean country have had heavy repercussions, both social and political. I am assured that the knowledge of such "high life" is common talk in that country. But if the wealthy are to be thus sheltered from criticism, not merely publishers but even printers are penalised. What chance, if this happens, has any honest book of ever seeing the light?

Another serious danger lies in suppression before birth, or if once published, some paper will be found honest enough to report the court proceedings. In recent cases publication has been rendered very difficult. This has happened to *Scourge of the Swastika* by Lord Russell of Liverpool, and a forthcoming book on *Lawrence of Arabia* by Richard Aldington. Neither deal with the subject of

sex, but if a few famous and experienced authors escape this form of suppression, the number who cannot thus remain unknown. A recent special number of the *Times Literary Supplement* is an eye-opener as to what pitch the U.S.A. has come, and it is only active opposition to all forms of censorship that will allow human thought to progress. The recent banning of the *Decameron* by a local authority roused feeling all over the country, but no one, so far as I know, seems to have drawn the true conclusion, which is that such people as these, and their like, who banned this classic, are unfit to judge any book.

Northern Notes

By COLIN McCALL

Many cases of unconscious Christian arrogance are to be found in the "Personal" columns of our newspapers, where Catholics give thanks to all the gods, goddesses and saints in the calendar for "favours received" or "prayers answered." One I have just read, named "Almighty God, Jesus, Queen of Heaven and Guardian Angel." The idea that such distinguished personages could be bothered personally to satisfy the requests of some obscure Mancunian strikes me as ludicrous, and that they should be thanked in the columns of the Press savours of vulgarity. But there is, of course, much that is vulgar in Catholicism. Think of the garish pictures of those selfsame saints and the gaudy ikons that are prominently displayed in our large stores prior to "decorating" Catholic houses and schools. Think, too, of the disgusting veneration of old bones.

* * *

The Rev. A. Woods, Vicar of St. Andrews Church, Litherland, considers that the majority of people who go to Church ought to be ashamed of what they put in the collection. "It is absolutely disgraceful"—he writes in his parish magazine—"to see the collection going down in value through the number of pennies and halfpennies," and he describes some of the contributions as "not even the price of a bus ride to town, much less than the price of ten cigarettes or that of a dance or show." But is this so very surprising? It doesn't seem to occur to Mr. Woods that the examples he mentions all provide something in return for money, and something that can be enjoyed here and now: a drive, a smoke, a dance, amusement, etc. He, on the other hand, can only offer a return in the indeterminate future. He reminds his readers that the collections are "offerings to the Church for the work of God, and I can only conclude that you don't think much of the work of God." Maybe he's got something there!

* * *

Two reports of religious activity in industry have recently come to my notice. The first is an official confirmation of what I knew by hearsay, that the Albert Hall (Manchester) Methodists are preaching regularly in some of the factories in the area. The *Anniversary Report* names five large firms where this takes place. The usual practice, I believe, is to deliver a sermon in the canteen after lunch. An interference with the rights of the workers, you think? Not at all, say the Methodists, anyone who wishes to walk out is free to do so.

The second report is more disturbing. It is a *Sunday Times* (September 19, 1954) description of High Mass at the annual Factory Feast in the Spa Lane Mills, Derby, conducted by the Bishop of Clifton, Mgr. J. E. Rudderham. This, though Protestants are in a "strong majority" in the mill. Still, the Catholic management was very considerate

and a loudspeaker commentary explained the meaning of each part of the service to the non-Catholic employees. The idea comes from Val-des-Bois in France and has already been adopted by 33 factories in Eire. That is only to be expected but it is disturbing to read of such practices in England.

* * *

From Scotland comes a lament that most of the kirks are short of elders. "The needs of the people—in sorrow and happiness—can't be met if there aren't enough elders," writes a minister in the *Sunday Post* (September 5, 1954), but most of the men who are approached make excuses of some sort to avoid the job. "What a fantastic situation it is!"—continues the reverend gentleman—"Men, suitable in all respects, turning down the highest lay position in the Church!" Obviously he is very concerned about the matter. And later on we read: "With too few elders the minister's work is doubled." Ay, there's the rub! Two days a week instead of one?

For Newcomers

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

RECORDS show that the days of the week originated with the Accadians, who lived in Chaldea thousands of years before the Christian religion came into existence. They believed each day to be ruled by one of the planets. Clay tablets have been unearthed which mention the institution of the Sabbath Day, ruled over by Saturn, the god of gloom and malignance. Thus it was deemed unlucky to commence any undertaking on the Sabbath, or Saturday. The Chaldeans ordained that on every seventh day, according to the phases of the moon, there should be a holy day. On this day the King did not eat cooked food, wear white garments, change his clothing, ride in his chariot, or take medicine to cure his ills.

From the Chaldeans this idea of a Sabbath was borrowed by the Hebrews, and from them it was transmitted to Christianity. Hence, when our contemporary Christian folk make Sunday a day of special "taboo" they are following the Chaldeans, whom they regard as idolators, and who lived in the very infancy of human experience.

Moreover, if they take the Bible as their guide, there is not a word in it connecting the first day of the week with the Sabbath. Long after the death of the (alleged) "Jesus," the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday in order to facilitate the conversion of Pagans. The Christian Sabbath is therefore of human, not "divine," origin; and once removed, as an expedient by the early Church.

The idea of "taboo days," moreover, may still be seen at work among savage tribes. It is well fitted to that cultural environment. No intelligent person to-day can possibly think that the British Sunday possesses some mysterious power of turning the harmless recreation of the week-day into a form of moral corruption. Nature herself is no respecter of days. The rain falls, or the sun shines, on Sunday as on any other day. The flowers bloom, the corn ripens and the birds sing just as though the Lord's Day Observance Society did not exist.

G. H. T.

LECTURE REPORT

Mr. F. A. Ridley, President of the National Secular Society, opened the winter session of the Glasgow Secular Society at the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, on Sunday, October 3. The chair was taken by the branch secretary, the undersigned, who welcomed Mr. Ridley to Glasgow, and appealed for more members to take part in the work of the Society.

Speaking on the Greeks and Freethought, Mr. Ridley said that Freethought and the Secular philosophy of life originated

among the ancient Greeks, who may be described as the founders of scientific philosophy. In the tolerant pagan classical civilisation freethought made great strides and the fundamental secularist principle as summarised by the Greeks, "man is the measure of all things," became widely accepted. The rise of Christianity and its ruthless suppression of ideas must be regarded as one of the greatest tragedies that ever befell mankind. The reason for this disaster must, in the opinion of the lecturer, be found in the social sphere. Whilst the educated classes were freethinkers, to the brutalised and enslaved masses, the oriental superstitions made an irresistible appeal. Turning to modern times, Mr. Ridley indicated that the invention of printing had immensely increased the possibilities of spreading culture among the masses. The successful propagation of the scientific view represented our only guarantee against the revival of religion. The critical philosophy of secularism was now indissolubly bound up with the social and economic progress of civilisation.

Secularism, concluded the lecturer, is a "positive" conception; it visualises the destruction of religion as a means for the attainment of a fully secular civilisation.

Replying to questions, Mr. Ridley emphasised the essential contrast between secular and supernatural ethics: the former being actuated solely by consideration for the welfare of mankind, the evolutionary ethics of secularism being a flat contradiction to the authoritarian ethic of religion. A secular civilisation, he concluded, can only be realised in an atmosphere of mental freedom.

JIM BARROWMAN.

Correspondence

THAT CAPITAL "G"

I notice that G. H. Taylor, H. Cutner and other contributors give the Christian god a capital "G." Why pay "him" (or "it") this compliment? Is it not to be taken as a sort of tacit admission of "his" existence?—Yours, etc., (Miss) K. SYERS.

[Miss Syers no doubt similarly ill-treats jack frost, santa claus and cinderalla?—Ed.]

TOO MUCH SCIENCE?

The interesting article by G. H. Taylor entitled *A Godless Speech*, makes one think. I am not so sure of his belief in more science at present.

I mean the dominant science of war and its horrible instruments. This branch of science is costing thousands of millions, whilst old men and women are slowly starving, and the nation has to cadge coppers for cancer research. Just as any scoundrel can become religious, so can any villain become a scientist, and Britain to-day is so full of these merchants of death that I for one am sick of seeing them. Unfortunately, I have to call upon some of these people, and I find that outside their particular studies, which are mostly automatic, they are as ignorant as aboriginals.—Yours, etc., PAUL VARNEY.

[We said the science of human behaviour and society.—Ed.]

BLOOD SPORTS

I read, in *The Freethinker*, of bull-fighting in Catholic-Fascist Spain. We are told sixteen Spaniards and one horse are necessary to torture and kill one bull. Now what about this democratic Protestant country, where up to forty ladies and gentlemen, the same number of horses and a pack of specially trained hounds, are engaged in the honored blood "sport" of torturing and killing animals weaker than bulls.—Yours, etc., K. LIDAKS.

N.S.S. Executive Committee

8th September, 1954

Present: Mr. Ridley (in the chair), Mrs. Venton, Messrs. Griffiths, Ebury, Taylor, Hornibrook, Woodley, Johnson-Corstorphine, Barker, King and the Secretary.

Sixteen new members were admitted to the Parent, Birmingham, Blackburn, Glasgow, Merseyside, Newcastle, Nottingham and West London Branches. The President gave a detailed report of the Luxembourg International Freethought Congress. A discussion of the Society's finances occupied some time. A Sub-Committee was appointed to consider Annual Dinner arrangements.

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H. Taylor, M.R.S.T. Materialism stated and defended. Price 4s. postage 3d.