

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIV—No. 46

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fourpence

THE present writer recently had occasion to visit for the first time, both Luxemburg and Germany. We have already recorded some impressions of the World Congress of Freethought at Luxemburg, and of its picturesque environment. As Germany is a more important, if more sombre European nation, some further impressions of that great country may, we hope, not be without interest to the readers of *The Freethinker*.

Germany at the Crossroads

This somewhat hackneyed expression may, we imagine, be accurately and appositely used of the present-day German Federal Republic. It is a common and, we think, justifiable criticism of British politics that the actual differences around which they centre are largely a case of Tweedledum versus Tweedledee! That the old virile radicalism of the days of Paine and Bradlaugh is a thing of the past and that the current difference between Labour and Tory is merely the difference between spelling Tory with a large or a small T. On the European continent, politics mean more and tend to centre around more real issues. This is so, in particular, in present-day Germany which, ever since the fall of the former Kaiser in 1918, has been the storm-centre of European politics.

Reaction in the Saddle

To-day, it is incontestable that reaction is in the saddle in contemporary Germany, not the blatant reaction of the Hitler period, but the more camouflaged and "genteel" form of reaction which existed in the days of Bismarck and the Kaiser. The present "Strong Man" of German politics is Herr Adenauer, a Catholic-Conservative and, it is believed, a crypto-monarchist. He heads a coalition government that *mutatis mutandis*, is supported by much the same elements who, under Adenauer, also like his Catholic Conservative predecessor, Chancellor Bruning, actively prepared the way for the subsequent rise of Hitler in the early 30's. One may relevantly add that, what is, in the present writer's opinion, the suicidal decision to "rearm" Germany, has given the militarist class and neo-Nazism in general a tremendous advertisement. Meetings addressed by former S.S. generals now receive wide publicity in the Press. Is another "Hitler" lurking somewhere in the underworld waiting for his opportunity?

Clerical Fascism

At the present moment, however, the danger of a revived Nazi regime, if it exists at all, does so at some indeterminate date in the future. At present the backbone of reaction in Germany is represented by the Roman Catholic Church; or, since belief in Dr. Adenauer is not yet a dogma of the Catholic Church, perhaps we should say, *political* Catholicism, *clerical* Fascism. To-day, as over so much of the European continent, the self-same forces who in the 1930s and 1940s prepared the way for or actively "collaborated" with Fascism, are now discharging a similar role in relation to political Catholicism. It is not

possible to repeat too often that, to-day, the Vatican is the centre of European reaction in every sphere of life. The present Pope, who was Papal Legate in Germany for many years prior to his election, is believed to interest himself in a more than fatherly manner in all spheres of German life, including *political* life. During the present writer's stay in the Reich, the papers were full of a tremendous Catholic rally at Fulda, the traditional headquarters of German Catholicism, at which a large contingent was present from the Communist Republic, now usually known by its self-chosen title of *Der Deutscher Demokratische Republik* ("The German Democratic Republic"). In actual fact it is the

inclusion of the old Protestant provinces of East Prussia, Brandenburg, and Mecklenburg, within the Communist zone, that explains the present preponderance of Catholicism, and its current political power in the Federal Republic of West Germany.

The German Freethinkers

The present sway of clerical reaction is, however, vigorously countered by a virile and growing German Freethought Movement. We in Britain naturally tend to insularity. For which reason, no doubt, we fail to recognise the disastrous impact of the barbaric regime of Hitler and the Gestapo, not only on politically advanced creeds, and on political democracy in general, but equally, on European culture, and on Freethought in particular. This was so in all the adjacent lands, which had the misfortune to be embraced within the Nazi "New Order," and subjected to the ferocious depredations of the Gestapo. Freethought, as such, was illegal in the "New Order." Hitler suppressed it in Germany, and, as far as we know, also in the Nazi "Occupied" lands during the war. Not only were the Freethought organisations as such, suppressed, but many of their militant workers took part in the Resistance Movements and perished at the hands of the Gestapo. In Germany itself, naturally, the repression was particularly severe. All the Freethought Societies had their continuity broken for the twelve years, during which the Nazi regime lasted. To-day, they are only just beginning to recover from this complete debacle.

Atheists and Reverent Rationalists

The above state of things was accentuated by the close connection which has always existed as generally on the continent between Freethought and the political parties of the Left, in particular, with the German S.P.D.-Labour Party. In present-day Germany the only openly atheistic German Freethought movement is also Socialist and Marxist. For the benefit of those unacquainted with the doctrinal disputes of socialism, the German atheists follow, like the present writer, the democratic Marxist interpretation of Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, and not the totalitarian Communist interpretation of Lenin and Stalin. The German Freethinkers produce their journal *Der Friedenker*,

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The German Scene

By F. A. RIDLEY

and are affiliated to the World-Union of Freethinkers, and were ably represented at Luxemburg by their president, Herr Freistuller, and vice-president, Herr Van der Linden. Herr Freistuller, who recently succeeded the late Herr Graul as president, was elected to the International Executive Committee. The present writer also had the honour of being re-elected to that exalted body. As far as our information goes, the effective membership of *Der Freidenker* organisation is about eight thousand, and is definitely on the upgrade. When in Germany, the present writer endeavoured to bring about an effective *rapprochement* between the German atheists and the more Marxist elements in the Social Democratic Party. We hope that the result of this will be to counteract the growing efforts of religious tendencies to infiltrate the anti-clerical parties of the Left. The Roman Catholic Church is working overtime in this particular field just at present.

However, though the most advanced, the German Freethinkers are not the largest anti-clerical movement in Germany. This distinction appears to be held by the "Free Religious Movement," a body which might be described in some quarters as consisting of "reverent" Rationalists. It claims a present membership of some sixty thousand and its pre-Hitler membership was round about the

quarter of a million mark. The "Free Religious Movement" is not affiliated at present to the World Union, but the present writer had the pleasure of meeting its genial president, Herr Max Zelk, socially, in the course of a visit to Hamburg. Herr Zelk's movement resembles the Ethical Union, or even, perhaps, the Unitarian Church, and in a manner, reminiscent of the Positivists, it celebrates Humanist festivals in place of Christian ones, besides, of course, inculcating a humanistic ethic entirely independent of the supernatural. It does not, apparently insist on atheism, or exclude Theists, as such, from its ranks. There is also the *Monist Bund*, the famous organisation, founded by the celebrated scientist, Ernst Hæckel, and now presided over by Professor Dr. von Frankenburg, a distinguished biologist from Hanover, who was present at Luxemburg, and who has visited the office of *The Freethinker* in London. The *Monist Bund* is not, at present, affiliated to the World Union. We do not know its present membership, but it appears to be influential outside Germany; in Switzerland, for example; and produces a journal, *Befreiung*.

In general, the scene in Germany, the land of the Reformation, is one of a still undecided battle between the forces of Progress and of Reaction in the religious, no less than in the political sphere.

On Censorship

By H. CUTNER

EXACTLY for whom Mr. Matson's article on this subject was written, I am quite unable to imagine. Was it not just a little too naive? Although we still have the Blasphemy Laws on our statute books, and laws against "obscene" libels, it must be said in our defence that there is practically no censorship in England. We are still, in spite of our proverbial hypocrisy, the freest nation in the world.

It is true that a world famous book like the *Decameron* was recently hauled into court as "obscene"—and I would like to ask how many people who declaim so loudly against censorship have really read it? Would Mr. Matson rush to read some of its stories to a mixed class of school-children? Would he care to do the same for D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*?

Of course our standards on what is or is not obscene should not be judged by what is fit for schoolchildren—but surely some standard must be a rule? Should John Cleland or André de Nerciat be allowed the widest possible circulation? And in any case, the stupid Victorianism which ruled Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy* as obscene—and in this quite a number of very eminent Freethinkers agreed—has long since been laughed out of court. You can buy Havelock Ellis and far more advanced "sex" books quite freely these days.

In other words, the authorities step very warily now on such questions. Any books declared obscene are sure of a fair trial. Lord Russell's book on the bestial Nazis was allowed freely to be published and you can buy an unexpurgated *Decameron* anywhere. So where is the censorship?

No, Mr. Matson in confining himself almost altogether to England, let off a particularly damp squib for he knows as well as I do where there is *real* censorship—that is, censorship at its worst.

For example, here in England one can buy a newspaper supporting the politically extreme right and the extreme left. You can buy the best defence of religion or the most aggressive attack upon it. You can lecture as violently as you like against the Government—naturally not in "army" language—or support it. You can advocate or

not Republicanism or Royalty, the retention or the abolition of the House of Lords, and many other things, for and against. You cannot do any one of these things in Communist-dominated Totalitarian countries like Russia and its satellites.

You can of course attack there religion or Capitalism or Royalty. But you cannot do both, attack and defend. You cannot buy any book criticising Karl Marx, for example, in Russia. You cannot deliver a reasoned lecture *against* Lenin on the wireless. And in these countries, you are not allowed even to listen to outside broadcasts whatever the subject. They are always jammed. And what happens if you try to leave the country?

When it comes to out-and-out censorship, the old Czarist régime, Hitler; the present Communist ones have completely mastered its technique. There is literally no freedom of thought or opinion whatever. Year in and year out, the peoples in Communist countries are told what to think, what to do, and any deviation from "orthodoxy" is followed by immediate arrest and years in an "instructional" camp where it is quite easy to bring the "deviator" back to the fold.

In these countries, there is no aspect of human culture which has not been invaded by, for example, "Marxism," and woe betide the poet or artist or musician who dares to question its authority.

Mr. Matson knows all this as well as I do—which is why I found his article so very naive and amusing. He was so very solemn in telling readers of *The Freethinker* the terrible consequences of censorship which they all quite well know and which, in any case, does not and could not apply to England. But it does apply to all Communist-dominated countries—and he said nothing whatever about them. May I wonder why?

—NEXT WEEK—

R. C. STATISTICS
By P. VICTOR MORRIS

The March of Materialism

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE relevant extracts of two letters with more or less the same intent, as opposing the Materialist standpoint, are here given:—

“The Materialist’s world has failed because the old-style matter which it rested on has gone. . . . Physics and biology have not been kind to the Materialist, and the Darwinian theories once so favourable for him have been knocked about a bit.”

“In the Beginning was Matter. So says the Materialist. But in the Beginning was Life—is not that just as rational? Remember, Life flouts the rules of Materialism. Darwin didn’t have the last word. Some scientists are even ready to look to God as a necessary Force. The days of ‘conflict’ are over.”

Is the assertion that Materialism has failed based on science? To decide this we ask from what source does the assertion come? And we find it comes from the pulpit and the popular Press. We are confronted with a “scientific truth” which clergymen and journalists know all about, and scientists have yet to discover.

Instead of bringing to witness the many scientists and philosophers who have endorsed Materialism, let us go straight to the fountain-head of the rumour that science has abandoned Materialism, the late Sir James Jeans himself. Jeans, with Eddington, was supposed to have upset the Materialist principle of determinism. For this they achieved a popular fame which they would never have had by confining themselves to the sober work of science. By getting on with their job as scientists they would have done useful service without ever hitting the headlines. By embarking on speculations in fields outside their domain they won spontaneous applause from the popular Press and the eulogies of the harassed Christian apologists of the time. Their theories were well and truly exposed by many of their colleagues who, so far as the Christian Press was concerned, might never have existed.

But let us see whether Jeans’ later words on the matter are such as to cause religious rejoicing. He said:—

“We cannot state that Materialism is dead, or that a deterministic interpretation of the world is obsolete, but we can say that determination and freedom, matter and materialism, need to be re-defined in the light of our new scientific knowledge. When this has been done the Materialist must decide for himself whether the only kind of Materialism which science now permits can be suitably labelled Materialism.” (*Physics and Philosophy.*)

The repugnance of some to Materialism is perhaps not hard to understand. It appears to discount the importance of man in the universe. It offers a scientific alternative to the religious scheme of man’s nature and destiny. Consequently there was no reluctance to interpret the revision of the physicists’ conceptions which were in use in the last century as the breakdown of Materialism. Yet, if the connection of 19th century Materialism with the prevailing atomic theory was no more than a historical accident, with Materialists naturally adopting the current ideas, then the newer discoveries can be assimilated without loss to the essentials of the materialist philosophy.

The newer knowledge concerned in particular the composition of the atom. It has not an internal block-like stability but contains constituents (e.g., protons, electrons, neutrons, deuterons, positrons) some of which may under certain conditions be passed on. At this sub-atomic level, moreover, deterministic prediction is not so easy as when the atom is dealt with as a unit. In view of these changes in the conception of our mechanical model, opponents of

Materialism have tried to push certain conclusions. The stable, inert solids on which Materialism depended have been abandoned: away goes the philosophy based on them!

Now if it were true that Materialism depended on billiard-ball atoms it is no less true that it is discredited. On the other hand, if the connection of Materialism with such is not vital, then it can accommodate the later theories without loss to its foundations. To decide this it is only necessary to compare Materialism old and new. What did the older Materialists stand for and what bearing has later science had on their central position? Are their conclusions still arguable? Their universe was deterministic; it ruled out the supernatural and was non-purposive; mind was the function of organism at the cerebral level. In every important characteristic their position has been sustained and strengthened by twentieth century science, and their adoption of the current conceptions of physics is not of permanent significance. In other words, as subsequent research has found no reason for positing some kind of extraneous Intelligence at work (God, Life Force, entelechy, soul, etc.), Materialism remains unaffected by the particular conception of matter prevalent. It is not bound up with 19th century atom theory.

When the physicists produce goblins and sprites from the recesses of the atom, then will be the time to talk of giving up Materialism. Even then, what is the gain to religion? Let Eddington’s electrons romp and jump about in fancy free, and religion gains not one iota, and “God” is as far away as ever.

In the case of Darwinism we must not confuse the general theory of evolution, which is not in dispute, with the particular manner of man’s descent, on which it no more depends than does nebular evolution on the Laplacian hypothesis.

Darwinism, in its narrower sense, is not superseded, but supplemented, by Mendelism. One of the most prominent workers in Mendelism (prominent, that is, in the world of science, not in the popular Press), is Prof. T. H. Morgan, who says, “The idea that Darwinism has been abandoned is not worth considering” (*Scientific Basis of Evolution*), and it would serve no purpose to quote the agreement of other investigators because there are none to pit them against: the differences among biologists are of a domestic nature. When, therefore, the Mendelians, whose work has added to our knowledge of evolution, disclaim any refutation of Darwinism, one can only wait for anti-Materialists and anti-evolutionists to take notice of the fact. “The points at issue between Darwinian and non-Darwinian biologists are entirely on the question of *how* evolution has occurred. No one disputes that it *did* occur.” (Claremont; *Innumerable Instincts of Man.*)

Morgan’s contributions would actually appear to take from the anti-Materialist his last hold on evolution. Concepts like selection, heredity, variation and adaptation are no longer capable of being used as the agencies of a creative intelligence, as by Joad. They are seen to depend on determinable and alterable conditions.

Obviously, then, the opinions of physicists cannot be dictated by their science when they venture wide of that field. Their findings in that sphere do not affect the fact that the finders, they themselves, have evolved from an animal ancestry, the development of which is accountable for only in materialistic terms. They do not affect the fact that mind is a product of organic conditions. What

(Continued on page 364)

This Believing World

Stupendous excitement in that typical Christian city of Bolton is being stirred up by its Entertainment Committee still wanting to erect a Christmas Crib in the town centre. The Methodist Church sees in this the ghastly hand of Popery—apart from the obvious fact that the Crib “would become a thing of “Entertainment” rather than, God help us, of “Devotion.” Our own reverent suggestion is a compromise—why not make the Crib that of Mithras instead of Jesus? People would then see how the Baby God Mithras was born under exactly the same conditions as the Baby God Jesus—and, not being the True God, would provide genuine entertainment, which is, after all, what the Bolton Entertainments Committee really want. Or does it?

All the same, Methodists appear to be most unhappy in Bolton. They sadly concede that “Methodism, in common with other Churches, was suffering from a decline in religion,” though “the idea that Methodism was dying was just not true.” But in Bolton there was a “redundancy” of old Methodist Churches, and this was serious. For it meant smaller congregations in them. At one time they had congregations of over 1,000; now they were lucky to have any with even 100. And all over the country Methodist Churches were closing at the rate of 60 a year. Again we must offer a reverent suggestion. Why not pay the Rev. B. Graham a handsome sum to “evangelise” for Methodism and convert true Christians from other sects to become Methodists? That ought to show ‘em—the other sects, we mean.

But Methodists are not alone with religious difficulties. There are the great Missionaries—those brave souls who, finding it hopeless to convert European infidels, go bravely out into the wilds of savage lands and do their utmost to bring the “natives” to Christ. The Rev. L. Davidson, at a recent Missionary gathering, was most despondent. They did not respond to Christ as they should have done. Buddhism, for example, was being “reborn” and Buddhist missionaries were converting them. Then somehow or other some “natives” preferred Muhammad to Jesus—an awful blow, for he told his audience “men are marching in thousands into the fold of Islam.”

But to crown all, Mr. Davidson moaned, “Christianity to-day is fighting an ever increasing tide of apathy”—as if we didn’t know it. But there was one—if only one—bright spot on the horizon and that was that none of these anti-Christian beliefs “had a Saviour to deal with Sin.” Because of this awful emptiness, they would all fail. “Come to the Cross” should be their battle cry. We must mention another bright spot, however. A target of £2,000 was set for a collection—and actually £2,003 11s. had poured in. And that was sure to gladden the heart of any true Christian more than “Come to the Cross.”

Coming back to the God Mithras, according to the *Sunday Pictorial*, not only is there a cult of Mithras going on in England to-day with its rituals and its “healing” services, but there is also a similar “Black Mass” to that in which our Christian “occultists” sometimes engage. Mithraic “rays” do cure people of serious ailments, and Mithras is attracting converts even from the Gold Coast. There would be far more conversions everywhere, but unfortunately the “Black Mass” Mithraists are always ready “to throw discord” into the ranks of true believers. Again we have a suggestion for this lamentable state of affairs. Why do the Christian Churches not step in and, like the good old Iconoclasts, smash every Mithraic

“idol” into smithereens and abolish Mithras for ever from the land? They did it before, and for Christ’s sake, they should do it again.

Materialism is now going to have another formidable enemy—a front line attack we are told in *Psychic Realm*, and that is “Psychic Healing.” This must be done publicly, exactly as Jesus used to do; and was not Jesus the Greatest Psychic Healer of all time? Psychic Healing in fact will prove to all blatant Atheists the truth of Survival, it proves “the continued existence after death,” and it will “banish Materialism.” Strange how these people almost tremble with rage when they realise that Materialism is not only still very much alive, but actively kicking!

Religion and Medicine

BELIEF in the supernatural origin of disease inevitably placed all of the prevention of disease in religion. Medicine was not preventive, it was only a healing art. The part it played was merely accessory to theology. It attempted to relieve the suffering or to save the lives of those from whom the priests or clergymen had been unable to ward off the pestilence. Frequently the practices of religious functions and medical functions were combined. . . .

So long as medicine was subordinate to religion, it could not advance. Medicine is most effective in prevention, and is effective in the cure of epidemic diseases. Even to-day the best medical treatment would not be able to stop any of the pestilences once they got started in a modern American city by merely caring for the sick. The control of the pestilences became possible only when medicine rose from its subordinate position and replaced theology as a means of preventing disease. The prayer for the sick gave place to pills and elixirs, and these in time have given place to quarantine and other measures of prevention.

Dr. H. W. HAGGARD,
Devils, Drugs and Doctors.

The March of Materialism

(Concluded from page 363)

would the physicist think if the psychologist set himself up to teach physics as entirely opposed to the latest text-book?

Some physicists no doubt think there is a God of some kind, though they would disagree in describing him, and certainly forfeiting his Biblical characteristics in exchange for his ability to function as a mathematical gymnasium. As a matter of fact the whole bearing of physics on religion is, to quote Prof. C. D. Broad, “quite trivial.” (*Philosophy*).

As for the conflict between science and religion being over, this is certainly true in the sense of the religionist having retired from it. The scientist pushes forward along the path of fact, regardless of what religious theories he may falsify. The religionist quits the ground and then claims that no conflict exists. “Those churchmen who airily declare that there is no longer any conflict,” observed the late Dean Inge, “are either very thoughtless or are wilfully shutting their eyes. There is a very serious conflict.” (*Science, Religion and Reality, sym.*)

A wider range of vision on the part of the opponents of Materialism might reveal to them that the physicist is not an authority on mind; that Einstein embraces, not replaces, Newton; that biochemistry is showing the utter dependence of life-processes on physico-chemical conditions; that in philosophy Materialism in some form is more widely sponsored than ever; and as for the conflict the only condition under which it ceases to exist is when the religionist uncom- promisingly retires from the scene.

THE FREETHINKER

41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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.

D. NIXON.—Copies of last week's issue were sent to J. Stanley Pritchard, the Editor, *Radio Times*, and the B.B.C.

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, November 14, 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, November 14, 6-45 p.m.: C. V. BELLAMY, B.Sc., "The Monks of Kirkstall Abbey" (illustrated).

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 16, 7 p.m.: W. T. RODGERS (Secretary of the Fabian Society), "The Future of Socialism."

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, November 14, 7 p.m.: GUY ALDRED, "What is Anarchism?"

Junior Discussion Group (South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall).—Friday, November 12, 7-15 p.m.: Madame A. M. MATLEY, "French Contemporary Literature."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 14, 6-30 p.m.: R. BARNES, "The Foundations of Peaceful Co-existence."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street, Room 7).—Thursday, November 18, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. CHALLAND, "Secular Education."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, November 14, 2-30 p.m.: P. G. PHILLIPS, "U.N. Charter Revision."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, November 14, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "Autumn Leaves."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1, five minutes from Edgware Road Station).—Sunday, November 14, 7-15 p.m.: P. TOWNSEND, "Developments in China."

Notes and News

The condition of Mr. Joseph McCabe remains about the same. He is looking forward to the resumption of his work in a few months. His illness has interrupted a series of six books he was writing on Catholicism. His greatest complaint at the moment is that his sight has deteriorated. As he told Mr. G. H. Taylor, who visited him recently: "Not to be able to read is almost as bad as being blind." At the hospital he insisted on being entered as an Atheist, adding: "If you can't spell it, I'll help you!"

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged: £486 11s. 6d.

N. Cluett, 1s. 6d.; G. I. Bennett, 15s.; Mrs. G. Swan, 8s.; Bayard Simmons (2nd donation), 5s.; B.S. (in memory of John Seibert), 5s.; H.J.H., £1; N. Horler, £1; G. A. Neale Peck, £1 1s.; W. J. O'Neill, £1; H. A. Davis (U.S.A.), 11s. 3d.; Wm. Kirkwood, 7s.; Jack Benjamin (U.S.A.), 14s. 1d.; W. Adams (Canada), £3 12s. 10d.; E. W. Milner (Jamaica), £1 1s.; W. Morris, 5s.; D. Dambe (South Africa), 6s.; J. F. Kirkham (Canada), £5; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.; Mrs. M. Rupp, 5s.; F. H. Eastman (New Zealand), £1; Mrs. A. C. Cohen, £2 2s.; R.B. (in memory of George Bazin), £2; A. Hancock, 1s. Total to date: £509 14s. 8d.

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

Appreciations

Mr. Wm. Collins of Manchester, sending a cheque for £5 for the Memorial Fund, says: "Without indulging in any laudation of Chapman Cohen, I have only to say that my contribution is but a slight recognition of what Chapman Cohen has done for me, and as I was under his influence from the age of 25, it only amounts to about 3s. per annum. I think I can safely promise to subscribe each year."

"I shall pass this way but once, so if I don't send my donation now you may never get it."—MR. GILBERT H. HOLMES.

Chapman Cohen on Paganism

CHRISTIAN misrepresentation, aided by its control of education and the instruments of publicity, has set on foot the legend that whatever its faults Christianity represented an advance on the religions of the Pagan world. But this is simply not true. The conquest of the Christian religion represented an all-round triumph of reaction and retrogression. It carried the world not forward, but backward. It enthroned intolerance where tolerance had been established. It glorified ignorance where knowledge had been appraised at high value. Can anyone seriously maintain that the Christian story of an after life, with its pantomime heaven and brutal hell, was an advance on the Pagan conception of another life? Was the Christian pantheon, with its emasculated, anæmic saints, a genuine improvement on the pantheon of the Pagan world? At the side of the old Greek Gods, with their representations of physical strength and beauty, the pain-drawn figure of an emaciated Jesus shows to small advantage. Was the world really the better for the exchange? What benefit did the world gain by dethroning the Pagan philosopher and enthroning the Christian theologian? It seems a poor game to swap Plato for Tertullian, or Socrates for Torquemada. Take the Pagan writers on such questions as the existence of God or of a soul, and you have wise men struggling with obvious absurdities. Take the Christian writers who succeeded them, and to make the comparison just and deadly take them on the same topics, and you have a crowd of foolish fanatics making absurdities doubly apparent by their own incurable folly. No one who was not a monk or a fool would have preferred to live in Europe for the first thousand years after the establishment of Christianity rather than live in the Rome of the Antonines or the Athens of Socrates.—*The Freethinker*, December, 1919.

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

Planned Parenthood

Fourth International Conference

By G. I. BENNETT

AT the invitation of the National League for Sex Education, Sweden, the Fourth Conference of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, attended by 158 delegates and observers from 21 countries, was held in Stockholm from August 17 to 22, 1953. Now available is the Federation's admirably comprehensive *Report of the Proceedings**—a little late in issue, but none the worse for that. It is conveniently arranged in chapters, the papers and reports given at the Conference being appropriately classified under general chapter headings.

Among the Addresses of Welcome recorded in the first chapter is one by the President of the Swedish National League for Sex Education, Mrs. Elise Ottesen-Jensen, who fitly recalled that the First International Conference of 1946, which marked the inception of the organisation that is now called the International Planned Parenthood Federation, was held in Stockholm.

The opening chapter includes the principal reports: "The History of the Birth Control Movement in the English-speaking World" by Margaret Sanger; "The Family Planning Work of India" by Lady Rama Rau; and "The International Bulletin *Around the World News of Population and Birth Control.*"

A chapter concerned with "World Population and Resources," contains two particularly noteworthy papers. In one of them Dr. Karl Evang, Director-General of the Norwegian Public Health Service, discusses the attitude of the United Nations organisations to the world population problem in the light of the then forthcoming 1954 World Population Conference under U.N. auspices. He emphasises that "it is impossible to plan or execute an active and positive programme for peace and security in this world without taking fully into consideration the unique and unprecedented situation in which the world at large and most countries find themselves through the extremely rapid growth of populations in the last 150 to 200 years."

In the other paper Georg Borgström, Head of the Swedish Institute of Food Preservation Research, addresses himself to aspects of European overpopulation. He focuses attention on the fact that "the European section of the human family has so far shown the greatest relative increase—from one-fifth to one-third of the world's total within a century," and sees "immense danger for the future in assuming the burden of feeding still more millions." Europeans should urgently realise that for more than a hundred years their survival and growth has been at the expense of people of other continents.

There are other chapters entitled: "Birth Control—Current Experiments and Research Themes"; "Sterilisation"; "Termination of Pregnancy"; "Subfertility and Sterility, Artificial Insemination"; and "Marriage Counselling and Sex Education." These give some idea how wide a field was covered by this Fourth Conference. It is impossible here even to list all the many papers presented.

What might be mentioned in passing is the abortion issue, the subject of four highly interesting contributions. But the concluding sentence of the one by Martin Ekblad must have won general assent. "The problem of abortion, legal and illegal," he said, "cannot be solved until a reliable method of contraception has been developed."

It is very largely the quest for such a method that brought

together those who assembled at Stockholm. And in his paper, "Current Research in Contraception in the United States," Dr. Abraham Stone gave a most informative summary of the efforts being made to this end. But why did Dr. Stone permit himself the question-begging observation that "the safe period, or rhythm, method could become a very useful biological measure for the control of fertility" if a means were available for a woman to determine just when her ovulation takes place? There is no evidence that that method will ever be a satisfactory one with the general run of people—especially primitive populations; and at least two speakers, Dr. S. Chandrasekhar and Dr. Anne-Marie Durand-Wever, acknowledged their lack of confidence in it.

The last chapter headed "Concluding Session" records the finding of four study groups at the Conference that had severally considered Contraception, The Abortion Question, Marriage Counselling and Sex Education, and Birth Control Clinic Organisation and Methods. In addition there are appended reports from nineteen countries, illuminatingly outlining the demographic and family planning situations existing in each.

No one can doubt that, with a rapidly expanding world population of some two and a-half thousand millions, family limitation has become one of the greatest needs of our time. In seeking to meet that need throughout the world the International Planned Parenthood Federation is rendering an incalculable service to humanity, as this exemplary report on yet another of its international gatherings bears abundant testimony.

Northern Notes

By COLIN McCALL

I TOOK up the *Manchester Evening News* (October 9, 1954) expectantly for the weekly religious column seemed suddenly to have imbibed a draught of common sense. "Nothing is more urgent in the field of religion than the steady clarifying of its ideas and terms to make them more readily understood by the minds of to-day," it began. Religious incantations and shibboleths, mechanically repeated were outdated, it went on. This promised to be good: but not for long. Soon I was engulfed in the usual mesmeric mysticism of spirit, soul and flesh. Spirit is "the deep, undifferentiated essence of being given by God and for ever sustained by Him"; soul is "that form of being which arises when the spirit . . . interacts with the flesh" and is "comprised of three powers in unison and distinction—the power to think, the power to feel, the power to will. This, apparently, "is the true spiritual being of man" and is described as having "a very clear form." Well, it might seem clearer to some readers but nothing has been clarified for me.

* * *

That this is so, was confirmed when I read some musings by a Scottish clergyman, the Rev. J. Y. Simpson. We need Christ, he states, because "without the meaning that Christ imparts to our days, life becomes pointless and burdensome, a ceaseless battling with frustrations and disappointments: without Him, we miss our destiny." I just cannot see this. I would be the last to deny that we all have burdens, frustrations and disappointments but I insist that there is more in life than a "ceaseless battling" with these. And there are other men and women to whom we can turn for help and comfort in distress; with whom, too, we

*Published at 10s. 6d. by the International Planned Parenthood Federation, 69, Eccleston Square, London S.W.1.

can enjoy the many delights of living. Life must be very shallow for a person who needs Christ to give it "meaning."

* * *

The Director of Religious Education in the Manchester Diocese, Canon Maxwell Dunlop, gained some notoriety when he was reported as saying that "self-pity is an occupational disease of the miners and dockers and is now affecting the railway men." He was promptly invited by the National Union of Miners' Lancashire secretary to visit a pit and do a normal day's work at the coalface. At first, it seemed, he accepted (*Liverpool Daily Post*, October 9, 1954) but a few days later the invitation was turned down. Perhaps he feared he might catch the infection.

* * *

Several Christian spokesmen have lately complained about the decline of interest in their religion. In Bolton, the Rev. W. Walker Lee informed us that many big Methodist churches now had congregations of less than 100 when at one time they had over 1,000; in Liverpool, the Archbishop of York said that the population "is now largely ignorant of the fundamental facts of the Christian faith"; while in Chester, the Bishop regretted that even in Church-controlled schools "comparatively rare use is being made of our right to give church teaching to our own children" and parents do not seem to be asking for the withdrawal of their children "to receive during two periods a week, the full Church of England teaching." Clearly the parents do not consider it important enough to bother about. The greatest problem before the Church to-day, said Dr. Garbett, is "to win the masses to the Christian faith." Quite true—but impossible, I think. The people are beginning to realise that Christianity is one of life's unnecessary burdens. Even new clergymen are hard to find. In 1905 there were 19,000; in 1950, only 14,000 and, during that period the population had increased by more than 4,000,000.

* * *

Another prelate has more reason to be pleased. He is the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr. William Godfrey, who laid the foundation stone of the St. Vincent de Paul Primary School, Pitt Street, Liverpool, on September 27. The school is expected to be opened next August and will cost £50,000, half of which comes from a Government grant. The Catholic clergy acknowledged the co-operation of the Liverpool Director of Education, Mr. H. S. Magnay, and the latter said that "in the last eight years no education authority had done more towards the provision of Catholic schools than Liverpool." Twenty new schools had been built and twenty-eight major restorations carried out "representing £1,500,000." St. Vincent de Paul was only the beginning of a wider plan for the area said Dr. Godfrey. With such co-operation from national and local government and the generous spending of public funds, this wider plan bids fair to succeed. Some of the consequences can be envisaged.

* * *

"God made the country, and man made the town." William Cowper's famous dictum was repeated to me when I spent a week-end in the Lake District recently and was looking at a particularly beautiful scene. I demurred and indicated that man had contributed a great deal towards the loveliness of that Westmorland countryside. Not merely the lanes and farmhouses, but the hedges and—most of all perhaps—the stone walls: a feature we are apt to take for granted. There are, of course, many truly natural beauties to be found in the English countryside but man has often improved the appearance of the landscape. Certainly he has left it less cold and less monotonous than when he found it.

Praise the Lord

By MIMNERMUS SECUNDUS

IN the *Birmingham Gazette* a clergyman is recently reported as criticising with much force the standard of living enjoyed by the highest dignitaries of the Church.

Jonathan Swift, the famous Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, declared that religion was nothing but a trade. He was in a position to know. Certainly, the accumulated wealth of the great Christian Churches is passing wonderful. In the Ages of Faith priests rivalled Kings and Emperors in their magnificence and splendour. Hampton Court Palace, for example, was the residence of a priest, and many another palatial building in England showed unmistakably how these prelates identified themselves with the governing class. Preaching a gospel of poverty, these ecclesiastics "out-Heroded Herod" in their ostentation and luxury. Even to-day lawn-sleeved bishops sit in the House of Lords, where they shield the aristocracy from the inroads of democracy.

Bishops "follow Christ" on four and five figure salaries and, presumably, water their dry crusts with their tears. They must be the Christian martyrs, which generations of artists have painted, and which generations of soft-hearted and soft-headed Christians have wept for.

Some say that a bishop's "salary" is not a "salary" at all. Maybe, it is a stipend, or an honorarium, but we must admit that it is money, and plenty of it. It is nearly all spent in administration, sobs their apologist. Is that the reason bishops leave large sums in their wills?

Bishop Creighton, who used to talk of the fearful financial struggles of the wretched ecclesiastics to keep out of debt, left £29,500. Archbishop Tait left £35,000, but the late Dean Inge left £98,000. Another tidy sum was saved by Bishop Walsham How, who left £72,240. A good second to this was Bishop Tuffnell's £65,000, and Bishop Phillpot left £60,000, whilst Archbishop Thomson left £55,000, and Bishop Trollope £50,790. Compared with these sums, the £19,361 of Bishop Harvey Goodwin, the £10,000 of Bishop Tozer, and the £12,605 of Bishop Pelham seem comparatively modest.

Is it not a bad joke to suggest that there is any real parallel between the legendary figure of the mendicant Jesus and these plutocratic prelates? And is it not carrying the jest too far to assert that the prelates are following the example of their alleged master, who is said to have lived simply and to have preached a gospel of poverty?

In many parishes the parson with his big and expensive vicarage too often is a miniature reproduction of the Bishop in a palace too large for him and for the times. Judge Rentoul stated that at the annual banquet given to the clergy at the Mansion House, 74 bottles of champagne were drunk (costing then about £40). Within the narrow confines of the City of London the Church possesses vast property, in addition to huge assets in other places. Does this spell plutocracy or vagrancy? Then add the vast resources of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Queen Anne's Bounty, and other sources of clerical income, which, added together, total the resources of a small state, and make most commercial undertakings appear of little account.

The ceremonial dress of the Christlike bishops costs about £200. "The stair-carpet at Farnham Castle are measured by miles," wrote old Bishop Thorold. "My episcopal income goes in pergolas and geraniums," complained Bishop Stubbs. It is, indeed, a far cry from the fishing nets of the legendary disciples to Lambeth Palace, with its guard room, Fulham Palace, with its pleasure grounds, Wells, with its moated garden; and other haunts of ecclesiastical grandeur.

The legendary Jesus had not where to lay his head, and died a felon's death. His teaching was an evangel of poverty. The first Salvation Army was sold up, including its founder, for 30 pieces of silver. His Grace of Canterbury pays his staff more than that sum each week. His Grace's ceremonial dress costs probably up to £1,000. His Grace has palatial residences. His Grace's income would keep 30 or 40 ordinary families. His Grace has chaplains to attend him. His Grace has a seat in the House of Lords. If this be humbleness, what is ostentation? If the Archbishop of Canterbury is a humble follower of Christ, so were Pope Borgia (Alexander VI) and the Renaissance Cardinals.

Some attempts have certainly been made by a few believers to follow the ascetic side of Christian teaching, but these bishops and archbishops follow in the footsteps of their alleged master in gilded chariots, accompanied by all the paraphernalia of aristocracy. A company of cigar-smoking pot-bellied bookmakers would be more representative of ascetic virtues than these ecclesiastics. For the bookmakers do not pretend to be holier than their fellow-men, nor do they masquerade as a sacred caste apart.

According to the Scriptures, Jesus was a poor mendicant preacher and also an iconoclast. In taking a salary of £15,000 yearly, and living a life of ostentation, the Anglican Primate has provided 15,000 reasons why he is not Christ-like. There are contradictions enough in the Christian Faith, but none greater than the legendary figure of the thorn-crowned Christ going to his felon's death, and the figure of an ecclesiastic shimmering with the needlework of Noodledom, and lording it over his less fortunate fellow-men. The Lambeth Palace walk leads, not to Gethsemane, but to El Dorado, the Land of Gold, and the coffers of the great Christian Churches show that the sorry game pays better than most business.

In Crucis

There stood a cross upon a lonely hill,
Where once a man was hanged, and often still
We backward glance and therefrom sadly trace,
The ruin, not of one, but ALL the human race.

DAI FRANCIS.

BRANCH LINE

EDINBURGH

In the absence of a regular open-air propagandist on that excellent speaking pitch, the Mound, local freethinkers are frequently to be seen making their presence felt, by questions, at religious meetings. However, while on a visit to the International Festival of Music and Drama Mr. Colin McCall improved the occasion with an outdoor meeting. A very satisfactory crowd was collected, and Mr. McCall excellently maintained the high standard of freethought propaganda. Branch Secretary: W. Cronan, 52, Sloan Street, Edinburgh 6.

BIRMINGHAM

Meetings are being held monthly in the Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street, and are advertised in the *Birmingham Mail* the Saturday previous. On Sunday, November 28, G. H. Taylor is the speaker. The December meeting, at which there will be an open discussion on "Christianity in Modern Society," is brought forward to December 19. Meetings in 1955 will be advertised later. Secretary: T. G. Millington, 95, Wentworth Road, Birmingham, 17. G. H. T.

Correspondence

HEALING

This is described as "Divine" Healing—or "Faith" Healing—by most who engage in the practice. I would like to chronicle my own experience in the treatment.

First, I would state that I am an old and confirmed Atheist—with no faith in any divine being—and accept none of the various fairy stories emitted by the purveyors of religion, but I must admit that certain persons have the power or gift to heal; hence I proffer my experience.

Some 20 years ago I suffered from a physical defect that prevented me from carrying on my work. This was treated by many medical specialists over a period of some two years—six—all with high reputations.

They each failed to cure by the known methods and ultimately they admitted failure and intimated that I must have the particular organ removed by "cutting it off"—the organ was my thumb.

I was duly booked to enter the hospital for the execution—and was informed that I would be in for about three weeks.

On the appointed day I started off on my journey to the hospital when I met my landlord, who asked me how I was. I jokingly remarked that he would not get any rent for the next three weeks and told him that I was going to have my thumb cut off. He did not examine it—as it was bandaged—but intimated that my journey was not necessary and that he would have it cured in less time than they would take at the hospital, and that I would be able to use the thumb normally again.

As I had known of this man's reputed ability to cure, I accepted his offer to treat the matter at my home each day for a week. I must here stress that I had no faith in any supreme being or god, but I had always had a great respect for him personally. Hence, I turned back from my proposed journey to the surgeons. I would stress, at this point, that I had suffered extreme discomfort for the preceding two years—and frankly was in the mood to "try anything once," as the loss of my thumb would have been a serious handicap to me at my particular work. To conclude my story, he cured my trouble in about 10 days of treatment, since when I have never had any further trouble with it after 20 years.

This man had "something" in his body that could—and did—cure or heal. He had healed hundreds of others before me, and I learned that he has done the same for many since the days which I refer. He took no payment whatever for his great service to me, and at no time did I ever for one moment feel that his gift of healing was derived from any supreme god, and during the whole of the time my convictions as an Atheist never wavered.

No wonder Cronin debunked the doctors. My saviour was a Spiritualist. I have never given any credit to that cult, but only to the man who had the gift to cure? Maybe plenty of Atheists have the same power to cure.—Yours, etc.,

FRANK BURGESS.

Obituary

By the death of John Frazer Lessels, better known to readers of this journal as J. Effel (the name under which he wrote and lectured), Northern Ireland has lost an active secularist who worked hard against great odds to keep the flag of freethought flying there. He was an informed and witty speaker and writer and contributed articles to *The Freethinker* from 1916. Twice he was a prime mover in starting a Branch of the N.S.S. in Belfast, but local intolerance and apathy have so far made it impossible to keep an active freethought movement going in that city. His latter years brought periods of illness that curtailed his work for the cause, but his enthusiasm remained unimpaired and infectious to the end. He died on October 28 in hospital and was buried at Carnmoney Cemetery on November 1.

Albert Henry Carne, a member of the Parent Branch of the N.S.S., died on Saturday, October 30, aged 51, at his home in Battersea, and was cremated at Streatham Park Crematorium on November 3, the undersigned conducting a secular service attended by members of the family. He had been suffering from coronary thrombosis for some time and had only been discharged from hospital recently, but he maintained great cheerfulness and a keen interest in the movement in spite of his illness.

P. V. M.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)

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