

The Freethinker

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SIR ARNOLD LUNN is one of the most belligerent of the 20th century converts to Catholicism. It is clear he regards himself as a great infidel slayer and it is true that one of his opponents, the late C.E.M. Joad, had shortly before his death so far conceded victory to Sir Arnold as to be received into the Church of England. But Joad, as can be seen from studying such early works of his as *Matter, Life and Value*, had always been a potential believer and when confronted with thoroughgoing anti-Catholics such as J.B.S. Haldane or Dr. C. G. Coulton, Lunn's showing was much less impressive. The book, *Now I See*, was published in 1933, the year of Lunn's final surrender to Catholicism. The opening chapters make fascinating reading for all interested in the psychology of conversion.

Like all of his kind, Lunn was never a complete unbeliever. Indeed, his father was a Methodist lay preacher and his mother the daughter of a canon and extremely sympathetic to Irish Catholicism. Lunn is very fond of asserting that the claims of reason alone forced him, almost against his will, into the Church. But it is obvious from *Now I See* that his whole background and upbringing, combined with his essentially credulous nature, made his conversion almost inevitable. The wonder is not that he became a Catholic, but that he took so long to make up his mind finally for Rome.

I shall now examine Lunn's principal arguments for Catholicism as expounded in *Now I See*.

First there is his rejection of the materialist explanation of life. In the whole book there is not the slightest attempt to meet the powerful arguments of materialism as set forth for example in the pages of d'Holbach or Büchner. Indeed there is no evidence that Lunn has read a line of these writers. What then, led him to decide against materialism? Well, it seems he was once climbing in the Bernese Oberland and was struck by the surpassing beauty of the surrounding scene. Then he solemnly writes. "I thought of Haeckel's dusty nonsense and laughed aloud. And from that moment I discarded materialism for ever." Yet he elsewhere claims that his case rests on rational foundations! The above "dusty nonsense" is a typical example of Lunn's apologetics. It is surely glaringly obvious that a man who seriously considers that the existence of a sense of beauty or "an appreciation of values" refutes causal determination in nature, which is the essence of materialism, has not the slightest understanding of that philosophy.

Having so cavalierly deposed of materialism Lunn proceeds to offer his proofs of the existence of God. He of course accepts the five arguments of the angelic doctor Thomas Aquinas though he has to admit that numbers one to three based on the necessity of a first cause are to all intents and purposes identical; that number four he cannot understand and that number five is in effect the hoary old argument from design. Here again, Lunn seems quite unaware of the weighty and conclusive counter-arguments

which have been advanced throughout the ages against the famous proofs of Aquinas. Kant's demonstration of the logical impossibility of a "first cause" (since cause and effect together make up the totality of experience we call nature, it is nonsense to argue that this very totality is the effect of a cause beyond itself) as well as Cohen's excellent supplementary point that cause and effect are not two separate entities but two aspects of the same phenomenon, Lunn apparently knows nothing about. Instead, he blithely talks about the "origin of the universe" as if this were a conceivable proposition. It would be interesting to hear him explain how there could be "a time" before time began! He of course "goes to town" on the design argument, quoting with approval from Sir James Jeans, whom even

theists now admit to have been a good scientist but a very poor philosopher. "From the evidence of design in the telescope," says Lunn echoing Paley, "we infer a human designer. From the evidence of design in the eye we infer a superhuman designer." But as has been pointed out *ad nauseam* from critics of the design argument from Kant to Mallock, this comparison, whether it involves watches or telescopes, is quite fallacious. In order to infer design we must have knowledge of purpose and motive which is simply lacking in the case of universe-makers. The design argument, moreover, assumes what it sets out to prove. Order is the very condition of existence—a physical platitude, as Mallock put it, and not a divine miracle. But one suspects that such reasoning is too subtle for such as Lunn.

To the objection that, even admitting design, the designer must be a bungler and indeed a fiend of the first order, Lunn calmly replies that "God does not learn from his mistakes because he makes no mistakes from which to learn. The apparent failures of the evolutionary process are evidence of the imperfection which is a characteristic of the world process." Where this "imperfection" originates if not from God he does not deign to explain. He goes on to assert that it is struggle that gives interest to existence and that advances in the brute creation are the reward for taking risks. One may be pardoned for doubting if the mouse in the clutches of the owl or the zebra attacked by the lion would appreciate that their sufferings are justified because they bring colour into life. The struggles of a child with meningitis may be of professional interest to the surgeons but they will not consider that the torture is thereby justified.

"The emergence of life from lifeless matter," writes Lunn, summing up this chapter on God's existence, "necessarily involves the kind of process which may roughly be described as a miracle." So also may the emergence of water from hydrogen and oxygen, so it seems that Lunn believes in some divine "Principle of Aqosity."

Lunn on morality should be compulsory reading for all

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Defective Vision

A Critical Study of "Now I See"

By ARNOLD LUNN

By Rev. JOHN L. BROOM, M.A.

wavering Christians, for he unwittingly succeeds in showing how immoral the religious, and specifically Christian, view of ethics is. "The humanist," he states, "avoids certain actions not because they injure other people," and he goes on to point out that if King David had been a humanist he would have felt miserable at having put Uriah in the forefront of the battle not because he had sinned against Jehovah but because he had sinned against Uriah. The extraordinary thing is that Lunn attacks the humanist for this very proper and sensible viewpoint. It seems that Lunn regards an action as wrong only because God condemns it. This means that goodness is merely a whim of the Almighty's—an action which brought suffering to thousands of innocents would be ethically justified if God approved of it. It is clear that Lunn cannot regard God himself as good because to judge him so would mean setting up a standard of values apart from the will of God himself. It must be admitted, of course, that Lunn's ethical standpoint is the logical one for a theist to adopt, but it is rarely stated so frankly. It follows that the problem of how a righteous God can permit

(To be concluded)

The Rationalist and Television

By R. READER

DURING the last five years a new enemy of rational thought has appeared, more formidable by far than a Roman Catholic. Rationalists everywhere will do well to ponder seriously its present significance and possible future effects. Television is a typical product of this unscientific age: indeed, it may be said to be the epitome of human irrationalism.

This monstrous invention, then, was launched upon these islands at a time when fuel shortages were seriously embarrassing many electricity stations. By reason of its expense and special aerial, it had enormous snob-appeal. Too late its enthusiasts discovered that three hours' indulgence, even with the saving of the light, was penny wise and pound foolish. The fuel stocks of electricity stations started to fall, and the incomes of the component dealers to rise.

But we must not be too hasty to accuse the technicians of oversights. A doctor who accidentally kills his patient may, aided by his colleagues, succeed in covering up his mistake. But the electrical and mechanical engineer who makes an error of calculation has no such good fortune. The bridge collapses, and his colleagues vie with one another to proclaim the details of his error from the housetops. The likelihood of such technical oversights occurring is, therefore, very small.

We must, therefore, conclude that the television engineers continued to develop their science, although fully aware that television possesses inherent technical drawbacks which can never be overcome, and which make it an uneconomical venture. Why?

To say that it was done through scientific curiosity is an altogether inadequate explanation. The truth is that they were working under orders. A consideration of the nature of their invention makes this perfectly plain.

Before the advent of television, those who wished to stop people thinking one thing and make them think another found themselves in the following dilemma:—The best way to stop people thinking the wrong thoughts is to see that they have no chance of reposing their minds. This can most conveniently be done by noise and clamour. Hence the braying loudspeaker of the multiple stores to drive out thrift and provoke willy-nilly buying.

The would-be sculptors of men's minds are unable to sub-

stitute their own wishes for those they have driven out. He does, however, admit that there was a time when he revolted against the doctrine of eternal torment. But then he realised that "people must not lay down in advance standards of behaviour to which they expect God to conform," and he goes on to attack Joad for rejecting Christianity because he disapproved of a Deity who tolerates pain and evil. In other words, God can indulge freely in murder on the widest scale (as in fact he is represented as doing in Scripture), but man must not disapprove, for that would mean "laying down standards to which God must conform"! However, one suspects that, like most Catholics, Lunn's conduct is better than his creed. Logically, on his premises a man would be justified in committing every crime in the calendar on the grounds that he was only following God's example. But it is probable that Lunn would refrain from torturing a child of his own even if it were incorrigibly wicked. The benevolent impulses of Lunn the humanist which he professes so to despise would conquer the depraved logic of Lunn the Catholic.

stitute their own wishes for those they have driven out.

One can, of course, proceed in the opposite manner by procuring a state of repose for the subject and then attempting to inject him with the right point of view. But this, again, is a double-edged tool. Some people sitting quietly alone are amenable to suggestion, yes, but others have a deplorable tendency to start thinking for themselves—and, moreover, thinking along the wrong lines.

Television has brilliantly combined the advantages of both methods, at the same time eliminating their drawbacks.

One sits in a darkened room, eyes fixed on the screen. There is nothing to distract the attention and the unnatural fixation of the gaze and almost complete immobility of the body induces passivity and receptivity of the mind. But, at the same time, one cannot let one's attention wander from the thoughts evoked by the images, otherwise one becomes conscious of nothing but surrounding blackness. It is not like the radio which can be listened to whilst doing something else in another room.

It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that a hundred thousand people, at any given moment, may be thinking identical thoughts, induced by a programme that is, perhaps, the expression of a single individual. It is not quite mass telepathy, but something very like it. The submission of one's thoughts to this inflexible guidance and control produces lamentable effects. Children who were formerly actively intelligent at school have, since their parents purchased a television set, become dull and below-average.

The set can be turned off, it will be objected. Yes, but a combination of circumstances makes this very unlikely. A television set is expensive, and people dislike feeling that they are not getting their money's worth. Again, the special aerial sets a kind of outward hallmark of wealth on a dwelling, but not to have seen last night's programme lays one open to suspicions of not having the set. And so the novelty becomes a practice, the practice a habit, and the habit a narcotic. All thought vanishes into thin air and leaves not a wrack behind.

At the present moment, of course, television is being used for innocent purposes. But enough has been said, it is hoped, to put Rationalists on their guard against its enormous potentialities for controlling men's minds. One can imagine a world broadcast of Catholic propaganda, and the effect it would have. Few, indeed, would resist the contamination.

Home Rule and Rome Rule

By F. A. RIDLEY

IRELAND, than a British colony, represented one of the storm-centres of the 19th century world; the savagely heroic deeds of such Irish "Resistance Movements" as the Fenians and the "Boycotters," made as much stir as the very similar deeds of *Mau-Mau* today and, *Mutatis Mutandis*, had very similar economic causes. However, whilst *mau-mau* is supposed to be a pagan witchcraft cult, the Irish equivalents of *mau-mau* were pious Catholics, whose church, whilst condemning their conspiratorial activities in *word*, has ended by profiting immensely from them in *deed*. For, as Ingersoll predicted at the time, "Home Rule" for Ireland would, in fact, soon become "Rome Rule," a prediction which has actually turned out to be much more correct than, say, the *obiter dicta* of the Old and New Testaments.

In 1922 after a civil war in which heroism and savagery were combined in about equal proportions, Eire, "Southern Ireland," acquired political independence, and subsequently became a Republic outside the British Commonwealth. But the historic connection of the Irish people with Imperialism did not end with the proclamation of the Irish Republic; Eire only receded from one Empire to another; from the British Empire to the Roman Empire. For, as Ingersoll had correctly forecast, "Home Rule" meant "Rome Rule"! The Catholic church, which had sat on the fence during the course of the national struggle, soon came to occupy a dominant position in the new state, as was pointed out, recently in this journal, the "Isle of Saints and Scholars," is now the most obedient province in the Vatican's vast empire, unless, perhaps, the Argentine, having got rid of the "atheist" Peron, now qualifies for that nadir of degradation.

Ireland is now the obedient subject of the oldest and most exclusive totalitarianism on earth; the only one that functions on both sides of the grave! Ireland, thanks to clerical control, has totalitarian politics; we have seen a popular Minister of Health driven from office when the Irish Hierarchy cracked its whip. It has totalitarian literature, subject to an *Index of Prohibited Books*, in which the literary value of books is decided ultimately by their conformity with Vatican religious dogma. But it has been reserved for the month of October in the year of grace, 1955, to witness the farthest extension of clerical control into secular life; "Total" sport! Totalitarian Football!

On, we seem to remember, October the 15th, a visiting football team from Yugo-Slavia was due to play Ireland in Dublin. Football has long since acquired its diplomatic passport and passes all frontiers without difficulty. Nor is the now not-so-Iron Curtain any barrier. English teams from the "capitalist" West have visited Moscow, the Communist "Mecca" several times in recent months, and *vice-versa*. The same also applies to Hungary, Bulgaria, and to other "red" satellites. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that Yugo-Slavia, Ireland's visitor on this occasion, has had very chequered relations with Moscow in the past, and is now for all intents and purposes, a kind of "buffer state" between the Eastern and Western blocs. However, Tito's special brand of "national communism" apparently conforms with the Vatican's idea of "atheistic communism." So it was unthinkable that good Catholic footballers should play with the same ball as atheists; the Irish hierarchy intervened; the Maynooth theologians declared the match off; the Archbishop of Dublin, in whose diocese the match was to have been played, blew his whistle, and ordered the Irish Football Association to call the match off.

The clerical intervention failed, and the match took place.

It failed, it is true, only by a narrow margin, sufficient, we fear, to induce the Archbishop to try again in the future. For, instead of telling his grace that he was, so to speak, quite "off-side" in the propriety of his intervention; the Football Association apologised profusely, and expressly declared that, had they known earlier what the clerical reactions would be, the match would never have been accepted—an ill omen for the Future? Now, they know! Moreover, the official accessories were lacking; President Kelly cancelled his visit; and the Army Band cancelled its contract. Still, the match went on, and the "atheists" won! Is the revolt against the clerical despotism beginning, not as hitherto, in the study, but on the football field? If so, it looks no good at all to clerical pretensions. For sport is an International on its own, with adherents in all lands; we would not be surprised if the too zealous Archbishop gets his knuckles rapt over the Vatican telephone; one must not ride the willing donkey too hard!

An Irish correspondent, for there *are* Freethinkers even in the "Isle of Saints," has kindly sent us a batch of relevant cuttings from the Irish papers. They make intriguing reading. President Tito is denounced as a modern "Nero," his hands red with the blood of persecuted Catholics; has not the Yugo-Slav Government imprisoned Cardinal Stepinac, a Prince of the Church? Naturally nothing is said in this correspondence about General Pavelic's *Ustuchi* thugs who, not only fought against Tito, but who actively supported by Stepinac and his colleagues and, with the full support of the Vatican, massacred hundreds of thousands of Greek "Orthodox" Catholics in a modern crusade marred by all the horrors of its mediæval predecessors—the precise details of this modern version of the war against the Albigenses can be found in Mr. Avro Manhattan's well-documented *Terror over Jugo-Slavia*. Fortunately, as is evident from this correspondence, not all Irish Catholics are as stupid as their Church; one doubts if the Archbishop has done himself, or his Church any good by his intervention?

Radio Eireann refused to broadcast the match. But the fact that, despite all the clerical pressure, the tickets sold out, constitutes a warning to Rome. The world moves on! Ireland too, will not always remain in the middle ages. St. Patrick has been dead quite a while!

QUATRAINS AFTER FITZGERALD

Death's gloomy Portal stands at this Life's End;
With slow, reluctant steps I thither wend.
And till he summons me to be his Guest
I know not whether Death be Foe or Friend!

The Parson tells me of a Paradise
Which I may win if this Life I'll despise!
A Mansion in the sky to own!—but hold!
May hap the Parson's tale is nought but lies.

Hope of a rarer Gem beyond the Grave
Tempts fools to cast away the Crown they have.
Best keep what is thine Own—for once 'tis gone
Thy Recompense is much in Doubt, poor Knave!

S. W. BROOKS.

—NEXT WEEK—

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF EUROPE: GERMANY

By F. A. RIDLEY.

This Believing World

That eminent Air Chief, Lord Dowding, believes not only in the reality of spooks, but of "flying saucers"—though he has, he admits, never seen a flying saucer; but then he has, he blandly tells us, never seen Australia. This kind of argument is a great hang-over of true religion. What, cries the Christian, you have never seen a miracle—but isn't it a fact that you have never seen the Pyramids in Egypt? You believe in the Pyramids, but you don't believe in the Miracles of Christ, the Son of God!

Spooks, Flying Saucers, the Miracles of Christ, Poltergeists, Levitations, Witches flying on broom-sticks, Apports, and similar marvels of "magic," all spring from the ignorance and fear of primitive man, and form part and parcel of the religions of the world. It must take many years before Science—not necessarily men of science—takes the place of "magic," and proves that the marvels of Nature require nothing supernatural to explain them.

The five priests of the Church of England who have followed the Rev. Hugh Ross Williamson into the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church will not cause many tears to be shed. What these people want is a thoroughly Totalitarian religion where all their thinking will be done for them; and in this Popery reigns supreme. Whatever may be urged against the Church of England and that part of it which is not afraid of Protestantism, it does in some degree practise the art of toleration. There is none whatever in Popery.

We often wondered why Lourdes managed to steal the lamplight (and so much cash) from Loreto, and an article in the Irish *Sunday Press* does not really clear up the puzzle. Loreto is claimed therein as "the world's principal Marian shrine," for it has attracted "myriads of pilgrims" for more than six centuries. The great attraction there has been and still is the actual House of Nazareth where Mary and her miraculously-born Son used to live. It was bodily wafted over into Italy in the thirteenth century, and it appears from the *Sunday Press* article, that not even the most hostile critic has ever disproved the truth of the wafting!

The reason for this is that many pilgrims have testified to the space left in Nazareth where the house used to be, and that should convince the most infidel of critics. Even the famous Shroud of Turin is not so thoroughly vindicated as the House of Nazareth in Loreto; and, we might add, that it shares with the 1,987,630 pieces of the True Cross in the modern world the same uncontrovertible evidence of its authenticity. Why then has Lourdes superseded it? We give it up.

The latest report on our young people is distinguished by a heartfelt recommendation that religion should once again be made compulsory in the Army. Our very religious military men have never taken kindly to any freedom in the Army, and certainly not to any religious freedom. Compel 'em to go to church—we must get rid of this religious ignorance and "apathy," they cry. We like the word apathy. After all, our young Servicemen are the products of compulsory religious teaching in our schools. Whence came their apathy? Is it because the science and history lessons proved the fraud of religion?

After nearly 2,000 years of Christianity we are almost tearfully implored by the Bishop of Hulme to be "vocal" about our "faith." The reason is that there appears to be so little religion in the country that believers should at once go into our factories and mills and workshops and give everybody the Gospel just like Communists give their Communism. It is obvious that the Bishop has never heard the people who go into factories preaching Christ Jesus. If he had, he would wonder why anybody believed anything; for it would be difficult to cap their hopeless ignorance and stupidity.

The Mystery of Mr. Rowland

By PETER E. J. JORDAN

MR. ROWLAND refers to the "more vocal" readers of *The Freethinker* and suggests they have not "given a second thought" to the problem of mystery. I notice also that in his article of September 16 he refers to the "dyed-in-the-wool materialists (who) will foam at the mouth at the suggestion of a compromise between Rationalism and any kind of Church." I fancy Chapman Cohen was right when he said that opponents of materialism never refer to it merely as such, but always prefaced by an irrelevant and derogatory word or phrase; e.g. blatant, crass—and now with Mr. Rowland "old-fashioned," "dyed-in-the-wool."

Having read the articles and correspondence and given them "a second thought," I can assure Mr. Rowland that it is not only with the "leaders" of the movement that he will find no common ground on his topic, i.e., Mystery—which now seems to have been spotlighted on our friend Will.

Mr. Taylor dealt with our mysterious friend Will in his note to Mr. Rowland's article of September 16th, and quite clearly showed that in abandoning the law of parsimony you land inevitably in "the most extravagant speculation and unsupportable dogma."

Mr. Rowland now says that all he has been saying is that "a great effort of will power can sometimes enable us to do things of which we should not otherwise be capable." The major point, as I see it, is to *what extent* does will power enable us to do things out of our normal practice. We say—as per Mr. Taylor—only to the extent which the physical basis of our persons permits. There is no mystery in this. Gordon Pirie, by training of his body and by will power and incentive (yes, they go together and cannot be separated), beats Zatopek. If Pirie had a badly lamed leg, i.e., if the physical basis was thus imperfect; or if at the time of the race he had troubles (financial, say) which so distracted him from making a supreme effort; then in either of these circumstances his chances of winning would be materially impaired. Where is the mystery? And with all the will power in the world he could not win with two lame legs. This, of course, is obvious, but it needs saying as it is the sort of thing which Mr. Rowland implies *could* happen merely by the addition of a dose of super will power. We can all envisage the possibility of a man running a mile in 3 min. 50 sec., but can anyone imagine it possible in the 50 sec.? A high jump of 7 ft. can reasonably be imagined, but how about 20 ft.? And why not a mile in a minute, or a high jump of 20 ft.? We say because the physical basis for such feats is not present in the human body, and no amount of "will power," as we understand the term, will make such feats possible.

Will power is the exercising, or refusing to exercise, our capabilities, physical and mental, but is conditioned, governed and limited by our actual physical or mental potentialities. There is no "mystery" in this.

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: In the article on Telepathy (Oct. 28), 2nd col. line 5, "statues" should be "status."

T. BENTON and others.—Many thanks for cuttings. They are always very useful.

MRS. LONG.—Thanks for interesting reminiscences. To have read, and then to have passed on, *The Freethinker* for over sixty years is to have performed a very fine service to the paper.

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

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40 Cannon St.—Sunday, November 6, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Menace of Catholic Action."

Bradford N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, November 6, 6.45 p.m.: ROY SEAR, "The Treatment of Jewish People and Minorities." H. NEWTON, "Essentials for Freedom."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Tuesday, November 8, 7 p.m.: E. BAKER, (National Peace Council), "Problems of a Power Age."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 6, 6.30 p.m.: A Debate on "Materialism—J. H. SMITH, B.A., "Abolition of Blood Sports."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, November 6, 2.30 p.m.: Miss L. BRYAN (Socialist Party of Gt. Britain), "Religion—a Socialist Analysis."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, November 6, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, Joseph Priestley: Scientist and Moralist."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, November 6, 7.15 p.m.: Miss M. WHATELY, "What has happened to the America I knew and loved."

Notes and News

THE appointment of Mr. Colin McCall to the position of General Secretary of the National Secular Society has given widespread satisfaction in the movement. Since its inception in 1866 the N.S.S. has never been lacking in men and women prepared to make personal sacrifices for

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £1,003 3s. 4d; J. White, £2 2s. 0d; Robert H. Scott, U.S.A., £2 6s. 0d; G. Swan, 10s. 0d; J. Quinn, 7s 0d; A. Hancock, 1s. 0d; F. Muston, 2s. 6d. Total to Date, £1,008 11s. 10d.

the good of the cause, and Mr. McCall is in the true line of that tradition, bringing to the task an earnestness and enthusiasm which offsets any material disadvantage.

Mr. McCall comes from a freethinking family, and his father, the late Colin McCall, senior, was a most efficient worker in the Manchester Branch of the N.S.S., and was held in high esteem by Chapman Cohen. The new Secretary first wrote for *The Freethinker* as a young man in 1939, since when he has contributed some eighty-five articles. He has also been one of the foremost of our northern speakers, both indoor and outdoor. He has spoken for all the main branches of the society in the provinces and Scotland; he knows their difficulties and problems and will be able to deal sympathetically with them. Such a unifying influence is essential in a society of geographically scattered membership which has to depend on London for its executive work. The work of the Executive has for some months been impaired as a result of changes of personnel, but it was the unanimous feeling, in making the appointment, that in Mr. McCall they would have the right man for the job. Mr. McCall has a difficult task immediately ahead, but in tackling it he has the tremendous advantages of sincerity, character and a genuine love of the cause. All that is needed—and we are confident that it will be given—is the co-operation and support of all lovers of the movement.

A Rationalist Association has recently been started in Johannesburg, which, we understand, has been joined by a number of *Freethinker* readers in the area. Will other freethinkers in South Africa who are interested please communicate with Mrs. B. Lurie, 24 Hill Road, Emmarentia Ext., Johannesburg. Phone 41—5251.

Mrs. Margaret Knight's recent meeting at Glasgow (October 16) was reported at some length in the *Daily Record* the next day, with heavy headlines and a picture. The report was almost entirely factual, with only the faintest note of disapproval, possibly for the benefit of Christian readers. Thus: "She's still at it. It was Billy Graham and the Church leaders this time. The storm of protest which greeted her broadcast talks on 'Morals without Religion' has not subdued Mrs. Margaret Knight." "The tall woman with the soft voice had more hard criticisms." "Then Mrs. Knight took a swipe at 'official' Christianity." We cannot compliment the *Daily Record* on the elegance of its language, but this paper has done really grand work, not only on this lecture, but on the Graham crusade, and must have disappointed many of its Christian readers.

On Sunday, December 11, The Merseyside Branch, N.S.S. has arranged a coach trip to Manchester to hear Mrs. Margaret Knight at the Charlton Town Hall. Will members and friends who would like to join us please apply for tickets, 7/- each including a reserved seat in the hall; not later than November 15. Further details from the Secretary, Walter C. Parry, 476 Mill Street, Liverpool 8, or phone Lark Lane 3640.

Religion or Education

By "HIBERNICUS"

ON about two hundred mornings every year the great majority of our children are given something called religious education. Secularists have always protested in general terms against the use of public money for teaching the doctrines of organisations which only a small minority of our people actively support, but they have sometimes tended to overlook the real effects of this teaching. In this article I propose to examine some of these effects.

If, first of all, we ask what is taught, we soon arrive at an indisputable answer—fundamentalism of the crudest kind. Some Church bosses assert that modern Christianity is enlightened and harmless; but we can see what they would really like people to believe by observing what they teach to children. Their modernism is seen to be merely a sop to the more intelligent, and represents a desire to appear intellectually respectable. The clerics know quite well that those who fear Hell will pray best. In my own country of Northern Ireland, any teacher who tried to teach the ideas of the Anglican Report on Doctrine would soon find himself in trouble.

But bad as all this is, if we look at the way in which these things have to be taught, we can only conclude that this latter is more serious. The fundamentalism has to be taught in a dogmatic manner, because, no matter how silly the whole thing appears, the teacher cannot allow anything controversial to creep in. More important, the whole system of religious education is dedicated to the proposition that belief should precede thought, that is, that it should be not education but indoctrination. And it is not surprising that thought, banned in the religious field, should not be conspicuous in other departments of life. The child who is taught to rely on Divine Revelations is, to use Aldous Huxley's words, "the father of the newspaper-reading, advertisement-believing, propaganda-swallowing, demagogue-led man." Many great men have agreed that education should teach the young how to think, not what to think. Bertrand Russell, for example, has always maintained this in the strongest terms:

"If . . . children themselves were considered, education would not aim at making them belong to this party or that, but at enabling them to choose intelligently between the parties. . . ."

"The prevention of free enquiry is unavoidable so long as the purpose of education is to produce belief rather than thought. . . . Educaion ought to foster the wish for truth, not the conviction that some pratical creed is the truth."

And Lord Morley has stated simply: "An educated man knows when a thing is proved and when it is not proved; an uneducated man does not know."

When all the bogus arguments have been cleared away, we can see that a real religious education might have some value, for older children at least. Such an education would give children a knowledge of the main religions of the world, and let them decide for themselves the truth of each. We can all see how mad it would be for a course in literature to proclaim that one writer was perfect and that all other writers were worthless. Yet this is what we do in our religious education. We can only hope and act that wisdom will some day prevail here.

The Bible Handbook (10th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 3d.

Review

Humanism in Practice. A Blue-Print for a Better World, by M. Roshwald. Watts & Co. 100 pages. 1955. 7/6 net.

One of the words I rarely use myself is "Humanism." It is now being used by Rationalists who have given up the word Rationalism as "out-dated," just as many Atheists towards the close of last century preferred to use the word Agnostic as representing better their views than the other more "blatant" one. Holyoake was a typical example. He never did like the word Atheism, it was considered such a shocking word; and after vainly trying to introduce "Cosmism" in its place, he found in Agnosticism just the appellation he wanted. There was, in his case, also the word Secularism, which he introduced, and a very good word it is, quite as good, if not better than, Humanism. For there is, perhaps, a smugness, a respectability, about the word Humanism with which even Rationalism was never credited.

As far as it is possible for me to judge (and of course I am speaking for myself) the word Humanism can be applied to almost every religion and every reform movement we have. Take as an example Father Damien, that great leper hero, who was a Roman Catholic priest—was he not a Humanist? I am sure he was, and I could name any number of quite religious people who mouth Christ Jesus when it is necessary, but who were at the same time undoubtedly Humanists—like Charles Dickens, for example. Was not David Livingstone a Humanist, and many priests of other religions? I am not a Socialist, but I am bound to admit that one of Socialism's greatest popular exponents, Robert Blatchford, was certainly a Humanist. Personally, I feel that the word is far too general to confine it to Rationalists or Freethinkers.

And that is what I find fault with Mr. Roshwald's very excellent little work. Throughout he writes as if only if one is a Humanist can his ideas on Human Sociability, on Personal Values, on Conditions of Existence, etc., be truly followed—whereas pretty nearly everything he writes about could be followed by Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, and even Christians. His own definition of Humanism is that it is "a philosophy demanding the fullest possible development of the faculties of every human being in order to secure to each and everyone the conditions of happiness." No civilised person could find any objection to the establishment of a Utopia in which this was the aim. And the number of books in which this or similar philosophy is championed must be legion.

Every reformer, no matter what his creed or colour, has fought for "happiness," a very illusive term, and not at all enlarged upon by Mr. Roshwald. What exactly is happiness? "Some of the happiest people I have met have been football fans watching a game in which their favourites were taking part. Mostly, I am bored stiff watching football, and feel that I am wasting time, and being most unhappy about it. Playing card games like poker brings very great happiness to some people; but for me, at least, cards have no attraction whatever."

As an out-and-out Malthusian myself, I should say that the most vital question for modern nations is the food problem and its relation to population increase; and whether one is or is not a Humanist, or a Muslim, or a Jew, or an Atheist, until that problem is more or less solved, it seems idle to talk about happiness in the way Mr. Roshwald does. Food is the one "fundamental" for everything living.

Of course man does not live by bread alone; and so the efforts of humanitarians like our author to spread the love of culture—art, music, literature and so on, to abolish slavery and hatred, to remove distinctions of race and colour, should be supported to the utmost but why specially call

all this Humanism? The *Essays and Lectures* of Ingersoll are packed with what was called in his day "humanitarianism"; and there are dozens of Christian writers full of the same kind of thing even if they do exhort you to be kind and merciful and just and loving for Jesus' sake.

And after all, even the Humanist, no matter how much he implores you to right-living, is often faced with such monsters as the German Nazis, and has to act in the face of their foul crimes just as people who do not call themselves Humanists act. Mr. Roshwald says:

The humanist approach to man, *qua* man, disregarding his in-group affiliations, has its limits, however. Some creeds are so extreme and inhuman that they succeed in destroying the humanity of those who believe in them. This was especially true of the Nazi creed. To regard a Nazi hangman, or an SS commander, as essentially human (in the humanist sense) and not as essentially Nazi (in the derogatory sense) would be to confound the desirable with the actual. We cannot and should not regard as human those creatures who completely disregard our humanity. There is a level of human behaviour and conduct, involving a minimum acceptance of the humanist philosophy, beneath which there is no room for argument or compromise. For such individuals who are below this level, the appropriate place is the asylum, the prison, or even the gallows.

With this most of us—if not all—who hate criminal cruelty, sadism, torture, and the other horrors brought again into the world by the Germans and the Japanese, must of course concur; but one is not necessarily a Humanist because he abhors crime.

Mr. Roshwald thinks that the *Deutschland über alles* myth should be fought and exposed no matter which country is responsible for a similar ideal; and he adds, "many religious doctrines and social philosophies" need to be exposed. But he himself quotes the Bible Samuel as if that judge or prophet was not a "myth." He claims that Samuel "opposed the very institution of monarchy, regarding it as a revolt against the rule of God over Israel." This may be so, but we have only the Bible's word for it. You can prove anything from this "nose of wax" as Luther was obliged to call the Holy Bible—but what is the evidence that there was such a person as Samuel; and that if there was, he opposed "monarchy" in the sense that Mr. Roshwald perhaps (in 1955) opposes it?

For myself, I prefer the word "Freethinker," for in these days everybody knows that it stands for anti-religion, and Freethinkers themselves have provided in their books and pamphlets a magnificent system of ethics quite equal and perhaps even better than that formulated by Mr. Roshwald. But this does not mean that we must not call ourselves Humanists if we want to.

Mr. Roshwald has written a stimulating work and it deserves close study. It should find a place at least in every public library in the land.

H. CUTNER.

Northern Notes

By COLIN McCALL

THERE must be times when the thoughtful Christian wonders if his god is deliberately playing into the hands of the enemy. The outstanding historical instance that comes to mind is the Lisbon earthquake disaster of 1755 which provoked Voltaire's poem and, later the incomparable *Candide*. The earthquake could not have occurred at a more inopportune time, for it was All Saints' Day and the churches were crowded. I now read that an Oldham girl aged 14 bravely saved her three-year-old brother from death by fire, but that she was severely burned about the hands and arms in doing so. At the time of the fire, the children's parents were at Friday morning mass in the nearby

Church of the Holy Rosary, from whence they were called by neighbours. Serious tragedy was averted by the prompt action of the schoolgirl but she suffered in consequence. The terrible irony of the whole thing does not appear to have impressed her parents, for they were back in church shortly afterwards, praying for her recovery. I say "irony," but "immorality" would be the proper word if there were a god behind it all.

* * *

Intent upon showing that such a god exists, seven Irish Jesuits recently arrived for a fortnight's mission in Manchester to the accompaniment of a "blaze" of publicity. The intention, it seems, was to set the town on fire from pulpits in the churches of the Holy Name and Our Lady of Perpetual Succour; the method: cross-questioning from two pulpits in each church. They went so far as to "debate" the subject of atheism, one priest attacking, and another defending it. This may well have been highly amusing and I do not doubt that the first priest won the contest and that the Catholic congregation upheld the verdict. Now it only remains for the victor to debate the same subject with a real atheist. The N.S.S. is willing enough but the Society of Jesus is unlikely to accept the challenge. Last year Mr. F. A. Ridley spoke in Manchester on "Secrets of the Jesuits"; a special invitation was sent to local representatives of the order, yet no priest attended. Apparently there are lengths to which even Jesuits will not go!

* * *

Another mission—that of the Liverpool Methodists—expressed concern about the drift to secularism; and the superintendent minister, the Rev. Frank T. Coplestone, called on Christians "to keep to the fore the spiritual principles by which men lived." In an age of atomic bombs, he said, "it was more and more essential that everyone should hold fast to the eternal values." Alas, the newspaper report (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 30/9/55) gives no details of Mr. Coplestone's "spiritual principles" or his "eternal values." Perhaps the reporter forgot to note them. Or maybe the minister was just talking vacuously: it would not be the first time. From past experience I incline towards this last explanation. So too, I think, will anyone else who has heard a clergyman try to explain what he means by such glib phrases.

* * *

The Rev. Wilfrid Garlick of Stockport also referred to the drift from Christianity when he preached at the Rush-bearing service in the churchyard of Macclesfield Forest Chapel. "Many modern things were wholly good," he remarked, "there were improvements in such things as education and the world was materially a better place. But spiritually the people had left the faith of their fathers, and of every hundred persons, only twenty-five were still in touch with the ancient faith. God had shown the world the true value of things, but to-day we had them all cock-eyed." Here again we have typical clerical language. What exactly is meant by "spiritually"? "Spiritual" is often used as a synonym for "mental," in which case improvements in education would surely have beneficial effects. If Mr. Garlick uses the term in a different sense, he should make that sense clear. He should also tell us how God has shown the "true value" of any thing, and what that value is. In fact, of course, nothing has any "true" value; everything is assessed, and assessments vary from time to time, place to place, and person to person. In a word, values are relative.

MANCHESTER BRANCH BULLETIN

No. 11. October, 1955

[Selected items from the anniversary Bulletin.—ED.]

With the ending of British Summer Time we transfer most of our activities indoors (though we shall continue to hold Sunday evening meetings on the Deansgate blitzed site when weather and circumstances permit).

How strongly Catholic and other Christians will strive to prevent the truth from prevailing was plainly revealed after one of the very few Freethought broadcasts that have been heard in this country—Mrs. Margaret Knight's "Morals without Religion." Mrs. Knight was condemned and abused in much of the press and in private letters. But the genuinely liberal newspapers recognised the sincerity and importance of her talks and many hundreds of liberal-minded people wrote and congratulated her on the courage she had displayed in delivering them. We in the Northern Region have not yet had the opportunity of hearing Mrs. Knight over the B.B.C. but we can, in fact, do even better on Sunday, 11th December. The Branch has succeeded in engaging Mrs. Knight to speak on what she wittily terms her "theme song" in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Mrs. Knight recently spoke at the Conway Hall, London, to a "full house" and an overflow meeting had to be arranged. We have every reason to think that our own meeting will be equally popular. The Secretary has already received block bookings from the Liverpool and Bradford branches and much interest has been shown in the preliminary announcements of the event. It will be widely publicised a little nearer the date; meanwhile members can bring it to the notice of their friends—and enemies!

On Friday, 23rd September, Jane Dawson of the *Manchester Evening News* replied to a question which asked "if there is a book giving Bible Contradictions, what it is called and whether it can be obtained in a library?" Miss Dawson had not seen a book of contradictions but referred to Bible Dictionaries, Theological Word Books, Bible Parallels, Commentaries, Concordances, etc. The Branch President addressed a letter to this lady journalist pointing out that the book in question was *The Bible Handbook*, giving details of the publishers and the contents.

Incidentally this is the first anniversary number of the Bulletin—suitably celebrated by an extra large edition! It was started for the purpose of keeping members acquainted with activities: to form a regular link between us. And we think it has served that purpose. It is particularly appreciated by some of our older members living outside the city area; it is read in places as far apart as London, Glasgow and Dublin; and it is displayed in the Central Public Library at Wigan.

Correspondence

OVERPOPULATION

I agree with much of Mr. Reader's letter (September 23) but maintain there is no problem of overpopulation for the community as a whole. It is only a problem for one section of the community, and the upper class by contrast enjoys a position of privilege provided by the labour of the masses, whose poverty is due directly to their position as a subservient exploited class. Thus it is as much a problem of abolishing the privilege of the upper class as the poverty of the lower.

To urge the masses to reproduce less is by itself a futile solution, because the sexual restraint and rational behaviour which Mr. Reader hopes for are more likely to follow the eradication of hunger than to precede it, and because any action undermining the privilege of the upper classes will incur opposition from the state and involve political activity.

I agree with Mr. Reader that one should not expect the first revolution to have righted matters, for most revolutions only replace one class-system by another. It is the last revolution, that achieves a class less society, which will right matters.

The other subject with which Mr. Reader's article dealt was war, and I will only add that the causes of war (as of any other feature of society) must be sought in the nature of the dominant class rather than the under-classes, which implies that overpopulation is not the cause.

EDWIN G. H. CROUCH.

THE DUKE BREAKS THE SABBATH

Instead of criticising the Duke of Edinburgh for playing a wholesome game of cricket on Sunday, the Sunday Observance Society should visit some of the seaside towns with the fun fair in full swing, as well as most vulgar (alleged humorous) postcards on sale. If the spirit of cricket could be inculcated into the human race I think most of the parsons would find themselves redundant.

F. C. ASHDOWN.

"SACRED" AND "HOLY"

G. H. Taylor (FREETHINKER, 7/10/55), quotes examples of criticism of this journal made by (I presume) typical "reverent rationalists."

One critic, describing himself as "at heart as much an Atheist as you," goes on to assert that "there is something rather sacred about a man's religion which we should not violate. This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks."

Compared with the utterances of reverent rationalists, the most extravagant whimsies of Lear and Carroll appear as humdrum as Euclid.

"Sacred" and "holy" are terms employed by adherents of a religion to indicate persons or things which they regard as "devoted" or "dedicated" to the god or gods they believe in and wish to "serve."

Anyone who professes Atheism disclaims all knowledge of or belief in any gods whatsoever, and therefore has no criterion by which to judge the "sacredness" of anything. Similarly, to regard Christianity as fallacious is to profess disbelief in Christianity's god, and once the god is abandoned there remains no-one to whom "sacred" things can be offered.

To sum up: only believers in a god and active participants in religious rites may legitimately use the terms "sacred" and "holy." When uttered by an unbeliever the words become completely meaningless.

S. W. BROOKS.

MORALS AND SOCIETY

I would like to recommend the following book: *Man, Morals and Society*, by J. C. Flugel. Penguin Books, 3/6.

In this book, the Author, who died only a few weeks ago aged 71, intends to "link in an intelligible way the natural history of conduct as studied in psychology with the normal principles of conduct as studied in ethics." In other words, he studies the growth of morals in the light of psycho-analysis. He shows how our primitive instincts are always in conflict, latent or open, with the external world (society) and with what is known as the super-ego (the ideal self).

He emphasizes the influence of the feeling of guilt and fear which seems to take such a great part in forming our moral outlook and is the base of most religions, especially the Christian religion, and shows the role that psycho-analysis has played and still has to play in freeing man of this feeling. Quotations follow:

"The religious emotions must be largely or entirely secularized and be put in the service of humanity. The religion of humanity is surely the religion of the nearer future."

"Men must abandon the last shred of that longed-for but illusory 'omnipotence' to which, even after the relinquishing of magic, they sought to cling through their relation with a divine ruler of the universe."

"Men are in fact thrown back upon themselves and must rely on their own efforts to improve their lot. But this very sense of loneliness and isolation may well serve to bring them closer together than would otherwise be possible; and they have the consolation of knowing that in the human heart and brain they possess instruments which, faulty though they be, have brought them far along the path of evolution, and, if wisely used, may bring them almost infinitely farther. We have ample proof that courage and intelligence, though they never perform miracles, will yet achieve what a generation or two earlier would have been considered miracles."

JEAN TOUDIC.

HOMOSEXUALITY

S. W. Brooks, in his remarks regarding homosexuality, seems to be putting over some case for a mental disease which should be wiped out as quickly as possible by having the "queers" treated in a hospital, etc. We all know that the male has female characteristics and vice versa but I see no reason in that for turning a blind eye to homosexuality. Hundreds of young men and women are morally corrupted each year, which must have a weakening effect on the mental welfare of the community.

As a follower of Freethought I see no reason at all for the (so-called) Christian attitude being changed. Germany pre-war was a glaring example of homosexuality running riot.

ALEX TALBERT.

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