

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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[After visiting the Luxemburg Congress of World Freethought, the present writer paid a short visit to Germany. Hence there has been a slight, but unavoidable, delay in his report. As the President of the World Union, Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner has meanwhile given an official report on Luxemburg. The following paragraphs represent a personal impression, rather than an actual report of the Congress.]

THE Thirty-First World-Congress of the International Freethought Movement, the World Union of Freethinkers, was held on September 1-6 at the Municipal Casino in the ancient city of Luxemburg, capital of the Independent Grand-Duchy of Luxemburg. Apart from the diminutive principality of Liechtenstein, the Grand-Duchy is the last surviving Germanic monarchy. This state of things derives from the mediæval Holy Roman Empire. Though occupied by the Germans in both world wars, Luxemburg still retains its sovereign and independent status as the smallest of European fully sovereign states.

Freethought in Luxemburg

Though pre-eminently a Roman Catholic land, no obstacles were put in the way of the World-Congress, as far as the present writer is aware. On the contrary, the authorities appear to have co-operated in every conceivable way! Several members of the government were present at the reception given in honour of the Congress by the Luxemburg Freethinkers. In addition, the Congress received most cordial receptions both from the (pre-dominantly Catholic!) municipality of Luxemburg City, as well as from mayors of the industrial town of Dudelanges in the south, and from the rural commune of Vianden in the north of the Grand-Duchy. The mayors of both these towns are Socialists and Freethinkers—in Luxemburg a virtually inseparable combination. The hospitality shown in all these cases was most generous and, in the case of His Worship of Dudelanges, positively overwhelming! This cordial reception was primarily, no doubt, due to the efficient work put in over so many years by the small—some 300 members—but energetic Luxemburg Freethought movement. This movement is under the able leadership of Monsieur J. Gremling, a brilliant young lawyer and Socialist deputy, now vice-president of the World-Union. The Luxemburg movement is, under this leadership, playing an ever-increasingly important role in the life and politics of the Grand-Duchy.

An Industrial "Ruritania"

The Grand-Duchy itself, much of which the delegates were fortunately able to see in the course of several social excursions arranged in connection with the Conference, may be defined as a partly industrialised "Ruritania": an old-world Lilliputian (by modern standards) state. This is a survival from more picturesque mediæval days, but the country has, in part, been heavily industrialised. The industrial area to the south, near the French border, contains the steel mills of Dudelanges, which we were

fortunately able to inspect. The European Steel Board, which is now permanently resident in Luxemburg, gives to the diminutive Grand-Duchy—with, all told, some 300,000 inhabitants—an importance in the modern world of heavy industry. In the main, however, the Grand-Duchy retains its "Ruritanian" atmosphere, with its beautiful countryside, stretching up to the Ardennes in the north, studded with quaint and delightful little towns. The capital, seat of the Grand Ducal Court, and formerly one of the strongest fortresses in Europe, represents a fascinating contrast of the mediæval and modern—the old Grand-Ducal Luxemburg, and the modern city of "Radio Luxemburg"

and the "European Steel Board." H.S.H., the Grand Duchess, enjoys, among the crowned heads of Europe, at least one democratic distinction: her palace is situated on a main thoroughfare, with a cinema directly opposite, and street-cars running democratically past the royal residence! Incidentally Her Serene Highness did *not* attend our World-Congress, as she was away on the famous all-royal Mediterranean cruise sponsored by the Greek monarchs.

A Tower of Babel!

The 31st World-Congress took place in the "Municipal Casino" (situated not inappropriately in "Notre Dame" street). The spacious room in which the Congress was seated commanded a splendid view over both the noble "Pont Adolphe" and the Bank and Parliament buildings of Luxemburg. Here for several days the hall resounded to the eloquence of speakers from many lands; their speeches delivered in the three official languages of the Congress—English, German, and French. The last-named was, however, the main language at all the functions of the Congress, and those "outer barbarians," who, like the present writer and our German colleagues, cannot express themselves in French, were at a serious disadvantage, and rather out of many Conference discussions. However, at least in the case of the present writer, this did not prevent them from appreciating the incomparable charm of the French diction of such masters of the spoken word as Monsieur André Lorulot and his colleagues. We hasten to add that this limitation has no meaning for the genial President, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, who is, evidently, a survivor of the halycon age before the Tower of Babel witnessed the division of tongues! Not all enjoy the rare linguistic abilities of the World-President. Our Esperantist friends could have obtained fresh material in support of their campaign for a world-language had they been present at Luxemburg in the year of grace, 1954.

Personalities of the Congress

It is a refreshing and permanently memorable experience to meet in the flesh, and to hear in person, the great contemporary figures of European and World Freethought. *Facile princeps* among the masters of Latin eloquence must

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Impressions of Luxemburg

By F. A. RIDLEY

be placed that great orator, André Lorulot, vice-president of the World Union and worthy successor of the world-famous anarchist and Freethought orator, the late Monsieur Sebastien Faure. At a public meeting during the Congress, M. Lorulot spoke for an hour and a half alone, and held his crowded audience spell-bound. Then there is the monumental Monsieur Jean Cotereau, editor of our French contemporary, *La Raison Militante*, like Tennyson's inexhaustible "brook" he can "go on for ever." The Ciceronian eloquence of Prof. Angelo Crippa of Genoa, spokesman and representative of the Italian "Giordano Bruno" Society sums up "the grandeur that was Rome" in his classical orations. Monsieur Jean Gremling, the brilliant Luxemburger, has a vitality apparently inexhaustible. Massively eloquent (an expressive) were the German Freethought leaders, Herren Freistuller, Van der Linden, and the biologist, von Frankenburg. English scholarship was notably represented in a masterly paper by the eminent Anglo-Saxon historian of Christian origins, Archibald Robertson. Nor must the ladies be omitted even in a summary report: conspicuous among these are Mlle H. Pardon and the eloquent French Freethinker and Feminist, Mme Denise Michaud. The former lady is, of course, that ever-green dynamo of inexhaustible energy, that veteran of many Congresses, the General Secretary of the World-Union. It is not often in our drab and mass-produced age that so many colourful and diverse personalities can be found assembled under a single roof!

Congress Topics

Though representatives from America and Asia were present, in the main the Luxemburg Congress represented *European* Freethought. As such it was more political—the ever-present danger, represented by political Catholicism sees to that!—than would be the case in a similar congress in Anglo-Saxon lands. In these lands there is not that close link-up as exists on the European Continent between Militant Freethought and the political parties of the Left. At Luxemburg the main topic was, "The Churches and the evolution of Modern Society." The majority of papers, including the present writer's, dealt with the *social* even more than with the current theological evolution of the Christian churches. However, Mr. Robertson gave us a notable exposition of recent changes in Christian apologetics. In the course of a survey of the recent literature relating to Christian origins, the Luxemburger, Monsieur Charles Thomes paid an explicit tribute to the exposition of the "mythicist" theory of Christian origins, published by our contributor, H. Cutner. A lucid message from the eminent French scholar, Prof. Alfarcic, who was unable to be present, formed a notable feature of the intellectual evolution of the Congress. Among the Resolutions, unanimously carried by the Congress, may be mentioned one calling for the liberation of the heroic Spanish people from the yoke of clerical-fascism, and one drafted by the present writer, describing the Vatican's "ecclesiastical Fascism" as the major enemy of contemporary Freethought and of human progress in general.

Forward to Amsterdam

The 31st Congress may, we think, be regarded as a success, and, in the annals of Freethought in Luxemburg itself, as a definite landmark. Its successor, the 32nd World Congress, will be held in 1956, in Amsterdam, to commemorate the centenary of the oldest Freethought Society in Europe, "Der Dagaraad" founded in 1856, a decade before the N.S.S. We look back on Luxemburg with satisfaction; we look forward to Amsterdam with hope. Forward, to Amsterdam!

Flogging a Dead Horse?

By F. A. HORNIBROOK

BY attacking the Bible and Christianity, Freethinkers are frequently accused of "flogging a dead horse": but the trouble with this horse is not even that he is dead and won't lie down, but that he is not buried, and the stink of his dead carcase still assails the nostrils of all intelligent people.

Those people who glibly tell us that the Church to-day is a social and philanthropic organisation, and exerts very little influence on the lives of ordinary men and women, must be going through life with their eyes shut.

Take for instance the abdication of King Edward VIII. and the part played by the Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the State Church, ably backed by his Nonconformist brethren and supported by politicians who realised that it was bad policy to oppose in any way the Christian vote!

But it affects the life of the ordinary citizen very little whoever is King or Queen: a much more glaring example of church interference is afforded by the Divorce laws.

People who tell us that the work of such societies as the National Secular Society is not needed, do not know that, again and again, wretched little newsagents are afraid to display *The Freethinker* on their counters, because parsons have told them repeatedly that if they do, they will not only withdraw their own custom, but threaten to influence their parishioners to do the same. Leather-lunged Salvation Army ignoramuses with their gospel of blood and fire, will make the air hideous with their discordant bellowing, supported by blaring brass bands: while the police indulgently look on; and rest or peace become an impossibility for people in nearby neighbourhoods.

Over and over again the police authorities have moved on Freethought speakers without any authority to do so, and have only ceased their persecution on finding that these speakers have behind them some powerful force such as the National Secular Society, which was prepared to take up the challenge and vindicate the right of free speech.

The great trouble with us Freethinkers is that when we reject the falsity and absurdity of religion, we just sit back and smile or wonder at the fuss Christians make in trying to save their wretched little souls; and we let it go at that. Many of us fail to realise that the fight for Freethought is just as necessary as, and even more vital than, it ever has been. If *The Freethinker* had a circulation of 100,000 copies a week, what a force it could and would be in the land! When one thinks that its price is but a tithe of a small packet of cigarettes, and that if every one of its readers made a determined effort to rope in one extra subscriber, we should not only be doing the new subscriber a real good turn, but helping Freethought enormously.

The Church always has been and always will be one of man's greatest foes to progress: that the Churches are less brutal than they were, is not due to any softening of heart, but solely to the efforts of brave men and women, known and unknown, who have kept the Freethought banner flying throughout the ages.

Some years before the war, when Germany still retained a certain measure of freedom and culture, one of the German papers published a cartoon of two priests looking at some of the instruments of the Inquisition. One of them remarked, "What a pity we cannot use these now; the faith would be much stronger if we could."

NEXT WEEK

INTERVIEWS WITH N.S.S. SPEAKERS
W. J. O'NEILL

Religious Apologia To-day

By ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

[A paper given to the International Freethought Congress dealing with the changes in doctrine and practice of the Churches in face of the present evolving society.]

IF we compare the intellectual climate of fifty years ago with that of to-day, we find a remarkable change in the attitude of the defenders of Christianity. The change is not altogether in the direction of greater rationality; on the contrary it has taken the form of a flight from reason.

Fifty years ago the issues debated by the apologist and the critic centred on the philosophical, historical and scientific credentials of the faith. Apologists were concerned to defend the credibility of the Bible; to show that the early chapters of Genesis, if not historical, were at least an allegory and inspired; to emphasise the agreements and to explain away the disagreements between the historical books of the Old Testament and Egyptian and Assyrian Monuments; to maintain the authenticity and the historicity of the New Testament; and, in particular, to prove the historicity of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The names of Strauss and Renan, Huxley and Haeckel were banded to and from in furious controversy.

To-day a very different tactic is adopted by religious apologists. The attempt to make the Bible "stand to reason" has been tacitly abandoned. Instead, apologists seek to bludgeon us into belief by dwelling on the practical consequences of unbelief. For the Catholic Church no very great change of front is involved; for Rome has never treated the truth of Christianity as a question of evidence. But for the Protestant Churches a considerable realignment has been necessary. The most famous Protestant theologian of to-day, Karl Barth, not only makes no attempt to base his beliefs on evidence, but repudiates in the strongest terms those who make the attempt. "That revelation is revelation can only be proved by revelation." The utmost Barth claims for the Bible from a historic point of view is that something extraordinary must have happened to cause men to write those books and other men to listen to them. *What* happened we only know by faith, and the ultimate sanction of faith is the "weltering inferno" which life becomes if faith is abandoned. Other Protestant apologists, without Barth's extreme intransigence, rest their case ultimately on the same ground. V. A. Demant contends that to deny the special creation of the spirit of man by an Eternal God is to leave man an animal incapable of reason and destitute of rights, and to surrender the whole case against totalitarianism. C. S. Lewis argues that only the recognition of the supernatural can save us from subjection to irresponsible scientific planners. The late Cyril Joad tried to turn the existence of evil (usually considered a stumbling block for believers) into an argument for theism by urging the necessity of a God to set evil right. Finally a report published by the Church of England in 1945 under the title, "Towards the Conversion of England" blamed humanism, "the age-long lie," the "root sin," for every evil in the world from sexual laxity to world war, and the World Council of Churches, assembled in 1948 at Amsterdam, echoed the chorus: "Either spiritual beliefs or a totalitarian State." None of these apologists attempt to base Christian beliefs on philosophical, scientific or historical evidence. All say in the last analysis: "Believe without evidence or be politically damned."

The change of front in religious apologia is due, of course, to external causes. Fifty years ago the bourgeois social order seemed secure. Political battles, at least in

Western Europe and America, were waged between combatants who agreed in accepting the existing basis of society. Socialist parties, whether large or small, were everywhere in a minority and unable to influence the course of affairs to any serious extent. Consequently theological battles had no apparent relevance to politics. No one, unless he was unusually philosophical and far-seeing, dreamed that the relegation of the plan of redemption to the realm of myth could have had any social and political repercussions. Isolated utterances could be quoted against this view. For example, my old friend, Belfort Bax—one of the pioneers of British Socialism—wrote, as long ago as 1883, "The bourgeois is acute enough to connect atheism and Communism." But this, however true it may have become, was not true of the average British bourgeois at the time that Bax wrote it. On the whole, the theological battles of those days proceeded without the combatants being aware that they were disputing about anything other than theology.

Now the case is altered. It is no longer possible to pretend that religious controversy has no political repercussions. Freethinkers differ among themselves, and will for some time to come continue so to differ as to what these repercussions are, but that they should exist is in the nature of the case. We cannot blame the Churches for fastening on the fact. Naturally they point to those effects which are most disagreeable to those to whom their apologetics are addressed. "You are a father of a family? All right! Suppose there is no God and the sacramental view of marriage is a myth. How do you think husbands and wives, sons and daughters will behave? Read the Sunday papers and see! You are an employer of labour? Good! Suppose there is no other life, and no "pie in the sky" when they die, for your work people. How will you get honest work out of them and prevent them going on strike and voting Socialist or Communist? You are a peaceful citizen and want to live your own life and leave a happy world to your own children? Poor fool! Science knows nothing of your right to be happy. Science knows only of the survival of the fittest. What force have you to oppose to the mobilisation order of a War Lord, the hydrogen bomb will blot out millions of you from the earth like so much vermin? Back to your prayers; back to your mass; back to your God! For nothing else can save you."

That, in summary, is the message drummed into our ears to-day from the pulpit, over the radio and from the Vatican itself. It is not to be expected that Freethinkers drawn as they are from different countries, from different classes and different political parties should have an agreed and comprehensive answer. We may have individually very strong views on these matters. Corporately we are limited to what we can agree on. But I think we can agree on enough to call the bluff of the clericals. For example, we have enough historical and statistical evidence at our disposal to render ridiculous the pretence that the decay of religious belief has led to a decay of personal morality. Without corporately committing ourselves for or against any political party, we may venture a surmise that the tendency of workers to strike or not to strike, to vote this way or that, depends less on their belief in heaven or hell than on the presence or absence of a stake in the economic system. The provision that everybody shall have such a stake is a "headache" for politicians, not for Freethinkers as such. As to power politics and the hydrogen bomb we

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

The "Northern Daily Telegraph" has been dealing with the Sabbath Question, and it is quite amusing to find that one of the disputants, the Rev. J. T. Riddall, M.A., gave once again the good old reasons Christians in general use to explain why they chose as their Sabbath Day Sunday, the Pagan day of the Sun, instead of Saturday as commanded in their Bible. Once again, we are told it was made "legal" by Constantine who, though always acclaimed as the first Christian Emperor, in actual fact never relinquished Mithras as his particular God. Mr. Riddall insists that the God of the Old Testament is also the God of the New; but he also insists that he can throw overboard any part of the Old he likes—just as the early Christians chose the Day of the Sun for their Sabbath Day, rather than the Jewish Sabbath.

One can put it another way. The whole of the Bible is Divinely inspired, it is God's Precious Word; but any Christian can believe just what he likes about the Old Testament, especially if he manages to get a few good arguments to support him. The only people not allowed to do the same with the Bible, that is, disbelieve parts exactly like true Christians, are heretics. For them the Laws against Blasphemy can conveniently be invoked. But never for people like Mr. Riddall who, as a good Christian, can play ducks and drakes with the Old Testament, and particularly with the Commandment relating to the Sabbath Day.

The reason for all this hullabaloo about the Sabbath is that the citizens of Blackburn were asked to vote for or against Sunday cinemas, and the Free Churches were up in arms against such a blasphemous proposal. They angrily protested against any vote being taken. What they want is what they have always had, a town dead on Sundays—not a smile anywhere, nothing but gloom and gloom. At the moment of writing we do not know the result of the voting—not that that matters much. For indeed, not all the Free Church ministers in the world can sweep back the Secular tide even on a Sunday. Sunday cinemas have come to stay in most parts of Britain; whether now or later, they will certainly come to Blackburn.

The visit of the Emperor of Abyssinia brought an article in the *Daily Mail* from the Editor of *Burke's Peerage* in which he repeated the glamorous old story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba from both of whom Haile Selassie claims to be descended. Mr. Pine gives the account "as recorded in the Bible," and no doubt believes every word of it. There is not a scintilla of evidence outside the Bible for the story—that is, there is no proof whatever that either Solomon or the Queen of Sheba ever lived.

But of course it is quite possible that some Israelites bearing with them "the Lion of Judah" migrated and settled in Abyssinia, and spread the legend as part of the Gospel of glorifying the tiny kingdom of Judah. Later, the Abyssinians were converted to Christianity—though we have a feeling that Abyssinia was never an object of pride for Christians. The slave trade there and many abominable customs were too much even for them!

Nobody opposes "lotteries" so savagely as our glorious Church—so we find it rather more than amusing to learn that the Church Commissioners have had appointed an "investments advisory panel" so that it can make a bit on the quiet juggling with Stock Exchange shares. The Church's income is somewhere about £8,500,000, and with

some clever gambling it can be made more. What with land owned by it going up in value, and what with its shares rising, the Church will certainly make more in the coming years—and, not the slightest doubt about it, will always bitterly oppose "huge" dividends, and football pool prizes, for the layman. Did anyone say—hypocrites?

At the risk of boring readers we must once again refer to that monument of credulity—Spiritualism. A prominent medium, Mrs. Estelle Roberts, stated in a recent "dis-course," that Spiritualists accepted the story of Abraham entertaining three angels to a meal even if "others regarded it as an impossibility." This is not at all surprising, any more than when another eminent medium, Mrs. Blaschke, anxious to impress readers with her Biblical knowledge, referred to Jesus as saying, "that the lion would lie down with the lamb." Really, is there any limit to Spiritualist ignorance?

One of the recent broadcasts for children was on the subject of Free Will and what Voltaire in *Candide* and Sophocles and Shakespeare in their plays thought about it. Naturally, they were all wrong—only Jesus Christ had the truth. Fancy schoolchildren understanding learned references to such authors!—we doubt if even the intellectuals on the Third Programme would. Is it a wonder that boys and girls leave school often unable to spell correctly or do simple sums?

Fifty Years Ago

Our greatest need is an adequate sense of humour. Nothing else really kills an absurdity, whether it is social, political, or religious. To argue solemnly with an absurdity often gives it a new lease of life. A keen perception and appreciation of the ridiculous is the only thing. Were this general, we should no longer hear or read lengthy arguments about incense, vestments, or altar lights. We should soon cease reading discussions on Biblical miracles, virgin births, or resurrections from the dead. We should cease to witness the spectacle of men announcing themselves as the mouthpieces of God—whether they were of the street-corner kind, with faces that carry the credentials of admission to a lunatic asylum, or of the pulpit variety, with the symptoms more carefully disguised. And with them would disappear a whole string of social and political abuses.—(Chapman Cohen, *Freethinker*, October 30, 1904.)

Religious Apologia To-day

(Concluded from page 347)

might—again without committing ourselves corporately—point out that the warnings of Church leaders would be more convincing if the Churches officially censured the use of such weapons. I do not overlook the pronouncement of the World Congress of Churches recently held in the U.S.A., and I wait for action to follow it up. We can hardly expect that God will intervene to prevent what his ministers refuse to brand as a sin.

On one point we Freethinkers must in any case be uncompromising. We oppose the Churches because on examination of the evidence, we find their dogmas to be false. The social and political consequences of that finding are a matter for dispute. But be these consequences what they may, the fact that the rejection of the Churches' evidences are disagreeable to some people does not make a false dogma true. To invite belief in a dogma, not on the evidence, but on account of the alleged social and political consequences of disbelief is a treason to truth which we refuse to commit.

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

C. S. W. BROOKS.—We should be interested in your reasons or evidence for the unorthodox view of Wilde.

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 31, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

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

INDOOR

J. CLAYTON'S Lectures (The Secular School, Pole Lane, Fails-worth).—Sunday, October 31, 2-45 p.m.: "Adaptation"; 6-30 p.m.: "Astronomical Religion."

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, October 31, 7 p.m.: MISS B. NIVEN, "William Morris."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Second Floor).—Sunday, October 31, 6-45 p.m.: I. F. DENNY, "The Development of Personality."

Junior Discussion Group (South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall).—Friday, October 29, 7-15 p.m.: MRS. M. JACOBY, "Handwriting Psychology."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 31, 6-30 p.m.: P. TURNER, "Fatalism and Uncertainty."

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (New Millgate Hotel).—Sunday, October 31, 7 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS, "Where Do We Go From Here?"

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square).—Friday, October 29, 7-30 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS, "Where Do We Go From Here?"

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, October 31, 2-30 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, "The Mind of the Ape."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 31, 11 a.m.: ROYSTON PIKE, "The Mystery of Joanna Southcott."

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead).—Thursday, October 28, 8 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Catholic Church and World Politics."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1, five minutes from Edgware Road Station).—Sunday, October 31, 7-15 p.m.: H. CUTNER, "G. W. Foote."

Notes and News

Our apologies to our contributor, E. H. Grout, whose article, "The Verdict of the Monuments," was by an error in the make-up run on to a portion of "overset" from another article. Mr. Grout's article ends at "Monuments" (p. 334 col. 2, line 56). Incidentally, it will interest older readers to know that E. H. Grout was "Harold Scudder" who wrote for *The Freethinker* some 30 years ago. The overset matter was an addition to George Miller's "Newcastle Notebook." Our apologies also to Mr. Miller.

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged: £453 10s. 9d.

W. Guelke, 5s.; Miss I. Barnes, 5s.; Miss E. Belchambers, 10s.; T. W. Burrige, 5s.; A. P. Firth, £1 1s.; W. Ma-whinney, 10s.; J. M. Marsh, £1; Mrs. J. MacPherson, 4s.; A. B. Mitchell, 8s.; W. J. Howard, 10s.; B. J. Edgcombe, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; A. Mackay and W. Trendell, 5s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d. Total to date £459 17s. 3d.

Donations should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

Appreciations

THIS week's appeal shall be written by its contributors themselves. The following are extracted from a few of the letters which accompany the subscriptions.

"My only regret is that I cannot send twenty times as much. If it had not been for Chapman Cohen and *The Freethinker* I might have been connected with some religious organisation, paying out weekly collections, supporting jumble sales and even going out begging for them, and getting nowhere!"

"Whatever we do we must not let our gallant paper go down, or the memory of Chapman Cohen fade."

"I have been a regular reader since the days of Foote and would like to pay my tribute to dear old Chapman. The best way we can do that is to see that *The Freethinker* is in a sound financial position. Hoping the appeal will meet with the success it deserves. . . ."

"I have been a reader of *The Freethinker* for well over 40 years and if that does not make a man of me nothing will. For clearing away the mental fog I enclose . . ."

". . . to the memory of Chapman Cohen, a great champion of freedom of speech and mind. He is gone but the work to which he dedicated his life must go on."

"I hope this fund will meet with the success it deserves, and so help this precious journal to continue for many years to come."

"Of all the papers I read, *The Freethinker* is the one I can least afford to do without."

". . . a small token of gratitude for much educational benefit derived from the pages of *The Freethinker*."

"This is my 75th birthday, and I hope to donate annually on this date."

"The Freethought movement has a heavy struggle against all the reaction in the world to-day, but I do think we make progress against Christianity."

"I never parted with money more willingly."

"C.C. always seemed to put into words my own ideas about religion, and as long as *The Freethinker* continues its uncompromising struggle against religion, superstition and ignorance Cohen will not have worked in vain."

"I feel this is money well spent; *The Freethinker* is really something to look forward to each week."

"So long as I am in a position to help financially I shall be delighted to make my contributions to support the life of the only journal in the country that is fighting ignorance, superstition and stupidity."

"Within the compass of eight pages is packed an unanswerable indictment of religion and bigotry."

"I expect many other contributors, like myself, will hope to come in again before the fund closes."

B.B.C. "History" for Children

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

FROM the title "History is Never Dull" one would think that an article in the section "For the Children" in the *Radio Times* had the praiseworthy object of interesting the younger generation in history as it is generally understood. That is, in a factual account of past events. Reading the article, however, made it clear that the title was entirely misleading.

The author, J. Stanley Pritchard, was using the space to give publicity to a series of plays written by himself which are now being broadcast at intervals in *Children's Hour* by the B.B.C. They can in no way be properly described as history, since they deal with Biblical stories about Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Saul and David. These are not history, but myth, legend and folk-lore. To represent them to children as history is of little credit to the author, to the B.B.C. and to the *Radio Times*, particularly when this is done with the inexcusable inaccuracies to be found in the article.

Mr. Pritchard says that his plays provide "a picture book of the Old Testament." For example, he says, "There is the boy Samuel, kneeling by his bed, listening to the message from God." Well, Mr. Pritchard's play may show that, but the Old Testament tells of nothing of the kind. The third chapter of the first Book of Samuel is at pains to point out that the boy was lying down when he heard a voice that he thought belonged to Eli the priest. He went to Eli, who denied calling him and told him to go and lie down again. This happened three times. The third time Eli told him to lie down and, if he was called again, to say "Speak LORD; for thy servant heareth." So Samuel, according to the Book, "went and lay down in his place," and there he was lying when "the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel." Samuel answered as instructed, except that he omitted to address his visitor as LORD; no doubt because, as the chapter informs us, he "did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him." All the LORD had to say was that he was going to execute vengeance on the house of poor old blind Eli because his sons had done wrong and he had not restrained them. After listening to this edifying message, "Samuel lay until the morning."

The question arises: "Why have Mr. Pritchard, the B.B.C. and the *Radio Times* deceived young readers by saying that Samuel was kneeling by his bed, when he was lying in his place (probably on the floor) with the LORD standing over him?" We can only surmise that it was done to inculcate the habit of kneeling and praying at the bedside, and we are prepared to agree that, with modern children, such a result can only be achieved by deception. We should like to know, however, what moral justification there is for the procedure.

Another picture Mr. Pritchard conjures up is that of "David playing to Saul, and in peril of his life." Does he really want children to turn to chapter eighteen of Samuel I where this incident is told? There they will learn that Saul hated David because the women sang a song to the effect that "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Saul, therefore, sent David on a dangerous mission against the Philistines, requiring him to bring back a hundred of what the ancient Israelites regarded as scalp-equivalents. Instead of getting killed, David collected two hundred of these grisly trophies. "History is Never Dull," as the title asserts. Nor is this. But it isn't history, and it certainly isn't a tale for children!

Mr. Pritchard gets nothing right. He talks of "Goliath, giant of Gath and champion of the Philistines, challenging the Israelites to send a man to meet him in single combat so that the costly war might come to an end." Yet there is not the slightest suggestion in the Bible story that his challenge had any such purpose. The idea only exists in Mr. Pritchard's not very well disciplined imagination, and should have been dissipated by the slaughter of the Philistines after Goliath had been disposed of. Again, Mr. Pritchard refers to David "going out to face the giant with no more defence than a sling and a few pebbles from a brook." The Bible story says he also had a staff. Since our author is claiming to depict history, he really ought to check his statements with the only reference book available.

His purpose, he tells the children, is to link the various stories together. Otherwise "you might find it hard to tell me right off whether Joshua came before Saul, and what connection there was, if any, between Joseph and Moses." That would be too dreadful to contemplate!

"This is history, remember," "these were real people," "God, they would say, is behind it all," "the Old Testament is bang up to date," "looking back at the Old Testament helps us to realise that just as God was in history *then*, so he is in history *to-day*." These are the conclusions that this broadcasting author draws from the stories he portrays so misleadingly. Moreover, it appears that the B.B.C. has given him *carte blanche* to inflict his inventions on the children. Have they no shame?

Monkey and Man

A monkey sat watching the crowds go by
And didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.
A drunk with his hat and his clothes all awry
With a hic and a whoop came staggering by:
The gangster who'd bartered his soul for loot;
The gambler, the pimp and the prostitute;
A woman all bent with toil and with care;
The tramp and the dude, and the man of prayer.
He viewed the saloons and the houses of shame,
The low dens of vice and the gambling game;
The bank with its loads of rich golden store
And the slums where there dwell the hosts of the poor.
He viewed the big factory, forge and the mill
Where they make the weapons with which man will kill.
He saw it all round him with heart, sick and sore;
Next he looked on their wars and could then stand no more.
He said: "Take me back to the land of my birth,
Where no greedy monkeys can own the whole earth:
Where they do not have wars, nor a jail nor police:
And all receive justice and all live at peace.
Where such a mess came from I just cannot see,
But I'm sure of this, it did not spring from me.
Go on in the vileness to which you have sunk
But don't claim you sprang from the poor little monk!"

Arkansas, U.S.A.

W. H. BURTON.

- THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.** By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)
- THOMAS PAINE, A Pioneer of Two Worlds.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s.; postage 1½d.
- LIFT UP YOUR HEADS,** An Anthology for Freethinkers. By William Kent. Price, cloth 6s.; paper 4s. 3d.; postage, 3d.

By Gods Ordained—A Rhapsody

By BAYARD SIMMONS

GO, goats; away, rude gobblers of young tree-shoots, worse than man's axe; that seeking axe for fuel and habitation, and his far-questing ship. Man has his needs; your need is food, the first, the greatest, primal need; that sturdy ineluctable fact.

You, too, are food; sick infants, and the wild mountaineer, need your strong milk and flesh. Man steals this nourishment from your young kids, and breeds and herds you for his butchering knife; your soft and melting eye holds it not back.

Eating and eaten, is your little life, indeed, the life of all—including man. (Oh, infamy!) Man has his fleas and bugs, those homely parasites, and lice; and, swimming in his blood, the fever-bacilli, that kill and kill; and cankers in his flesh that eat the life.

Yes, eating and being eaten is the rule for men and goats, by gods ordained; the life-destroyers in the end destroyed; the wielder of the knife, the axe; the nibblers of the tender tree-shoots; all eating, and a menu, till life close.

Besides, you stink. Go, set a league between me and your smell—odour abominable! Keep to the leeward, for the love of Christ.

Why this should be, I know not. Is it the perfume of a native dirt? The sex-call to a mate, warning expectant nanny? An armour to keep off an enemy? A poison-gas to the tormenting fly? A mystery. I must ask Professor Huxley, our spectacled and kindly friend, wise in animal-lore.

Man, too, can stink, in life and death, chiefly in multitudes, as Shakespeare's Coriolan and Cæsar knew. Enough of that—but mentioned here in fairness to all goats.

For Man is Animal; he eats and kills, destroys and stinks. Yet were that all, why tell you, goats, tell anyone, this common, piteous tale of life? Man is much more—more, incomprehensibly more, immeasurably more; greater than goats or gods can know, especially goat-gods, like shaggy Pan. Man has that in him, like Phæbus, which can illumine and make bright the world; Apollo's son, and wise Minerva's child.

Man is creator, a demi-god, beauty and wisdom can this half-god make; he can be sage, artist, and saint. (Saints often stink; lowly, self-neglecting for his god, a-work among the lowly.) Even in destruction, man prepares the broken ground for better growth, for crops that serve his health, his energy creative.

Man has learned. He lays aside his axe and plants new trees, assisting Mother Nature's lying-in. What have you learned, O goats? What more than eating, and to butt and tup, and breed, involuntary? Breed mischief, no whit less than milk and food. *Mischief*, the operative word: mischief, equalling the good you do: a mischief like the locust in warm lands, those swarming, flying, hopping foes of men.

Taking your mischief on the lowest plane, not *plain*, for this you do in the high hills: in Lebanon, where giant cedars grow, you are the pest that bites the forester. For these dear trees, sweet-wooded and majestic (a theme through three millenia of song; yea, in the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's), are dying from the ravages of goats.

What know you, bearded beasts, of poesy? Learn that the cedar in the poet's heart stands second only to the Tree of Life. Alas, Lord God posted no Cherubim with swords of flame to guard the cedars tall that grow upon the slopes of Lebanon. You, mangey ones, the cedars' seedlings eat, and thus the groves of cedars haste to death.

Are there no thorns and thistles in these hills that can with herbs sustain your hardy life? Have you no use for

shade from level branch? Must you too ravage like the Ottoman? Your stink o'ercome the cedar's pleasant smell? Are there no rulers in that sunny land to drive the ravishers from this famed spot, and let the cedar flourish like green bay?

Men in all ages worshipped gods in groves. The pillared church is but the grove's tall trees repeated in dead stone: timber turned stone by some fell gorgon head: a lifeless shell, sheltering lifeless faith.

Therefore, you goats, avoid, and get you gone, you, with the horns of Eblis and his jinn: there are other rocks on which to climb. Skip you, and jump, with your delightful kids, leap like a ballerina without skirt; get out, be gone, foul goats; leap far away, and leave the loveliness of Lebanon.

Newcastle Notebook

By GEORGE MILLER

APART from lovable old Noah, we do not remember that any of the characters, whose sad stories may be read in a recent publication called the Bible, were ever conspicuous for a humane attitude towards animals. There are instead numerous passages which could testify to the contrary. Nor do our Christian contemporaries, when they proudly recount the sufferings and martyrdom of the early Christians (who were fed to lions, remember) display much sympathy for the poor cats who had to eat such tough rations. Good Christians have always been much too pre-occupied with the care, repair and overhaul of their hypothetical souls to trouble about Fido and Felix.

We were therefore interested when a church in County Durham held a service "in thanksgiving for God's creation, especially the animal kingdom." It was an open air service, for even the most cavernous church, unlike Noah's elastic ark, has not so much seating capacity for our animal friends as has an adjacent field. Parishioners brought along cats and dogs, the only animals Matfen village had heard of; Dolly, the mare, also attended, for whose recovery after an optic operation God was thanked. God was probably having a round of golf at the time of the service, convincingly disguised as the nearest available veterinary surgeon. It elates us to learn that those who call themselves Christians can occasionally refrain from emulating the ancient Semites. But we wonder if they realise that some animals are not the pleasantest of divine handiwork, being equipped with sharp teeth and claws, or when timid and docile, are often quite dreadfully ugly. Must we praise God for everything?

The Rev. F. L. Gould has hit upon a capital method of attracting teenagers to St. Paul's Church, Gateshead—he runs a youth club at which any extremity of American style dancing is permitted and encouraged, thus ensuring that the soul shall dance upon something more hectic than a jig to Heaven. Darling Teddy Boys are not excluded; the only qualification being that jivers are regular attenders at church. He who will not pray, neither shall he bop. The Club meets four times per week, even after Sunday service, and since its activities are apparently confined to jiving and bopping, the Rev. Gould's explanation that "the Club is an expression of their life together in the church" requires explanation. It equates bopping and jiving with Christian doctrine and practice.

"Actually, holidays are one of the minor by-products of 1,900 years of Christianity." This piece of news occurs in "Thought for Sunday," a series appearing in the *Newcastle Sunday Sun* from the quill of the Rev. G. E. Diggle. We anticipate with certain forebodings a report in a future Thought as to what were the major products of the Christian factories during 1,900 years. Deadly gloom, rank superstition, broken hearts, mass terror, charred corpses? And umpteen Bibles in various conditions of neglect.

Not until the inception of Christianity in Britain, so the news continues, was Sunday set aside as a holiday for the working class. And that day (holy-day) was reserved for pumping Christianity into the people, a service impossible of execution if the masses toiled like Trojans every day. Well might the proletariat have reflected wistfully upon the days of their pagan Saxon and Angle forbears who, according to Sir Arthur Bryant, were an incorrigibly lazy lot of narrow materialists, devoted solely to rude sports, mead, the beer jug, and writing chronicles, but not evening ones.

Those who are worried and in doubt about the precise date when Christianity achieved victory over the old Druidic religion will be grateful to the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, which recently gave the date as 634 A.D. This was the year of the battle of Heavenfield (Northumberland) when King Oswald led his small band of Saxons against Cadwalla's hordes, whose defeat (a matter of course, for King Ozzie had supplicated God) marked the decline of Celtic influence—"and Christianity flourished." This proves what a wonderful power for good the Church is, once the sword has prepared the way.

Correspondence

COLOUR BAR

Reading "This Believing World" for September 24, I was astounded to encounter the words "Whether the colour bar in South Africa is right or wrong." This was followed by the suggestion that Christians like Canon Collins cannot logically condemn the colour bar unless they confront their astonished congregations with wives taken from groups of uncultured savages or ring-nosed cannibals.

We know that the Bible sanctions slavery as a divine institution and also the revolting history of Christians and the Christian Church in this respect, but I fail to see how such stupid comments can do anything but harm to our cause. What of the members of our Fyzabad branch and other coloured freethinkers? They would find it equally beneath their dignity to mate with the lowest products of our western civilisation, prostitutes and morons, etc. Would this mean that they are in favour of a colour bar?

The writer is entitled to his opinion, and while we do not believe in censorship so far as general publications are concerned, surely such comments should be left to Dr. Malan and his ilk, and I am astonished that the Editorial Committee of *The Freethinker* was not sufficiently vigilant to use the blue pencil in the interests of our movement.—Yours, etc.,

EVA EBURY.

SECULAR EDUCATION

I must thank all who have written to *The Freethinker* or to me re withdrawal of children from religious worship and instruction at school, in accordance with Section 25(4) of the Education Act 1944. These letters have given me a summary of the general position at the present time.

It certainly does not seem to be any longer the same as in Mr. Morris's time (*The Freethinker*, October 8), although in one case a child was made to leave his school and had to wait 6 months before he could start again at another one. Freethinkers' children to-day are not likely to suffer in their future careers because of their not attending religious classes at school—except in an odd case or two. On the contrary, many go to grammar schools and universities and have the same chance as any other children. Further, people are usually no longer asked what their religion is when applying for a job.

The attitude of teachers and fellow pupils seems to be generally good or indifferent, although there are still quite a few cases of head teachers trying to bring pressure on the parent or not providing the exempted child with suitable secular work during the religious instruction periods. Normally, by law, a written request from the parent is all that is needed and there should be no need for explanation.

Freethinkers seem to be divided about half-half as to withdrawing their children. Some fear that their children may suffer in some ways, but, after all, it is in the home that a child gets most of his moral training and attitude to religion. However, I think that to-day, with the law for once on our side, we should all take position, if only so that the exception in our favour does not fall into desuetude. Furthermore, the example may be contagious and incite other people on the borderline to do the same.

If we think something is wrong we should act in accordance with our beliefs, at least in the limits set by the law.

I have asked my son's headmistress to exempt him from attending religious worship and instruction and she has complied with my request. Of course, it does not mean that he is immune from the religious nonsense as he will hear and see a lot of it around himself, but I stress to him that the stories he hears are but another type of fairy story and have to be taken exactly in the same way. I try to show him, too, by practical examples (my garden and my neighbours' gardens . . .) that it is man's efforts only that count and that our welfare and happiness are due entirely to our own efforts and our relations with others, without any part at all being played by any imaginary witch gods.—Yours, etc.,

JEAN TOUDIC.

BELIEF AND INTELLIGENCE

In the sentence of mine Miss Evelyn Belchambers quotes—"Belief as such is not necessarily an index to intelligence"—the operative word is "necessarily." Had I omitted that, I should have laid myself open to serious criticism. My object in writing was to make clear what tends to be overlooked: that there are intelligent believers.

By any standard, Dean Inge and Bishop Barnes were men of high intelligence. And any who are familiar with the writings of Schweitzer know that his is a capacious—dare I say massive?—mind. These men have stood at the portals of freethought and yet have remained believers. How are we to explain this refusal to go further except to say that they are thinkers tied to a faith (in God) that they did not want to surrender?

To Miss Belchambers' last point (What is the precise difference, after all, between "innate intelligence" and the "mind's freedom from emotional prepossessions"?) I would reply: I may have no greater innate intelligence than any given Christian, but my being free of his traditional beliefs may nevertheless enable me to get a larger view of truth.—Yours, etc.,

G. I. BENNETT.

Obituary

The oldest member of the Sheffield Branch N.S.S., Henry Trummell, died on October 18 and was cremated on October 21, when the undersigned conducted a secular service attended by members of his family, representatives of the N.S.S. and friends. The deceased had reached the advanced age of 89 and was one of the few remaining freethinkers who heard Charles Bradlaugh lecture. Although living alone and suffering from a crippling physical disability, his loyalty to the Cause never wavered. His old friend, Mr. A. Samms, visited him in his last illness and was responsible for the funeral arrangements.

P.V.M.

We greatly regret to announce the death of Edward John Page at the age of 72 on October 17 last. Mr. Page had been for many years a valued member of the West London Branch of the N.S.S., and a regular speaker in Hyde Park where his genial exposition of Freethought was always popular. He was a determined opponent of all blood sports. The cremation took place at West Middlesex Crematorium on October 21, the N.S.S. being represented by Mrs. R. Seibert. Our sincerest sympathies are extended to Mr. Page's family.

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