

The Freethinker

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THE present writer visited Brussels the second week in September in order to take part in the deliberations of the international Executive Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers. Subsequently he visited Germany. A report of the Brussels meeting is appearing in these columns by the President of the World Union, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner. However, some impressions of European problems, as viewed by the present writer, may not be without interest.

The meetings of the international executive are held in the School for Advanced Studies in The Free University of Brussels. This renowned seat of learning is not only famous in the fields of scholarship on account of the eminent scholars who have taught there, but has also a practical significance as the intellectual headquarters of Belgian anti-clericalism and Freethought.

Belgium is one of the "marginal" lands, in which the clerical and anti-clerical forces are about evenly balanced, and carry on a bitter struggle for political and intellectual control. This fact, which was noticed by Joseph McCabe during his monastic career, part of which was spent in Belgium, erupted into physical violence in the streets of Brussels a few weeks before our meeting, when Catholic demonstrators rioted in Brussels against the education policy of the present predominantly anti-clerical government.

Walloons versus Flemings

The kingdom of Belgium, the military violation of the neutrality of which by Germany in 1914 represented Britain's *casus belli*, was itself the creation of British diplomacy under Lord Palmerston in 1830, when Belgium broke away from Holland and became an independent state, the permanent neutrality of which was henceforth guaranteed by the Great Powers, including both England and Germany. From the allied standpoints of demography, language and religion Belgium is a hybrid made up of two, in many respects violently opposed, nationalities with different languages; the French-speaking Walloons and the Flemings who speak a dialect of Teutonic origin akin to that of the Dutch. All public notices in Belgium are written in both languages. From the ideological standpoint there is bitter rivalry between the two races; the Walloons, like their French neighbours to the south, being largely freethinking and anti-clerical, while the Flemings, who were re-conquered by the Spaniards from the camp of the Reformation in the religious wars of the sixteenth century, are predominantly Catholic in religion and pro-clerical in politics. The evolution of Belgium, both intellectually and politically, was, as McCabe already noted in the last century, marked by a permanent and sometimes violent struggle between the liberal and freethinking Walloons and the conservative and clerical Flemings. The recent riots indicate that such is still the case.

Louvain versus Brussels

While the "Free" University of Brussels is the intellectual headquarters of Belgian Freethought, the clerical re-

action similarly has its headquarters in the famous Catholic University at Louvain not far from Brussels, which university has existed since the Middle Ages. Of course the line of demarcation is not absolute. There are churches, any number of them, in the capital, whilst Freethinkers are not unknown even in Louvain. Indeed Miss Pardon, the veteran dynamic and indefatigable secretary of the World Union, actually resides in Louvain, a feminine Daniel in a den of clerical lions! The "Free" University is a unique institution, which was closed by the Nazis during the war, and which the Belgian clericals would presumably close for ever if they had the power; for it has always been the headquarters of anti-clericalism in practice, and of a Liberal and Positivist philosophy in theory; a bust of the founder of Positivism,

Auguste Comte, adorns the room where the international executive discourses. Among the eminent scholars who have been associated with the Free University may be mentioned Reclus, Henri Pirenne the historian, and, better known to the general public on account of the sensational character of his exploits in sky and sea, Prof. Piccard, of stratosphere and subterranean fame.

European Freethought

The mental outlook, as, also, the major problems of European Freethought, differ widely from those current in the Anglo-Saxon world. The main strength of the national sections represented at Brussels lies in lands which the Roman Catholic Church dominates or is striving to do so. In most of Europe, as, also, in Latin America—and even to an increasing extent in the formerly staunchly Protestant United States—the contemporary counter-reformation of the Church of Rome represents the major preoccupation of Freethinkers. This basic fact determines their current mental attitude, for Catholicism, unlike Protestantism, is totalitarian and cannot be fought solely in the religious sphere and by intellectual arguments. Its present offensive is political and educational, at least as much as religious and theological. This fact necessarily gives to Freethought on the Continent a political character which it does not, at present, possess here; for whilst Freethought movements can—to employ a current political metaphor—practise co-existence with the Protestant Churches, they cannot do so with the totalitarian Vatican. This fact, which is often ignored by Anglo-Saxon Freethinkers, actually makes a great deal of difference between the attitude of Freethought groups here, and their counterparts across the Channel.

European Problems

To step from a meeting of the E.C. of the National Secular Society to one of the International Executive, is to step from one world into another; for the problems which agitate us here do not cut much ice on the Continent. "Bible-banging," the necessary antidote to Biblical Fundamentalism, rouses little interest in Catholic lands where the Holy Book is too holy to be read; where, indeed, the Faith-

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Some Impressions of Europe: Brussels

By F. A. RIDLEY

ful are not at all encouraged to read it. There, too, the Graham circus is not a topic to attract much attention, except, to some extent, in Germany, where Billy recently supplemented American dollars with his spiritual currency! The fundamental problems with which European Free-thinkers are principally concerned are of a more practical character; the political combat with clericalism, which aims, more or less openly, at the domination of the state; and the increasingly urgent question of secular education, as against the increasingly bold attempts of the clergy to infiltrate the state schools, secular by tradition, or else to obtain lavish subsidies from professed secular governments for the support of their own clerically controlled schools. Secondary, but quite important, questions, quite without importance here, are the struggle for the legalization of

cremation, and also the re-admission of the Jesuits, which has recently been effected in Sweden, and is at present a controversial issue in Switzerland. With the example of Spain and Portugal before their eyes, our European colleagues can have no illusions as to the ultimate aim of the Vatican!—the final and total suppression, if not of free thinking as such, at least of organised Freethought.

Amsterdam, 1956

The main business of the Brussels meeting was to arrange for the agenda of the Amsterdam Congress next year. This will be a most elaborate affair, which will embrace the whole problem of the philosophy of Freethought in its relations with the contemporary world. We hope that British Freethought will be strongly represented at Amsterdam next autumn.

Freethinkers and Telepathy

By G. H. TAYLOR

MARGARET KNIGHT'S chapter on Extra-Sensory Perception in the book *Morals Without Religion* has brought the problem of telepathy to the fore again, and in recent months three *Freethinker* contributors, all Materialists, have written on the subject: Colin McCall (Aug. 26), H. Cutner (Sept. 2 and Oct. 14) and A. Yates (Oct. 7).

Mr. McCall pleads for a more critical and hard-headed approach when considering the validity of the experiments of Dr. Rhine (U.S.A.) and Dr. Soal in this country, pointing out that the former was subjected to some devastating criticism by Joseph Rinn, whose challenge he failed to meet, while Soal's probability theory has been called in question. On his "left" is Mr. Yates, who goes further and actually denies, *a priori*, the possibility of telepathy, on the grounds that "the only means by which we can gain any knowledge at all is through our five senses. . . . We may argue, therefore, from the absence of sensory organs other than those we already possess, that telepathy is neither a physical nor mental possibility." To the "right," however, is Mr. Cutner, who asks, "Why should telepathy not be a fact in the evolution of mind? . . . In the course of evolution why should we be surprised if it can transmit and receive messages?" and speculates on the evolution of a new type of mind with telepathic power. He stipulates, of course, that proof of telepathy would leave Materialism untouched. That is, I take it, telepathy would merely demonstrate a new property of matter, a kind of radio from brain to brain, which would not violate physical causation.

Mr. Cutner's theory that telepathy may represent an evolutionary advance is only tenable on the assumption that telepathy is a biological advantage, and therefore has survival value. As against this, Mr. Yates pertinently doubts whether telepathy would in fact be an advantage, and comments, "Would life be worth living if we were constantly subjected to the bombardment of other people's thoughts and feelings? The great works of literature, art and science have had their genesis in the secrecy of individual minds, secure from the intrusion and distraction of alien thought."

It is, I think, equally arguable that telepathy, assuming its reality, represents, not an evolutionary advance, but a throw-back to our animal ancestry, more fitted to the unanimous activities of birds, ants and bees than to our own. If we thus reverse Mr. Cutner's theory, then the possession of telepathic power would be something to be ashamed of rather than proud of. J. B. S. Haldane has remarked (*Possible Worlds*) that if the mind is a system of electromagnetic energy associated with the brain we should expect telepathic phenomena to occur on the analogy of electromagnetic induction. We should also expect them to be unusual, be-

ing eliminated by natural selection, making our comparative mental insulation a special adaptation. In that case we should interpret the apparent ability of birds to transmit their intention to change the direction of their flight in terms of their lower status in evolution. That is, they have not reached the stage of our mental insulation.

If, however, the above is tenable we should have to suppose that telepathy was at some stage in the past an evolutionary advantage. If, then, at some stage in the future it were again to become such, or is at present becoming such, then we are back again with Mr. Cutner's speculation.

Mr. Yates's assertion that the traditional five senses are our only gateways to knowledge is more questionable. Modern physiology recognises some twenty-six receptor elements in the human body. Probably none of them accounts for the reception of telepathic messages, but if the human organism has more handles than five with which to become aware of what is happening outside it, may not further investigation reveal more, and perchance one for telepathy? Can it be—and here I am speculating, perhaps extravagantly—that there lies, at present hidden, in the labyrinthine organ in the internal ear, some terminal which collects "wavular" effects from another brain? The "Berger Rhythm," and later the electroencephalograph, has shown that brain-events can leave their mark *outside the body*. If telepathy is real, therefore, such markings would have to be (a) registered on another person's brain, and (b) condition the awareness of the original thought from the brain of the transmitter to that of the receiver.

To sum up, (1) I would say that we do not yet know enough about properties of matter, and particularly of sense receptors, definitely to rule out telepathy. (2) As McCall says, we should not be too eager to accept "results" without inquiring closely into method. (3) The theory that telepathy is of biological advantage is open to serious doubt. (4) Proof of telepathy would not invalidate Materialism. And (5) I would agree emphatically with Cutner that proof of telepathy would not help the Spiritualists one iota.

ALMS

Alms are a distribution of one's own possessions, or of somebody else's, to the end of perpetuating the pious leisure of priests, monks, and other lazy folk who find it much more agreeable and convenient to pray than to work.—Voltaire.

NEXT WEEK

Rev. J. L. BROOM, M.A.
on CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

Science and Education

By E. G. MACFARLANE

PROFESSOR BRONOWSKI'S speech at the final meeting of the British Association this year has once again forced the question of the relation of science to our existing system of education before the minds of the public. Perhaps now that the impact of scientific discoveries and the urgent need for an education which is capable of preparing men to use them properly are becoming so plainly felt, one may hope for a more realistic response than has ever been the case in the past.

The brutal fact of the situation is that the existing system of education is based upon the truth of a particular set of religious doctrines. This is shown by the fact that the school day begins with a religious service and special periods are set aside by Act of Parliament for the study of the Bible as a sacred book. This authoritarian basis of education is quite incapable of being harmonised with the outlook of the scientist and indeed it is positively inimical to the teaching of science as a viable attitude of mind since there is obviously no need to pursue an investigation of anything if the mind has been already impressed with the "fact" that Christ came to reveal the whole truth about our lives on this earth and that the record of this revelation is contained in a sacred book called the Bible. It is an unavoidable principle of scientific investigation that the findings of a particular piece of investigation should not be laid down before the investigation begins—yet this is what is done by an authoritarian religious code and of course this is why the Bible must be taught as a sacred book. If the Bible were to be regarded as an ordinary product of human thought there would be the possibility of a student coming to some other conclusion than the orthodox conclusion that the Bible is the very "word of God". The authoritarians guard against this possibility by teaching that the Bible is "sacred". Thus the application of science is frustrated at the very outset of every school-day. Science is actually precluded by the religious act of worship every morning.

If we wish to make the scientific attitude an integral part of the education of the man of the future then we cannot be half-hearted about our demand for the exclusion of the teaching of positive religious doctrines in the schools. There can be no compromise on this point. The authoritarian and dogmatic attitude which dominates the present system of education must be replaced by the speculative and empirical attitude of the scientist. In other words religion in the schools must be replaced by the attitude of the freethinker and the pupils must be trained to be speculators and seekers of the truth rather than believers with dormant minds which is the natural outcome of the present system of education.

The change-over required is, of course, no superficial matter. It is a re-orientation of outlook which will require a social revolution in other spheres as well and I wonder whether some of the scientists, who say they desire to see science being made an integral part of our education, really visualise what is involved.

The first thing which we must realise is that educational policy is laid down by political parties since the kind of education which is given in schools of the State is fixed by political action in the first place. Now if the British Labour and Tory Parties had not been dominated by men who accept the authoritarian attitude to life we should not have the present Christian dominated type of education which exists in Britain. Our educational system is a creation of the men in these parties. They made the decision to enforce religious observances as far as possible and they have been able to achieve a remarkable com-

pleteness of success in this. Some gains have, of course, been made by the efforts of a few devoted and fearless freethinkers but generally speaking the authoritarians have had the better of the battle so far. Secularists have inclined to show defeatism when confronted with opportunities of showing that they are opposed to the impertinence of the authoritarians in using public institutions for the spread of their particular doctrines to the exclusion of all others. I feel that much more use may be made in future of the loopholes offered to those who are freethinkers and aim to have real freedom of self-expression made the rule rather than the exception in the State. For the benefit of those who may have hesitated to withhold their children from taking part in religious observances in school so far may I give my own experience here? I have four children and have given instructions as each went to school that they were to be excused religious indoctrination. The oldest boy has now reached the final year of the academy and I asked him the other day whether—looking back on his school-life—he had any cause to regret that I had risked making him feel the odd-man-out by withholding him from the religious aspect of school-life. He answered: "No, on the contrary many boys are jealous of my position and I have heard them say that they wish their parents would adopt the same attitude." I asked my second boy, who is in the third year at the academy, the same question and he told me of a brush he had with his teacher on this subject at the beginning of this term. She had asked him whether he was now old enough to decide for himself whether he wanted to take religious instruction and he said he was. Then, when she asked him for his decision, he told her that he had decided against it. Later, others who had heard the whole exchange between teacher and pupil, told him that if they could have the right to decide for themselves on this question they would decide the same way as he had done. My two girls, who are still at primary school, in addition to having exemption from general religious instruction were recently granted exemption from attending church parades. This received newspaper publicity, as did also a request for exemption from attending the parade to greet the Queen on a recent visit to Dundee. The latter request covered my own case (I am a teacher and as such protested about being used, as a republican, in taking part in a nationalist and monarchist festival) and the case of the children. I have also been excused attendance at ALL religious services in connection with the school. Every morning (and the daily demonstration of non-conformity is important I think) I do not enter the school hall until the religious part of the proceedings are over. About a thousand children see that I do not attend these religious services and many have asked me the reason for it. I have told them that I do not approve of a particular religion being spread by the State school—which should cater fairly for all beliefs in a proper democracy.

With all these facts to show that there is no reason for freethinkers continuing to avoid making use of the freedoms laid down by law in this country, may I urge them to take action along the lines I have indicated so that the overthrow of the authoritarian system of education in this country may be hastened by the publicity which will result, causing the general public to give real thought to the situation. I fully realise, of course, that the ultimate

(concluded on page 340)

This Believing World

As a counterblast to "horror comics" the Bible is going to be produced in "picture strip" form, an American idea, of course. It will be "vetted" by Churchmen so as not to give offence to Episcopalians, Methodists, or—if possible—to the other 352 Christian dominations who swear by the Bible. Our own curiosity is roused by this touching respect Christians have for each other's tender feelings. But all the same we wonder how the stirps are going to depict quite a number of Divine incidents for which the Bible is so famous.

The way in which God Almighty drowned all the little children in the Flood makes a fine subject. Jephthah promising the Lord his own daughter as a human sacrifice is another. Those delightful Plagues of frogs, lice, and flies, and the killing of the firstborn in Egypt, beating a slave to death, burning witches alive, hewing people to pieces, mutilating prisoners of war, consuming human beings with fire from heaven—these, and dozens of other similar pious incidents in the Holy Book, offer fine material for strips for children. We wish the sacred enterprise every success.

But whatever happens, Bible stories must never be debunked. We can these days admit that the famous story of George Washington and the Little Hatchet never happened; that General Wolfe was not reading Gray's *Elegy* on the battlefield before capturing Canada; that Raleigh did not offer his cloak for his Queen to walk over a mass of mud; that Drake was not playing bowls when the Armada was sighted; and so on. But God help you if you do not swallow the story of Elijah going up to Heaven in a fiery chariot, or the way Jesus was carried about by a Devil. It is still Blasphemy to deny *anything* in God's Precious Word.

The news that 1,000 Brazilian convicts with shaven heads and in prison uniforms going to Mass recently is heartening. It proves how the Power of God can soften the criminal no matter what were his crimes. The Cardinal-archbishop of Rio was particularly elated, for all this mass Communion, added to the 42,000 other masses which the International Eucharistic Congress brought into Rio; and helped to give the necessary reverence to the Procession in which 10 Cardinals and 100 Bishops took part. Such is the beautiful Power of the Holy Ghost in a Roman Catholic country and, no doubt, God himself is suitably grateful.

We always pity devout Theists trying to explain the goodness of God when hurricanes and tempests and whirlwinds and floods destroy everything in their path, including hundreds of people. And the worst of it is that times out of number, it is the churches and their devout penitents, much more than pubs and cinemas, which suffer most. Just as one example, Hurricane Janet struck the other day a Barbados church killing ten people taking refuge in what ought to be God's arms. Did the Lord turn away at the crucial moment or what? Come, you reverent and pious Theists—what is your explanation?

Really, the Occult Committee of the Magic Circle must look out. It has been investigating "fraudulent mediums," and such "phenomena" as spirit photography, spooks in haunted houses, levitation, and other marvels; and speaking to the Nottingham Rotary Club recently, the vice-president,

Mr. Douglas Craggs, challenged Spiritualists everywhere to produce a "levitating" medium. He could have equally challenged them to produce a spook or a spirit photograph or an apport. But if he continues in this way, Mr. Craggs will make himself *very* unpopular—with Spiritualists; just as Freethinkers are highly unpopular with Christians because they don't believe in the "miracles" of Christ.

A "local" Churchman writing in a Leicester newspaper wants to know what the Churches really think of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? The operative word here is "really." We have an idea that most of the *intellectuals* in the Church wish to Heaven that Christ had never made such a ridiculous promise. They know perfectly well that not one Christian in a million cares a brass farthing about the Second Advent. Very few of them want to be one of the lucky 144,000 wafted by Christ to sit in his Many Mansions "up there," listening to Peter and Paul squabbling for eternity. They much prefer to be here with their radio, T.V., and football pools. And they are right.

"IMMORTALITY"

For me to have made one soul
The better for my birth,
To have added but one flower
To the garden of the earth,

To have struck one blow for truth,
In the daily fight with lies,
To have done one deed of right,
In the face of calumnies,

To have sown in the minds of men,
One thought that will not die,
To have been a link in the chain of Life,
Shall be Immortality.

(ANON.)

(A favourite poem of the late Mrs. Ratcliffe and read at her cremation.—Ed.)

MISSIONARIES

Speaking of churches, brings me to the subject of missionaries. Is it necessary to tell my Freethinking friends that here, as all over the world, the missionary is a fraud? As teachers or doctors they sometimes do good, but such cases are extremely rare. And even when such cases occur, I consider their place would be better filled by one properly trained to either profession. The ordinary representative of the dissenting sects who comes out here disgusts his logical Hindu hearers by his dogmatisms, and they soon learn to pass him by without further notice than an amused smile. He comes out from the missionary manufactory stored with idiomatic and grammatical Urdu called from "Dr. Forbes' Manual," or a similar work, and finds to his dismay that in very few parts of India is he understood; indeed, he may be sent to a district where they have a patois of their own. For the languages of India are legion.

From A HINDU.

SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

(concluded from page 339)

overthrow of nationalist and authoritarian education can only come at the hands of a political party which is dedicated to world parliamentary ideals based on a theory of state which is overtly neutral to all positive beliefs before we can put science in its proper place in our system of education. In other words we need a humanist movement towards world integration on a basis of free thought if science is to become the servant of us all and not the tool of some tyrannous individual or group.

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.

CORRECTION. Mr. C. S. Lewis, the Christian apologist, has not, as we said in a previous issue, joined the R.C. Church. Apologies to Mr. Lewis—and congratulations; His book, *Surprise by Joy*, actually describes his conversion to High Anglicanism.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: MESSRS. DAY, WHARRAD, NEWTON, SHEPPARD and MURPHY.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1.0 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Every Sunday: 8.0 p.m.: MESSRS. MCCALL, MILLS and others.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday and Sunday at 8 p.m. MESSRS. PARRY, THOMPSON, and other speakers.

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

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

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. ARTHUR, EBURY and WOOD. *The Freethinker* on sale at Marble Arch.

INDOOR

Bradford N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, October 30, 6.45 p.m.: ROY SEAR. "The Treatment of Jewish People and Minorities."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Tuesday, November 1, 7 p.m.: L. ZUTSHI, B.Sc., "Asia's Role in World Development."

Friday Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Friday, November 4, 7.30 p.m.: R. BENJAMIN, "Morals Without Religion," "Mrs. M. Knight's Approach."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 30, 6.30 p.m.: A Debate on Materialism—For, F. J. CORINA; Against, F. W. WATSON.

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (64 George Street, Manchester).—Saturday, October 29, 3 p.m.: D. GARSIDE, B.A., "Do We Believe in Democracy?"

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Millgate Hotel, Long Millgate).—Sunday, October 30, 7 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, "The Freethought Parties and the Future."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, October 30, 2.30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Social Origins of Christianity."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, October 30, 11 a.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, M.A., "Personality in the Television Age."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, October 30, 7.15 p.m.: E. S. HILMAN, "The Jewish Idea of the Messiah."

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre).—Thursday, October 27, 8 p.m.: Open Meeting.

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £967 17s. 4d.; C. E. Ratcliffe, £35; A. Hancock, 1s.; U.S., 5s. Total to date: £1,003 3s. 4d.

Notes and News

TO make sure that the Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund reaches £1,000 this year, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe has contributed £35. It was the wish of the Organizers of the Appeal to reach £1,000 by the end of the year and they highly appreciate Mr. Ratcliffe's generous donation. Following many requests not to close the Fund for the moment, we hope his example will spur on other admirers of Chapman Cohen further to swell the Fund.

Having received some lukewarm praise from a reviewer in the *Bolton Evening News*, Mrs. Knight's book, *Morals Without Religion*, became the centre of a controversy in that paper in early October. Again, we are glad to note, Bolton freethinkers held their own and had some good letters published.

The West Ham Branch, N.S.S., is beginning its winter session with an Open Meeting on October 27, at 8 p.m. As always, its meetings take place at the Wanstead Community Centre and we hope the Branch members will give them every support. Mr. Warner, the Secretary, is anxious to make the meetings a success and with the help of members and their friends will no doubt do so. Please note that all meetings take place on the fourth Thursday of the month.

LECTURE REPORT

On Sunday, October 9, Mr. F. A. Ridley, President of the N.S.S., spoke to the Glasgow Branch on "The Three Impostors: Moses, Jesus and Mohammed." The Chair was taken, with his customary efficiency, by Mr. J. Barrowman, Hon. Secretary of the Branch, before a full meeting.

Introducing the speaker the chairman remarked that there were modern impostors who could have been discussed before a Glasgow audience, such as Billy Graham, the British Labour Party and the Monarchy. However, as the lecturer was speaking under the auspices of the Glasgow Secular Society, he had elected to deal with comparative religion.

The lecturer claimed no personal originality for the title of his lecture. It was taken from a heretical book supposed to have been written in the Middle Ages, known as "The Three Impostors." The three main forms of religion in the Western World claimed to have been founded respectively by Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed. The lecturer added that he did not regard either Jesus or Moses as impostors: it was very doubtful whether either of them ever existed. Muhammed seemed to have been an historical character, but we have no means of discovering what was his precise mental attitude. Mr. Ridley briefly traced the conclusions of modern criticism in respect of these three personalities. He emphasised that the Mosaic law presupposed social conditions much later than the time of Moses and that the accounts given of Christ in the New Testament were too much at variance to have represented an historical Jesus. Muhammed probably was an historical figure but there is nothing original in the Muslim creed which is a combination of Judaism and of primitive pagan relics, such as the famous "black stone" in Mecca worshipped by the pagan tribes of Arabia, but declared by Sir Richard Burton, the explorer and Orientalist, to be originally a meteorite. "These three historical creeds," concluded Mr. Ridley, "represented the last strongholds of Theism and are now in danger of destruction by the rapid expansion of the knowledge of comparative religion leading to atheistic conclusions."

The scholarly lecture was sprinkled with humour and an interesting meeting concluded with his replies to a number of questions and points raised in discussion.

Just How Good Was That Billy Graham Crusade?

MORE WENT TO CHURCH—FOR A FEW WEEKS

(reprinted by permission of the *Daily Record*)

THE biggest question that arose out of the Billy Graham controversy—just how much good did the Tell Scotland crusade do for the churches of Scotland—is answered to-day.

Dr. John Highet, lecturer in sociology at Glasgow University, reveals that on the three successive Sundays following the end of the Billy Graham campaign the average attendance at church was up nearly 19 per cent. compared with a year earlier.

The actual increase was 10,575, or 18.7 per cent. on what it had been when Dr. Highet carried out a similar census a year earlier.

Missing Thousands

The 1955 census covered seven religious denominations because the Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow, "for his own good reasons," says Dr. Highet, refused to be associated with it, although the Catholics had been associated with the census in 1954.

Dr. Highet emphasises, therefore, that the church-going figures refer only to the seven non-Catholic denominations in the period following Dr. Graham's campaign.

He also points out that, despite the increase, two-thirds of the church members in these seven denominations were still not turning out regularly to public worship.

This year's census followed immediately after the close of the crusade at Hampden Park, and on three successive Sundays (May 1, 8 and 15) an average of 67,078 adults attended the main religious service held in the 329 churches of the seven denominations.

This represents a third of their Glasgow membership and less than one-tenth of the city's adult population.

The 1954 figures showed a total attendance of 56,503, which was 28 per cent. of their membership and only 7.6 per cent. of Glasgow's adult population.

The figures for each successive Sunday in 1955 were: May 1, total attendance 72,079 adults; May 8, total attendance 67,534 adults; May 15, total attendance 61,620 adults.

Biggest Increase

The Baptist and United Free Churches showed the highest relative increase—32.1 per cent. up on 1954—and the Free Church the smallest at 11.9 per cent.

The Church of Scotland attendance was up by 17.3 per cent.

During this year's census the Baptist Union and the Free Church had 62.9 per cent. of their membership turning out to Sunday worship.

The Church of Scotland was the lowest, with 31 per cent. The other figures were: Methodist 46.4 per cent., Congregational Union 43.7, United Free Church 36.6, and Episcopal Church 34.6.

Dr. Highet stresses that his 1955 census had no connection with the "Tell Scotland" movement of the Billy Graham organisation. It was made in connection with the University's Survey of Glasgow for the Third Statistical Account of Scotland.

Now the Credit

Dr. Highet's conclusion:

The Billy Graham campaign has not been the sole factor in the increased attendances (the Scottish churches have been engaged in extensive missionary work during the past two years), but it has been the chief factor.

The increase has been due to more regular attendance by church members themselves rather than to the acquisition of new members.

It is abundantly clear that, even by the close of the census (i.e., after three weeks), there had been a marked drop in attendance from the peak registered on the Sunday immediately after the Crusade ended.

THE HIGH COST OF SOUTHERN SALAMI

By CLIFF HANLEY

BILLY GRAHAM, in what sounded like an apology for the £47,000 budget for the Scottish Crusade, said that if one soul was saved the money would be well spent.

A saved soul is fortunately impossible to define in ordinary terms, but the cost per soul certainly seems high.

The more I consider the Graham campaign the less I like it. It isn't hard to whip people into a theatrical frenzy of righteousness at a mass rally with saccharine organ music and 1,000 voice choir.

Our industrial civilisation has left a gap in man's emotional life, and created a hunger for emotional purges. Deliberately or otherwise, Billy Graham offered an emotional purge.

This, I suggest, explains the sudden increase in church attendance immediately after the Crusade. But an emotional orgy as a spiritual diet, is lacking in nutritional value.

And this fact explains the sharp falling-off in church attendance even within a fortnight.

Billy Graham sold a rosy, easy salvation on the basis of theological claptrap backed up by a spell-binding personality.

A sudden access of spiritual euphoria will fill churches—while it lasts.

But spiritual salvation is reserved for the man who is ready to wrestle constantly, in agony if necessary, with the devils of every day life, and find the truth in his own heart, inside a church or outside, and without the benefit of Billy Graham's southern-fried salami.

(Reprinted from the *Daily Record*, September 23, 1955.)

THE WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

(concluded from page 335)

In France and in Belgium the question of Church schools and of State schools has given rise to political crisis of the first magnitude, and the Committee formally passed a resolution of congratulation and encouragement to the present Belgian Government on the strong stand it had taken up in this matter.

In Soviet Russia the Orthodox was now a tool of the State and there was much to indicate that considerable international political activity was now being engineered by means of it.

In Sweden the despotic authority of the Lutheran Church ended and it was now possible for Freethinkers to leave the Church, but at the same time the ban on the Jesuits had been terminated, and the Society of Jesus was taking full advantage of the event. On the other hand the Norwegian government maintains the ban. It is to be noted moreover that in many countries regarded as Protestant the Catholic claim a rapidly increasing proportion of the population; this is particularly so in Holland and in the United States, where there are now 4 Cardinal Archbishops, 170 bishops and nearly 47,000 priests as well as 158,069 nuns or other religious. M. Cotereau pointed out that France should be celebrating shortly the Separation of Church and State,

which had been the occasion of one of the most largely attended international freethought congresses on record in 1905, in which the main event was a procession to the statue of the Chevalier de la Barre (a lad beheaded for, it was said, being irreverent at a church procession) in which at least 100,000 people took part (this was the lowest figure, some put it as high as 200,000). However, not a word yet had been said of a public celebration. And what, in fact, is there to celebrate; France is worse off than in 1904; papal and clerical influences are now stronger than then.

The Dutch Federation enquired whether Freethinkers in other countries would be prepared to receive Dutch children in exchange during the holidays. (If any reader is, please let me know.)

The feasibility of establishing an international press bureau was next discussed at some length; but as finances are not available for such a venture it can only be accomplished on a small scale by volunteers.

Finally the following provisional programme was drawn up for the International Freethought Congress to take place next year (1956) at Amsterdam;

Subject: Freethought's Message to Mankind

- Sessions (1) Freethought opposed to dogmas, to religions and churches; speakers: Ridley and Gremling.
 (2) Freethought as a challenge to the present world spiritual crisis; Noordenbos and Cotereau.
 (3) Freethought in relation to the modern technical revolution; Dr. Wenzel and Lorulot.

The appointed speakers are requested to limit their discourses to 30 minutes; those who wish to take part in the discussions should give in their names to the secretary beforehand and the chairman will take them in order; the time allowed them will be decided by the chairman at the session, but will not exceed 15 minutes.

Place: Amsterdam. Dates: Friday, August 31st to Monday, September 3rd; five full sessions, Saturday evening; Celebration of the Centenary of the Dutch association "De Dageraad" (The Dawn); Sunday afternoon, tour of Amsterdam by canal; Tuesday, September 4th, motor coach tour.

Readers who think of coming to the Congress should note that the old Amsterdam is highly picturesque; that there are many interesting buildings and the famous collection of pictures in the Rkys museum and that the surrounding country has its peculiar charm, made up of windmills, canals, old houses, cows and stretches of flower gardens. Application for Congress membership should be made at Easter or soon after.

The Passing Show

By J. GORDON

ACCORDING to Canon Collins, Precentor of St. Paul's Cathedral, hanging is against Christ's teaching. Since one would be hard pressed to find any saying by Jesus expressly condemning the gallows, one must judge from his general attitude in order to estimate his probable reaction to the death penalty. It was Jesus who said "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life"—surely the most bombastic and egotistical utterance ever made. And since this same Jesus condemned to Hell all who are unable to accept either his Way, his Truth or his Life, it does not appear that this great "I am" would have allowed a small matter like hanging to stand in his way.

* * * * *

Whatever one might say against Christians, no-one can accuse them of not holding a higher opinion of themselves than of others. While lamenting their state of being poor miserable sinners when asking their God for the grace to live

in humility and repentance, their attitude towards others frequently displays a mixture of impudence and intolerance. For instance, at the annual meeting of the British Association the Bishop of Bristol, Dr. Cockin, assured the scientists present that they would have to cultivate and preserve humility in their work. "They would have to remember that they were created things, and that their place in the scheme of things was a relatively lowly one." As the Bishop appears to be on intimate terms with the Almighty, and has apparently had from him a briefing on the relative status of each and every one of us, it would appear that God does not hold a very exalted opinion of his scientists. Dr. Cockin went on, "It is fair to ask scientists (or any other person for that matter) whether the temper in which they were conducting their researches was consistent with their status." It is to be hoped the scientists appreciated the delightfully pontifical and totalitarian flavour of this pronouncement. Meanwhile one might echo Burn's exclamation: "May the Lord gie us a guid conceit o' oorselves!"

* * * * *

A leading article in the September *Monthly Record*, the magazine of the Free Church of Scotland, criticises the Duke of Edinburgh for playing polo on the Sabbath, watched by the Queen and other members of the royal family. The article expresses "pained regret," and says, "We genuinely believe that the Royal Family have in this respect done a grave disservice to the nation," and concludes, "The Throne stands as long as it is surrounded, not by the empty plaudits of those who frequent the cricket and polo fields, but by the loyalty and affection of those who give heed to the divine injunction, 'Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the King.'"

* * * * *

One can only hope the Duke and the Queen have been duly impressed. Of all the calamities which could befall the British Throne to-day, undoubtedly the most awful be to incur the displeasure of that repository of the salt of the earth, the Free Church of Scotland.

Correspondence

MORALITY

After hearing Margaret Knight's lecture at the Conway Hall, I thought that even though we reject the idea that supernatural sanctions and authority govern it, our behaviour is none the less dictated by the authority of public opinion.

Even if mankind the world over were to shed belief in supernatural authority, there still remains the different existing situations, the economic factors, which preclude normality in behaviour.

Mrs. Knight's reference to apes and chimpanzees, as examples of co-operation and mutual aid is true insofar as social equality goes.* It is even safe to assert that human beings will behave kindly, sociably, etc., while we assume (rather smugly, I think) that our economic and social relationships are alike.

Kindness is meaningless as a virtue unless there is someone to be kind to.

Generosity is meaningless unless there is someone situated unequally to us.

Forgiveness is meaningless unless someone exists who is able to wrong us.

Truly must the "sinner" exist for the virtuous! Religion has to depend on the "other fellow" being "bad" in order to exist.

But even were religious belief abolished, would not the new code of morality—which is only what the majority think—be as authoritarian and dogmatic?

While the division of society into classes and economic groups exists, while competitiveness and social inequality lasts, there can be no normalcy for human behaviour. Thus if our behaviour is such that it does not conform to current behaviour, we stand condemned by the religious and irreligious alike!

Psychologically we know too little of the real reasons for human behaviour to sit in judgment on our fellow humans. But if we are

Freethinkers as we claim, we should be prepared to question the underlying reasons, the economic factors, which are a basis for so much of the anti-social behaviour which permeates society.

Religion will die out when morality conquers it, the kind of morality which organised Freethinkers and Rationalists, organised into a body with a high standard of integrity, recognise themselves as purposeful instruments in the Universe—not in a religious sense—but with a conviction to make it possible for all men and women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort by their own industry, without having to barter their independence, sell their affections, or prostitute their talents in order to live.

There are many institutions in our acquisitive society which need the penetrative light of Freethought. How many Freethinkers, for instance, cheerfully assume that Law has something to do with justice? Or that it is "natural" for a majority to toil in order to maintain, besides themselves, an idle minority?

GEORGE HILBINGER.

[* There is no social equality among apes. They have their bosses and semi-bosses and even unions!—Ed.]

50 YEARS A READER

I note on p.301 a reference to an old reader in Kent. You might be interested to know I have been reading *The Freethinker* since 1905. I was married on August 13, 1895, and we had a little family party to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee.

An early reader of the *Clarion*, I was struck and shaken out of orthodoxy (Episcopal Church) by Blatchford's articles, and later his *God and My Neighbour*, accepting the Evolution theory and becoming an atheist.

R. J. HALE.

THE STARS OF AFTERTHOUGHT

I agree, F.C.C. When mother makes apple pie she remembers the toddlers, and out of the bits and pieces left over "she makes Currant Man also," as "God made the stars also." But the unconscious humorist of Genesis was doubtless catering, as is mother with her currant man, for the little ones.

MOLLY ROCHE.

DETERMINISM AND FATALISM

If Mr. Gratorex visits London I suggest to him that he might pay a visit to the Library of the British Museum and consult Mr. A. G. Trent's book, *The Soul and the Stars*.

It expounds a system of astrology in which the human will and environment act as modifying factors to the influence of the stars, as such it is deterministic, and not fatalistic.

With regard to my article on astronomy, I concluded by indicating that some astronomers now believe that we shall soon know definitely why the universe has evolved as it actually has; the contested word, why, being obviously employed in a physical, and not in a metaphysical sense, as I should have thought, was obvious.

There is surely nothing metaphysical in saying that you know why the earth goes round the sun.

F. A. RIDLEY.

TOTALITARIANISM

On p.407 (1954) Mr. H. Cutner specifically referred to me as a "Totalitarian." On p.318 (1955) he refers to a Totalitarian who wrote that "religious and anti-religious views are accorded unimpeded propagation in the U.S.S.R." To avoid possible error, will readers please note:

(a) The Totalitarian who wrote the opinion quoted above was not I; (b) I am not a Totalitarian; (c) I am not, and never have been, a Communist, and (d) In the Second World War I volunteered and served as a fighter pilot in order to fight totalitarianism.

W. AULD.

[Mr. Auld was not the individual referred to.—Ed.]

THE SADISM IN CHRISTIANITY

A Sadist is one who obtains enjoyment from inflicting pain on others, or from witnessing such infliction. Listen to two eminent and revered theologians of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church:

Peter Abelard (1079-1142): "The elect will go forth to see the torments of the impious, and seeing this they will not be affected with grief, but will be satiated with joy at the sight of the unutterable calamity of the impious."

St. Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274): "That the saints may enjoy their beatitude more thoroughly, and give more abundant thanks for it to God, a perfect view of the punishment of the damned is given them."

In order to hear or read such sentiments without a feeling of

nausea, one would have to be either insanely enthusiastic for the cause of Christ, or else insensitive to the point of imbecility.

Yet the pious dupes who finance missionary ventures to the lands of the "benighted heathen" still chatter their glib nonsense about the "civilising influence" of Christianity! S. W. BROOKS.

FREEDOM AND/OR EQUALITY

Major C. Draper (16/9), requested quotes to back my statement that there were politicians who approve of unemployment. Sir Graham Cunningham wrote: "The only effective sanction to procure discipline, stabilise wages and improve efficiency is the fear of unemployment." And Walter Higgs (ex-M.P. of Birmingham) said: "Before the world gets back to normal we must have eleven people wanting ten jobs."

Major Draper also asked whether I prefer freedom or equality—I answer "both." In any society where one class is subordinate to another, all cannot be free. Nor are they equal, for the chief inequality is not between how much two people earn but between those who own property and those who own none. (It is a qualitative rather than quantitative difference.) In a class-less society there is no separate ruling class. The people rule themselves, and because private ownership and profit are no longer features of industry, money will lose its significance and in time become quite unnecessary.

EDWIN G. H. CROUCH.

WAS JESUS "IDOLISED"?

Mr. Du Cann—who is always boosting up Jesus—tells us in his latest article, "Carrot and Stick," that Billy Graham "is a success. For he is idolised by the crowds, unlike Jesus. . . ." But surely, "the common people heard Jesus gladly" is one of the boasts of Christians and, according to the Gospels, Jesus could always depend on a crowded audience. The whole point of the Christian story is that Jesus was such a huge success that "the Jews" decided to kill Him. Some of the denigrators of Billy Graham are in fact acting just as "the Jews" are supposed to have acted towards Jesus. J.R.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE REPORT

Wednesday, October 19

The President in the Chair and Mr. Johnson acting as Secretary. Present: Messrs. Ebury, Tiley, Draper, Corstophine, Arthur, Cleaver, Barker, Gordon, Hornibrook, Griffiths and Taylor.

Correspondence from Manchester, Fyzabad (W. Indies) and Johannesburg was dealt with.

Mr. Ridley reported on the International Executive meeting of the World Union of Freethinkers, recently held at Brussels.

The important question of the appointment of a General Secretary was considered in the light of replies to the Society's advertisement. The Treasurer read a letter of application from Mr. McCall for the post. Members expressed pleasure at this application. Mr. Taylor then moved, and Major Draper seconded that Mr. Colin McCall be appointed to the position of General Secretary of the N.S.S. Carried unanimously.

Arrangements for the conference of delegates were deferred to the next E.C. meeting to be held on November 16. G.H.T.

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