

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

THAT Meredith admired Foote as a literary "craftsman" as well as for his sturdy Freethought can be shown by his presentation of a book of his poems to Foote while he was doing "time" for the wholly imaginary crime of blasphemy. And it was Meredith who sent Foote frequent donations for (his own phrase) "the best of causes". Foote received, perhaps the last letter Meredith wrote before his death, and there will be some readers still alive who remember the splendid article on Meredith written by Foote at the request of Austin Harrison in the *English Review* in 1912. It proved how well Foote could write for a bigger and different audience than he had in his own journal.

On the other hand, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, who was nothing if not a "reverent" Rationalist, and whose *Robert Elsmere* showed how far she was from orthodoxy, appears to have gone out of her way to attack Secularism, Secularists, and THE FREETHINKER, knowing extremely little about any of them. It was a pity, for she was a gifted lady. If she ever knew the admiration Meredith had for Foote, no doubt she would have been rather disagreeably surprised.

Foote discontinued the Comic Bible Sketches after some years, but he was always ready to criticise and fight if necessary for the cause he loved so well. He never cared much for Mrs. Besant, and so was not altogether surprised when that clever lady deserted Freethought for the mixture of esoteric Buddhism and Occultism which Madame Blavatsky graced with the name of Theosophy. It inspired some of his hardest hitting articles, which even Theosophists had to read. And later came the campaign which perhaps did more to bring THE FREETHINKER into notice than even his Comic Bible Sketches. This was his drastic exposure of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes as a prize liar. Mr. Hughes wrote a book called *The Atheist Shoemaker*, which pictured the conversion of a "well-known" and "popular" atheist to Christianity — and which Foote had no hesitation in calling "A Lie in Five Chapters?" The story is a long one, but it ended in the complete exposure of Mr. Hughes even though he called in his friend George Jacob Holyoake to plead for him — a feat which Holyoake appears to have done to his own satisfaction and against everybody else's in the Freethought movement. So thorough was Foote's exposure that Hughes was forced to call in his book, and he never said anything afterwards about the Converted Atheist.

Another famous campaign in which Foote displayed a master hand was against the American Torrey-Alexander attempt to convert England to Torrey's peculiar brand of Christianity. Torrey was, like Hughes, an unmitigated liar, and both Robert Blatchford and W. T. Stead joined in to get the reverend gentleman booted out of England. He never came back. All these things and many others gave THE FREETHINKER plenty of publicity, and brought many readers into the fold. And this was in spite of the then

formidable competition of the Rationalist Press Association at the height of its fame.

All this time THE FREETHINKER appeared with a wealth of articles by Charles Watts, Francis Neale, Arthur B. Moss, J. T. Lloyd, "Abracadbra", Minnermus, T. F. Palmer, Walter Mann, and, of course, a young rising star who was not by any means slowly rising into fame on his own account — Chapman Cohen. In particular, the help C.C. gave (from 1897) to Foote, whose health was causing anxiety, was invaluable. But, in spite of poor health, the veteran Freethinker as he was (actually before his time) never shone to better advantage than in his public debate with a

convert Jew called the Rev. Jacob Warschauer, in which that oily gentleman received the trouncing of his life. In THE FREETHINKER for 1911 will be found a verbatim report of this debate which Warschauer refused to allow to be published in pamphlet form. It was a damning exposure. Foote was obliged afterwards to deal with him in a "personal" attack, a job which he must have hated, but it was necessary with such an opponent.

When Foote died in 1915, lots of his readers thought it meant the death of THE FREETHINKER — just as the *National Reformer* did not survive long after Bradlaugh died. They reckoned without the capabilities and pertinacity of Chapman Cohen. We were in the midst of the terrible World War I — a war which stunned the British people, utterly unprepared for such a devastating holocaust. It was difficult indeed to run the paper without Foote, let alone during a war of such magnitude; and Chapman Cohen has never, in my opinion, received his due for the way he kept his readers together, and with their help and his own dogged determination, carried THE FREETHINKER with marvellous success through those terrible years.

He not only kept THE FREETHINKER triumphantly alive but he kept the National Secular Society going as well; and all the time, with pen and speech, he was hammering away at the enemy with some of the most splendid articles, in their own way, ever produced by a Freethinker. Actually he became an "institution". He had readers all over the world, and many were the encounters in the pages of his journal he had with distinguished people like Dr. Lytton, Bernard Shaw, Prof. Eddington, and many others. C.C.'s grasp of philosophical problems was remarkable, and week by week, in his own tireless way, he did his best to "instruct" his readers in the fundamentals of freethinking. He was not infallible any more than Foote, or any of us; but he made THE FREETHINKER alive, and a journal to be reckoned with.

When World War II came he was no longer young and the destruction of THE FREETHINKER office in 1942 was a heartbreaking blow. At one go, it almost destroyed the life work of two great editors. But once again he rose to the occasion. A whole library of rare and irreplaceable Free-

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Freethinker

(Concluded from last week)

By H. CUTNER

thought works went with the office as well as all the various equipment for printing and producing the paper. It was enough to break anybody's heart. That THE FREETHINKER duly appeared, and continued to appear is C.C.'s greatest triumph—and in it all he had, like Foote, the devotion of his readers, who were always ready to help, and did help, with money enough where and when that was necessary.

But the fifty years and more of work he put into the paper, and his own extensive lecturing and debating were bound to extract their toll; and when the inevitable occurred he had to lay down his pen, and hope for his paper the devotion again of his many readers to the new editor.

THE FREETHINKER was now taken over by the Secular Society Ltd., which had been founded by Foote in 1898, and a new honorary board of G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd. was formed, with Mr. W. Griffiths as Managing Director. The new Editor was Mr. F. A. Ridley, who has a thorough

knowledge of Roman Catholic history and theology and whose scholarly articles have been a regular feature in these pages. He was succeeded two years ago by an honorary Editorial Committee, and today, in the hands of this Committee, consisting of Mr. F. A. Hornibrook and Mr. G. H. Taylor, THE FREETHINKER is still the voice of Militant Freethought, still the stubborn opponent of religious nonsense and obscurantism. Indeed, it is the only Freethought journal in England carrying on the tradition of Bradlaugh, Foote, and Chapman Cohen.

Never has its message been more vital and necessary than in these days. Every reader knows that. THE FREETHINKER has appeared for 75 years. It can easily reach a century. For there is no other journal in the world which has had such a powerful influence against superstition and credulity. Its flag has never been lowered. And it never will be if its readers rally round it as they did under G. W. Foote and Chapman Cohen. It is, as Meredith knew and said, the mouthpiece of "the best of causes".

Clerical Quotations

A clerical excuse for not answering Atheism: "It is not the business of the Christian teacher to apologise for Christianity, but to try to tell people what it is. A religion that stands on the defensive is one that has ceased to believe in its own truth."—F. R. Barry, Canon of Westminster (*The Christian Faith*, p. 293).

Christian goal is the Other-World: "Christianity is a religion; God, not Man, is the centre of its interest, and its whole conception of life is through and through religious and supernatural. It starts out from the primary conviction that Man is made for God and Eternity and that therefore the purpose and meaning and goal of human life are not to be sought within Man himself, but in obedience to the will of God."—F. R. Barry (*ibid.* p. 299).

Toning down the Apocalypse is a falsification of Jesus-Story: "We fail to understand our Lord's teaching if we tone down its 'apocalyptic' colouring."—F. R. Barry (*ibid.* p. 306).

Christian Ethic lags behind times: "An ethic which claims to be final in that sense—to prescribe exactly how men must behave, irrespective of changing needs and situations—is out of the running from the word 'Go'."—F. R. Barry (*ibid.* p. 311).

Let us destroy the parasitic Christian clericalism and credalism: "Two vices that are parasitic upon all religions—clericalism, the spirit of the Sadducean priests, and credalism, the creation of static confessions and compulsory theologies. The medieval era was also one of cruel oppression and persecution; clericalist and credalist rule prevented the free expression of new thought, and without freedom of enquiry and of statement truth cannot be discovered."—P. Dearmer, late Canon of Westminster (*The Christian Faith*, pp. 318-320).

The Church is superstitious, bigoted, oppressive, cruel: "During the (first) centuries that followed, the now dominant Church was guilty of superstition, bigotry, oppression, cruelty."—P. Dearmer (*ibid.* p. 318).

The Catholic God is a Criminal: "There is no optimism, except for the rounded selfishness of a criminal, in a world-view that consigns the vast majority of mankind (99 per cent. or more, according to many authorities) to unending torture in Hell."—P. Dearmer (*ibid.* p. 327).

Let us debunk the Christian sin-obsession and the fictional

Hell: "The sin-obsession and the legend of Hell came from a debased Judaism, and asceticism from the pagan Egyptian world. It was, in fact, the sin-obsession which caused the now powerful Church to accept slavery, war, cruelty, as a judgement and punishment from God. Why should man not be cruel, since God himself was cruel?"—P. Dearmer (pp. 328, 330).

Let us drop the Christian Hell, Heaven, and Salvation: "The Kingdom which the early Church had expected was indeed an ideal state of life upon earth, not an eschatology of Heaven and Hell' (Troeltsch). That central message of Jesus, the Kingdom of God, was in fact dropped quite early, the idea of the Kingdom being replaced by that of a static, authoritative Church, and its promise by a system of rewards and punishments. This led to a concentration on a personal salvation."—P. Dearmer (p. 328).

The Pope's persecuting Church is directed by abnormal persons: "The condemnation of sex relationship... caused much of the thought and action of the Church to be directed by abnormal persons—the frustrated, the solitary, the sub-sexed, the un-sexed, the homosexually-minded, or the sadistic. There is no defence for the gross horrors of religious persecution after the 11th century, but there is a psychological explanation."—P. Dearmer (p. 329).

Jesus is not the Founder of Christian Church: "We cannot assert with confidence that Jesus ever spoke of the Church in the sense of the Christian community. We have no direct evidence in his recorded sayings that he laid down a constitution or rules for an organisation that should arise after his death. We accept, then, the view that our Lord did not contemplate the Christian Church as we know it, that we cannot assert with confidence that he ever spoke of the Church, and that the Gospels give us no warrant for supposing that he laid down a constitution for the later Church. Further, we are bound to assert that he proclaimed the imminent advent of the Kingdom of God."—N. Micklem, D.D. (*The Christian Faith*, p. 164-169).

(Compiled by GREGORY S. SMELTERS)

—NEXT WEEK—

DEMOCRACY IN CHRISTIANITY

By C. G. L. DU CANN

Political Catholicism in Germany

By F. A. RIDLEY

AT PRESENT Germany is beginning to recover, both economically and politically, from her overwhelming defeat in the war. Autonomous political activity is again evident in the Federal Republic of (Western) Germany as it was after the first World War. Now, as then, the sceptre of Germany, potentially still the most powerful land in Europe, is lying in the gutter waiting for some hopeful aspirant to pick it up. The last time this situation occurred the eventual winner was Hitler. Today the issue is still in the balance and there is no lack of hopeful claimants in the offing. Perhaps the most powerful, and certainly the most persistent, is the R.C. Church, or, more precisely, political Catholicism. Present day Germany is perhaps the principal agent through which Catholic Action (the political arm of the Church) is now engaged.

In contradistinction to the Communist-controlled East, Roman Catholics are only in a slight minority in the West, as against the Protestant Churches. Two operative factors threaten to convert this large minority into an actual majority. First, there is the higher Catholic birthrate; then there is the considerable influx of displaced persons, mostly political refugees, from Poland and Eastern Germany. This latter factor is being systematically exploited by the Adenauer regime. Germany is perhaps the classic land of political Catholicism, which found expression in the Holy Roman Empire, the First Reich, which lasted for a thousand years from Charlemagne, who founded it, to Napoleon, who closed it. Subsequently we find political Catholicism vigorously expressed in the "Centre Party", which successfully resisted the mighty Bismarck, in the famous *Kulturkampf* (confessional conflict) in the last century. The Second Reich — the Hohenzollern Empire (1871-1918) — represented a political fusion of the Protestant north and the Catholic south with, however, the effective dominance of Protestant Prussia. In such a Germany, Rome and its political instrument, the Centre Party, could only strive for survival, hardly for power.

The Third Reich of Hitler began in the Catholic south, in Bavaria — the most Catholic part of Germany, where even today life-sized crucifixes are a common sight along the main roads. Its Catholic origins had a profound effect on the subsequent character of Nazism: it is no accident that Fascist regimes, whether in Germany, Italy or Spain, develop originally in the authoritarian atmosphere of the Catholic Church. It is, nevertheless, inadmissible to conclude that National Socialism was itself a Catholic movement. Nazism represented an acute brand of racial mysticism which, ironically, is more similar to that of the Jews than to any modern political movement, whereas the R.C. Church — as its name implies — is nothing if not cosmopolitan. In any case, the Nazi legislation on marriage, divorce and legitimacy, is flatly opposed to Catholic teaching. Since when have racial human stud-farms been a recognised Catholic practice? True, the German Catholics supported Hitler, but solely as a *defensive* measure, a lesser evil against the arch-heresy, Communism. Traditionally the Church of Rome believes in taking its enemies one at a time.

Had Hitler won his war, political Catholicism would have been *kaput* in Germany. The Hitler regime was totalitarian and brooked no rival. Today, the Germany of that devout and artful Catholic politician, Dr. Adenauer, sees Catholicism more powerful than at any time since the Thirty Years War (1618-48). This remarkable come-back

is due both to general and to local causes: first, to the anti-Communist reaction with which Catholic Action has now identified itself so prominently; and also locally to the present alienation of East and West Germany. For the present, the Communist East is largely identical with Protestant Prussia, which formed the chief obstacle to Catholic supremacy in the time of Bismarck. The immense growth of Catholic strength in the West is shown by the present Germany of Dr. Adenauer, formerly Lord Mayor of the Catholic cathedral city of Cologne, now Federal Chancellor. His own party, the Christian Democratic Union, though not exclusively Catholic — like its predecessor, the Centre Party — is predominantly so. The pious Adenauer, a former centre politician, and incidentally the father of a priest, does his best to further the political interests of the Church along with his own, in places as far apart as Hamburg, and Darmstadt in the south. I was recently told that the government is busily engaged in importing Catholic refugees from the East into politically doubtful areas with a view to swaying the next election in 1957 — which promises to be both close and decisive — in favour of the present authoritarian regime, now busily engaged in undermining the democratic constitution.

The German Freethinkers, who were suppressed under Hitler, have no illusions as to their future prospects under the present crypto-Fascist regime, aided by the machinations of political Catholicism. A by-product of the growing Catholic menace was shown in the recent elections, when Protestant clergymen actually voted for the traditionally anti-religious Social Democratic Party, an event hitherto unheard of. Not so well known abroad are the current manoeuvres that political Catholicism is carrying on with the opposition parties, including Communism! However, the German Union, perhaps the most active of the parties opposed to Adenauer's authoritarian and remilitarisation policies, was also founded by a former Centre Party German Chancellor, the late Dr. Wirth. Even more striking was the recent visit of a German women's delegation from the women's pacifist groups, who seem far more active in opposition to the Adenauer regime than their male colleagues to the Soviet Union. This visit, which had enormous publicity in Germany and Russia, was led by the eminent German pacifist Prof. Fassbinder, an ardent Catholic whose report on the Russian visit in her paper *Frau und Frieden* emphasised particularly the present state of religion in Russia! As the Vatican itself gratefully acknowledged a birthday greeting to the Pope in the same issue, one may assume that the Holy Father is now well informed on matters pertaining to the Soviet Union, particularly as Prof. Fassbinder was personally received, if not by "B. and K.", at least by people only a degree less exalted. Is Rome preparing to do a deal with Communism? I may here add that the German Communists would probably make no difficulties. From what I was able to observe, the only German party in which freethinking ideas are still strong is the much maligned Social Democratic Party, very unlike its opposite number here, the Labour Party.

Whatever its future, German Catholicism is still at present anti-Communist. Over the radio the Catholic Archbishop of Cologne periodically denounces "Godless Bolshevism". Undoubtedly the *immediate* aim of German Catholicism is to repel Communism; the ultimate strategy

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

One of the questions bothering the Rev. Dr. S. Bailey (who is the Study Secretary of the Church of England Moral Welfare Council) is, "What is sex?" And in a recent number of *The Observer* he does his best — from a Christian standpoint — to answer such a baffling mystery. For most people, he pontifically tells us, it means "fear, disgust, embarrassment, salacity", and so on; but "most people" here means Christian people, and it is his own Christianity which is responsible for such ignorant misconceptions. Only he does not say so.

It is significant, however, that he does not, in this particular article, drag in Jesus as the greatest sex expert that ever lived. Jesus is not even mentioned. But Dr. Bailey does admit that "Christian opinion itself is divided" on the question of "family planning by contraception". At one time, all Christians were horrified at the mere mention of "contraception" — so it is good to record that the horrid Neo-Malthusians who had to bear the brunt of Christian attacks — calumny, heavy fines, and imprisonment — have at least divided even Christians on the issue. So Francis Place, Richard Carlile, Dr. Knowlton, Dr. George Drysdale and Charles Bradlaugh, among others, are now vindicated. They were all Neo-Malthusians and atheists.

Wales has always been the country par excellence for religious revivals, salvation, divine healing, frantic attacks on sin, frenzied conversions, and yelling in strange tongues; so we are not surprised that the latest American evangelists, Renée Martz, and Dr. Lorne F. Fox and his party from U.S.A., are holding "church rallies", and spending sizeable sums in advertising their holy wares. Dr. Fox, we are told, was once "an incurable invalid", and look at him now — hale and hearty through God Almighty's ineffable grace. And Miss Martz (age 15) is already thrilling huge audiences with her "Life Story", in which she details "Hollywood cinema offers" and her "World-wide Crusades". It is all too heavenly for us.

But — shades of Sinclair Lewis' "Elmer Gantry"! — is not the famous slogan of all American revivalists (kept dark by them), "More Cash than Converts"? How long would Dr. Fox and party and Miss Martz (age 15) last even in Wales if the "necessary" were not forthcoming? The one commodity easily and triumphantly filched from the religiously credulous is still what Charles Reade used to call "Hard Cash".

Although that gallant Christian, St. Paul, bluntly told women in church to shut up, we are pleased to record that the Presbyterian Church of England has appointed a woman, Miss Annie Gordon, as its first lady minister. Dr. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, is also very pleased, for he insists that there is "no theological" reason against the ordination of women. So overboard goes St. Paul and his "theology" on females in church. No doubt whatever Miss Gordon will be able to fulminate against Sin and Man's depravity and the Saving Grace of Jesus quite as well as any parson; though she is uncertain as yet whether to wear a clerical collar. We strongly advise a spot of prayer to God Almighty to settle this momentous problem.

God helps those who help themselves is one of those old adages always used by fervent believers when things go wrong, just as they say "God help you" when things are so bad that nobody, not even God, can help you. The latest Report on "faith healing" by ten doctors appears to give us

an amended version of the old proverb — "God helps those who are ill if they go to a doctor first". Naturally, God is a wonderful help, for he always guides doctors to perform cures; but all healers must first be medically qualified. God never helps unqualified people. Apart from these trivialities, our ten doctors seem to have very little faith in "faith cures" of any kind, not even when performed by Men of God under Divine Guidance.

But one thing does emerge from this Report. It gives the conclusions reached by the doctors on nine cases submitted by Mr. Harry Edwards, the phenomenal Spirit Healer who failed so miserably to prove his faith in spirits in a recent TV discussion. Out of these test cases of absolute cures of incurable diseases, three died while being investigated, and one is still gravely ill. Two recovered — one from a "slipped disc", which usually rights itself; the other's illness was doubtful. And the remaining incurable cases were wrongly diagnosed. Still, if the spirits fail, Spiritualists can always fall back on God — and he never fails.

POLITICAL CATHOLICISM IN GERMANY

(Concluded from page 167)

is still in the background but its final goal was indicated by that great politician Leo XIII when he told the visiting Kaiser that the Catholic Church still prayed for the restoration of the Holy Roman Empire as the greatest secular power in Europe and as the temporal sword of the Church. Adenauer does not go as far as that, but he is an old man and Rome will outlive him! Political Catholicism in Germany cannot really desire reunion with the Protestant and Communist East: that would spell *finis* to its ultimate aim. What it ultimately needs is reunion with the southern Catholic lands at present outside Germany — Austria, Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar, Luxemburg, all formerly parts of the German "Holy" Empire. Their incorporation would give German Catholicism the actual majority which it lacks at present. A revived German Catholic Empire, the greatest power in Europe and its bulwark against the westward expansion of Communism — such appears to be the glittering prize to the attainment of which German political Catholicism is working so persistently and, so far, not unsuccessfully.

Pius XII is a former Nuncio in Germany and is still a recognised expert in German affairs. The recent visit to Munich of his nephew, Prince Pacelli, may have considerable political significance.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9TH.—Present: Mr. F. A. Ridley, in the chair; Messrs. Barker, Cleaver, Ebury, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Tiley, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Title for debate at Gloucester was proposed. New members were admitted to Birmingham, Central London, Merseyside, North London, Nottingham and Paris Branches. Correspondence and Branch Reports were dealt with and it was decided that the President should accompany the Secretary to the joint Birmingham-Leicester meeting at Leicester Secular Hall on June 10th. Conference arrangements were announced. Speakers for the outdoor demonstration selected, and advertising measures approved.

FACT AND FICTION SECULAR POEMS

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World", or to our spoken propaganda.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON and SHEPPARD.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston-on-Thames).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every Week-day, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. CAVANAGH and MILLS. (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. CAVANAGH and MILLS.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.

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

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 27th, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, PH.D., "Darwin and Wallace".

Beyond Malthus

By REGINALD READER

THE FREETHINKER of March 2nd, 1956, contained two references to overpopulation: Mr. G. I. Bennett's article "The Necessity for Birth Control"; and Mr. F. A. Hornibrook's mention of Dr. J. Y. Dent's opinion in "Anxiety and its Treatment". Overpopulation was also referred to by Sir Henry Dale when delivering the Huxley Lecture to the Charing Cross Hospital Medical School on March 15th.

In every case it was concluded that world population is too large for world food resources, and those who still doubt the enormity of the catastrophe threatening our children, and our children's children, should read *The World's Hunger* by the American economist, Dr. W. Vogt.

But why is food always taken as the only yardstick for measuring human numbers? Why is attention never drawn to the other evils of overpopulation, *with us here and now*, which make even survival for famine problematical?

Observe the passers-by; the strained eyes, tense jaws, pinched lips; notice the jerky, impatient gaits, the struggle to board trains and buses or to alight from them; the running into one another on traffic crossings; the jostling, irritation, and frustration of crowded pavements, shops, restaurants, and places of amusement. In a word, *observe the conflict and strain produced by the material, physical impossibility of reconciling a desire to carry on living with consideration for one's fellows*. That strain exceeds the elastic limit of many individuals. Some omit the consideration for others (crime, etc.); some make unsatisfactory com-

promise (medicine-taking, drug-taking, psycho-neurosis); increasing numbers of the unstable make no compromise at all (psychoses and insanities).

It is useless to point to open fields only twenty miles away. The milling throng is where it is, not by choice, but by necessity. To displace it would only raise feeding, housing, clothing, and a thousand other problems elsewhere. Displacement only shifts the burden; it does not remove it.

The pious, of course, have a sovereign remedy. "Take away science and noise", they say, "and peace will return to the earth". It will, indeed, but for scores of millions it will be the peace of death. To throw humanity back on primitive methods of production and distribution is to sign the death warrant of three-quarters of the earth's present population. Mechanisation, noise, and an ever-increasing fury in the tempo of the bear-garden are inevitable accompaniments of swarming.

No; from the comfortable depths of Western European armchairs overpopulation is discussed in a delightfully academical manner, quite untrammelled by any consciousness of the need for immediate action. Nor is this simply human laziness. On the contrary, every effort is made to prevent the masses from seeing the problem realistically. Why? — *Because effective population control is a spiritual time bomb, the chain-reaction of which would sweep religious neurosis from the earth for evermore.*

In fact, as a result of effective control:

1. The fundamental compulsion driving humanity to compete, envy, and hate would gradually decrease in intensity.
2. The present vicious circle of autointoxication (hate-thoughts producing poisoning of the bloodstream, the poisoned bloodstream provoking fresh hate-thoughts) would be broken.
3. The return to mental health of increasing numbers of people would increase the sum total of human happiness in the world.
4. Enduring satisfactions would be sought — not the transient, vicarious, unsatisfying emotional jerks of the bear-garden.
5. Given "breathing spaces", mankind would have a chance to *think*.
6. Its first thought would be: "We are improving matters by ignoring one dogma. *Is it possible that all dogma can be replaced by reason?*"
7. And the second thought would be: "We have successfully controlled quantity. Why not quality?" The present Reign of the Degenerate would be at an end.
8. Increasing satisfactions and happiness would reduce neurotic rumination of death (i.e., strengthen resistance to the onset of religious neurosis).
9. Non-existent congregations — and even more, non-existent stipends — would cause the rational religious to take their coats off to render service, not services.
10. The relentless progress of outraged Nature's plan for completely destroying Man (local fights, battles, plagues, international war, purges, extermination camps, floods, fires, cancer, polio, heart disease, the atom bomb, the hydrogen bomb) would slow up, halt, and then recede.
11. Those at present constrained to avoid starvation by childish, useless, cruel, ignoble, or disgusting occupations, would find better employment for their hands and brains.

But all these things are the last reforms desired by the leading lights of religious neurosis. Take away human unhappiness, and you take away their reason for existence. Let us leave them poring over plans to double the size of London

Jehovah's Witnesses

By JAMES HERVEY JOHNSON

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES is an American religious sect founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1871. Like its bitter enemy, the Catholic Church, this sect claims to be the only people to follow "God's or Jehovah's Word". The Witnesses claim to be Jehovah's "chosen people". They believe that all "foreigners" or outsiders will be wiped out at the battle of Armageddon, when the forces of Jesus Christ leading a host of angels will defeat the forces of Satan, the present powerful devil, and that thereafter for 1,000 years (the millenium) Christ will rule the earth and the Witnesses will live in peace and happiness, after which the world will end and the members of the sect will live for ever in heaven with their God.

They deny there is a hell. Those who reject their belief will simply expire and fail to live with Jesus at his second coming or go to Heaven at the end of the millenium. The doctrine preached by the Catholics that those who did not believe would be roasted in Hell forever did not appeal to Russell. He denied that Jesus preached of Hell for unbelievers. The Catholics, who gain great control over their followers by preaching the fear of Hell, have bitterly opposed the Jehovites, and in Catholic Canada have had them jailed for conducting missionary work and distributing pamphlets.

Like the Catholics, the sect claims you must believe their doctrines or face extinction. There is no compromise: they do not believe other religious groups will be saved.

The Witnesses claim they are "not of this world". They anxiously await the second coming of Christ as prophesied in Revelation. Each World War was fondly believed by them to be the battle of Armageddon, and the end of rule by men. They do not vote, do not bear arms and have recently been given exemption from military service by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that they can be classified as conscientious objectors. This will probably attract many thousands to the fold. If the Witnesses sincerely believed the Bible to be God's word, they should seek exemption from military service as outlined in Deuteronomy 20 : 5 to 8, instead as outlined by the Government, which is of this world. They claim all governments, Capitalist and Communist, are under the domination of Satan. They do not class their religion as such, but use the slogan, "religions are rackets".

They have been persecuted by the Catholics, and by patriots who resented their refusal to salute the American or other flags. They have been banned in many other countries, especially behind the Iron Curtain, and jailed for their obstinate determination to refuse to follow governmental laws in conflict with their religious beliefs.

While refusing to vote or bear arms for the United States, the Witnesses are energetic in running to the courts to protect their rights to practise their religion, forgetting that all religions are Devil's organisations. A number of memorable decisions made in their favour have been beneficial in upholding the right of freedom of religious belief. Even Canada has, after court decisions, upheld the right of Witnesses to distribute literature in Catholic-dominated Quebec.

The Witnesses are taught to obey the Ten Commandments, liquor and tobacco are frowned upon, except that wine is permissible because Christ drank wine and was called a wine bibber, and Paul recommends drinking "wine for your stomach sake". While formal divorce is opposed, they do not object to breaking up a family if other members disagree with the beliefs of one member who is a

believer. This is, of course, following Christ's declaration that "I am come to bring not peace but a sword . . . to set father against the son, the mother against the daughter . . . and a man's enemies shall be of his own household", which they literally believe. Many families are disrupted because of this philosophy. They support members who have broken with their family, and point them out to newcomers as an example of taking a firm stand.

Those who study the strange and fanatical sect believe that it appeals to the under-privileged, the frustrated, and those who see little opportunity to gain happiness against the rigours of this life. They are promised "pie in the sky" if they will only believe and give of their time in selling Watch Tower pamphlets and literature, which is produced in prodigious quantities by their own help, much of it unpaid, in an eight-storey building in Brooklyn, New York. Observers say that the Witnesses are used by this vast publishing enterprise to promote sales which run into the millions of copies.

The control of the religious group is dictatorial, much like the Catholic Church which they criticise. Dissenters are given a cold shoulder and not permitted in high places. The sect is ruled by the President, Nathan H. Knorr, and a board of directors. Voting for the board is dependent upon a contribution of \$10, and one vote is allowed for each \$10.00 contributed. There has been little dissension with the Jehovah's Witnesses hierarchy, generally speaking, and the Witnesses, like the members of the Catholic Church, seem to enjoy having their thinking done for them by the head of their sect. This is a lazy man's way of living — not a thinker's way. They merely coast along, believing what they are told to believe and doing the work of the higher command. This consists chiefly of making house to house canvasses, searching for people who will buy their literature and believe the strange doctrines preached by them.

Confusing the Biblical injunction against drinking blood with transfusions, they refuse to allow blood transfusions to be given sick or injured Witnesses and a number have been reported to have died rather than take the advice of physicians who advised the transfusion. Not caring much for this world, it is easy to see why continuation of natural life is not too eagerly sought for. The sooner the end of human rule comes, the better, for then Christ will protect them in the peace and happiness they feel unable to achieve by themselves. Other work consists of standing on street corners selling the magazines printed by the Society. They have an elaborate system of call backs to bring prospects into the fold and make many if they find a person inclined to believe.

There must be a tremendous income from the millions of pamphlets printed, mostly on cheap newsprint, and apparently by writers unknown for literary ability. This income is added to by those who make bequests after their death and by contributions to the money box always in the rear of their churches, which are referred to as "Kingdom Halls".

(To be concluded)

"You will find as you look round the world that every single step of progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step towards the diminution of war, every step towards better treatment of coloured races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organised Churches of the world."
Bertrand Russell

The International Language

By W. AULD

THE APPARENT EASINESS of the *project Interlingue* as compared with the *language Esperanto* is wholly illusory, and I regret that Mr. Cutner has seen fit to recommend the former without, apparently, having made a thorough study of either. While it may be true that for some Western Europeans, with some knowledge of English or one of the Latin tongues, Interlingue is easier to read without study than Esperanto, this fact is used to conceal two defects of fundamental importance in its structure.

In the first place, readability is only one of the characteristics of a language. One must also be able to write it, to speak it, to understand it when spoken, and to think in it; and in these respects Interlingue is infinitely less easy than Esperanto, which represents the *common denominator* of facility in all functions. In the second place, the international language, to play its role with maximum efficiency, must obviously attract all peoples, and be of use to Asians, Africans, Eastern Europeans and others, as well as to Western Europeans. Interlingue makes no attempt to adapt itself to the linguistic habits of the former, and de Wahl, with scrupulous honesty, gave his project the name "Occidental" (as it was called until recent years) — a name which speaks for itself. Esperanto, on the other hand, while its word-stock, like that of Interlingue, is drawn from the major European tongues, by the agglutinative nature of its grammatical structure (i.e., its characteristic of word-building from roots, as in English *postman* from *post* and *man*; *welfare*, etc.; and wide use of affixes as in English *walker*, *dentist*, *happiness*, etc.), is made easier for everybody, including Asians and others.

Prof. C. L. Wrenn (*The English Language*, Methuen, pp. 35-36) writes:

A language that can, as could Old English, build up new words for new ideas from its own elements so that even the most technical terms have the sound and feel of native words, will have the strength which comes from unity of impression and the advantage of being fully understood most widely among its users. Except for a relatively small number of highly educated people, a language like modern English, with its vast tracts of thought which can scarcely be expressed without the aid of a Latinised vocabulary, must for many hearers lack something of naturalness and clarity in many areas of thought outside the common things and experiences of life.

If the reader substitutes "Esperanto" for "Old English" and "Interlingue" for "modern English" in the above passage, he will apprehend another reason for the superiority and strength of Esperanto. I have been careful to make a firm distinction between the *project Interlingue* and the *language Esperanto*. As the originator of Esperanto remarked, "For a language to be international, it is not enough to call it so". It is possible that Interlingue, if introduced simultaneously into every school in the world, might serve as some kind of international vehicle. So, for that matter, might ancient Hebrew, though few would recommend it for the purpose! Esperanto is a language because it is used as such by at least 100,000 people. Esperanto is used in every walk of life and has proved its value for every use to which language can be put. In some hundreds of families it is the principal, or even the only, common language. At this very moment some scientists and doctors are writing their treatises in the international language. Every year a large number of Congresses are held at which Esperanto is the only language spoken — and this includes not only "Esperanto-Congresses", but also congresses of, e.g., railway workers, which have merely adopted Esperanto as being more suitable for their discussions than a multiplicity of national tongues. The above list could

continue *ad infinitum*, fact could be added to fact to make an overwhelming case for Esperanto, but space forbids. Until Interlingue has proved itself in practice, it must remain a project, one of five or six hundred projects which have never succeeded in passing the blueprint stage.

One must realise from the start that language is a social phenomenon and serves a social need. Every language in the world is adapted to the needs of the social group which uses it, and Esperanto is adapted to the requirements of those who use it for international communication. Mr. Cutner writes that it "can never displace a language like English or French, so rich and varied in its literature". Now, this sentence contains two fallacies. There is no reason on earth why Esperanto should replace English or French, which fulfil the internal needs of the English- and French-speaking peoples, while Esperanto is designed to fulfil their external needs; there is equally no reason to suppose that, in the fulness of time, in a world-wide community in which the concept of nationality had died out, the national tongues might not die, as Latin died, while Esperanto continued to function because of the social need for it. This is a question which need hardly concern us, but it is necessary to clarify the essentially different roles of the national and international tongues.

Secondly, the literature of Esperanto is both actually and potentially as rich and varied as those of France and Britain: actually, because quantity is no indication of richness and variety, and the many thousands of works published in Esperanto since 1887 are as rich and varied as the hundreds of thousands published in any national tongue during the same period; and potentially, because the language, already as richly expressive as any national tongue, will, in the not far distant future, find its Dante and its Shakespeare. Already it has writers no less talented than those writing in other languages. Any person who cares to read the finest work in Esperanto can confirm for himself that this is no idle boast.

Mr. Cutner, though sympathetic, is less than fair to Esperanto in many respects. He is apparently unaware of the enormous strides taken by Esperanto in the last fifteen months, i.e., since the General Conference of UNESCO passed a resolution recognising the cultural value of Esperanto, and accepted the Universal Esperanto Association as a consultative body. We certainly do not want a lot of "useless talk" about the language problem by "UNO or similar bodies", but the talk in this case is proving far from useless, and the way for governmental introduction of Esperanto into the schools is clearly opened up by it. Indeed, the first steps towards this have already been taken in some countries, for example, in Slovenia (Jugoslavia). I am sure that should these plans reach fruition and Esperanto be officially introduced into the schools, Mr. Cutner will not be the last to applaud, for he is correct in saying that the introduction of an international language is long overdue, and his diagnosis of the problem to which Esperanto is already providing the remedy is penetrating and exact.

The Universal Esperanto Association has associations and delegates in 80 countries. British readers should turn to the British Esperanto Association, 140 Holland Park Avenue, London, W.11.

"To call ourselves Christian when the whole of life is one continuous refutation of Christianity in practice, is just the height of indecency, and also of moral cowardice at its worst".—Nietzsche

The Rising Generation

V—WHEN WAS JESUS BORN?

THERE CAN BE but few Freethinkers who have not been triumphantly told some time or other that they must believe in Christ Jesus because they are following Christian chronology dating from the year of our Lord—1 A.D. That was the year of the birth of Christ. Well, was it?

The truth is that—even if an historical Jesus is admitted—no one knows when he was born. *No one*. The various authors who have written the (so-called) *Lives of Jesus* have utterly failed to give us a date that they can agree to among themselves. With very few exceptions, however, they do agree that the year 1 A.D. is quite impossible.

As Jesus was born when Herod was alive (according to the Gospels) and as Matthew distinctly says the infants who were massacred at the famous Massacre of the Innocents had to be “from two years old or under”, Jesus must have been somewhere near that age at the time. But Herod died B.C.4—so Jesus could not have been born afterwards, and therefore the date 1 A.D. is completely wrong.

Luke who, in general, contradicts his three comrades—the other Gospel writers—plumps for a date when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria, which did not occur until 7 A.D. So if Jesus is really an historical character—which is very doubtful—he was born between B.C. 6 and 7 A.D. Of course, as Luke so flagrantly contradicts Matthew, strenuous efforts have been made to prove that Cyrenius had been Governor of Syria at an earlier date—that is, he was Governor twice. There is no evidence of this whatever.

Nobody knows either the month when or the day on which he was born. Our dear old Christmas Day—the 25th of December—now given as the date of his birth, was quite unknown to the early Church; in fact, it was only made the birthday of Jesus in the fourth century. In actual fact, December 25th had been kept as a kind of religious festival for *centuries* before the birth of Jesus; it was, as Gibbon said, “the winter solstice when the pagans annually celebrated the birth of the sun”. And as Jesus is made to say he “was the Light of the World”, what more appropriate birthday could have been chosen?

Unfortunately the Gospels clearly indicate that mid-winter could *not* have been the right time—so we are left quite ignorant when the Saviour of the World was born; we do *not* know the date or the month or the day. H.C.

A Crowded Platform

A MEMBER of the N.S.S. Executive recently received a request from the “Assemblies of God Radio Dept.” to bring to the platform “fifty witnesses who will tell the audience of the blessings they have received through following the teachings of the Secular Society. They must be in a position to state the particular sins and vices which bound them before they were delivered by accepting the teachings of the Society. I will bring fifty witnesses who will inform the audience of the vices from which they have been delivered by the power of the Gospel of Christ” The writer, describing himself as a Revivaltime Evangelist, strangely regarded all this as “a debate”. His conception of a debate is radically different from ours.

A fifty-strong chorus of “Hallelujahs” would no more prove Christianity true than would fifty contorting Hottentots prove the validity of their gibberish. Would fifty

Buddhists testifying to the power of Buddhism prove its truth? Would an assemblage of Zulus extolling the power and love of their remotest ancestor prove the divinity of Unkulunkulu? If Christianity can be adequately defended by fifty people—or a million—saying they have received benefits, every other religion on earth can match it and cancel it out.

We do not seek to advance Secularism by regimenting fifty of our members to stand on the platform and have their noses counted against fifty Christian noses. Instead of noses we offer to supply *one Secularist head*. The Christians can use as many heads as they like—inside equal time.

As for Secularism confessing to the horrible thefts and murders they did before they became Secularists, we cannot comply. Our membership is not drawn from such ranks. And we suspect that the fifty reformed characters with which our Evangelist friend threatens us were not really bad characters at all, but merely cheap exhibitionists. G.H.T.

Reflections of a Miner

ALTHOUGH I have been a reader of THE FREETHINKER for many years, this is the first time I have ventured a contribution. I dare say I can do justice to the Freethinker's position more clearly in discussions with friends than when trying to explain my views in writing.

Many who profess to be Freethinkers or who join advanced movements seem confused as to what constitutes free thought, especially in the political field. Many so-called “leftists” profess adherence to the principles of democracy, yet want to hold on to the *status quo*. To me, Socialism is a natural process of evolution. Nations will eventually have to collaborate to see where they can channel their goods to ensure that every country gets a fair share. Possibly this may come about after another world war or an endless series of smaller ones.

In the great question of Birth Control—too little food for too many mouths—the great enemy here is, of course, the Church, which has opposed every major reform that would benefit mankind. Yet its Holy Book records the killing of thousands in holy battles and the murder of untold numbers of children.

Murderers are hanged in the belief that we are thereby safeguarding society. Yet do we know sufficient about the brain and the glands to tell how these may affect the murderer? We cannot say what makes men become murderers. We cannot even say whether we are completely normal ourselves. Environment, health and education are also important factors to be taken into consideration.

Many people I have known never read and are content with surface things like football pools and darts. These, of course, may be good fun, so long as they do not exclude more worthwhile pursuits. The great value of a paper like THE FREETHINKER is that it helps men and women to do their own thinking.

ANTHONY SCOTT

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