

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVI — No. 35

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

In 1834 there appeared in Paris the famous pamphlet of the priest Lamennais, *Words of a Believer*, in which he demanded that the Church should take up the cause of the people in opposition to the ruling classes. Pope Gregory XVI flatly turned down the proposal, describing the pamphlet as "small in size, immense in its perversity," and proceeded to condemn the whole democratic movement within the French Church and closed down its journal, *The Future*. Lamennais seceded from the Church, took an active part in the 1848 revolution and sat as an extreme Socialist in the French Assembly that year. All the Radicals and Republicans in Paris turned out at the funeral in 1854.

He had died as a heretic under the ban of the Church. Nevertheless he has possibly had more influence *inside* the Church than outside it. A characteristic of the Vatican is to learn from its enemies and to borrow ideas even from heretics.

A Prophetic Warning

In 1878, eight years after the proclamation of his infallibility, Pope Pius IX, Gregory's successor, died in Rome and now appears destined for posthumous sanctity. His successor, Leo XIII, statesman and scholar, and probably the ablest modern Pope, had a long reign marked by a number of important pronouncements. He found an unopened letter in his predecessor's study, written by a French disciple of the Socialist Henri de St. Simon, and containing a solemn warning that the new class of workers created by the Industrial Revolution was becoming completely alienated from the Church and from Christianity itself; moreover, the future lay with the workers, despite their miserable lot under a system of unrestricted competition, and for Christianity to survive in the new world being opened up, the Church had to win the confidence of the masses by taking an active interest in their welfare. The previously inarticulate masses were entering history and would have the final word in determining its course.

Such was the gist of this remarkable document; it was to prove the germ of important developments in the social field. Actually Leo was probably as conservative as his predecessor, but a man of superior intelligence. As a Papal diplomat he had visited England and Belgium, then the most advanced industrial lands in Europe, and had seen the terrible conditions in which the workers lived in the early industrial age. Nearly 70 when he became Pope, he at once set to work considering what changes of policy could prevent the current rift between the Church and the industrial workers reaching impassable extremes. It seems that Pereire's letter was the germ of the famous Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (On New Matters), possibly the most influential ecclesiastical document of modern times.

The Situation before 1891

Since the condemnation of Lamennais and his paper half

a century earlier, the breach between Rome and the democratic movements had become absolute. Under Pius IX (1846-78) the R.C. Church had pursued a consistently reactionary policy in every sphere. However, as Pereire, the writer of the letter, and a Catholic convert, had seen clearly, this policy was a boomerang which must one day recoil on the head of the Church. After the middle of the

19th century the process of industrialisation began to develop very rapidly in western Europe and North America and the new class of industrial workers, the Marxist "Proletariat," increased in number and importance, and as it expanded in Catholic lands it found the Catholic Church

inseparably allied with its political enemies and economic exploiters. In theory the Church preached resignation to the disinherited, while in practice it fiercely opposed all efforts at social reform and stood solidly on the side of the *status quo*. This was the situation in 1891 when Pope Leo made the first overture by the Church of Rome to the industrial workers.

Social Catholicism

The encyclical was not solely the work of a talented Pope, but the combined effort of a group of Catholic sociologists, including Cardinal Manning, whose intervention in the great London Dock Strike of 1889 was perhaps the first open declaration of the new approach of the Catholic Church. It was recognised that the latter must now take account of the of the great and growing industrial class in the social field. Already, in 1870, the Catholic historian had referred to Marx's *Capital* as the Koran of the Socialists. The workers were going after other gods! They must be brought back and the Church must meet them half way.

Two Great Encyclicals

This attitude took effect in the two great social encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931, Pius XI, to mark the 40th year after Leo's). They together form the authoritative basis of Catholic social policy and of the world-wide movement, Catholic Action, which now exists to propagate it.

Nor has their influence been confined to the Catholic Church; it has also been considerable in Protestant circles. The late Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Temple, publicly stated that these two Papal pronouncements were the most important issued by any Christian Church on the mutual relations of Christianity and modern society. In social and political affairs Rome has always been opportunist and adaptable. A brief summary of the two documents will form the subject matter of the next article.

VOLTAIRE CELEBRATIONS

Mr. F. A. Ridley represented the National Secular Society at the recent Voltaire Celebrations in Geneva. Readers will be pleased to note that his report of the proceedings will appear in a forthcoming issue.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Social

Catholicism - 1

By F. A. RIDLEY

Problems of the Heart

By COLIN MCCALL

IT IS GRATIFYING to have one's views authoritatively confirmed. In these columns on October 22nd, 1954, I wrote: "But there is, of course, much that is vulgar in Catholicism. Think of the garish pictures of those selfsame saints and the gaudy ikons that are prominently displayed in our large stores prior to 'decorating' Catholic houses and schools." The confirmation comes from Father Anthony Lauck, C.S.C., teacher of art at Notre Dame University, U.S.A., writing in *The Catholic Digest* for June 1956. "Whatever sculptural form may exist" in the "traditional church-goods statue," he says, "is buried under a maze of garish colour, heavy drapery, and naturalistic details. There is no chance for a supernatural or æsthetic note to come through."

Father Lauck is searching, in particular, for good images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and he quotes some responses to his inquiries. "I don't think there are any good images" (Head of Notre Dame reference library); "You will have great difficulty in finding good examples of the Sacred Heart" ("one of our best-known makers of stained glass"); "There are no good Sacred Heart pictures" ("A religious who helped organise the largest body of Catholic artists and art teachers"); "The usual image of the Sacred Heart has become almost a synonym for religious vulgarity" (Graham Carey). And Maurice Lavanoux, long-time editor of *Liturgical Arts*, declined to speak on the subject because "it was so hard to find images worth talking about."

Father Lauck describes a holy card which he has carried for years in his prayer book. "I seldom notice what it represents," he writes. "If I do, I observe what a weak, effeminate face our Lord has, and what sickly colours cover the card. The figure has the hands and heart of a child. It emphasises details which repel . . . this effeminate image will appeal to few men." From this, the writer goes on to some general comments. "Notice how few men attend parish devotions," he remarks, and asks: "Could this be in some degree the fault of the pictures and statues which men find in church?" "Sentimentality and forced emotions drip indiscriminately from the statues," he says, whereas men "need awakening images, quickening images, absorbing images, in church" and, whilst the pictures of the Sacred Heart "may please a young girl," they "may nauseate a grown man."

This is plain speaking, and it is clear, from an accompanying photograph, that Father Lauck is not merely a glib talker: he is capable of putting his own advice into effect. A Sacred Heart carving executed by him has the strength and nobility which is lacking in most of the others. Æsthetically, it must be judged far and away superior to them. But it is a completely unrealistic, stylised, figure with, I think, Egyptian affinities. Indeed, it might well serve as a mummy-case. The head is dignified, and the hands are beautifully simple, the palms being circular and concave, thus suggesting the nail-wounds. Whether it is a fitting ikon, is open to doubt. And there is one æsthetic flaw, too; one that, so far as I can see, is unavoidable: namely, the Sacred Heart itself.

What can an artist do with so essentially unæsthetic a thing as an exposed heart? A heart, moreover, that must be the focal point of the painting or sculpture. All kinds of devices have been tried yet, not surprisingly, none has proved successful. Sometimes, Jesus has been represented opening his robes at the neck to reveal a heart with radiating rays; in others it is painted on or, as it were, through

the garment. In a modern Italian bas-relief (photographically reproduced by Father Lauck) it protrudes slightly above the clothing. Though the work has quality as "pure sculpture," says Father Lauck, the heart is too small. The Father has certainly not erred in this direction; in his own carving the heart is like a large rosette high on the chest. It is quite unsuccessful: an æsthetic flaw, as I have said, and — so far as an atheist can judge — unsatisfactory as a Sacred Heart also. Were it removed, the genuine eloquence of the carving would then be unimpaired. Yet I would doubt its general appeal to an unartistic person; and the bulk of Catholics (men as well as women) are unartistic — a fact which Father Lauck must face.

"Bad art hampers devotion," he says. But is it true? "We seek figures of our Lord which have vitality and animation, as well as good construction," he adds. But "we" means "he" and his fellow artists and art-teachers, not the Catholic laity — or even the Catholic priesthood — as a whole. The Croatian sculptor, Ivan Mestrovic, created an over-lifesize plaster in an attempt to solve this same problem of the Sacred Heart. Here again, it is with the heart itself that he most noticeably fails: it resembles a somewhat misshapen orb held in the left hand close to the chest, so that one looks for the non-existent sceptre in the other. Failures, failures, all the way.

I have devoted some space to consideration of this matter because it seems to be a particular illustration of what I think has been a Christian vulgarisation of art and, indeed, of life. (Vulgarisation should not be confused with popularisation: great art can withstand popularisation, witness the Venus de Milo). The heart symbolises love and affection, and does so most beautifully as an "idea"; an idea which has had sublime expression in prose and verse; but an idea which, expressed pictorially, is vulgarised. "I love you with all my heart" is a hackneyed but legitimate poetic statement, with a meaning that we all apprehend. It would lose both its poetry and its meaning if "heart" were taken literally to mean the organ; it would be as repellent as Father Lauck's holy card mentioned earlier. Now, in the visual arts it is only possible to portray a heart in some likeness to the organ — with disastrous consequences! It is possible to portray love (in its different aspects) in various ways but never, I hold, by pictorial representation of the human heart. The Roman Catholic Church has tried to do so — unsuccessfully, as Father Lauck concedes. He still hopes for success in the impossible task; the bulk of his fellow-religionists, in fact, care very little. What does vulgarisation matter to them? They have been surrounded by vulgarity from birth; their religion is vulgar — even disgusting — and it will remain so to the bitter end.

Voice of Freedom, the American Freethought monthly printed partly in English, partly in German, thinks that anti-clericalism among Spanish workers is increasing. In support of this view, it quotes a report in the *New York Times* from Bilbao — "a region where the Church has a tight hold on the minds of the people." The report states that "Roman Catholic priests said anti-clericalism among the industrial workers in this area had reached 'truly alarming' dimensions." What constitutes "truly alarming" dimensions in the eyes of priests is difficult to say, but the news is encouraging.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE CHURCH AND MAMMON
By SEAMUS

The Expanding Universe

By G. H. TAYLOR

A MENTAL PICTURE of what an expanding universe implies may perhaps be gained by considering it as a tank of goldfish. The more goldfish are added the greater the density and the less space for each fish. Thus, in order to compensate for loss of space it may be necessary to get a larger tank. In this way the density may be kept steady and workable, each fish retaining its quota of space.

The "goldfish" of the universe are galaxies of stars. In the voids between them new stars continuously appear and collect into galaxies, yet the universe does not become overcrowded. It is as though the "goldfish" automatically spread themselves to make way for newcomers, and create their own "water" (space) as they go.

It is this "flight of the galaxies" that makes our expanding universe.

The question "What does it expand into?" makes space something which exists prior to matter, and is therefore irrelevant. Space, or space-time, is a conceptual tool not needed until there is something to measure and some movement to calculate.

The flight of the galaxies is truly universal. It happens everywhere. And there is something else that is equally common to all regions of the universe: that is the distribution of elements. The universe shows the same pattern throughout. We do not find all the hydrogen in one corner, all the iron in another, all the uranium in another and so on. The distribution is consistent. The proportion also appears consistent, too, the lighter elements, such as hydrogen and helium, being plentiful, and the heavy elements a rarity.

The facts indicate, then, that in some way the lighter elements get a start on the heavier—pre-date them, in fact. We should therefore expect the lightest—the one-electron element hydrogen—to have been the first in existence, and the ancestor of all other forms of atom.

How, then, did it all begin? What caused the flight of the galaxies? How did the universe evolve? The first thunderous fiat of the Biblical Jehovah was heard only in the realm of ancient myth-making. What is the scientific answer?

Today two rival theories hold the field, and they may be called, perhaps not too loosely, the British and American schools respectively.

In the days of Eddington, a quarter of a century ago, the proposed solution of the problem was, very roughly, fission or fusion? In other words, is the universe the result of a breaking down process (fission) or a building-up process (fusion). Lemaitre, a pupil of Eddington's (and incidentally a priest) saw the birth of the universe from one giant radioactive atom, whose explosion meant the beginning of time and space. The theory failed on several counts; for one thing it would not explain why the lighter elements predominate to such an extent.

The idea of sudden creation of the many forms of atom from a common ancestor has not, however, been given up by some American astronomers. They postulate that about 5,000 million years ago matter consisted exclusively of neutrons, these being under the influence of compressed radiant energy. (A neutron, like a proton, has a standard weight of one but no electric charge. It is, as it were, an uncharged proton.) The spreading radiation providing the temperature, this nucleus gave rise to a building process as a result of which, in half an hour by our clock, "creation" was accomplished, the temperature being estimated

at 15,000 million degrees Centigrade in the first second of the explosion.

What is meant by "creation" is not, of course, something coming miraculously out of nothing, but the rapid integration of a great dust of all the known kinds of atom from a neutron ancestor. The half-hour is arrived at by considering the fact that free neutrons lose half their number in 15 minutes, so the job would have to be done quickly, if the various elements had to be built up step by step. After about 250 million years—so the theory goes—the flying apart process would spend itself and then the dust would begin to draw together into stars, and the stars gravitate together into galaxies. This presumably could take place piecemeal while the flight of the galaxies continued.

The British school (Thomas Gold, F. Hoyle, etc.) prefer the theory of "continuous creation" to that of suddenness. The raw material of all existence is hydrogen, which is being continuously formed. Single hydrogen atoms, according to Gold, a cosmographer at the Royal Observatory, come into being continuously in the voids between the galaxies. Only a thin gas at first, they gravitate together and finally become new stars, and the latter then form into galaxies. Thus a star, in its beginning, is nothing more than a hot ball of hydrogen. Nuclear processes then build up other elements; by fusion of its atoms hydrogen will make helium, and, later, carbon will arise from the fusion of helium atoms, and so other atoms will be gradually built up.

As the universal ancestor in continuous "creation," hydrogen will naturally be the element most frequently met with in the universe, with possibly uranium the least frequent. In these fusions there is a loss of mass, released as energy. The loss may be of small proportions, but enough, it may be noted, to give the hydrogen bomb its power.

From Bulgaria

OUR CONTRIBUTOR Mr. D. Shipper has succeeded in establishing correspondence with Freethinkers and groups in Scandinavia, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary and Finland.

Half in jest, Mr. Taylor sent him a Chad captioned "Wot! Nothing from Bulgaria?" Not to be daunted, Mr. Shipper used as his medium the Bulgarian radio information service. His latest letter, addressed to Mr. Dave Shipper, 66 Tudor Road, Cardiff, South Wales, England (*sic.*) is as follows:

Republique Populaire de Bulgarie

RADIODIFFUSION BULGARE,

Sofia, July 26th, 1956.

Dear Sir,—

No, Mr. Shipper. We do not have any anti-religious societies in Bulgaria and I do not think their existence would be justified. Religious problems have never been acute in this country to the extent they are, for example, in Italy, and the need of an organised struggle against religion has never existed. Although freedom of religion is fully guaranteed, the churches are open and the priests are free to preach, religion is gradually dying out with the advance of scientific thinking and discoveries. You would find few believers among the young generation, but after all, this seems to be the case in Britain and most other countries too. Actually, I may say that for many years now, even before the war, there have been few real believers in this country.—Yours sincerely, NINA ROBEVA,
In Charge of Listeners' Letters.

This Believing World

Two very religious shows our ITV recently held are worth noting. One was the now famous 64,000 Quiz in which a student of the Bible (over many years) completely failed to answer an elementary question on it. He was asked to name the New Testament book in which the 11 names of the Apostles of Jesus were given — excluding Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It was, of course, Acts, but he said John, which, curiously enough, does not give the list. Not even the Pope knows why. It was an unexpected lesson to the contestant, who thus lost the £800 which he had previously won.

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Whether this particular question was really taken out of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, as he claimed, by ex-Inspector Fabian or not, we do not know. But we are prepared to give 100 questions on the Bible so difficult that not one Bible student in 10,000 could answer. Anybody who gets as far as winning £800 answering questions on the Bible ought to have the humility to be content. Especially if he is still in the elementary stage.

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The other show was a picture of three "young people" asking a Christian priest questions. Two of them were well dressed and courteous. The third was a young gentleman whose principle qualifications were an incredible vulgarity and ignorance. He was, of course, "agen" Christianity, and no doubt was a godsend to the organisers as a splendid example of "unbelief" — the others being quite obviously examples of whole-hearted believers. Isn't it about time that TV or ITV organisers understood that "unbelief" does not depend on bad English and illiteracy and bad manners?

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While it is true that the Rev. Dr. W. E. Sangster, of the *Sunday Times* is striving for a whole-hearted return to Fundamentalism, quite a number of his readers are fighting for a "Christian message" which has "reasonableness, simplicity, and Truth" on its side, and they claim that the only way this can be accomplished is "by adjusting religious dogmas to the results of science and scholarship of this day." One correspondent to the *Sunday Times* points out that it was "scientists and reformers, heretics or modernists" who have exploded "Christian myths" and who were in consequence "subjected to the most fierce opposition and even persecuted."

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It is as well that this should be stressed for naturally it is about the last thing that a Fundamentalist like Dr. Sangster would want anybody to know. A "reasonable" Christianity would have to do without many pious characteristics of the Original Message of "our Lord." Modern Christianity indeed is ready to throw overboard the Virgin Birth, and even a "physical" Resurrection. But it will have to do much more than that if it is going to survive. Whether a watered-down Christianity is worth saving is another problem altogether. We think the Old and the New are completely out-of-date. They are anachronisms.

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Five hundred years ago (in 1456) the Roman Church decided that it had done a grave wrong to Joan of Arc — and, as Mgr. R. A. Knox recently told us, "reversed the sentence by which she had been burned as a witch." The Roman Church takes great pride in this reversed judgment — but surely the original must stand? The poor girl was tried by a bench of bishops, who presumably knew their Bible. The evidence proved to them that Joan was a witch. The Bible says that all witches must be put to death, and

the Church faithfully followed this Divine instruction — and no "reversal" can change the Bible nor what the Church did.

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The Roman Church followed the burning of Joan by the burning of hundreds of thousands of other poor people as witches or wizards. In following the Bible it had good authority, and even at this day it fully believes in witches and wizards — as indeed even John Wesley did. The whole atmosphere of religion breathes superstition and credulity, and Joan of Arc was a victim to them, as were millions of others. No amount of word-plugging can absolve the Church, and even Mgr. Knox will have found that out by now.

The Rising Generation

X—THE STORY OF SAMSON

NO ONE CAN DENY that in the story of Samson we have one of the most picturesque and romantic in the whole of the Bible. It has formed the subject of some splendid paintings, music, and drama, and his very name has passed into our language as the symbol of strength just as that of his wife Delilah, that of perfidy. But when all is said and done, the real question must be — is the story of Samson as related in the Bible true? The answer is very definitely, it is *not*.

The meaning of the word Samson gives the show away. It is "solar." Like all or nearly all the names in the Bible, it is quite artificial. Samson is the *Sun* — or a human delineation of the Sun — just like Hercules.

The Twelve Exploits of Hercules belong to classical mythology and can be explained in terms of the famous Signs of the Zodiac; but, of course, when pagan fables were adapted for the Bible they were "transmuted" to suit the Israelite story. This is admitted by Prof. Goldziher in his *Hebrew Mythology*, in which he says that "The most complete and rounded-off Solar Myth extant in Hebrew is that of Shimshon (Samson), a cycle of mythical conceptions fully comparable with the Greek myth of Hercules."

Samson's "exploits" are some of the most thrilling in the Bible, and it is not surprising that, as so many pagan nations had their "strong" or "mighty" men, the Bible writers endowed one for the Jews. The Hindus called their strong man the Strong Rama, the Assyrians called theirs Sandon, shown to be like Samson, a lion killer. In Ninevah, they also had a great king and famous lion killer, while the Babylonians had a mighty strong man called Izdubar, who killed wild animals and, like Samson and Hercules, had long hair. It is easy to guess that the long hair which distinguishes Sun-gods really represents the sun's rays. Two other strong heroes in ancient religions are the Greek Bellerophon, and Thor, the Scandinavian God. Thor is certainly the Sun personified — like Hercules.

The Hebrew writers of the Old Testament made up the history of their nation (if ever there really was a Hebrew nation); and as their one wish was to be considered as warlike as the Assyrians, Babylonians and Egyptians, they invented the stories of the battles of the Israelites against the "Philistines" and other races. In addition, like them they had to have a hero, a strong hero, a mighty lion killer, as well as a great lover. So was Samson invented — but he was nothing but a paper hero — a myth like so many others, and merely a representation of the Sun.

H.C.

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.

L. WARING.—The Quiz answer was correct after all, and the "correction" in the issue of August 10th was done erroneously during Mr. Taylor's absence on holiday. The World Union of Freethinkers met at Conway Hall, London, in 1946, exclusively under the auspices of the British section, it being difficult after the war to contact and organise the European bodies, though there were some foreign visitors present.

H. McADAM.—(1) The "Yankee Messiah" would be Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism. (2) Brigham Young, his polygamist follower, was a carpenter.

R. WARDLE.—We cannot supply you with addresses of Freethinkers in your locality, but we can supply them with yours if you wish.

W. W. HERBERTSON.—There is usually considered to be a slight difference between Theism and Deism. Both reject doctrinal religion, but the Theist's God is personal, the Deist's impersonal; the Theist's God, that is, can be prayed to. This distinction, however, is only a matter of literary consent, and not a hard and fast dictionary ruling.

Mrs. E. HARLOW.—The film *Leather Saint* would probably bore you to death; we hear it is Catholic propaganda of the mushy type.

P. J. R.—We hope soon to have a review of the new work on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

GREGORY S. SMELTERS (Sydney).—The journal *Befreiung*, which you mention, is the Swiss *Freidenker*, to which name the Swiss Freethinkers reverted in January this year (they were allied to the German Monistenbund).

G. A. PLIMMER.—See B.M.A.'s Report on "Spirit Healing" published last May.

N. H. JUDGE.—See article on "The Expanding Universe" in this issue.

A. SLACK.—All rival sects must more or less be "blasphemers," the one to the other.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (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.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.
- Platt Fields, 3 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and others.
- Merseaside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.
- Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bristol Downs).—Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: DAVE SHIPPER.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Park).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: J. L. SHEPHERD and others.

Notes and News

NEWS of progress made by the N.S.S. continues to be encouraging and, as foreshadowed some weeks ago in these notes, we have now to report the formation of yet another branch, to be known as Wales and Western Branch. The new branch is at present based on Bristol (where a Humanist group has been struggling for existence) and Cardiff. The President is Mr. S. M. Caines, of Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff; and Mr. P. E. J. Jordan, 18 Pembroke Road, Southville, Bristol, 3, Vice-President, and Mr. D. Shipper liaison officer between the two centres. Four N.S.S. speakers have already been in operation on the Downs speaking site, Bristol, and the question of some winter activity is under consideration.

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THERE was a good attendance at the inaugural meeting and some members of the new branch, owing to their isolated position up the Welsh valleys, had never before met a fellow-Freethinker. It was decided to hold meetings on the last Tuesday in each month at the Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff, and the first of these will be on September 25th.

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THE Martin Luther film has certainly upset Manchester's Catholics, and when recently shown at the Gaiety Cinema, in the Cottonopolis entertainment centre, it was picketed each evening by sorrowful Catholics with copies of an anti-Lutheran pamphlet. Shown again in Eccles, on the outskirts of Manchester, the local Catholic Actionists tried a different plan. Instead of the usual picketing, a copy of the leaflet was distributed to every Catholic home in the parish.

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THE International Catholic Auxiliaries are a group of over 200 girls from 15 different countries, religious fanatics, thoroughly indoctrinated and pledged to work for Catholicism in underdeveloped countries under the command of the local Bishop. The Society was founded in Brussels in 1937, under the inspiration of Father Vincent Lebbe, a Belgian Missionary in China. Soon after World War II the scheme was enlarged to admit girls from other countries with the same illogical ideals. It now has members from all the countries of Europe, the United States and Canada, and the East. They work in teams of from three to eight girls and are an addition to the well-disciplined international Catholic army.

QUIZ

1. Who was the first Director-General of UNESCO?
2. What sort of an electric charge has an electron?
3. Sterilisation was banned by a Papal Encyclical of 1930, except for one purpose. What purpose?
4. As a young man Chapman Cohen crossed swords in controversy, first in the open air and later through THE FREETHINKER, with one who became a Bishop. Who was he?
5. What is the correct missing word? "A little _____ is a dangerous thing."
6. How long has the Church been separated from the State in France?
7. "God give you better health — and more sense." Who spoke these words and under what circumstances?
8. When and why did the Pope rebuke the Catholic Party in Italy?

(Answers on page 284)

The Imposture of Lourdes — 3

By H. CUTNER

ONE OF THE QUOTATIONS given by Dr. Guy Valot in his book, *Lourdes et l'illusion*, is from Prof. Pitres of the Bordeaux Faculty of Medicine — "If ever anybody tells you about the so-called miracles of healing at Lourdes, you must see in them only the shameful exploitation of human stupidity." And it is as well to remember that in accepting the thesis written by Dr. Thérèse Valot on Lourdes — the first part of the above work — the jury of the Faculty of Medicine at Paris conferred on it the highest mention, and thus implicitly recognised that there are no miracles in Lourdes. In this, the President of the jury, Professor Paul Chevallier, had with him, in full accord, his three colleagues and publicly said so.

Now, as it happens, one of the books which helped to propagate the story of the Lourdes miracles was also a thesis written by a Catholic apologist, Mme. Bon, whose husband, Dr. Bon, was always a strong supporter of the "miracles" of healing at the Shrine. It was at first accepted by a medical professor who appears never to have read the book itself, but only its "moderate" conclusions. When his colleagues found out what it really was about, after the thesis had been printed, it was unanimously rejected by the Faculty. But this did not prevent a speaker at a Catholic Conference in 1955 (attended by Dr. Guy Valot) from proudly declaring in answer to the query, "Are there miracles at Lourdes?" that there were, and in proof showed the thesis of Mme. Bon without declaring that it had been rejected by the Medical Faculty at Paris. Dr. Valot was not allowed to speak, and as it is most unlikely that any Catholic ever challenges any declaration by another Catholic, especially at a Catholic Conference, everybody there must have believed that the "miracles" were backed up by the Medical Faculty of Paris. Thus is Catholic truth circulated.

Dr. Valot, in exposing the way in which Catholic apologists like Dr. Boissarie wrote up the "miracles," points out that they were not acting as doctors but as apologists for Catholicism; and in a note he adds:

We are no longer in 1912. Since then, we have had two wars. Churches used to be empty in 1914 but they are now full in proportion to the fear of atomic bombs. In fact, thanks to this fear, to votes for women, to the cinema, to TV, all religions have benefited in this year of grace 1956. If Catholicism is doing so well, Islam and Buddhism are doing even better. In India there have never been so many sacred cows and monkeys. What should a rich Hindu do to merit the praise of those around him? Should he give food to any of his neighbours dying from hunger? Not at all, our Hindu would much prefer to help a hospital for old rheumatic cows — indeed, if at the moment of death a cow would urinate on him, his family would jump with joy. Religious rows and the movements of populations in India, due to the creation of two Islamic states, have been responsible for more victims than World War II, but nobody appears to have minded. Renan well said: "Human stupidity by itself gives us an idea of the infinite."

The two authors of *Lourdes et l'illusion* worked in perfect accord, going through the Lourdes archives, not at Lourdes where they are not housed, but at Paris. They could not tell all, but they read all they could, bored most of the time, often discouraged, and glad to find a rare pearl missed by a propagandist. They were lucky in the fact that once they had gone through a painful phase of Agnosticism they felt at last free, outside all religions; and however strong their convictions, this was at least a guarantee of their absolute impartiality.

Already this book has had numerous appreciations, one from an ex-President of the National Order of Doctors, Rene Leriche, whose researches in abolishing "pain" in

illness brought upon him not only the thunder of angry Catholics, but also the angry denunciations of Protestants. Did it not say in the Bible, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children"? And how dare any doctor take upon himself the task of making childbirth painless? And so, speaking on the French TV, Dr. Leriche said, "Pain is silly, and helps no one. Do you know that I have even helped to abolish the sufferings from pain of priests and nuns and — well, how pleased they were no longer to suffer!" Hearing these words, comments Dr. Valot, "the spotless theologians should have shuddered with horror, tore their clothes and buried their heads in ashes, thus following the finest biblical traditions — but they didn't; which proves how dogmas vary."

It is a great pity that space forbids me to quote some writers like the great French neurologist Charcot, and the famous novelist, Huysmans, both of whom railed at the superstition and trickery reigning in Lourdes. Huysmans became a convert to the Trappists, and his sympathies were with Catholicism; but he saw enough of Lourdes to recognise its crudities and credulity.

But here is a specimen of both these qualities from their book, *Modern Miraculous Cures*, by the Drs. Leuret and Bon, published in 1950:

Mlle Malgogne followed the Procession of the Holy Sacrament and, as in the case of the sacred Pool in Bethesda, she heard the "Get up and walk." She had been bedridden for 18 months, yet she walked at once. Unfortunately, she had attached her skirt to a body-belt which became loose and she lost her skirt, with the result that she followed the Holy Sacrament, the doctors, and their Holinesses the Bishops, attired only in a chemise and with her legs unclothed — causing a certain emotion. The two doctors, comments Dr. Valot, must have lost all sense of proportion in their apologetic delirium, for they should have realised that the Holy Virgin could not possibly have cured Mlle. Malgogne at the cost of her modesty.

The two Drs. Valot were astonished not only to find that there was nowhere a reasoned criticism of Lourdes from the medical-rationalist point of view, but also how often the myths of miracle cures varied in details. Their well-documented book supplies that "long-felt-want"; but it must be translated into English. Already it is being translated (or has been) in some European languages.

But there is a tragic sequel — the untimely death of Dr. Thérèse Valot. She was killed in a motor car accident on April 4th this year. Her husband is heartbroken and of course her death, according to the Catholic press, was due entirely to an angry Deity having his revenge on an impious writer, an unbeliever in the miracles of Lourdes. One is reminded of the death of Zola, put down to his unbelief in exactly the same way, though there are now people who are convinced that Zola was in reality murdered by some very pious Catholic deliberately stopping up the chimney of his room.

All his readers must send their sincere sympathies to Dr. Valot and wish him all the success his remarkable book so thoroughly deserves.

OBITUARY

WILLIAM PETER ADAMSON

WE regret to announce the death, on July 4th, 1956, of William Peter Adamson, retired chemist, of Portsoy, Banffshire, for many years a member of the National Secular Society. We extend our sympathy to Mr. Adamson's widow and relatives.

An Industrial Chaplaincy

By LEON SPAIN (U.S.A.)

SECULARISTS have been vigorous in avowing their opposition to the existence of a chaplaincy in many departments of public life. The prestige and prerogative enjoyed by the chaplains is above and beyond whatever useful services they perform. However, despite the futility of the divine services which the chaplain renders, the principal bone of contention is that such an office should not be maintained at the taxpayer's expense.

In Webster's *Universal Unabridged Dictionary* a chaplain is defined as "a clergyman who belongs to a ship of war, to a regiment of land forces, or to some public institution, for performing divine service; a clergyman who is retained to perform divine service in a family." The definition is an exposure of the contradictions inhering in the office of chaplain. Apart from performing divine service, the chaplain is supposed to beseech divine aid for the armed services to which he is attached, and for the "souls" in his charge. We have seen, in practice, warring armies employing the services of chaplains belonging to the same church, imploring aid from the same Almighty God to help their respective armies and navies.

Chaplaincies have been commonplace in armies, navies, schools, hospitals, and legislatures. However, a new arrival on the social scene is considering the thoroughgoing use of the chaplaincy as an instrument in its everyday routine. An industrial chaplaincy is bidding fair to reach the power and prestige enjoyed by the chaplaincy in institutions where they have become firmly established. An industrial chaplaincy's activities will have farther reaching effects than the activities of chaplaincies in the army, etc.

The following is an item which should interest readers: "Firms Install Chaplains, Take Time Out for Prayers," is the caption which appeared at the head of a news item in *The Evening Bulletin*, Philadelphia (July 20th). In the news item is a detailed account of the activities of large-scale industrial managements to bring religion to their employees in the course of the day's work. Many companies have installed chaplains, and other firms take time out each day for devotions and prayer sessions. Approximately 65 companies are now served by chaplains on a full-time or part-time basis. In many firms, industrial operations and office duties are suspended completely—except for switchboard operators—during periods set aside for devotionism, which may last from one minute to one-half hour. Of course, one is always reminded that attendance at such devotionisms is not compulsory. The article further states that some services are lunch-time affairs and do not necessarily take place during company time, that the services differ widely, that some are held weekly, and others daily. Some services are for employees only, others include customers.

The Rev. Anthony Monteiro, who conducts a special course on the industrial chaplaincy at Bloomfield Theological Seminary, and who also serves as chaplain for nine companies, has said, "Ever since the war both management and employees have begun to realise they needed something in their work besides just earning a living, making money and production—spiritual values could fill that vacuum."

What are termed "spiritual values" will in due time lead to the inculcation and dissemination of sectarian dogmas which are in no way related to the social virtues esteemed by all who have the best interests of the vast human family at heart. The spiritual interlude inaugurated during the

day's occupation, and given countenance and support by pious congressmen and industrialists, has all the signs of being the biggest mental soporific offered thus far to hard working wage earners who have neither time nor strength left to raise themselves culturally after a gruelling day's work. Undoubtedly such a chaplaincy will be an invaluable and useful adjunct to management in conditioning employees to accept unpalatable features of their work, and to confide to the chaplain problems which they would do better to take to properly qualified sources in medicine, law, social services, etc. If religious services are introduced on a wider scale in the realm of American industrial enterprises, the mental inertia which will set in will be difficult to calculate, considering the other distractions which have done their damage, such as televising, cheap reading matter, long sessions at the taverns, and the exclusive attention to the day's sports results. Population has reached a new high level in the U.S. and the religious affiliations of the majority of its huge population is also at an all-time "high". Despite the fact that, nominally at least, memberships of religious bodies are reputedly at their highest, the total prison population is also at its highest. The fact that more than sixty million Americans do not profess denominational ties or membership in the numerous sects studding the religious horizon, is played down by the spokesmen and representatives of the more powerful corporate religious bodies, who maintain that the increased membership is indicative of an innate craving for religion.

With the institution of prayer sessions preceding cabinet meetings, the engraving of the motto "In God we Trust" on postage stamps, the contemplated construction of chapels in state and federal houses of legislature, where legislators can retire for "prayerful consideration" of issues facing them, the coming into existence of an industrial chaplaincy follows well nigh inevitably. However, despite the sham reputation and prestige conferred upon the clergy and the chaplaincy, pious palaver will still be pious palaver, whether intoned by a primitive mumbo-jumbo specialist or by a clergyman officiating at a modern religious service.

The "Religious Revival"

By HIBERNICUS

UNLESS YOU ARE BLIND, deaf and dumb, you will know that we are suffering from a "Religious Revival." Up-to-date as ever, the Churches in their study of psychology have reached Emile Coué, who taught that if you told yourself a thing often enough, it would come true. Hence our "Religious Revival."

This revival exists only as things exist for idealist philosophers, i.e., in the mind. If we, who are not idealists in this sense, are so crude as to examine the facts, we find that all social surveys show that the decline in church attendance continues. The Papists, of course, claim large numbers of conversions, especially in their controversial literature, but in more private publications priest after priest testifies that the great majority of young people abandon their religion at the first opportunity. "Religious Revival" and "Leakage" are the official names of the façade and the reality.

In the non-Catholic sects, we have the same picture. Doctor Billy Graham was thought by some to lead in the Day of Enlightenment, but some embarrassingly frank

parsons have announced that his converts were nearly all schoolgirls, who soon forgot Billy for some new idol. The Modern Churchmen's Union was recently told by one of its leaders that Billy had seriously harmed thinking religion, and we can certainly see what they mean.

Some years ago, the Churches had, in men like Inge, Barnes and Temple, thinkers who did honestly try to reconcile modern knowledge with something like Christianity. Now there is no one like them. They have been replaced by ignorant demagogues. Now (according to them) if science and religion differ, so much the worse for science.

In all this we see what the "Religious Revival" really means. What has revived is the crude and intolerant religion in whose name were burnt witches and Protestants, heretics and Freethinkers. And it is the Liberal Christians who have suffered. The present Bishops, with few exceptions, are intellectual nonentities whose names are hardly known. The writings of modern theologians are known to few; the writings of some pre-war theologians contained something of interest to all, but the moulds of outmoded metaphysics and moralisings of their successors are worthless to all who are not prepared to make the enormous assumptions demanded.

Whether we are preparing for a new Dark Age where theology is Queen over the Sciences, or whether the reactionary tendency in modern religion is a last desperate effort to save what remains of this profitable racket, remains to be seen. A young man of my acquaintance has recently decided not to become a clergyman; he and his family weighed up the situation, and decided that the Church was neither a safe nor a profitable career compared with the Civil Service. Some people, apparently, are deciding that the churches are declining in spite of propaganda. It is the purpose of the Freethought Movement, I think, to ensure that some sanity is kept in the world while knowledge knocks away the foundations of religion.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Dr. Julian Huxley. 2. Negative. 3. For a punitive purpose. 4. The Bishop of London, A. Winnington-Ingram. 5. Learning. 6. 50 years. 7. Charles I of England, when touching for "king's evil" (scrofula). 8. In 1926 to please Mussolini, who then dissolved it.

G.H.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

NIGERIAN PRACTICES

Re Mr. Anderson's letter in your issue of July 27th regarding fetishism in Nigeria, as a seaman I have had contact with Nigerians and I know many are enlightened people wanting to get rid of superstition-spreading Christian missionaries.

What is the difference between pro-rain witch-doctors of Chichester and anti-rain witch-doctors of Africa?

What is the difference between oil to make ordinary people god-like monarchs and libation pouring of blood or gin in Nigeria?

What is the difference between certain bush ceremonies in Africa and drinking the blood and eating the body of Christ in Catholic churches?

K. LIDAKS.

SCOTCH DRINK

In Mr. McCall's interesting article "Scotch Drink" there is one inaccuracy—the statement that Scotsmen can drink in their own country towns and villages on Sundays "only during licensing hours." In fact there are no licensing hours in Scotland on Sundays for the simple reason that public houses and licensed restaurants cannot open on that day. Theoretically therefore at least "travellers" can obtain drinks at any license hotel from one second past midnight on Sunday morning till a second before that hour the same night. Nor is it necessary according to the law to "book in" for the day at the hotel of one's choice; one need only be a *bona fide* traveller. Moreover the law does not clearly define the word "traveller." If a man leaves his home at any time on Sunday and goes to his local hotel for the purpose of having a drink he would seem to be breaking the law, but if he ventures out for a

stroll and happens to drop in at the same hotel for liquid refreshment because he feels thirsty he can quite legally be served!

In fact, of course, most alcohol-seeking Scots travel a short distance out of town for safety's sake but they can be seen in hotels all over the country on the Lord's Day quaffing John Barley-corn to their heart's content from the earliest hour till midnight chimes without a break, while their unfortunate English neighbours have to keep to the statutory hours. By a great irony, therefore, Scottish Calvinist prejudice, which forced the pubs to close on Sundays, has, by leaving the "travellers" loophole, resulted in Scotland's being one of the most liberal countries in the world as far as Sunday drinking is concerned. (Rev.) JOHN L. BROOM. [As a non-alcoholic Freethinker Mr. McCall's error is excusable; as a moderately alcoholic Freethinker Mr. Broom's correction is acceptable.—Ed.]

POINTS FROM LETTERS

Of course parsons live on the Cross—their greatest asset—and should they lose it their occupation, like Othello's, would be gone. Unlike racecourse fools, the parson is on a winner every time. He issues tickets to Heaven, but as the train does not start till we are dead we cannot get our money back.—PAUL VARNEY. Though regretting the attitude of the BBC in excluding the Secretary's talk, perhaps the "two minutes' silence" will eventually be been.—C. E. RATCLIFFE.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15TH.—Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chairman), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Gordon, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Ebury and Hornbrook. New members were admitted to Dagenham, Edinburgh, Fyzabad, Manchester, Nottingham and Parent branches (15 in all). Reports of meetings in Bristol and Edinburgh, and announcements of forthcoming meetings in Blackburn and Dumfries were received. Humanist Council and World Union of Freethinkers activities were also reported. A new Wales and Western Branch of the Society was in process of formation. Among many items of correspondence was a reply from Huddersfield Town Clerk regarding exemption of vicarages, presbyteries and manses from rates. The Society would make application for similar exemption. It was hoped that a Maltese contact would prove useful to the Society. Plans for a Rules and Standing Orders Committee comprising three E.C. and four provincial members were agreed. A course of 12 study classes to be addressed by the President was approved. Mr. D. Shipper was appointed to act as a "contact man" for the Society in his travels about the country. Solicitors' finding that the Rules had not been passed at the Conference was given; and the E.C. received and approved the Trustees report—drawn up after consultation with the Solicitors—confirming certain financial transactions between the Society and the Secular Society Ltd. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, September 19th, 1956.

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