

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXV—No. 1

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fourpence

LAST year Mr. Billy Graham, the latest of a long line of American evangelists, came over here to convert the British people to his "Fundamentalist" version of the Christian religion. Tremendous publicity uniformly attended the sayings and doings of the Reverend Billy. Gone are the days when Christian apostles went out into "the highways and hedges," carrying neither purse nor scrip, as the Master himself enjoined them. In the year 1955 such simplicity is no longer required by the effective gospel preacher of the "good tidings." If the Jews were then the chosen people, Americans from "God's own country" have now succeeded them in that exalted station. All the methods of Big Business and of American "high-pressure salesmanship" are now pressed into the service of the Lord and of his messenger. Brass-band publicity preceded him. No longer, like John the Baptist, does he feed on "locusts and wild honey": contrarily he dines at places like the Dorchester, where the menu is much more substantial; and where a sumptuous dinner of many courses gives the right sort of atmosphere for the heart-felt denunciations of "Materialism" that follow it! The gospel preached by the Rev. Billy may belong to the first century of our era, but the Graham circus used twentieth century methods to "put it over."

A Confession of Failure

Despite the tremendous publicity given to the Graham Mission, and despite the huge audiences which the American evangelist drew at Harringay and Wembley, we confessed at the time that we were not impressed by its claim to have scored a lasting success. Evangelists, including evangelists from across the Atlantic, come and go, but the lasting traces of their missions are not usually conspicuous. Indeed, as was pointed out at the time, the very fact of the visit of the Rev. Billy himself afforded the most convincing proof of the failure of his numerous predecessors—all of them! For had not a whole series of preachers and Bible-punchers of the greatest temporary eminence, Moody, Sankey, Torrey, Alexander, and "Gypsy" Smith, and God alone knows how many more, all claimed to have done *before* exactly what Billy and Co. claimed to have done *now*, for the first time? Where such gifted servants of the Lord had failed, why in God's name should Billy Graham be so presumptuous as to claim permanent success? His very presence here is a confession of failure—the failure of his predecessors and, presumably, of the God who sent them.

"He Came, He Saw," but—

As we remarked at the time, despite the sensational publicity which attended him, Billy Graham failed to imitate Julius Cæsar; certainly "he came," and "he saw," but, equally certainly, he failed to "conquer."

VIEWS and OPINIONS

"Where are the Billy Graham Converts?"

By F. A. RIDLEY

Confirmation of this statement has just appeared and, as so often happens, it comes from an unexpected quarter. For to be precise, on December 6, 1954, our contemporary, the *Evening Standard*, published an article entitled, *Where are the Billy Graham converts?* Echo answers where? When the author's findings and figures have been carefully examined, echo echoes the reader. We congratulate the author of this most useful article on a good job of work. But, perhaps he had better be careful. The noble proprietor of the *Evening Standard* is said to be not indifferent to the spiritual welfare of the people of these islands. Mr. Schwarz and his colleagues may find it safer as well as more profitable to go on denouncing Communism, or even that bête noire of his lordship, Free Trade.

Some Evangelical Statistics

In the Holy Gospels we find the injunction: "Search the Scriptures." Mr. Schwarz has certainly searched, and the results are very illuminating. Record was kept at the time of all the converts who came forward to "testify" at the Graham meetings, and here are some exact figures based on such written records.

Out of twenty Anglican parishes in London, with a total population of 420,216 people, a total of 336 came forward at Harringay to declare their faith. Of this total, two hundred and twenty-six were not really "converts" at all, but old churchgoers before. Only just under one-third of this total figure, one hundred and ten in all, were actually "converts" in the accepted sense of the term. Of this, very modest, last figure, seventy-five, more than two-thirds, had already lapsed when the *Evening Standard* made its computation, leaving thirty-five in all. Not a very impressive figure, particularly when one considers the tremendous publicity which heralded the evangelical bandwaggon of the Harringay spiritual circus. Mr. Schwarz adds that information from Methodist ministers who co-operated with the Mission, indicates that the percentages of Nonconformist converts at Harringay was much the same as the Anglican. Our critical survey concludes that of thirty-six thousand potential "converts" two-thirds were already church members and, accordingly, not "converts" at all in any real sense of the term. Of the twelve thousand who were, adds Mr. Schwarz, "fewer than four thousand are still in the churches." Again an unimpressive figure. After, as before Billy Graham came over to save us, we seem to be still in a "pagan" land.

"Out of the Mouths of Babes"

However, in one respect Mr. Graham and his colleagues can claim to have accurately fulfilled the evangelical precepts. For "out of the mouths of babes," as the Gospel enjoins, has "praise" been "perfected." Here are some more figures.

"A quarter of all the people who came forward were aged between twelve and fourteen. Eight per cent. were aged between five and eleven. Twenty-seven per cent. between fifteen and eighteen. That is, sixty per cent. under nineteen." Accordingly, of the four thousand "converts" presumed to be still in the churches, some fourteen hundred alone are adults.

One can scarcely be surprised that after enumerating these, certainly not extravagant figures, our authority adds:—

"I conclude that Billy Graham's enduring effect on church attendance in London to-day is unimpressive. The figures published by the crusade were misleading. There was no adequate sorting-out of new recruits and old hands, of adults and little children. And very many recruits, it seems, have fallen by the wayside." Adding that Billy Graham will be back here again in March, Mr. Schwarz concludes his courageous and timely article with the surely relevant query: "Will he do better next time?"

"Full of Sound and Fury—Signifying . . ."

Actually, another eminent preacher of the Gospel, Dr. Donald Soper, put his finger on the weakest spot of the Harringay "crusade" when he stated that "the crusade was an emotional manifestation that has not touched outsiders at all." This criticism was also echoed on the B.B.C., when a speaker on the *Any Questions* panel cautiously suggested that a more intellectual and less "fundamentalist" approach might pay better dividends in more lasting conversions, in future. However, it is abundantly clear from the whole tenor of his discourses that Graham and Co. are entirely incapable of any such reasoned approach. It is not for being reasonable that the Rev. Billy gets his "Trade Union" wage of £5,000 a year. He gets it for banging the Bible and by bringing souls to Christ. But he had better be careful! If his percentages in March are no better than last year's, he may find the hard-headed businessmen who back him drawing their own conclusions when he comes to draw his cash!

Pioneers in Prison

By MIMNERMUS SECUNDUS

"Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth."—
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

"Look with thine ears: see how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief. Hark in thine ear: change places, and handy-dandy which is the justice, which is the thief?"—LEAR.

THERE is an unfortunate affinity between pioneers and prisons. Many of the noblest men and women in history suffered long and cruel incarceration within the grim walls of prisons for their devotion to truth. Prisons have thus not infrequently been glorified by the halo of the martyr. How many brave soldiers in the Army of Human Liberation have rotted in gaols? How many men of genius have solaced their imprisoned hours with their pens, learning in suffering what they expressed as literature?

Read the stories of the judicial murder of Freethinkers, heretics, Jews, and alleged witches. Read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and McCabe's *Biographical Dictionary of Rationalists*. See how, through so many ages, independence of mind was killed off and hypocrisy and servility fostered. For many centuries Europe was a hotbed of religious persecution. With rack and thumbscrew, stake and gibbet, the Christian Churches silenced opposition. Thus it happens that some prison records are bright spots on the scroll of history.

The ancient priesthood commenced the work of persecution. In old-world Athens Socrates solaced his prison hours with philosophy before he drank the deadly hemlock

among his sorrowing disciples. The Christian priesthood, even more fanatical than their Pagan predecessors, sometimes dispensed with the mockery of a trial, and, as in the case of the unfortunate Hypatia, resorted to plain murder. The great Galileo, when he was old and poor, suffered in a Roman dungeon, and Roger Bacon was on two occasions imprisoned—once for a period of ten years—on the common charge of heresy and magic. Yet he, too, like Galileo, but disturbed the pious ignorance of his contemporaries with ideas of discoveries that were to be realised after his death.

Nor can we forget that the hapless Giordano Bruno, perhaps the greatest martyr of all, suffered the horrors of a cruel imprisonment before his tragic end by burning at the hands of the hired assassins of the Romish Church, the "secular arm."

Thomas Paine, in whose honour a ceremony is to be held in a few months time at Thetford, his native town, composed in prison part of the world-famous *Age of Reason*, a work for which scores of persons afterwards suffered imprisonment. It was while in the Bastille that Voltaire wrote the greater part of the *Henriade*. The priests would have liked to put Voltaire to death, but thanks to his influence and position he always evaded their eager clutches. Richard Carlile, his family and associates, had more than their share of pain and penalties for daring to defend free speech in Georgian England. Carlile himself suffered over nine years' imprisonment, and his family and shopmen endured among them about fifty years' confinement. That warmhearted Leigh Hunt had two years' captivity for satirising the Prince Regent, afterwards George the Fourth, of indifferent memory. Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, was no stranger to the interior of a gaol. His famous *Purgatory of Suicides* was another instance of a mind triumphing over captivity. Ernest Jones, another Chartist leader, also belongs to the roll of men who have, by the resources of genius, converted a prison into a palace of thought.

Another noteworthy prisoner was honest John Bunyan. He was not a Freethinker, but he spent twelve years in Bedford Gaol for militant Nonconformity, and wrote part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* while in durance vile. Bunyan had an excellent humour. A snuffling busybody came to visit him and declared that God had ordered him to search for him in half the prisons of England. Bunyan retorted: "If God had sent you, you need not have taken so much trouble. God knows I have been in Bedford Gaol for years."

Works from the prolific pen of Daniel Defoe were born in captivity, while Cervantes, of *Don Quixote* fame, was held captive by the Moors for five years.

Most of these were apostles of Freethought in some form or other. Men in our own Freethought Movement, hissed at by superior people, stoned by the crowds, have found that intellectual honesty is not a paying career.

Charles Bradlaugh, prematurely aged by his strenuous fight for liberty, saw honours showered on men not fit to black his boots. Francesco Ferrer, fronting the rifles of the firing-squad, had to find his reward in his own conscience. George Foote had to listen to the mocking voice of the Papist judge, telling him that he had devoted his great talents to the service of the devil. Yet, in their hours of apparent failure these men had actually triumphed. They were martyrs who missed the palm but not the pains of martyrdom; heroes without the laurels, and conquerors without the jubilation of victory. They laboured not for themselves, but for the world and coming generations.

Retreat from the Bible

By C. G. L. DU CANN

Each Saturday, *The Times* newspaper—which may be defined as the organ of the governing oligarchy of Britain—carries a short Christian article by an anonymous correspondent.

More than once a week would be too often for its Christian readers, who like Christianity in small doses on week-days. More than a half-column would be too much, for this present terrestrial world is more important than any coming spiritual world to readers of *The Times*. Therefore the regular ration of Christianity is nicely calculated on the sound journalistic principles.

Recently the article has dealt with the Bible. The once open Bible is now a kept-closed book. Says the article: "The popular mind at present takes for granted that the Bible has been fatally discredited, and that 'nobody now believes that sort of thing'."

Evidently this Christian apologist is a Mr. Faintheart. (I think he puts the case against his own cause altogether too high.) "Jehovah's Witnesses" and fulsome Fundamentalists we always have with us, though they are hardly respectable enough to be dealt with in the columns of *The Times*.

But this Christian Mr. Faintheart is no fundamentalist, not even a neo-fundamentalist. "It ought to be stated roundly that the doctrine of textual infallibility is no part of orthodox Christianity. . . . It is in itself inherently untenable."

Well, now what does this mean? Nothing can be clearer, surely. It means that even the words in the Bible attributed to Jesus Christ, even the words on which the Church is founded, may be fallible, i.e., wrong. Once this sort of thing is admitted, what remains?

But the writer goes on to emphasise that "symbolism and myth" play a large part in the Bible. What a pity the Bible does not say so. Even to say "The Lord spoke to Moses" is to employ the language of mythology.

A myth is fiction, not fact. If Christianity rests on myth, how does it differ in this respect from the dead outworn religions of Greece and Rome, which are also mythical? Granting that a myth may enshrine truth, it certainly is not factual. Yet Christianity has always claimed to be historical, not fictional, in origin.

And who is to separate the factual-historical wheat from the mythical-fictional chaff? The Church? Then, which Church, for the Roman, Greek and Protestant churches speak with different and contradictory voices. Or the private judgments of individual Christians? In the latter event, no two of us will believe alike. It will be a case of *so many men (and women), so many Gospels, tot homines, tot sententiae*.

Such are "the insights opened up by a century of criticism," and "we must frankly and thankfully accept them," says the writer. So be it, the modernist and the Free-thinker will say. But exactly where does this lead? To anarchy in the world of theology, ecclesiastical organisation, and religious thought.

"The Church," says the writer, "is paying dear for timidity and lack of candour in Scripture teaching." What does "lack of candour" mean, except that the Church, in plain language, has been telling us lies? This apologist is really ending all pretence of defending Scriptural Christianity as conceived by Protestantism and hitherto maintained.

Then we, at first sight, seem to be left only with the Roman Catholic position: that the Church, if not the Bible, is infallible. Unfortunately, only convinced—one almost

writes only converted, or newly-converted, for these are the most enthusiastic—Roman Catholics will accept this view. Others regard Popes and Churches as only too obviously errant and liable to error. And this Mr. Anglican Faintheart, writing from a non-Roman standpoint, will have "no infallible authority in religion any more than anywhere else."

As usual, the writer talks disingenuously of "The Church"—meaning what Church? He really means no existent Church at all, but a fictional and notional Church existing in his own imagination and conjured up to serve the purposes of his argument.

This citing of an unspecified "Church" is frightful intellectual dishonesty. He cannot say these things for the "infallible" Roman Catholic Church—for this Church would repudiate him with horror. Nor does he speak for the Anglican, except in-so-far as anybody may say anything and call it Anglicanism, though it may not be in any doctrinal document of that Church. The "Free Churches" would regard him with contempt.

For whom, then, does he speak? For educated minds of our day and generation who can afford fourpence for a daily newspaper and who no longer can possibly accept the Bible as "the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture," like the late Mr. Gladstone and the Anglicans of his day.

And if such folk are in retreat from the Bible, this little leaven in Scriptural language is bound, in time, to leaven the whole lump. The retreat will soon be a rout. The Bible may remain a "best-seller," but already it is no longer a best-read, or even a much-read, book. It is being discredited by its own votaries.

Indian Rationalist Association

The Fourth Convention of the Indian Rationalists will be held at Meerut on January 28-30, 1955. The subjects for discussion are:—

1. The nature, scope and need of Rationalism and Rationalist movement to-day.
2. Conditions for the success of democracy in India.
3. Present educational system in India, its defects and remedies.
4. Modern family life: causes of disharmony and conditions of success.

Intending delegates who are desirous of submitting 30-minute papers on the above subjects are requested to do so by the first week of January, 1955, as it is intended to publish the same in the proceedings of the convention.

Admission will be by tickets: Membership of the Reception Committee Rs. 10s., Non-student Delegates Rs. 5s., Student Delegates Rs. 3s., and Fraternal Delegates Rs. 1s.

All correspondence regarding boarding and lodging and other matters may be addressed to: Prof. R. S. Yadava, Secretary Reception Committee, c/o Meerut Rationalist Association, Vaish Orphanage Buildings, 36, Eastern Kutchery Road, Meerut.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE COLOUR PROBLEM IN BRITAIN
By COLIN McCALL

This Believing World

The hullabaloo caused by the TV play, adapted from George Orwell's famous nightmare novel *1984*, was distinguished by two characteristics—the insistence on a rigid censorship, and the sanctity of the Sabbath Day. The cry for censorship came from our voluble Totalitarians who strongly objected to allowing millions of people to see what might have been the fate of Europe had the Hitler-Stalin combination won the War in 1940, as it very nearly did. While the Sabbatharians gasped in horror that “torture” scenes should be enacted on God's Holy Day. These people appear to have no objection to the scenes appearing on a week-day—but on a Sunday . . . It was outrageous.

It is good, however, to find that, so far, the B.B.C. has not yielded to the howl for censorship. Orwell's book perhaps only reached a few thousand readers, but on the TV millions saw his terrifying exposure of Totalitarianism—and it was all the more terrible because Orwell was not a disgruntled Tory but a Socialist. One Labour Member of Parliament, Mr. George Brown, has admitted that Orwell exaggerated nothing. He recently saw for himself behind the Iron Curtain exactly what Orwell had depicted in his book.

But, apart from this, the B.B.C. ran true to form on the matter of religion. The Director of Religion practically took over control and, to give one example, we had on the Sunday before Christmas a magnificent feast of religious broadcasts. There were: a special Sunday Reading, a series of Advent Sermons from Glasgow entitled “God Comes,” the “Messiah” up North, the Chapel in the Valley, a “People's” Service, a Children's Hour of Lessons and Carols, an Evening Service, a Cantata “A Saviour Born,” an Epilogue “Blessed He that Cometh,” a Sunday Half-hour, and the Way to Heaven's Door. On TV we had a boring lot of Carols from Manchester sung by schoolboys, two of whom were later given a Bible and a Prayer Book; and an Epilogue—“Love was Born at Christmas, Star and Angels give the Sign.” Not a bad effort for one day.

Everything said or sung was pure undiluted Fundamentalism. Nobody functioning appeared to have the ghost of an idea that there had ever been any Bible criticism, or that Angels, Devils, Miracles, etc., had long since been laughed out of court in—of course—intelligent circles. The religious fare offered was mentally on the level of three-year-olds. But by hook or crook Jesus had to be dragged in with halo complete—it was what the British public wanted, and they got what they wanted.

All that Freethinkers can do is to protest—but, as an example of how difficult it is to combat the childish Fundamentalism dished out at Christmas—it ought to be *Mythras*—take our contemporary, *John Bull*, which gave its readers a “new” *Life of Jesus* based entirely on the Gospels. Again we had the credulity, the superstition, and hopeless ignorance, which the reverent believer writing on Jesus inevitably betrays—the same old Angels, Devils, Miracles, etc., so beloved of the B.B.C., and the Salvation Army. To criticise this ridiculous and pretentious “life” of Jesus would be a sheer waste of time.

What can Freethinkers do? We can support the only Freethought journal in the country by doing our best to extend its influence and circulation. There is nothing Christians would like more than to see our extinction for,

apart from a few books published in limited editions, and the aggressive onslaughts in *The Freethinker*, Christianity has practically no opposition. The B.B.C. has a clear field, and any distinguished scientist who would like to say what he thinks of Modern Fundamentalism on the air would be politely told to shut up.

Even if the Editor of a newspaper is broadminded enough to allow a little discussion in his columns on the claims of the Bible or Christianity, he will in the end himself plump for the most stupid aspects of both, and rope in a Bishop to “sum up”—never a Freethinker. Let us therefore accept the challenge from believers, and do our best to meet and beat them. Let us never forget that the Flag of Freethought so bravely held up by Bradlaugh and Foote and Chapman Cohen is still aloft and has never been lowered.

Review

The Rationalist Annual. Edited by Hector Hawton. Watts & Co. 1955. Price 2s. 6d.

CONTRIBUTORS to this *Annual* have world-famous names, not only in the world of Rationalism but in Science. Messrs. Gordon Childe, Morris Ginsburg, Arthur Keith, J. B. S. Haldane, and Antony Flew, can be relied upon for stimulating and often provocative articles not always easy to read but always packed with acute thought and observations. In addition, there are articles from Margaret Knight, E. H. Hutten, Bertram Joseph, and Ernest Gellner, quite up to the standard set by the other writers.

Prof. Childe specialises on prehistoric archæology, and in “The Stone Age Comes to Life” with a masterly pen deals with this fascinating period of man's early history. Whether “Durkheim's Theory of Religion” was worth discussing is a matter of opinion, but Prof. Ginsburg has finely and critically analysed it for us.

Anything on Darwin from the veteran Sir Arthur Keith comes from perhaps our greatest authority on Evolution, and “Darwin's Place Among Philosophers” proves that the author of *The Origin of Species* was “an objective philosopher, the first of the kind.” Most philosophers, contends Sir Arthur, “have done the chief part of their thinking seated in the study chair.” Darwin, “too, had such a chair, but the facts on which he brooded were, for the greater part, those he had gleaned with his open eyes in the open field of life in all its forms—plant, animal, and human. What other philosopher covered so wide a range of inquiry or reaped so great a harvest of knowledge?”

Prof. Haldane deals in his incisive way with “The Origin of Purpose.” Mr. E. H. Hutten makes mincemeat of our religious physicists in his “Religion and the Physicists,” and Miss Knight deals splendidly with “Æsthetic Experience and the Problem of Evil.” Prof. A. Flew, in “The Third Maxim,” patiently and philosophically examines some statements made by C. S. Lewis in *Miracles*—though one may be pardoned for asking whether this much vaunted writer was worth dealing with even if he is an out-and-out Christian. Mr. B. Joseph gives us a scholarly article on “The Renaissance Mind,” with the warning that to understand it “we must be careful to ignore our modern prejudices, whether these be rationalist or religious”; while Mr. E. Gellner cleverly demonstrates all sorts of things in “On Being Wrong.”

Perhaps a few readers of this *Rationalist Annual* may ask after finishing it—is there any Freethought, except by implication, in the whole of its 80 pages? I shall leave it to them to answer.

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.

- R. WALTER MAYES.—In order to prove Jesus insane you must first prove he existed. Possibly Christians would rather have him mad than non-existent.
- J. K. McCLELLAND.—Man has become civilised by controlling nature. Why should birth control not come into that category?
- T. A. SLACK.—Freud argued that Moses was an Egyptian priest who tried to carry on the monotheism of the Egyptian Aknaton. The Commandments were not original, being predated, e.g., by the Hammurabi Code. The Moses of the O.T. is predominantly mythical.
- G. S. BROWN.—Letter passed to Mr. Ridley.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.
- 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, January 9, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Canon St., off New St.).—Sunday, January 9, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Catholic Church and World Politics."
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, January 9, 6-6.45 p.m.: IRVIN DENNY, "The Essentials of Democracy."
- Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 11, 7 p.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "Does Science Advance Man?"
- Junior Debating Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, January 14, 7-15 p.m.: F. A. WILBY, "Education in America."
- Kingsway Association (Kingsway Hall, W.C.2).—Monday, January 10, 7-30 p.m.: L. EBURY, "The Secularist View of Life."
- Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, January 9, 6-30 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS, "Where Do We Go From Here?"
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.), Sunday, January 9, 2-30 p.m.: Canon R. H. HAWKINS, "Capital Punishment."
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, January 9, 11 a.m.: Dr. HELEN ROSENAU, "Mithraic Tendencies in Christian Art" (with illustrations).
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, January 9, 7-15 p.m.: L. EBURY, "Myself and Freethought."

Northern Notes

By COLIN MCCALL

"THERE is no railway into the Kingdom of God," said a Methodist preacher recently at Mobberley (Cheshire), "we must always aim for the top and we shall go places if we go with God." Railway or no railway, there are plenty of would-be conductors to the heavenly station. They are handicapped by the absence of reliable maps and timetables, but are convinced that the station exists and intend to visit it, but, for the present, are content to commune with its stationmaster.

On the subject of faith healing, I might refer readers to

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £676 12s. 11d.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.; H. Holgate, 3s. 6d.; A. S. Learie, £1; G. Stewart (In Memory of T. F. Palmer), £2; Miss L. Pye, £2; M. Baker (Malaya), £3 16s.; F. Ransome, 5s.; J. Wm. Ward, 15s.; Mrs. B. Longhurst, £1 10s.; R.E. (South Africa), £1; G. Miller, 4s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; A. W. Harris, 2s. 6d.; R. Gilliland (Belfast), £2; C. Mears, £1 1s.; H. Pirouet, 15s.; H. H. Jones, £1 1s.; H. Strange, 15s.; H. Williams, 4s. Total to date, £695 8s. 5d.

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

an article in the *British Medical Journal* (December 3, 1954). Dr. Louis Rose of the Department of Psychological Medicine at St. Bartholomew's Hospital reports on 95 cases which it was claimed had received partial or full benefit from the treatment of a faith healer. He concluded that no single case revealed conclusively that the healer's intervention alone resulted in improvement or cure of a measurable organic disability.

* * *

Numerical gains and losses in Christian Churches and congregations continue to come in, and the increases are usually Catholic. The first Catholic Church at Alderley Edge was recently opened and blessed by the Bishop of Shrewsbury, while an area in Birkenhead once adequately served by one Church (St. Werburgh's, Grange Road) now boasts nine churches a century later and a Catholic population of over 30,000. The annual meeting of the East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, on the other hand, announced that its "household of faith" is smaller than of yore. "But," said the Rev. A. B. Dowling, "just because our circumstances seem less favourable than they used to be, we must not imagine that the providence of God has deserted us . . . we live in a changing world. It is no less a fact that we free Christians worship in a changing church. Even our worship itself changes." That, it would seem, is the heart of the trouble. Christianity cannot be satisfactorily modernised: it is primitive and must remain so. The Catholic Church realises this and acts accordingly: the Unitarians attempt an impossible compromise. Sooner or later they will have to make their choice between freethought and faith; there is no half-way house.

* * *

Sunday School was once described by G. W. Foote as the place where Alfred and Angelina meet to read the Scriptures—and flirt. A lady correspondent of the *Daily Sketch* has gone one better than Angelina and used the Church as a marriage bureau. "Look here, Lord," she said, "if you want me to be married it's up to you to find me a husband." Three days later a complete stranger (from the Church, mind you) asked her to marry him. "Imagine my surprise," she writes—and I can!

* * *

I should like to express my thanks to Mr. Harman Grisewood, B.B.C. Director of the Spoken Word, for the reminder (*Catholic Herald*, December 12, 1954) that St. Gabriel Archangel has been heavenly guardian of radio and TV for nearly four years now (by proclamation of Pope Pius XII). Mr. Grisewood is a little surprised that the Holy Father did not choose "some less exalted figure to be the patron saint of broadcasting" but calls it an "inspiring choice." "Let us try all we can," he continues, "not to disappoint St. Gabriel by what we do with this powerful agency of communication." Mr. Grisewood has no need to worry on that score: the B.B.C. provides many opportunities for Catholic propaganda and none for the N.S.S.

Australians Ignore the Churches

By GREGORY S. SMELTERS

To call Australia a Christian country is really only self-deception (Ed., *Catholic Worker*, Melbourne, December, 1951).

THE everyday life and beliefs of Australians have been investigated by the Psychology Department of Melbourne University, and results of the survey have recently been published in twin volumes, *Social Structure and Personality in a City* and *Social Structure and Personality in a Rural Community*.

According to the review in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (November 20, 1954), 'for their sample of ordinary city Australians, the research team took 112 families living in two Melbourne suburbs generally regarded as socially and economically average. They settled on them by choosing the families of all sixth grade children of two State schools in the area.

The city families examined regarding their church-going declared themselves belonging to one religious group or another, *but generally did not attend church*. This tallied with a Gallup Poll showing that *only 23 per cent. of the population claimed to go to church every week*. Of the 70 per cent. of people who said that they belonged to the Church of England, *only 6 per cent. of adults went to church regularly, though the percentage of Catholic regulars was 62*. At the same time most of the Australian non-churchgoers considered it a good thing to send the children to Sunday school—not for religious training, but for moral education. This weakness of Church membership did not, however, imply a corresponding antagonism to religion. *Most citizens distinguished clearly between the Church as an institution and Christianity as a faith*. Practically all regarded themselves as Christians: *95 per cent. of them believed in God, 63 per cent. believed in life after death*."

For comparison: How many people in England go to church? Mass Observation figures indicate that 10-15 per cent. of the population go tolerably frequently; 10-15 per cent. go occasionally; 50 per cent. are indifferent and never go, but may raise no objection to being labelled religious; *20 per cent. reject all supernatural creeds*. (*The Literary Guide*, September, 1953.) For poll data on Danes, Swedes, and Americans as atheists, see *The Truth Seeker*, September, 1947, p. 171. For West Germany: 24 per cent. believe in God and go to church, 64 per cent. believe in God, but do not go to church, and *10 per cent. are complete atheists*. (*Der Spiegel* of Hannover, March, 1949.)

Now did you notice that great, queer discrepancy between the Australians' beliefs in God and in immortality? It strikingly reveals a basic mental confusion in the average man and woman which is not confined to Australia. Clearly, the person who denies immortality cannot logically claim to believe in the Christian god Yahweh, the Christian devil Satan, and the rest of Christian salvation myth! So there remains almost nothing of coherent Christian doctrine of supernaturalism in a person who rejects immortality, and therefore—from the Church point of view at least—those 37 per cent. of the Australian disbelievers in life after death must be counted as atheists. Those of the disbelievers in after-life who, nevertheless, professed belief in God only exemplify again the world-wide muddle that you may believe in a God apart from the salvation mythology as dogmatically taught by all Christian Churches—an extremely curious illusion, if only you realise that it is entirely based on the traditional capital letter G in "God." This capital G in "God" is, notably, a palpable forgery by the Christian translators of the Hebrew words "elohim" (= gods) and "el" (=god) which both always refer, in the O.T. as finally revised by the victorious Yahinistic priests, to

their tribal god Yahweh whose proper name was a taboo. In the New Testament "God" may, besides Yahweh, refer also to his son Jeshua (= Jesus) and Holy Ghost (in a forged passage). *Thus it is utterly impossible to sever the Christian "God" from what it refers to, without destroying completely its meaning*. Therefore, there can be logically no belief (for nominal Christians) in God outside the Christian Churches, or apart from any particular mythology, unless the believer creates a new mythology around his own "God." But then he will have only added another myth to the innumerable old ones.

This is the tragi-comic world-wide muddle about "God-belief independently of all churches (mythologies)" which a secular education must wipe out. Our slogan must be "A god apart from all the gods is a logical fallacy, and Yahweh is a myth." Only after realising this can mankind be adequately clear-headed from responsible thinking in an atomic age. It is, however, a gigantic task in the teeth of organised obscurantism, both of the Churches and of the democratic Press cowed by the Churches. It is because of this organised obscurantism that even the top educated class, in the United States, the university graduates still has 65 per cent. of believers in the god Jeshua (Jesus) as H. W. Schneider shows in his *Religion in 20th Century America* (Harvard U.P.).

Fortunately, this purely verbal illusion of a capitalised "God" can be easily dissipated at a quite elementary stage in the instruction of grammar by a proper emphasis on the logical distinction between proper names and collective (or class) names, and by teaching children to recognise the latter even if they are often visibly disguised by the ornamental capital initials and omission of articles. At the next scholastic stage of linguistic education, in the secondary school, the teacher can then easily proceed to the contemporary semantical interpretation of all proper names as a sub-class of collective names, that is, *all names are collective (or class) names*. As Bertrand Russell puts it: "There is not a thing called 'France' over and above its various parts. The same holds of 'Mr. Smith'; it is a collective name for a number of occurrences." (*History of Western Philosophy*.) If taught to all children in the world's schools, this simple point in basic language structure might wipe out belief in the verbal illusion, "God," in a single generation, because, after all, "religion is only an antiquated language," as Fritz Mauthner, the great German atheist, has pointed out.

Was Edison a Believer?

Editor, *Readers Digest*.

In *Readers Digest* there appeared an article called "Incandescent Lamp," wherein it was stated that Thomas A. Edison had said, "After years of watching the processes of nature, I cannot doubt the existence of a Supreme Intelligence. The existence of such a God can, to my mind, almost be proved from chemistry."

I brand this statement as a lie.

I was personally acquainted with Mr. Edison, and visited him at his laboratories, where the main topic of our discussion was his religion. He did not believe in a God. In fact, when a reporter asked him, "What does God mean to you?"—he answered, "Nothing."

The greater the man, the less his religious superstitions.

Why does religion continually invent lies to support its untenable position?

JOSEPH LEWIS.

(from *Age of Reason*)

LECTURE REPORT

Freedom of the Press

THIS was the title of a talk given by the Editor of the *South London Press*, Mr. E. Kinton (known also by his nom-de-plume "Wanderer"), to the West London Branch of the N.S.S. at the Laurie Arms on Sunday, December 19, with the branch president, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, in the Chair.

The speaker observed that we were now standing at a period comparable with that of the invention of printing, which was the atom bomb of its day in the war of ideas. We were now at another turning point in the mental battlefield with the coming of television, a most pregnant source of propaganda, the possibilities of which were now just beginning to be explored. It represented a propaganda machine potentially more effective even than printing, and in the face of which it was legitimate to suppose that reading by the general population would decline alarmingly. Moving pictures would exercise an additional hypnotic effect and therefore surpass reading matter as a means of indoctrinating ideas. Television's somewhat crude and unsatisfying representation of George Orwell's 1984, shown recently, had induced some element of panic in the popular Press, and, through that, the people.

In a brief but illuminating historical sketch the speaker noted that it took some thirty years for the effects of the Education Act of 1870, providing for free and compulsory schooling, to be felt on the national Press. With the twentieth century came big commercial ventures in newspapers, profiting by the ability of the masses to read. That is, having been taught the mechanics of reading, they were now a prey to the lowest forms of journalism, with resulting big profits to private advertisers who demanded large circulations. The process of accumulating big circulations had continued to our day, where, saturation point having apparently been reached, children's newspapers were coming on to the market.

In the nineteenth century the newspaper had been the privilege of the moneyed classes of the population. The advent of the popular Press about 1900 meant that ever increasing numbers of people carried the new cheap dailies under their arms as a sure sign of their culture. Without such competition as radio or TV, the way was clear for these papers to exploit the popular mind in any direction required. Papers in Britain have now achieved a coverage unequalled even in the U.S.A., where, of course, the Press operates over a much wider territory. The biggest Sunday and daily circulations in the world were to be found in this country.

With the Press, cinema, radio, TV, etc., we were the most indoctrinated people in the world. The effect, in general, was not to *inform* the general public, but to provide the famous S's—Sex, Sensation, Sadism, Sentimentality and Sport, in that order.

Freedom of the Press to-day meant something quite different from what Milton, who first used the term, intended. It meant freedom for the already existing Press to get more material, more news, more saleable matter. It no longer meant equal opportunity for all to the right of expression in print. Such opportunity was purely hypothetical, as the financial resources necessary for such undertakings were strictly limited to wealthy groups, and utterly inaccessible to the people as a whole. He thought a community-owned public Press would be some improvement.

The speaker thought *political* indoctrination played a lesser part, and took the form of a few over-simplified points hammered home, especially by cartoons. The big

political parties did not own the national newspapers, nor did the latter actually take their instructions from advertisers. It was not necessary. Their editors, he thought, knew which side their bread was buttered.

The speaker suggested the power of the Press, or other means of indoctrination, was far greater than that of the Government. Whoever controlled the minds of the populace controlled the nation. The coming of commercial television meant that the Government was dispensing its powers, and the speaker would prefer a Government monopoly, with all its attendant evils, to a monopoly by those who, in virtue of the ownership of capital, could control the nation for their own purposes. The reduction to absurdity would be a case where the Government might be unable to inform the people of a war, owing to all news agencies being in the hands of groups with the power to suppress such news.

Questions and discussion following the lecture were an indication of the great interest and importance attaching to it, and the speaker was accorded a most hearty vote of thanks for his stimulating address.

G. H. TAYLOR

Beliefs

BELIEFS do not depend upon truth or reason. We all acquire beliefs before we know the truth or reason that should underlie them. Beliefs, so far as a mass of human beings is concerned, are not relinquished when truth and reason no longer support them.

Beliefs are acquired from the immediate environment. They are usually handed down from generation to generation like heirlooms to which people cling without regard to their worth.

Beliefs are accepted on the basis of tradition or age. If some nonsense (such as a virgin birth) has been believed by millions for thousands of years, it is presently accepted by the masses as a fact—or as God's truth!

The crop of "believers" is always super-abundant, and orthodox religion is chiefly responsible for this backward condition of humanity. The advance of Humanism will gradually overcome this malcondition.

Humanists approach beliefs objectively. They accept beliefs only after the scientific method of investigation shows them to be in harmony with the facts. The Humanist does not confuse fact with fiction. Any belief which cannot withstand the objective approach must be discarded.

In Christianity "beliefs" (there are scores of contradictory beliefs) are usually founded on the "Holy Bible"—which is self-contradictory in many passages.

The Bible is also, in numerous passages, so obviously obscene that no decent person would dare to quote in a public gathering what is unblushingly set forth in holy writ. And if one should be rash enough to publish (in a book) the entire collection of "holy" filth, he very probably would be arrested (as a "red" or something worse).

Not until the early part of the seventeenth century did the English-speaking peoples get the "Authorized Version" of their scriptures. This version was authorised by a king, James I, and kings were then supposed to reign by divine authority.

However, the chief religions of the world have different bibles, and it is claimed that all of them are divinely inspired. But the plain fact is that all of these so-called sacred books were written by ignorant men, who didn't even know that the earth is round. They believed in miracles. They had almost no knowledge of science, and they cared

nothing about it. Their minds were centred upon the gods, and they saw fit to add angels and devils, etc., to the unholy assortment of mythical personalities.

Even when the writings in one bible plainly contradicted the writings in other bibles, the "believers" were usually satisfied with whatever was served up to them—no matter how unscientific and nonsensical it finally proved to be.

By Dr. E. L. Dwight-Turner, in *Progressive World*.

For Newcomers

SOME TERMS

RATIONALISM.—This is a method of approach only. The Rationalist, as such, arrives at no conclusions. He is concerned with the way of arriving at conclusions. His way is that of reasoning, as against the blind acceptance of unsupported dogma.

FREETHOUGHT.—A Freethinker is a Rationalist who has arrived at conclusions by applying his rationalism to religion and superstition in general. He refutes the claims of such.

SECULARISM.—This is Freethought put into action. The Freethinker has criticised ideas. As a secularist he proceeds to attack the institutions based on these ideas.

ATHEISM.—The Atheist is a Freethinker who attacks the root of all religion, the god-idea, based on fear of the unknown, and consisting of the projection of human attributes into the forces of nature.

MATERIALISM.—The Atheist pulls down the theologian's universe; the Materialist builds an atheist one. Materialism is the positive counterpart of Atheism. The Materialist formulates the philosophical implications from scientific evolution.

It is not necessary to be either an Atheist or a Materialist to be a Secularist. This may be seen from a perusal of the Principles and Objects of the National Secular Society, as follows:—

"Secularism affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; that liberty belongs of right to all; and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilised State.

Secularism, affirming that morality is social in origin and application, aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

Secularism demands the complete separation of the Church from the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organisations. It seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of all peoples as a means of advancing universal peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and the dignity of mankind."

G.H.T.

50 years ago

THE greatest danger to advanced opinions, when they become widespread, comes from their compromising friends rather than from their avowed enemies. Inside the churches various attempts are being made to gild the religious pill, to give it a coating of rationalism, and to get the dose swallowed. And outside the churches there are only too many who are ready to recognise every expression of liberal opinion as signs of an approach towards the freethought position.

But the leopard does not change its spots. What Christianity was, Christianity is. It is as ready as ever to obstruct progress, and the need for vigilance on our part is as great as ever. Liberal thinking is not uncommon today; but what still remains comparatively rare is the clearness of view and sanity of expression which, having once

seen the true course, admits of no compromise, is daunted by no difficulties, but takes its course, happy if victory crowns its efforts, and, if not, is content with having made the road easier for those that follow.—Chapman Cohen (*Freethinker*, Jan. 1, 1905).

Correspondence

ORIGIN OF THE EARTH

SIR,—Readers of the "Science Front" column which dealt with "The Nebular Hypothesis" may be interested in an article published in the *Anglo-Soviet Journal* (Autumn, 1952) on "The Origin of the Earth," in which it was claimed that Soviet mathematicians had shown that our planetary system could have evolved from a disc-shaped nebulous cloud by condensation, without any initiating "catastrophe" such as the Jeans Theory and the collision theory require.

The article began by referring to astronomy as a battle-ground between religion and science, and suggested that catastrophic theories have found favour in the West because they make human life seem a very rare occurrence and thus support the religious view that man is the central feature of the universe. Certainly, catastrophic explanations would be more acceptable to a religious type of person and consequently would occur to him most easily.

It is claimed that Laplace's error lay in not considering the heat produced in the cloud by collisions between particles, and that when this is taken into account the mathematical equations of motion give the required speeds of rotation of the planets, which Laplace's theory did not. The size of Jupiter and Saturn is due to the fact that, being shaded from the intense central heat by the inner portions of the cloud, they cooled more quickly than the inner planets and are therefore older and bigger. It is also claimed that all other features of the planets (their mass, energy, distances and composition) can be adequately explained.—Yours, etc.,

E. G. H. CROUCH.

DISH DIVINE

SIR,—A few years ago in Newquay, when the Elim people were holding a campaign, I went into their huge marquee, and after listening to a spate of fervid oratory from a semi-illiterate Pastor, the invitation was given for those "seeking the Lord" to go round the back (why is it always round the back?) and there seek information at the Inquiry Room. I accordingly made a bee-line for the Pastor, who was delighted to hear that I was seeking the Light! Had I any questions? I had. In becoming humility I wondered could the pastor help me in regard to a little matter about the Blessed Trinity. Could he explain the three in one business?

"Ah! brother, I'm glad you've asked that," he said. (They are always glad you ask whatever you do ask.) "This," he contended, "is a Great Mystery which has puzzled theologians for hundreds of years. It is a mystery which will only be made plain when we reach the Heavenly Land."

"But can you explain it?" I interposed.

"Um—er—well let me explain it in simple, homely language," he continued. I inferred that being a poor simpleton that was just what I wanted. He positively glowed. "I suppose you are going home to your evening meal," he said. I admitted the soft impeachment. "Then," said he, "suppose when you arrive home your wife places before you a plate containing, shall we say, meat, greens and potatoes. Eh?"

I confess I was unprepared for the Parthian shot which followed. "Well, there you are then," he said, positively beaming now, "there you have it. Only one dinner but three parts to it. One in three and three in one."

The effect upon me was electrifying. I felt like stout Cortez staring at the Pacific with a wild surmise, and then in a great flush of realisation I knew deep within me that I had found the key to an Eternal Reality. I had resolved a doubt which had occupied the minds of metaphysicians for years without number. And now—Oh, wonder of wonders, oh, abiding bliss—it had been revealed to me—even me. The secret which had eluded the ancient Fathers was mine. I had discovered the entity of the ever-blessed Trinity. It was, and would remain henceforth and for ever, neither more nor less than a cut off the joint and two veg.—Yours, etc.,

DAI FRANCIS.

Foreigner, Male, 34, having resided three years in London, Ph.D., Diploma holder three Universities, knowing English, German, French, Czech, Russian, Esperanto, with sound reading knowledge of several other European languages and of Continental business and office work, offers his services as translator, business correspondent, interpreter or modern language master. Write Box 33, The Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1.