

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXV—No. 10

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fourpence

FOR some thirty years British radio, for religious purposes, has been handed over lock, stock and barrel to the degrading religious superstitions of an ever-dwindling section of the populace. Apart from an occasional whisper of scepticism on the Third Programme, heard by few and heeded by fewer, the regime has been totalitarianism complete. The B.B.C. attitude has been that the Atheist shall pay for his licence and then cease to exist. As if not satisfied with seven hours of broadcasting all to themselves every week, the Christians have frequently imposed their superstitions on other programmes which have taken on a religious colouring.

Still not satisfied, the B.B.C. religious policy has been that if people will not tune in for religion, then religion must be *imposed* on them. This is done by way of "Lift up Your Hearts" at a time when many working families find it convenient to have their sets turned on. They are rewarded with some of the most brainless mouthings of unadulterated drivel it is possible to extract from the bilge bag and inflict over the family breakfast table. If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, then Mahomet must go to the mountain: if the people won't switc! on for Jesus, they shall switch on to Jesus.

The Balloo Goes Up

On January 5, 1955, broadcasting history was made when basic religious beliefs were allowed to be challenged in plain terms, and the B.B.C. became, in the affronted eyes of the faithful, a hotbed of Atheism overnight—and if the pun be excused, over Knight. The furore was due to press publicity, which created an enormously increased public for the remaining talks. The first had a brief notice in the *News Chronicle* and some comment in the *Telegraph*, but the next day the *Daily Express* picked up the story and others followed, with the result that the entire national press waited for the second talk in an atmosphere charged with no small degree of excitement. The front pages of two national papers were packed with abuse, while a Church newspaper contended that Mrs. Knight's script reader should be sacked for worthwh. "Take this woman off the air," screamed one paper, while the "Unholy Woman" was cartooned with a horned Devil at the microphone. The Bishop of Coventry poured out a torrent of ignorant abuse, subsequently apologising; and was accompanied by hundreds of frenzied letters to the daily press about the "insult unparalleled in the history of British broadcasting," Mrs. Knight's views being blamed for Fascism, Nazism, Communism, the Belsen labour camp, the Hydrogen bomb, and possibly the atrocious weather. Had a corpse been found in the vicinity of Broadcasting House on the night of January 1, we wonder whether Mrs. Knight would have been detained for questioning. Her own "fan mail" contained a proportion of Christian letters which, in the disinterested scientific spirit, she calmly categorised as "psychotic." A gorgeous variety of epithets (without argument) were used against her, from the sound and fury

of the Bishop, the splenetic sarcasm of the Nonconformists, the pained surprise of a few "intellectuals," right down to the pious pipings of frightened old ladies of both sexes.

She had given a talk on Morals without Religion. The Christians gave her Religion without Morals.

Such an outburst of Christian love is a timely reminder to those who would have us "stop hitting religion because it isn't there any longer," and go in for some free-thought painting, free-thought ballet, or (who knows?) free-thought knitting.

Though attacked with what the *Observer* called "brutal vehemence," the series was completed, the B.B.C. refusing to yield to

the demand to suppress it. The morning after the second talk the *Daily Sketch* front page declared in heavy headline, "Godless Radio Repeat Scandalises Nation." What a remarkable check-up only a few hours after she had spoken! The B.B.C. said that "only a handful" of protests had then been received, but the *Sketch* knew better. The whole "nation" had been scandalised.

Christian Dismay

The *Church Times* knew that "All over England men and women . . . have apparently reacted with extraordinary dismay. . . ." Let us look at some of this dismay. From Mrs. Knight's own correspondence (see *News Chronicle*, January 27) comes the following: "It was like a breath of fresh air in a stifling fog," "It was like a draught of cool mountain water when you're tired and thirsty," "It was like the opening of a dungeon door to admit the light," "You have crystallised my own vague thoughts," "You have put into words what I have been feeling for years," "So someone has said it at last!"

Similar sentiments often appeared in letters to the national press. "We no longer accept the ancient view that the earth is flat. So we should not be afraid to probe the foundations of Christian belief." (*Daily Express*, January 14.) "Those of us who do not fear to be described . . . as 'the new Pagans,' even sometimes in face of severe social or economic pressure which Christians often bring to bear upon us, have a right to expound our opinions by all the modern means of communication at the disposal of the orthodox." (*Sunday Times*, January 23.) "Thousands of people would be glad to substitute moral teaching based on fact and experience for the woolly haze of fairy-tale Christianity. All they want is a lead such as Mrs. Knight is trying to give." (*Daily Express*, January 14.)

The Sheltered Lie

Where, then, is the "dismay"? The dismay is in the Lie Found Out. And the way to perpetuate a lie is to give it shelter and protection. The way to end it is to withdraw that shelter. Mrs. Knight's broadcasts came under the General Talks Division and were not referred to the religious section. It is reported that six out of seven regional controllers turned her down, and only London

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Broadcasts: A Summing-Up—1

By G. H. TAYLOR

carried the first two talks. Yet her plea was simply to tell the children the truth; namely, that some believe in a God and some don't, and that they can make up their minds when they are older. In other words, *be honest with children*. Is that so terrible a crime in Christian eyes? And she said what is, after all, common knowledge among modern scholars; that New Testament stories are on a par with Greek myths. If the faiths of other religions may be criticised by Christians and Freethinkers alike, why cannot Christian faiths be criticised by Mrs. Knight?

How to Legislate for Lies

If the Bishops really want children to be patterned in the Christian style, we suggest they should persuade the

authorities to adopt the following rules:

(1) All children shall be forbidden to have agnostics or atheists for parents.

(2) Fair play for unbelievers shall be secured by (a) removing all their speakers to the Third Programme. (b) arranging for a clergyman to be present so that the doses of unbelief shall be immediately countered, and (c) in discussions between Christians and Atheists only dummies shall be used for Atheists, and the script for these dummies shall be written by Christians.

We hope, finally, to examine the "arguments," such as they are, which have been advanced against Mrs. Knight's views.

Concessions to the Advance of Secularism

By LEON SPAIN

THE conquest of the entire domain formerly held by the ecclesiastic will ultimately be achieved when the advancing forces of enlightened Secularism dislodge his dead weight from every department of human interest and activity. The advance of Secularism, in all fields where freedom of inquiry and research was not forbidden or restricted, has been inexorable, much to the chagrin and disappointment of the exponents of the supernatural and their theocratic champions. Secularism, apart from resting on the secure foundations of advancing knowledge, was consistent with human needs and the dignity of the individual, freed from non-worldly concerns. This has been evidenced by a recent statement issued in the U.S.A.

American Protestantism, in the opinion of many of its youthful adherents, is deficient to the extent that it still emphasises the letter of its old-time religion to modern techniques. Among such techniques are marriage counsel, economics, and vocational guidance. This was revealed in a four-year research conducted by the Central Department of Research and Survey of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., to test the influence of the Church in the sphere of youthful interests. The Council represents thirty Protestant and Eastern Orthodox church bodies in the U.S.A. The investigation reflected a cross-section of the views of nearly 2,000 youths and adults.

In the survey, it was revealed, the church showed the least effectiveness in what is described as "optional" activities: vocational guidance, the Christian attitude towards economics, marriage counsel, interdenominational work, and church history. The traditional Christian attitude towards economics, at least until modern and recent times, was not of prime concern, since other-worldly concerns took precedence. The biblical admonition for slaves to obey their masters and Martin Luther's vicious counsel to the German Princes, urging them not to desist from using any means or weapon in their power, during the Peasant War, and the dark record of the various churches during the long era of black slavery, are singular instances of the church and its attitude toward issues in the economic sphere. If the attainment of the Kingdom of God is of paramount importance, then a profane issue like economics is of secondary concern.

Marriage counsel, or the Christian attitude toward it within recent times, was not concerned with the physical welfare and emotional health of the parties. Marriage was regarded as a concession to the physiological promptings, which the ecclesiastics, in their childish dogma, termed "human weakness." A feeling of guilt was impressed upon newly-weds and those unable to attain to the virtues of celibacy, by telling them it was "better to marry than to burn." A religion, resting upon such a primitive sex ethic, was remote, indeed, from understanding the factors

necessary to the happiness in the most intimate of unions. If the Protestant church, in many of its sects, has departed from this primitive sex ethic, it is due to the strides which Secularism, medical science, and mental health have made in the field of marital relations. Shakespeare had more to offer than St. Paul, Jesus Christ, Luther, John Knox, or Calvin, in appraising the true love of man and wife, when he said: "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds."

The survey stated, also, that progress had been made in developing a more "Christian" attitude toward race. Just why the true "Christian" attitude was inoperative, since the days of its earliest history, will be left for the adherents and spokesmen of Christianity to answer. Christian history is replete with crusades and inquisitions, wars and persecutions, heresy hunts and innumerable evils, which would put to shame any other group having such an unspeakable record. Such despicable annals do not upset the Christian apologist in the least, since he is both unwilling and unable to understand the true factors in both individual and social development. Wholesome human individuality and broader human sympathies are always construed by the Christian apologist as truer aspects of the spirit of Christianity. Secularism and its broadly human interests, from which the supernatural has been expelled, has been the bugbear of Christian moralists and theologians.

Also, in the survey, it was stated that one out of four young adults had dropped out of church work because they were "bored." They maintained that they lost interest in a church which did not satisfy their personal needs. Personal needs, in various aspects, have been the solvents which have dissolved the negative and obstructive elements in the stream of progressive thought.

The survey also revealed that few of those interviewed had reported opportunities for working and associating with youths outside of their religious affiliations. This, also, applied in kind to other faiths, races and income groups. It is evident, beyond question, that religious or denominational affiliation has been a deterrent to the cultivation and practice of the broadest extension of human sympathies. A true human fellowship, and the best and highest of which human nature is capable, will be achieved under a Secularist Humanism, where the pretensions of theological morality will be relegated to the museum of outworn beliefs.

The supreme and exclusive devotion to the affairs of this world, "the world in which we live, move, and have our being," is the ultimate and unalterable aim of Secularist Humanism. It predicates an ethical system grounded upon natural morality, without extra human or other-worldly considerations, and will seek the development of humans to the highest degree, intellectually, morally and physically.

Space Travel?

By F. A. RIDLEY

PERHAPS the most startling development of mankind's mastery over Nature in the present century has been his conquest of the air; the Third Dimension to those of sea and land. This conquest has been finally achieved during the last fifty years. It is an old ambition of mankind, since the legendary débâcle of the Cretan aeronauts, Daedalus and Icarus; a legend which perhaps embodies a memory of a genuine early (and abortive) attempt at flight. The recently discovered remains of Cretan civilisation demonstrate a mechanical aptitude on their part.

Actually the first conquest of the air goes back to the latter part of the eighteenth century, and space-flight originated about the same time as the Industrial Revolution. During the closing years of the 18th century, the passion for flying in the precarious balloons of the period was rampant on both sides of the Channel. The aerial crossing of this strip of water was attempted and eventually achieved by enterprising flyers, much in the same way as nowadays it is crossed by enterprising swimmers. Nor were the military uses of the balloon neglected. "Citizen Carnot," the famous War Minister of the French Revolution—"The Organiser of Victory"—formed a corps of balloonists, and French balloonists did valuable espionage work. They flew over the enemy lines at the decisive French victory at Fleurus (June, 1794). Napoleon, unaccountably, dissolved this corps, but the English papers in 1804 featured Napoleon's army invading England in balloons!

Despite the feverish passion for scientific novelty, the 19th century never in fact got beyond the balloon. Theoretically, the science of the period toyed with more advanced forms of space-flight. This theoretical regard resembled, perhaps, our own day, when in relation to interplanetary travel, "coming events cast their shadows before them." The enormous sales of the pioneers in that time of books (in what would be termed) "Science-Fiction," books by the authors Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, indicated that "space-travel" was mentally very much "in the air." But it was not until the 20th century when aeronautics acquired more advanced instruments than the balloon that real advance was made. The airship and aeroplane, aided largely by military necessity, made phenomenal progress in the first half of this century, since, in fact, the Wright brothers first took to the air in 1903, and Blériot, in 1910, first flew over the Channel in his monoplane.

One can now fly anywhere on this planet; even the rigours of the Poles offer no serious obstacle to the intrepid aviator. But, so far, aerial progress has been confined within the ramparts of our globe: but will this always be so? Must the practice of mankind always linger behind imagination? Even prior to the Christian Era imagination had already transcended the limits of this earth, as we see from the story of Daedalus. In the second century A.D. the Greek novelist Lucian of Samosata, a "best seller" in his day, described a voyage to the moon! What next?

To-day one notices a literary parallel with last century, with the era marked by the pioneer "science-fiction" of Verne and Wells. Then, those bold pioneers anticipated in imagination only the scientific conquest of the air actually achieved only in the last half-century. To-day we find an entire contemporary sub-species of literature devoted to the, as yet, unachieved conquest of outer-space, far beyond the confines of our planet. This continually-expanding literature describes the still future successes of interplanetary travel, and societies already exist advocating its ultimate attainment. Unfortunately it is true that (so far as this writer is aware) none of these writings are on the

Verne-Wells level! That may, however, just be a literary accident. The point is that these writings exist. Does it similarly point towards a future attainable reality? Will Man eventually succeed in contacting the other planets in his Solar System?

Till now it must be conceded that the vast bulk of this "science-fiction" has certainly more claim to be regarded as fiction rather than science. That again may be another literary accident. Writers of the calibre of Lucian, Verne and Wells are not born every day, or every century! Nevertheless, a few of the extant "interplanetary" novels are written by men of genuinely scientific training and temper. For instance, *The Sands of Mars*, written recently by Arthur C. Clarke, a former president of the "Interplanetary Society," is one of the best of this kind. In his *Exploration of Space*, a non-fictional book, the same author has put the scientific case for space-travel perhaps as well as it could be put. The "I.P.S." is fortunate in possessing so persuasive an advocate. Such works are rare, and radio, incidentally, hardly assists the cause of interplanetary flight by its rather puerile radio "science-fiction." Current radio treatment appears to lay emphasis rather heavily on the "fiction."

Will Man reach the other planets? A, "leading question," as the lawyers say. The answer is anybody's guess. But such attainment does not appear ultimately to be impossible. Readers of the more serious—non-fiction—works on astronautics, such as *The Exploration of Space* (above mentioned) or the more technical works of the German pioneers in this field may conclude that at least a *prima facie* case has been established. Among these German writers on astronautics may be mentioned Herr Oberth, "The Copernicus of Flight," as the enthusiasts of space-travel describe him, and Herr Braun, the inventor of the "V2" pilotless plane. The writer of this article would suggest that in 1955 the case for eventual space-travel is at least as strong as that for present-day flight, as predicted a century ago, when Jules Verne wrote his pioneer romances. Of course, one must naturally discount a good deal of rather naive optimism of the "we'll never know until we get there" type, also a good deal of unimaginative prejudice against new ideas and original projects.

What would—I will not prejudice the issue by writing "will"—the intrepid explorers find on the other planets? Already that question can be answered with substantial accuracy, thanks to even our present astronomic knowledge—very little! Apart from Mars and Venus, and one or two small satellites, climatic extremes of heat and cold would prevent even the most enterprising "space-craft" and their crews from landing anywhere. Even those planets where a landing might be possible do not appear to be viable for man. In a profit-making economy such as ours there would be little except scientific interest to justify the fabulous expense involved in setting up colonies on "The Sands of Mars," while the moon appears to be completely barren. However, so was the summit of Everest, but that did not stop people from climbing it at the risk of their lives! So we shall see—what we shall see.

One interesting sideline may be noted. The Vatican has recently become extremely interested in "Space-Travel." As far back as 1922 a Catholic theologian explicitly declared that a good Catholic may hold that "rational" beings may exist in other planets. A few centuries back they burned Giordano Bruno for making a similar suggestion. More

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

The extracts from the Cambridge Union Society Debate on whether "This House will Welcome the Return of Billy Graham" broadcast by the B.B.C. the other evening were particularly illuminating. Cambridge is not like Oxford, the Home of Lost Causes—it is supposed to be more modern, more up-to-date. Yet it would be difficult to imagine more primitive Fundamentalism than that uttered by both sides. As far as Christianity is concerned both the proposers and the opposers of the Motion were at one. They differed a little—a very little—as to Billy Graham, but for the "truths" of Christianity there was nothing but the most unequalled admiration.

Does anyone mention Paine's "Age of Reason?" We doubt whether the brilliant debaters—law and history students, most of them, had ever heard of it. We doubt whether any of these students even knew that there was something called Higher Criticism, let alone a case for Freethought. Every time a speaker mentioned Jesus and his religion there followed the most vigorous applause. Bradlaugh and Foote and McCabe might never have written a line against Christianity for all these university students cared or knew. This proves how times have changed, we are told. Rather would we say that these young people are "throw-backs" from the despised and very religious Victorian Age, and ought to be met with the weapons G. W. Foote so brilliantly used in *Bible Romances*.

As for the Rev. B. Graham himself, his success in converting so many Christians to Christianity has led him to authorship and the *Chicago American* is publishing his *I Was Born Again*. Its opening sentence is characteristic. "Yes, Christ changed my Life." It is a world-shattering phrase which, by the way, used to be yelled in exactly the same words by many converted drunks, convicts, and ex-burglars, brought forward by the Salvation Army and listened to in public squares years ago, before that august body had quite earned its present reputation for true Christianity. Just as Billy Graham was born again, so can you—though we doubt where you will be crushed in the rush to broadcast the glorious news.

It is not only in the Roman Church that the problem of marriage hits those priests who are forced to be celibate. It is upsetting the Buddhists in Korea. With the encouragement of President Syngman Rhee, the unmarried Buddhist priests there are kicking up a most holy shindy at the married Buddhist priests, and want them to confess that they are living in sin; and are demanding they either resign or abandon their wives. After all, they have the pious example of Buddha himself who abandoned his wife just as she was having a baby. Rhee is a Methodist, and the only reason he opposes marriage among his priests is that it was really introduced by the Shinto Japanese when in occupation, and he hates the Japanese. Perhaps, like so many Christian priests, the Buddhists will "put away" their wives and live with them afterwards.

Although fiercely denouncing "mixed" marriages Jews appear to have objected to Hitler doing the same; and now in Israel they are even more savage than the Great Fuehrer himself about it. Israel is packed with orthodox, anti-orthodox, and non-orthodox Jews of every nationality, and even colour, but the Rabbis appear slowly but surely to be getting the upper hand with disastrous results. Let religion get a free hand in Israel and it won't stop. It is bound to be completely Totalitarian. Food will be

"koshersed," nobody allowed to carry a handkerchief or an umbrella on the "Sabbath" day, women will be forced to wear a wig, and plenty of other tomfoolery ordered by Rabbis will be most religiously kept. And what a chance Israel had to be modern!

The Bishop of Southwell, with an astounding originality, has proclaimed to a stupified world that the story of Adam and Eve is not "factual." It does not, he informs us with charming insistence, "describe an event at the dawn of history." This touching confession of disbelief will be, of course, received with the utmost horror by all followers of Billy Graham. As that erudite theologian would say, if there was no Adam and no Eve, how could there be a Fall of Man, and how could Jesus come as the Saviour, to say nothing of how could Billy Graham come to save those who already had been saved through Christ Jesus? These pious puzzles confound us—so we give them up.

Punishments

As one reads history . . . one is absolutely sickened, not by the crimes that the wicked have committed, but by the punishments that the good have inflicted; and a community is infinitely more brutalised by the habitual employment of punishment than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime.—OSCAR WILDE.

Space Travel

(Concluded from page 75)

recently the Vatican has issued a kind of spiritual "catalogue" of these hypothetical dwellers in other worlds. Somewhere in Space, we learn, there may even be a "Garden of Eden," with "Adams" and "Eves" free from "original sin"! A French Catholic paper recently devoted an entire issue to space-travel! What is the reason for this unexpected solicitude? Is the Vatican desirous to conquer new worlds, to compensate for its losses in this? Or is it looking for a hide-out when "Atheistic Communism" takes over down here?

What has been termed the Atheism of Astronomy leaves no room for God. The French astronomer Laplace expressed this "Atheism" when he wrote that God is an unnecessary "hypothesis." Even the writers of science-fiction do not invoke his aid in either their science or their fiction: they just ignore this "hypothesis."

PUBLIC MEETING

at

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQ.,
LONDON, W.C.1.



For Freedom of Speech in Broadcasting
"MRS. KNIGHT AND THE B.B.C."

Wednesday, 16th March, 7.30 p.m.

Speakers:

G. H. TAYLOR (Chairman), F. A. RIDLEY,
L. EBURY, P. VICTOR MORRIS

Organised by National Secular Society.

Admission Free

THE FREETHINKER

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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.

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 week-day, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, March 13, 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).—Sunday, March 13, 6-45 p.m.: CLIFFORD ALLEN (S.P.G.B.), "Russia—Is She Socialist?"
Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 15, 7 p.m.: J. A. TANNAHILL, M.A., "The Causes of War."
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 13, 6-30 p.m.: J. JOHNSON, "The Fallacy of Education for Leadership."
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, March 13, 2-30 p.m.: Prof. A. ROTHSTEIN, "The Soviet Union as an Example of Socialism."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 13, 11 a.m.: H. TENNYSON, "Vinoba Bhava of India; Modern Saint on the March."
West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, March 13, 7-15 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, "Some Unsolved Problems of Science."
The 46th Conway Memorial Lecture, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1. Friday, March 11, 7-30 p.m.: The Rt. Hon. The LORD BOYD ORR, D.S.O., M.D., F.R.S., "Ethics in the Atomic Age." Chairman, the Rt. Hon. the LORD HORDER, G.C.V.O., M.D. Admission Free.

The 49th Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society

EVEN next year's Jubilee of our Annual Dinner cannot do more than sell all available seats—which was the case this year. Freethinkers from London jostled with comrades from the provinces and, as usual, took the opportunity, not always easy, to meet old friends and old workers in the Cause. Few functions are as lively as our well-organised N.S.S. Dinner, and this year was no exception. In plain language, everybody thoroughly enjoyed himself and herself. The ladies, who turned up in great force, also added the distinctive notes of colour and charm and helped to make the evening a memorable one.

An excellent dinner provided by Messrs. Lyons at the Oxford Street Corner House was voted one of the best—in fact, it was difficult to engage in any controversy during the repast. And this year, the speeches were brief, to the point, and thoroughly appreciated by the guests, who included Mrs. Dowman, the Secretary of the R.P.A. and Mr. Dowman, Editor of the *Monthly Record*.

With the distinguished cinema producer, playwright, and particularly Thomas Paine enthusiast, Mr. Adrian Brunel, as Guest of Honour, the Chairman, Mr. F. A. Ridley,

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £791 12s. 2d.; K.B.K. (in memory of Edith M. Vance), £5; A. V. Peries (Ceylon), £1 1s.; J. Humphrey, 6s.; W. J. Preston, 5s.; "The Village Atheist," 5s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Snow, 10s.; Miss W. Shinton, 10s. Total to date: £799 10s. 2d.

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

rightly gave prominence to Paine in his opening address, which was punctuated throughout with his usual wit. He hoped that out of the rise of democracy all over the world would emerge a new Age of Reason into a clearer atmosphere.

Naturally, Mr. Ridley paid a well-deserved tribute to the splendid work of the late Joseph McCabe—work which certainly he considered vied with that of Chapman Cohen.

The Toast to the National Secular Society was then proposed by Mr. Brunel, who began by pointing out the long list of great men associated with the Freethought movement—Mill, Huxley, Clifford, Darwin, Bradlaugh, and many others; and then showed how much Paine anticipated some of the present objects of the N.S.S. by reading out extracts from his published works. Mr. Brunel was at the moment working with his son (who, with Mrs. Brunel, was at the Dinner) on a film on Paine in Thetford, which he hoped our Branches would show; and he expressed a wish that all lovers of Thomas Paine who had Paine items—books, reviews, prints, anything connected with the great man—would help him to form a Thomas Paine National Library. It was an excellent speech and was warmly applauded.

Responding to the Toast was Mr. Harold Day, one of a contingent from Bradford whose sturdy Freethought, expressed recently in the local Press in defence of the broadcast by Mrs. Knight, earned him the caption "Day follows Knight." He hoped that the N.S.S. would achieve soon all its objects.

Mrs. Venton then charmingly and briefly gave the Toast to "Our Guests," and was followed by Mr. J. Hutton Hynd of South Place Ethical Society, who showed that, in spite of the many theological terms used by the Churches in praise of "Fellowship," in the ultimate Fellowship was purely "secular," and that we Secularists had it also in abundance. The Toasts were heartily responded to by the guests.

After the Interval, we all enjoyed a delightful feast of music, singing, and conjuring, arranged by Miss Eileen Cusack, whose own beautiful rendering of "Oh, my Beloved Father," "My Dearest Dear," and "Paris in the Springtime" showed her at her best. At the piano was Mr. B. Cater-Smith, who gave us a masterly performance of a Chopin scherzo and other items, and accompanied both Miss Cusack and Mr. Tudor Evans perfectly. Mr. Evans sang the ever-green and ever-popular "A Wandering Minstrel I" as well perhaps as any D'Oyly Carte tenor, and "The Song of the Flea" as well as any Russian baritone. In duets, the two singers were also heartily applauded for their rendering of "The Singing Lesson," from *Bitter Sweet*, and that grand old English song, "I'll Give You the Keys of Heaven." And as a change from male magicians, Miss Paula Baird mystified and enchanted her audience with many puzzling tricks.

Everything went splendidly without a hitch—for which all those working behind the scenes, including the General Secretary, Mr. P. Victor Morris, and Miss Jill Warner, deserve our thanks. Perhaps for our Jubilee they will arrange a "Super-Dinner," and for that we shall all look forward next year.

H. C.

Tom Paine's Message to Our Day

By BAYARD SIMMONS

(Concluded from page 71)

IN our own country the Established Church was so powerful that it forced the abdication of the most popular King that England has had for generations. And the Archbishop (by-the-bye) kicked him when he was down. None of the political parties here dare look sideways at the Catholic Church, although this is supposed to be a Protestant country. Our Foreign Office is lousy with Roman Catholics. The first three film censors in this country were Catholics—O'Connor, Shortt, and Tyrell of Avon.

Finally, Pope Pius XII, whose coronation was broadcast for hours by our B.B.C. in all regional wavelenghts, sent this message to General Franco, the newest of the Dictators and the Butcher of the Workers in the Bull Ring at Badajos:—

Praying for new successes in conformity with your glorious Catholic traditions and blessing our cordially beloved Spain, we thank you for your devout message and invoke for your Excellency Divine assistance. (My italics.)

So much for the reactionary attitude of the leaders of organised religion. (One could fill pages.) I hope my little list may start some of you along the line of my recent thought, namely, that while politicians in the lump are bad, the priest-politician is the very devil. There remains to be considered the much wider question as to the effect of religion itself on progress. This is far too big a subject for me to tack on at the end. I must content myself with indicating two outstanding cases in which religious belief in itself (quite apart from its professional ministers) operates to put the brake on progress. The first is the division of people in the same country needlessly caused by rival religions. The division of the Indian and the Irish peoples into two religions kept back progress in both countries for decades. The dispute between Muslim and Hindoo in India, and Protestant and Catholic in Ireland was undoubtedly forwarded by the paramount power. The organisation of the workers in Belfast and Bombay into trade unions to protect their rights as workers has encountered many difficulties because of religion. The "yellow," or Christian trade unions, all through Europe are a thorn in the flesh of the working-class in their struggle for betterment of their conditions.

My second case is the nullification of progressive effort by the religious idea of future life. If one is promised, as the saying is, "pie in the sky, when you die," one may be content to forego an actual pie in this life. The many mansions of the Heavenly Father may be more attractive than those provided by, say, the local Borough Council. Such notions as these must have a real effect on the efforts of the reformer to improve our world, which the pious regard as only a transient Vale of Tears.

I hope I have succeeded in making out a *prima facie* case that Tom Paine was right in attacking the Christian Church as being a drag on the wheel of progress. Of course, as I have already written, Paine did not attack what he would doubtless have called "pure religion." He was not an Atheist. He was genuinely concerned to promote a religion of humanity. For my part, as a hundred per cent. Atheist, I regard all religions as likely to become breeding grounds for reaction, and, as such, I hold that it is better to abolish them.

Finally, to come back to what I was saying on the subject of reading the life of this saint as a cure for dejection. Paine, during his lifetime, lived to see the triumph of one of his causes, the establishment of the United States of

America. In this cause he played a decisive part. For most men this would have been the end of their altruistic endeavours; they would have turned to personal and profitable ends. Not so Tom Paine. Here are some of the things he advocated. He advocated, nearly a century before they got it, freedom for negroes, in other words, the abolition of slavery. He was a Republican, describing monarchy and hereditary titles as anachronisms; he denounced cruelty to animals; he exposed the crime of poverty in States calling themselves civilised; he advocated old-age pensions and showed how the money for this could be raised. He was in favour of international arbitration for the avoidance of wars. He was a feminist advocating easier divorce. A recent biographer of Paine, Mr. Hesketh Pearson, has written thus of Paine's attitude to women: "He was probably the first person to display an entirely civilised attitude towards women, and the movement for female emancipation may be said to have begun with his words: "When they are not beloved they are nothing; and when they are, they are tormented. They have almost equal cause to be afraid of indifference and love. Over threequarters of the globe Nature has placed them between contempt and misery."

After Paine's death scores of people in this country were fined or imprisoned for selling his works, or even recommending that they be read. This was in the terrible period of reaction the score of years after the Napoleonic Wars. But that period passed, and many of Tom Paine's clear-sighted suggestions have been relished in this and other countries. In this country we are passing through a similar period of repression and reaction, but it will not last for ever. They will disappear the quicker if we face them with the courage and resolution of that great citizen of the world and friend of mankind, Thomas Paine.

[I am indebted to Mr. Hesketh Pearson's "Tom Paine, Friend of Mankind," published by Hamish Hamilton, for certain facts quoted here. It is an admirable biography for those who would like to know more of one of England's greatest men.]

Leicester Log

"A MAN without Jesus is a menace," declares Canon Eaton in his Church magazine. We agree. Such men are dangerous. They are a menace to the priest's livelihood. They are a danger to established religious privileges. They threaten the ancient power of the Church.

And what of the man *with* Jesus? He, too, is a menace. For one thing, he is a menace to free speech. For did not Jesus say, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled"? Canon Eaton had better explain, on his theory, why the prisons are full of Christians. A Rationalist pastor is said to have asked the Governor of Dartmoor for permission to visit the unbelievers in gaol, in the manner of a Christian minister, the request being refused on the grounds that there weren't any unbelievers to visit.

* * *

Another Leicester Canon has solved the problem of why people become Atheists. It all goes back to childhood, when they had an overdose of religion "of a bad kind" (that is, of course, the kind different from the Canon's), or a domineering father and so on. Presumably Christians are Christians because their daddies gave them an overdose of Atheism?

A fervent Christian writing in the *Leicester Mercury* is convinced that it is high time we had another religious revival. A member of the Leicester Secular Society had the following published in reply:—

GENESIS

Sir,—If a religious creed needs a revival every few years, surely there must be something wrong with it.

If the science of Genesis has been proved wrong, why should we accept the theology of Genesis?

If teaching children about devils, demons, and hell-fire causes them to have nightmares, would it not be better to discontinue such teaching?—CAVE CANEM, Leicester.

Cave canem means beware of the dog (collar?).

* * *

A Leicester member suggests that it would be a good idea to send a specimen copy of *The Freethinker* to all letter-writers in local newspapers whose letters indicate that they deserve it.

[Will other branches, and also isolated members and readers, please take note of this and send any known addresses?—Ed.]

* * *

“How on earth can you have Christian morals without accepting the Christian faith?” asked a preacher at Loughborough recently.

We fail to see the desirability of either. What is the value of such Christian morals as neglect of one's family (Luke XIV, 33) celibacy (Matt. XIX, 10-12), or castration (Matt. XIX, 12)?

Some elementary knowledge of sociology might have showed him that morals are evolved standards of conduct based on experience. Religion does not found them; it distorts them.

* * *

Here is reproduced a letter to the Padre of the *Leicester Evening Mail*:—

DEAR PADRE,

We of the Leicester Secular Society do not accept your definition of “blind faith”—that you “mustn't ask questions or obtain evidence.” If the genuine inquirer asks questions and examines evidence, sooner or later he or she will ask questions which are unanswerable.

To accept statements without question in this way does not need any mental exertion and we think you will find that most Christians are prepared to accept without question, as you said. They seem to leave their brains on the church doorstep.

The “historical Jesus” has not been conclusively proved, and if final proof were available you still have to prove his Divinity.

If you would like to come to our discussion class on Tuesday nights at 8 p.m. at the Secular Hall, with a few friends if you like, we should be most happy to hear your point of view.

We await results.

* * *

Shed a tear for the City of Leicester. I quote from St. Peter's Church magazine. “Taking the city as a whole, our Sunday Schools are most poorly attended. Our Church, scout and guide troops and companies are weak in number. There are a few Church lads and girls clubs and the Church Lads' Brigade has by no means caught the imagination.” Children of this scientific age are not likely to fall for the tales they are still telling in Churches and Sunday Schools, and, of course, parents do not force them to go as they did years ago. How are they going to fill all the new Churches which the Bishop is appealing for?

FOSSE.

—NEXT WEEK—

PERNICIOUS EFFECTS OF THE BIBLE

By E. H. GROUT

Atheism on the Air

By H. JARVIS

A *News Chronicle* leader commenting on Mrs. Knight said: “Should she have been allowed to put and press her points without a balancing exposition of Christian belief? That is where we think that the B.B.C. went wrong.” Why this wonderful tolerant idea of a balancing exposition? Have the B.B.C. not a committee that deals with religious broadcasts to see that we are all well soaked in the traditional religious ideologies?

Letters to the Press poured in by the thousand; such an hysterical outburst of injured religious pride has not been seen for a long time. Dr. Garbett (Archbishop of York) said the B.B.C. had been used as a “Nation-wide channel through which the speaker attempted to persuade parents to teach their children that belief in God might be compared to belief in Santa Claus.” Another divine, Father Joseph Christie, declared: “The primary reason for uneasiness is that the B.B.C. is a monopoly which has the power to sponsor this type of anti-religious propaganda without allowing the other side to be heard. Unless the Corporation is prepared to allow competent speakers the same opportunities as Mrs. Knight, it must appear as favouring attacks of this nature.” Dr. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, a tolerant voice almost eclipsed by reaction, stated: “It is surely a welcome sign that freedom of speech is still a reality.” The facts have now proved that freedom of speech is anything but a reality.

In the “discussion” between Mrs. Knight and Mrs. Morton the latter made such meaningless statements as “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that we might have life.” etc. Did God love the world when he drowned the whole of mankind and also millions of innocent animals? That Christ came to bring love to the world was also averred. Christ himself said: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother.” (Matt., Ch. X, v. 34-35.) How much better would it have been for humanity had he stayed away!

Mrs. Morton said that the whole teaching of the Bible was concerned with the teachings of this world and not the next world. On the contrary, life after death, heaven and hell, is the whole main theme of the Bible. (He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark, Ch. 16, v. 16.)

Universities teach theology and grant degrees for divinity, so it must have been very disturbing to the theological professors to hear another university lecturer debunking God. If many started to do this, then theology would rapidly decline and their jobs disappear. This is of course an important motive behind the opposition. The Church screamed out through its loudest mouthpiece, the Archbishop, possibly because he has the most to lose.

Religious intolerance is not yet dead, although perhaps dying, but it still rears its ugly head. Freedom of speech on religious matters has never existed on the air since the B.B.C. started. Perhaps this is an encouraging sign of a step in the right direction—but it's got to be kept going by perpetual vigilance. With all the millions of words broadcast favouring these biblical myths, it needs only a few sentences of honest doubt to cause an outburst of religious revivalism. Truly did Karl Marx say “the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism.”

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

Reductio ad Absurdum

By REGINALD READER

THIS old dodge to test the truth of Geometry propositions, applied to certain professed aims of organised religion, yields results that are indeed curious. Imagine, then, a world entirely Christian, faithfully increasing and multiplying with four children per family. What follows?

First, a redoubled frenzy of production to achieve civilised standards of living, dying away in a wail as raw materials run out, or can be obtained only by expending more energy than they later yield. Ever more believers arrive, all kindly disposed and theoretically-charitable, with nothing to give but healthy appetites and pressing needs. A few, at enormous expense to the rest, are shot to the moon, but things get steadily worse. Until, as a gentleman with a white beard once told me, God works a miracle.

That is one reply, of course. Here is another. After a period of astounding, unimaginable hardship, human life degenerates into a mere *fight to eat*. Social and biological compulsions destroy all mankind's restraints, until the 1940-45 edition of torture-chambers, crematoria, and corpse-soap, fertiliser, and bookcovers appears, in retrospect, as the timid efforts of bungling amateurs.

This has been, this is, the monstrous fate to which organised religion, with its expansionist ideals, its overweening conceit in Man, and human fecundity, and its almost total disregard of the space-time limitations of our existence, is leading us.

You doubt this? Look about you. There is a boom in futile novelties, distractions, and the instruments of death. The cost of *living*, on the other hand, never ceases to rise. Food is ever dearer. Everything is strained to its limit. Houses, flats, schools, trains, buses, roads, the very pavements—all crammed to capacity and beyond capacity. The schools disgorge ever greater numbers of capable, willing youngsters. Can we employ them? A disturbing question, this, but pluck up your hearts: the deafening clamour of pulpit, popular Press, cinema and radio will soon direct their attentions to that most worthy of all occupations—the procreation of further children in even greater numbers.

What can be done? Live in anarchy? Of course not. But let us discard dogmas that, in this modern world, are downright insanity. First reduce the birth rate, since most contemporary distress turns on the fact that there are too many of us already. Educate women and girls out of baby-worship. No new marriage allowances one year hence. Universal instruction in birth-control, and its non-utilisation to be made a major felony. At present we hang people for taking human life, but we pay them handsomely for committing the equally terrible crime of begetting a human being condemned to live in poverty, discontent, and frustration, until shot, bayoneted, napalmed, disintegrated, or just poisoned in a hole. "Military safety in numbers" is meaningless: the vast bulk of present populations lack the knowledge either to manufacture modern weapons or to use them. What matter if the enemy has so many more millions than us? In a war of technicians, other people who are not technicians simply get in the way, and have to be fed, clothed, and protected from panic. Their only advantage is that, when taken prisoner, they give the enemy similar headaches, until, of course, suitable Belsens, Dachaus, and Buchenwalds are installed.

Secondly, education in the real meaning and use of money, rejecting both the doctrine that values can be had for nothing, and the illusion that we can go on expanding indefinitely. All monetary units to be a function of both

the earth's raw material content and its exploitation, the latter being itself a function of human effort and techniques existing at the moment the unit is in use.

At the present time there is little possibility of rational measures being taken. In general, mankind never acknowledges the existence of a brick wall until it has run its head against it, not once, but several times. But rational thought must inevitably triumph. The driving force behind contemporary middle-religious neurosis—is an attempt to circumvent death, founded on wild hopes, delusions, pretences, bluff, and misrepresentations. It must sooner or later commit suicide. The remnants of humanity, freed at last from their mental chains, will make a fresh start, order and reason replacing the outworn creed of Christianity.

Correspondence

THE SPANISH INQUISITION

I would suggest to your correspondent, *Veritas*, that he studies the history of the Spanish Inquisition in more detail—he could, incidentally, read Mr. Roth's fine book with advantage; Lecky was a great historian, but he wrote a long time ago, and, in any case, he was not a specialist on Spanish history.

Neither, it would appear, is your correspondent, who makes the extraordinary assertion that the Spanish Inquisition was not, as stated, a purely Spanish institution, because it also existed in France, the Netherlands, Italy, and South America. As far as I know, the *Spanish* Inquisition never had any jurisdiction in France, though the French Kings had their local tribunal. The other countries cited, as *Veritas* ought to know, but, apparently, does not, were parts of the *Spanish* Empire. It was, actually, the introduction of the specifically Spanish Inquisition illegally into the Netherlands that touched off the Dutch revolt against Spain.

With regard to your correspondent's equally inaccurate assertions, if he will read, say, V. B. Ibanez's famous anti-clerical novel, *The Cathedral*, he will get a good account of the *political* uses to which the Inquisition was put. There is no question of "Catholic Apologies," Ibanez was Spain's leading anti-Catholic writer, and this book is on the Index.

Similarly, if *Veritas* will study the famous case of Carranza, Archbishop of Toledo, whom the Vatican unsuccessfully attempted to protect *against* the Inquisition, he will learn how purely nominal was the control actually exercised by the Popes over the Spanish Tribunal.

Finally, I must admit that your correspondent's concluding remarks strike me as absolutely childish. The relevantly tolerant attitude of the Inquisition to witchcraft is cited by the learned historian (Cecil Roth) whom I quoted, as an historical fact, and, as such, it is particularly creditable to a Jewish author to cite it in connection with an institution from which his race has suffered so much; whilst my own comparison between the two most ruthless of modern engines of human oppression, the Inquisition and the Gestapo, was a perfectly relevant means for estimating the historical role of the Spanish Inquisition.

I would suggest to *Veritas* that, in future, he signs his own name, instead of taking refuge in so inappropriate a pseudonym.—Yours, etc.,

F. A. RIDLEY.

OBITUARY

EDWIN PANKHURST (1858-1955)

On Tuesday, 1st March, a great worker for Secularism passed on into the darkness. Progressive history is made by humble, anonymous, or little-known, men who care uncompromisingly for truth. Edwin Pankhurst, who lived through a most exciting century of social improvement, was fearless, inexhaustible and loyal to his principles. As a boy he was poor, and as a young man he went to London, met and loved Bradlaugh. He read the *National Reformer* as well as *The Freethinker*. His was the energy behind the Plaistow Branch, and later the West Ham Branch, in which his daughters and son-in-law (R. H. Rosetti) were so active. He watched Bradlaugh hand over office, through ill-health, to G. W. Foote. The N.S.S. has lost its oldest member; freedom has lost a partisan who retires with glory.

VERNON ROSETTI.