

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVI — No. 38

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

CONDUCTING the official service in Sheffield Cathedral for the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the Bishop of Sheffield told scientists what he expected from them. "What is wanted," he said, "is an integration of the Faith preserved by the Church with modern science. For the present intellectual confusion is not just an academic problem: it is becoming a social disaster."

The Bishop forgets. There is no confusion at all. Or so we are told. Science is perfectly integrated with religion. Or so it has been said — over and over again by Christian apologists for years and years. What has become of the old, old story? Has Bishop Hunter forgotten that science and religion work arm in arm and get on marvellously? Surely it is a time-honoured and respectable opinion, taught by his Church and held by all the best people, that there is now no conflict between Genesis and Evolution; they merely say the same thing in different ways. Religion and Science are two aspects of Divine Truth; they pursue different paths to the same goal in complete harmony, with scientists working for the glory of God to the utter confusion of Atheists and Materialists. It was a lovely story while it lasted. And now we have the Christian Bishop, 1956 style, pleading for some overture from scientists to prevent the "social disaster". Or does he mean *religious* disaster?

Truth Will Out

For half a century Christians have taken comfort in the pious lies about a rapprochement between Christianity and Science, except that occasionally one of their leaders owns up to the fallacy — men such as Dean Inge, Bishop Barnes, Bishop Gore, Canon Storr, and now the Bishop of Southwell and, by implication, the Bishop of Sheffield.

Especially disconcerting from the Christian point of view is that such men represent the best brains of the Church. One wonders what they think of their more primitive-minded brothers. To this pertinent question the late Dean Inge gave answer in a pungent passage in his *Outspoken Essays*.

"It is quite unnecessary to go to Central Africa to find the savage," he wrote, for "the mentality of the Stone Age exists on our own platforms and in our own pulpits."

The less intelligent, less critical believer inherits his religion with as little question as he inherits his surname. At the other end of the scale we have the Inges and the Barnes. The dictum of Quarles seems applicable: "He who sits down a philosopher rises up an Atheist."

There is, in truth, a great rift in the Protestant Churches between the more fundamentalist type of belief and the more enlightened, the latter actually becoming the less consistent of the two.

Discarding Doctrine

The heresies of Barnes and Inge are well known. Among the lesser rebels we had the admission of Canon Storr that

the existence of God and the belief in survival after death, surely two foundational doctrines, could not be proved. In his book, *Do Dead Men Live Again?*, he admits that "Plato offered a number of inherent 'proofs' of the immortality of the soul, and later thinkers have followed his example: But none of these proofs is convincing and many of them have in the changed conditions of modern thinking lost any force which they may have earlier possessed. It is better to admit frankly that neither religion nor philosophy can demonstrate the fact of human survival." As for the idea of Hell, "It must not be the traditional Hell. No material flames will scorch the unrepentant sinner. It will be a spiritual judgment spiritually administered."

The Bishop of Southwell, Dr. Barry, in his Diocesan Letter of February last year, stated explicitly that "The story of Adam and Eve is not factual; it is a myth. And it serves no Christian interest to pretend that it is otherwise."

But these have been teachings vital to the Christian Faith. The amount of dogma thrown out by enlightened churchmen makes the amount left over look rather silly as the basis for a great established and privileged state religion.

Dean Inge, in his *God and the Astronomers*, speaks of Christian doctrines about death being "a mass of contradictions" and deplores that Christianity has "ragged edges in its intellectual presentation." It was to tidy up these ragged edges that in 1938 a Report on Doctrine was issued, as a result of which the edges passed from the ragged state into being thoroughly tattered and torn, and no similar Committee Report has since been attempted. Some of the Committee believed in miracles; some didn't. Some believed in the Virgin Birth; some didn't. So they passed on to the burning question of whether Christ existed before he was born. The Report accepted evolution (which, of course, is merely the way biology explains and amplifies Genesis), rejected literally the story of the Fall of Man (but retained it, no doubt, as a spiritual allegory) and proceeded to acknowledge the resulting dilemma: "No Fall, no Atonement." It regarded the Ascension of Christ as "symbolical," while those old favourites, Heaven, Hell and Satan, without being explicitly dismissed, yet appeared somehow to melt away in the verbiage.

A Deity in Difficulty

Remember, these Churchmen were "called" to their profession. They are God's chosen spokesmen. We have to ask, therefore, what is the mental calibre of a God who allows his selected representatives to commit themselves for two thousand years to doctrines which, at the end of that time, they admit to be false?

The position is this. God himself believes in miracles when he talks through the mouth of his instrument Dean Farrar, thus: "It is clear to every honest mind that if miracles be incredible then Christianity is false." (*Witness*

VIEWS and OPINIONS

1956 and All This

By G. H. TAYLOR

of History to Christ.)

God does *not* believe in miracles when he talks through the late Bishop of Ripon, thus: "The time is past when Christianity could be presented as a revelation attested by miracles. There has been no special intervention of the Divine Will contrary to the natural order of things." (*Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures.*)

What is the integrity of a God who allows his accredited voices to give contrary reports?

Hunter's Hybrid

In his Sheffield sermon Dr. Hunter, continuing his instructions to scientists, said he "could not see a large renewal of public worship until the new concepts and ways of looking at things had become part of the language out of which the liturgy, the symbols and words of common worship grew."

But would Dr. Hunter like the look of such a hybrid? We doubt it. Consider, for a moment, what it offers. "We beseech Thee, Almighty Hydrogen, through Thy beloved

Son Helium, and in the fellowship of the interstellar voids . . ."

Or even a new Lord's Prayer.

"Our Father, which art in the Expanding Universe. Hydrogen is Thy Name. They will be done on earth as it is in the stellar system. Give us this day our daily quota of vitamin, and forgive us our social maladjustments as we forgive them whose maladjustments are to our disadvantage. Lead us not into situations in which expediency overrides principle and deliver us from evil, for thine are the galaxies, the atomic energy and the glory, for ever and ever throughout the spatiotemporal continuum. Amen."

Or would he rather be a Bishop?

The choice is there. A prayer wafted to an unknown Ally in the Sky, or a doctor working to cure ailments? A Bible filling the heads of people with clotted nonsense, or a science laboratory directed to human betterment? A Cross or a crucible?

A mongrel liturgy or a thoroughbred stipend?

REVIEW

Immortality

By H. CUTNER

ANY BOOK which deals with "Immortality" makes me very curious, for I believe that when we are dead we are done for — to put it in plain language. Still, some people appear to think that such a view can be easily controverted, and so here we have a book called *The Way of Immortality* by Ian Fearn (Neville Spearman, London, 1956, 10s. 6d.), and it must be admitted that Mr. Fearn has a holy knack of putting words together in a most reverent way.

What can an unblushing Freethinker say of his book? As far as it is possible for me to read it, I can only — sadly, if you like — insist that most of it is completely unintelligible. I simply have not the trained ear of the Immortals. I always thought that Immortality meant living for ever, not as a mere name (like that of Shakespeare through his plays) but exactly as one would like to be for eternity. The late Sir A. Conan Doyle used to picture a Spiritualistic Summerland into which, if we were very good, we should eventually go and revert to the age of about 25 — happy, glamorous, full of vitality, and the beauty of life; and I suspect most people think about Immortality in that way.

Alas, Mr. Fearn will have none of this. For him, Immortality means "not some gift bestowed in a future life but a new quality of consciousness to be realised through present living". And what is "the way thereto"? Naturally, it is revealed by "one immortal Traveller" who made "new destiny for man beyond mortality". I knew from the title of the book that it would not be long before we would stumble on the "one immortal Traveller".

The immortal Traveller, in fact, gives us "the mystic chart of His progress in the art and science of Life immortal" in the "familiar sequences we call the Lord's Prayer". So there you have it. The Lord's Prayer is the "chart" to Immortality.

Mr. Fearn is not in the least bothered that the Lord's Prayer differs in many particulars from the familiar one we know, in various other versions, so that it is impossible to say which is the true "chart". But why worry about that? What is needed is prayer and plenty of it. And whether it is to God or the High Cosmos or His Spirit or the Deity or the Father of Spirits or Our Father — so long as it is to one of them or the blessed lot, if you want Immortality get on your knees; in other words, grovel — and pray. But you must not forget that though the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were "doubtless good and helpful", to

them, you have to grovel to the "new concept of God" which came from Jesus. When they saw Jesus praying, his disciples "beheld His glory, the glory of the whole begotten Son of the Good". Moreover, "the Prayer of the Prince" is different "to all the common prayers". Mr. Fearn should have insisted that the Prince was the greatest God who ever prayed to himself that ever lived. We might have understood that.

The book is packed with this kind of religious conglomeration of words, though what they mean I simply cannot say. I do not know what is meant by "Thy Kingdom Come" or "on earth as it is in Heaven" or the other phrases which form the texts for Mr. Fearn's chapters. The words are there as they are in his "explanations", but what it is that Mr. Fearn wishes to convey is quite beyond me. Here are a few gems:

So we too can set apart, make holy, the nature of the Spirit's dynamic evolving, and through that mystic hal- lowing of man's new freeborn becoming as a Prince of Life's high heredity . . .

Then the punitive will of a fearsome God is changed to the enabling Principle of an intimate Father working His purpose out by his own travail in and through the be-coming of a whole begotten Son.

It is the principle of the circuit that lifts the man and the maid of Nature to the fairyland of the Prince and Princess.

For the curriculum of the Cosmos is for us men and for our education, that thereby we may bring ourselves into co-incidence, conscious, vital, joyful, with the dynamic be-coming of God through the Living response of man.

There is plenty of this sort of thing in the book, and I can only say that "enough is good for a feast" and that 120 pages of similar puerilities and meaningless phrases can no more prove Immortality than any of the imbecilities in the Koran.

It would do Mr. Fearn a power of good to read Macaulay's critique of Robert Montgomery.

—NEXT WEEK—
THE ATOM THROUGH HISTORY
 By G. H. TAYLOR

Franciscus Uber Deutschland

[A Report on the 77th Congress of German Catholicism held at Cologne, August-September, 1956.]

By F. A. RIDLEY

THE 77th annual Congress of German Catholicism was held some weeks ago and the tremendous publicity it received, even from the Protestant north, indicates not only the magnitude of the event but, more generally, the formidable strength of German Catholicism. On Sunday, September 2nd, no less than 800,000 attended the public demonstration and procession through the streets of Cologne. In view of continued Catholic complaints about the persecution of religion in the Communist east, it is interesting to note that some 28,000 are alleged to have come from that zone, correctly known as the German Democratic Republic. Apparently not all the Catholics in the East have as yet been tortured to death, as we are so often led to conclude from reports in the Catholic press of England. Nor — a more important consideration — does the "opium of the people" automatically disappear in a Socialist society.

The Cologne Congress appears to have marked a new level in the religious, and no doubt political, influence so far attained by Roman Catholicism in the actual birth-place of the Reformation. No doubt its success — for 800,000 is a big crowd on any standards — will delight the heart of the former Papal Nuncio in Munich, where Pacelli Street is named after him, not His Holiness Pope Pius XII. Beneath the vast dome of the majestic Cologne Cathedral, traditionally dedicated to the three Wise Men of the East who brought gifts to the infant of Bethlehem, were assembled the leaders of German Catholicism, both clerical and lay. The Archbishop of the ancient See of Cologne (formerly an elector of the "Holy Roman Empire"), Cardinal Frings, is at present the head of the German hierarchy; both he and his colleague, Cardinal Wendel of Munich, are among the leaders of Catholicism in its present embittered cold war against "godless Communism," which His Eminence of Cologne fiercely denounces on the radio. The Catholic lay representatives at Cologne are better known to the general public than are the leaders of the hierarchy, and included the President of the Federal Republic, Prof. Heuss, and the President of German Catholic Action, Prince von Lowenstein. But far above these was none other than the Federal Chancellor, Dr. Adenauer himself, a former Lord Mayor of Cologne in the Kaiser's day. Adenauer is generally recognised, even by his political opponents, as the outstanding political leader in Western Germany today, where he has ruled for the past seven years. He is also the recognised leader of political Catholicism in Western Germany, and his son is a priest. Pictures of the Chancellor seated next to Cardinal Frings were prominently displayed in the press, and wide publicity was given to the Chancellor's speech.

However, though he was the best known personage present, he was not actually the most famous man there! For the outstanding feature of this 77th Congress was the dramatic appearance of a dead man — none other than St. Francis of Assisi, that "second Christ" as his admirers styled him. For some of the relics of St. Francis had been solemnly transported from his native Italy of the 13th century, and publicly carried in procession through the streets of Cologne before an adoring multitude. (Yes! We are in the mid-20th century!) Of all Catholic saints, St. Francis is the most human and attractive, probably the most famous of the non-biblical saints of the Church, of whom it was said that "Francis listens to those to whom God will not listen." But this gentle pacifist and humani-

tarian, who even thought that animals might have "souls," and who had a feeling for nature unique among Christian saints, would certainly not relish the uses to which his relics are now put by the hard-faced politicians who assembled at Cologne ostensibly to do him honour.

In contemporary Germany, "the land between East and West," politics are concerned with realities, not, as so often here, with mutual back-scratching. German rearmament is the major problem at present and is being energetically pressed forward by Adenauer, leader of the government party, the "Christian (chiefly Catholic) Democratic Union." The "moral rearmament" of Germany is the self-appointed task of the Catholic Church. At Cologne the hierarchy took a definite line on this issue. Cardinal Frings and his colleagues are entirely in favour of the current policies of their co-religionist, Dr. Adenauer. No doubt — though I have not myself seen any reference in the German press — they entirely approved of his recent sensational suppression of the German Communist party. It is even probable, in view of the way in which Frings has been waging the cold war on the radio recently, that he and his colleagues actually regard the new Wehrmacht as the appropriate vehicle for a hot crusade in the not distant future, with the ultimate aim of recovering for Germany and for the Holy Church the alienated lands of the now Communist East, for ever since the days of Charlemagne German Catholicism has been a crusading force: the "great" Charles gave the Pagan Saxons the immediate choice between baptism and the sword, while the whole of present day Eastern Germany was originally "germanised" by force by the crusading Teutonic knights, who, incidentally, were Hitler's self-proclaimed models.

The German hierarchy, in uttering these bellicose sentiments, does not actually speak with the undivided voice of German Catholicism. The Church, here as so often in the past, sits on both sides of the fence. It has pacifists and even fellow-travellers with Communism in its ranks. It does not put all its eggs into the one basket. Recently there have been a number of protests by German Catholic pacifists against the present bellicose attitude of the hierarchy, in particular against using the relics of that most pacifist of saints, Francis of Assisi, as in effect an advertisement for the new German army. It is actually amongst the Jesuits, the great Fascist order of the Church, that the link-up between German Catholicism and militarism is most strongly advocated.

It is unnecessary here to say that the Roman Catholic Church represents the totalitarian type of religion, and that it uses politics equally with religion to ensure its domination over mankind. Political Catholicism is perhaps more evident in Germany than anywhere. Ever since the days of the Holy Roman Empire (three of the seven electors of which were clerics) German Catholicism has been primarily a political force. Today it is more so than ever. A former city councillor of Cologne expressed to me the opinion that it is the strongest political force in Germany today, and concurred with my opinion that today Catholicism has succeeded the Fascism of the '30's as the major bulwark of political and ideological reaction, not only in Germany but throughout the western world. One cannot help thinking that it might be desirable if contemporary Freethinkers were to devote less time to comparatively trivial points, and were to realise the realities of the current situation. The fact is that modern freethought and the whole structure of liberal

This Believing World

After writing a very big "Study of History" which proved his leaning towards a religion of some sort, Prof. Toynbee has now enlarged his ideas to give us *An Historian's Approach to Religion*. It describes, in reality, his own search for a God—"the presence behind phenomena." Once you sense this "presence," it is very easy to step right over to a God, then to God, and finally to his Son. This accounts for a reviewer of the book insisting that the worthy historian has "one of his feet firmly in the Christian camp," while the other "lingers somewhere in India," where, we know, anyone can find more real religion in a day than even in the Vatican or among Jehovah's Witnesses in a year.

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Needless to add, the same reviewer—in the *News Chronicle*—doesn't think much of Prof. Toynbee's excursions into religion, and fears that "the theologians will tear him to pieces." But supposing they do? Surely that would not make them right and Toynbee wrong? The truth is that they both can be torn to pieces, for few things are quite as vulnerable as religion in general and Christianity in particular. His study of history made Gibbon into, at least, an infidel, as his contemporaries were well aware. But what a long way back from Gibbon has Toynbee tramped!

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English Catholics—some of whom, we believe, cherish visions of Royalty turning once again to Catholicism—are very angry or hurt that the Queen was not represented at the funeral of the late Cardinal Griffin; which makes one wonder whether they would feel equally hurt if she was not represented at the funeral of a Chief Rabbi, or of a Head Imam, or even of a Grand Mahatma? That a Protestant is beyond the pale with all Roman Catholics is forgotten when it comes to Royalty for, of course, the Queen is by law a Protestant—and that does not mean an Anglo-Catholic. But it is always amusing for outsiders like us watching the eternal squabbles between the Holy Roman Church and the—more or less—unholy Protestant Alliance or Protestant Truth Society when it comes to Royalty—in our predominantly Protestant country.

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We always thought that Hell had been located, over 100 years ago by the Rev. J. Furniss, a stout-hearted Roman Catholic, who was inspired to depict it in all its infernal beauties for the benefit, in particular, of young Christians, but more so even for Catholic backsliders. In *A Sight of Hell* we get something which obliterates even the most lurid of horror comics. However, to Fr. Furniss we must now add the Seventh Day Adventists, whose headquarters in Regent Street are graced with a placard, "Location of Hell Discovered. Welcome." It must now be very intriguing to learn if Fr. Furniss was right when he described the infinite flames of Hell burning for an infinite eternity especially when frizzling little children. Would some Seventh Day Adventist tell us?

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In a recent discussion on public schools in Hampstead, one of the contestants said their days were nearly over. He added that he himself was obliged to go to 18 religious services every week. His opponent angrily asked—why not? "Who would deny the basic principles of the Christian religion?" One wonders whether this gentleman is living in a dream world, or in a world of reality? The basic principles of Christianity were denied at the very outset of its formation when Peter and Paul and Barnabas and, no doubt, many others among its champions rowed and quarrelled unceasingly.

They are still being denied—and we can leave Freethinkers out of the running—by the various sects Christianity has broken into. Fancy getting Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, and Calvinists, all to agree as to what they are! The word "unity" acts like a bombshell among them, as it has always done. Why, these days they cannot agree whether Jesus is Jehovah himself, or only his Son, without a torrent of words and words in explanation. And they never will or can agree as to what "Christian principles" really are.

The Rising Generation

XII—THE BLESSED APOSTLES

ALTHOUGH we are always told that the Gospels are "inspired" documents; that is, they were written with God's help, it is astonishing that on the simple matter of naming the Apostles of Jesus, they are unable to agree.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are at loggerheads on naming one of the devoted companions of "our Lord." Matthew calls him *Lebbeus*; Mark, *Thaddeus*; while Luke, who claims that he wrote his Gospel to put the others—more or less—right, says his name is *Judas*; which is rather astonishing because there already was a *Judas*. No one has ever been able to explain this discrepancy.

It is also very interesting to learn what each Gospel writer says about some of them. Take "Matthew," for example. He was called by Jesus when "sitting at the receipt of custom"; that is, he was a tax-gatherer. But Luke says his name was "Levi"; and commentators have had to prove that Matthew was really called Matthew Levi or, as some declare (like the Dutch theologian Dr. Hooykaas), it is most unlikely that Levi and Matthew are the same, or even that one of the great Twelve was a tax-gatherer. Luke says that Levi was a "publican," but all Christian temperance advocates indignantly reject the implication or impression that Levi was "mine host" at an inn drawing beer for toppers.

Voltaire had the greatest contempt for the Blessed Apostles, calling them knaves; and certainly there are few passages in the Precious Word which show Bible heroes in a worse light than those depicting them quarrelling in Luke as to who should be "accounted the greatest"; or, when Jesus was arrested, telling us how "all the disciples forsook him and fled," including, of course, Peter, who had "denied" him. And what a picture Mark shows of Peter rebuking Jesus, and Jesus rebuking Peter in turn, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

There is no evidence whatever that any of the Blessed Apostles ever lived at all. They are as mythical as were the Twelve Tribes of Israel over whom they were supposed to rule in Heaven. There is no Heaven either. All, all are myths. As Dr. Hooykaas (and with him, many other theologians) said, "The Apostles disappear without a trace."

H.C.

FRANCISCUS UBER DEUTSCHLAND

(Concluded from page 303)

opinion on which it is ultimately based, are threatened now by the most formidable counter-offensive that the western world has known since the Reformation. In Germany, the actual land of the Reformation, this fact is glaringly obvious. The current disintegration of Protestantism and the chaos caused by the Communist revolution have given the Vatican its opportunity. It is at present taking it with both hands. Germany, unlike England, is a major interest of political Catholicism. The recent display of terrifying power at Cologne underlines this warning.

THE FREETHINKER

41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
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THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 10s. (in U.S.A., \$4.25); half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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.

N. D. THAIN.—Pædomorphosis is the appearance in the larva or embryo of novel features which do not come out in the mature organism but appear at a later stage in its evolution. It is, as it were, an anticipation of evolution and thus the opposite of recapitulation, in which features of the organism's past evolution appear in the larva or the embryo.

OLD READER writes: "Why not issue an Appeal for the Sustentation Fund? We should not sink into a false sense of security." This is one of several timely hints that we have received recently. Please see opposite.

ROGER R. TAYLOR.—We are searching for the books you have listed, though some are out of print, and have also contacted Mr. George Whitehead on the matter.

K. SYERS (Miss).—We do not say all clergymen are humbugs. Some really believe what they preach (and as Mr. Cohen used to say, that is the worst one can say of them). The clergy are not all of the same mental calibre. They are a mixed group — one might even say muddled.

G. MORRIS.—With regard to the Welsh vicar who was recently kicked by a parishioner, there might be little to notice in the behaviour of Church and Chapel people towards one another, but for the claim that the Christian religion makes for good feeling.

E. F. CROSSWELL.—The absence of Bishops from the Suez debate shows lack of interest, but whether their absence is a good thing we leave to opinion.

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.
Merseyside 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.

INDOOR

- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, September 23rd, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A. "This Terrible Twentieth Century."
Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40 Canon Street).—Sunday, September 23rd, 7 p.m.: S. M. CAINES (Cardiff), "Racial Relations in Great Britain."
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Newcastle Chambers, Angel Row).—Thursday, September 27th, 2.30 p.m.: J. W. CHALLAND, "Miracles."

To Our Readers

IT IS WITH REGRET that we find it necessary once again to ask for money for THE FREETHINKER. We regret it, but we feel no sense of shame; we know that the paper is highly prized — even loved — by its readers; we know that those readers are loyal to it and to the cause it champions. We know that they will give, and give generously, when it is required. And, unfortunately, the time has come.

Readers are aware of general rising costs; they are aware that we were compelled to increase our price from 4d. to 5d. last March, in an attempt to meet increased expenses. Since then, however, the rise has continued and it has hit us badly. First came printing increases (though we should like to thank our printers for keeping these at a minimum), then the postage rates went up (and our weekly postage bill is very heavy). And the plain truth is that a loss is incurred on every issue.

Clearly, that loss has to be met, if THE FREETHINKER is to survive — and we are all agreed that it *must* survive. There are two principal ways in which to do this: first, by increased circulation; second, through the Sustentation Fund. Readers can help in both. We are initiating an advertising campaign: you can make THE FREETHINKER known to friends and acquaintances and so help circulation. You can also subscribe to the Sustentation Fund. Particularly valuable are regular donations — weekly, monthly, half-yearly, yearly. Our readers have never failed us in the past and we do not think you will fail us now. You will, we are sure, give as freely as you can; as freely as the Directors give of their time; as freely as our contributors give of their talents to interest you week by week.

From Our Readers

THE FOLLOWING LETTER from Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Sunley (both aged 82), of 17 Sunny Terrace, Dipton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, was addressed to the Secretary of the National Secular Society, but we are sure it will be of interest to all Freethinkers. It is a letter to cherish.

Dear Friend,—Many thanks for your progress report of our movement. We wish it greater speed in the future. We were both brought up in an atmosphere of fanatical Methodism but we managed to shake off the fetters a long time ago, and we emerged into the light of freedom of both mind and body, devoid of fear and rewards. We have felt a good deal happier since.

We are both getting old, so there is not much we can do, but we wish you every success in banishing superstition and bringing light and common sense to the peoples of the world. For ourselves, we are very resolute and pleased we chose this path, which can't be much longer for us, and will end this, our only, life unfettered and unafraid.

My partner is almost blind, but endorses all I have written and sends her best wishes.

I am sending a trifle from our pension toward THE FREETHINKER Sustentation Fund, wishing it could have been more.

Yours sincerely, W. B. SUNLEY.

MY GOODNESS, NO!

Two nude paintings accepted for an art show have caused a commotion in the respectable seaside resort of Bognor Regis, Sussex. . . . Said a member of the hanging committee, Mr. Andre Taddei: "We could not possibly show them with the Dean of Chichester coming to open the exhibition."

—News Chronicle, September 8th, 1956.

Notes and News

It is with interest and good wishes that we hear from the president of the Central London Branch N.S.S. (Mr. S. Salter) that the Barnsbury Branch of the A.E.U. is sponsoring a large public meeting on "The Plight of the Old Folk", to be held in the St. Pancras Town Hall, Sept. 27th, 7.30 p.m. Leading Trade Unionists and members of the Nat. Fed. of Old Aged Pensioners will speak. The Barnsbury Branch was some months ago addressed by the N.S.S. President and passed a resolution deploring the attitude of the B.B.C. towards freedom of expression. Members of the Central London Branch N.S.S. are taking a share in the organisation of the meeting.

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THE clergy have had a crushing defeat at Merthyr Tydfil. After a long struggle to obtain the right to vote, the result of the Sunday Cinema Poll was declared amid scenes of almost unparalleled enthusiasm in the history of Welsh local government. The result was an overwhelming victory for the Secular forces of Sunday Freedom, by 12,779 against the Sabbatarians 3,013, further evidence of the growing number of Welsh people willing to fight the bigoted forces of reaction.

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THE big controversy in the *Barnsley Chronicle*, to which we referred a fortnight ago, has proceeded most satisfactorily for the freethought side, the Editor having allotted the freethinkers almost as much space as the Christians, with the inevitable result. This paper has a circulation of 42,000 and controversies of this nature, especially when instigated by first-rate press controversialists of the calibre of our reader Mr. H. Irving, must make many effective contacts for our cause.

★

IN this case, as in others, a leading local minister was drawn into the battle. His challenge to Atheists was heavily headlined; he offered to bring to the platform 100 people who would bear witness to the effects of their conversion to Christ. Mr. G. H. Taylor joined in from London with a counter challenge, in which he proposed to examine these 100 converts, requiring them to show (a) that they had previously been Atheists, this to be proved either by membership cards of an accredited Atheist society or by equally satisfactory proof that they were publicly known as Atheists; (b) that their Atheism had resulted in their committing legal or moral crimes, and (c) that they were now leading socially useful lives.

★

It goes without saying that this challenge was not taken up, and, at the moment of writing, the minister has lapsed into silence. Nor has he apologised for repeating the Christian tale about Price Hughes after being adequately corrected on the matter by Mr. Irving. The latest Christian letters are feeble in the extreme and make no attempt to answer Mr. Irving and his several supporters on any single point.

★

ACCORDING to the Catholic Logos News Agency there has been a press campaign in Spain (which, of course, means a Catholic campaign) against Mendelssohn's Wedding March being played at weddings. It is described as improper music for a sacred occasion, because of its association with the Shakespearian play "Midsummer Night's Dream," which, says the Agency, "deals with a spell cast by an evil spirit, which causes a charlatan transformed into a donkey to be loved by a woman . . . The immense majority of those who ask for the Wedding March to be played ignore the facts behind this music." Once the

divine authority of the Roman Catholic Church is conceded, there is no limit to the logical nonsense which it entails.

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THE Catholic Directory for 1956 (New York) reports that the number of Catholics in the U.S.A. is now thirty-three and a half millions, nearly a million more than in 1955 and a ten-year increase of nine millions.

For Amusement Only

By COLIN McCALL

Psychic News claims that it is the Spiritualist newspaper with the world's largest circulation. It must wield some influence, then, with a sizeable section of the population. Up and down the country, in hovels and halls, amateurs and professionals pursue those phenomena that they broadly describe as psychic. And what an inclusive term it is. Some idea of its range—as well as its irrationality—may be gleaned from any issue of the weekly paper emanating from High Holborn, London. The issue dated September 1st, 1956, is an average example; suppose we glance through it.

We read on the front page that a London grocer is to sell his business and devote his time to healing. He apparently has a reputation for amazing "on the spot" (i.e. in the shop) cures. Whether it is true that he cured a Teddy Boy's toothache "within a few minutes" seems relatively unimportant (to all except the Teddy Boy and, possibly, *Psychic News*) though I should like to have seen the area of decay on the tooth in question before and after the "cure." Mr. Wyndham is already more of a healer than a grocer, we are told, because the boy came in to buy an aspirin, then didn't need one. Much stronger claims are made for this shopkeeper-healer, however. A little girl aged 11 was almost blind and unable to walk (and, of course, "It was said that nothing could be done for her"). Now, after a year's treatment, the child is "able to walk and her sight is coming back." This is typical of the type of statement often made in *Psychic News*. "Evidence," did you say? Come! Come! "Who said that nothing could be done for her?" did you ask. Really! "It was said" should be quite sufficient. Why, a report of one of the grocer's recent healing services contained "contradictory" statements, says the *News*, but it still considers the cases "worth quoting"—and quote them it does!

From the grocer's shop in Kensington, to the Gargoyle Club, Soho; to pose the intriguing question, "Did an intruding spirit break-up the candle-lit seance, which two girls were holding at an hour near dawn in a locked room of the Gargoyle Club?" Who could resist such an opening sentence—in bold type? A site with "historic associations," two mischievous girls in the "Nell Gwynne" room, flickering candles, and an illiterate tumbler ("a name that could have been a mis-spelling of Nell Gwynne") that later became wild. Ah! but more is to come: one girl "began to sense a presence in the room" (apart, of course, from that of her companion). "She still cannot describe what it was—she only knew that someone or something was there." *Knew*, mind you, not *thought*. How did she know? Who cares?—she passed out anyway, mumbling incoherently. "Fortunately" (the word is *Psychic News*'s, not mine) one of the owners of the club—Mr. Jimmy Jacobs—is a Spiritualist; more, a medium; but "a sticker for personal witness as against hearsay." The *Psychic News* Editor, Mr. Fred Archer, apparently regards testimony that "both staff and members of the club have had unusual experiences at the

Gargoyle" as something other than hearsay — when he has it from Mr. Jacobs. Do you want further instances of "personal witness"? Here you are, then: Mr. Jacobs's sceptical partner (a stock character in such a comedy) and "two other witnesses" have seen a "tall figure, cowed and shrouded" outside on the pavement; and one of Soho's oldest residents, when asked if she knew of a ghost at the Gargoyle, replied plurally "You mean ghosts!" — which is quite conclusive and, incidentally, printed boldly.

On pages 2 and 3, household pets come on the scene: and what Spiritualist could resist "A Friendly Chat" — about a cat — with "Brother John," or the clairvoyant Mrs. Ena Twigg "seeing" a huge Alsatian trotting in church? Particularly when the dog had been put to sleep only three days before, and the cat was "marmalade" — "a handsome little gentleman with a lovable disposition"! Brother John "humanises" cats (poor creatures!) and he became devoted to this one. He feared, though, that it had been killed by a car (and if you guessed that it was alive all the time, don't give the game away!) until he heard a loud rap on the altar of his sanctuary, whence he had retired to pray. "If you have heard a spirit rap you will know there is no mistaking it," writes Brother John, "sharp, decisive, with almost a personality of its own. And something in that rap seemed to tell me that my little cat was still alive." Which, you must agree, readers, is most remarkable. Brother John is convinced that the rap was given to help him "in a dark hour," but he "almost failed to appreciate it" — despite its unmistakableness, its decisiveness, its near-personal quality. Fortunately, he knew its message "inwardly," "as surely as if the spoken word had been given." He ends his "Friendly Chat" — as he began it — with some babbling about "What's in a name?" and then the final question, "You can see what I mean, can't you?" With deep regret, I have to confess that it isn't altogether clear.

Nor can I quite agree that the night visitation of a spirit, complete with spiritual glass-cutter — as recounted by a German woman in a Dutch Spiritualist publication — is either "evidential" (as claimed) or not likely to "scare" a lady — German or otherwise. If a lady "heard her bedroom door open and someone come into her room," she would, I imagine, be just a little scared: especially if — as in this instance — the door was locked. If she heard noises as though "somebody was moving the glass-topped table under the window" and then the glass-cutter at work, I would have thought it quite disturbing. But maybe Spiritualist ladies are used to midnight visitors — spiritual ones, that is.

Ah! but the East, my friends, that is where one should go for real miracles. In India, "the unknown and the miraculous are part of the routine pattern of life." Unknown patterns, like unheard melodies, are, no doubt, sweeter, and here is Mir Bashir, "famous to East and West as palmist and accultist," to interpret them for you. "I witnessed miracles every day," he states — and if you think that must have been a little tiresome, you are probably right. But, looking back after 15 years (with the infallible eye of memory), Mir Bashir is "overwhelmed with wonder"; and he will probably remain in that state.

Reluctantly, we must move on; noting in passing, a "spirit's view of Jesus" received by automatic writing and now reprinted on page 6; impressed (perhaps) by a Colchester lady's use of a tumbler (seemingly less wild than the one encountered earlier — "without hurt to myself or anyone else I know of") for 40 years with "100 per cent. correct evidence time and again" (obviously a better speller, too). On to the tragedy referred to on the last page. The story of a man who "had occasion" to visit a Kensing-

ton medium and crystal-gazer. What occasion he had to visit her, we are not told; suffice it to say that the visit was opportune. During an "apparently uninspired" reading, the lady announced "dramatically" (of course): "I see a man falling on a mountain. He is dead at the foot of it. Does this mean anything to you?" Naturally, it "seemed pointless" at the time but it took on "a new and tremendous significance" that same evening. A personal friend of the "sitter" had been killed on Snowdon "shortly after 4.30 in the afternoon." The story is a little below usual standard; the times are not synchronised. But *Psychic News* is undeterred. The fatal accident took place "to all intents and purposes, at the instant when Miss Montague 'spotted' it in her crystal." A suggestion that a lot depend upon one's "intents and purposes" would be most ungracious towards our entertainers. To whom we must now bid farewell — in Kensington, where we first encountered them.

Our trip together through the psychic realms has, I trust, been as enjoyable for you as it has for me. Treated lightly and heartedly, like a tour of a fairground, it can provide many amusements. The great mistake is to regard it as a solemn weekly pilgrimage. Unfortunately, thousands do.

A FREETHOUGHT MOVEMENT QUIZ

1. Who wrote these Freethought classics: (a) *Martyrdom of Man*, (b) *Trial of Theism*, (c) *Supernatural Religion*, (d) *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*?
2. The N.S.S. has had one lady General Secretary. Who was she?
3. Who edited THE FREETHINKER while G. W. Foote was serving his prison sentence for blasphemy?
4. Which N.S.S. branches today have a coloured man as President?
5. Which city had an Eclectic Society, a forerunner of secular societies?
6. Of which society, now attached to the N.S.S., was Joseph McCabe secretary as a young man?
7. With what object was the Secular Society Ltd. formed in 1898?
8. What were the real names of (a) "B.V.," (b) Vivian Phelps (author of *The Churches and Modern Thought*, etc.), (c) Saladin, (d) Mimmermus?
9. Who was the first lady to make a front page contribution to THE FREETHINKER?
10. What is the opening sentence of the N.S.S. Principles and Objects?
11. In which month does a new N.S.S. member's annual subscription cover the following year?

(Answers on page 308)

Branch Line

IN SPITE of the adverse effect of a wet summer, open air activity has been well maintained in many branches of the National Secular Society, and under the circumstances sales of literature must also be regarded as satisfactory, as well as the enlistment of many new members.

On the long-term policy it has been particularly pleasing to note the progress made by our younger speakers. The facts speak for themselves; of 32 speakers who have represented the N.S.S. on outdoor platforms this summer no fewer than 13 are in their first or second year. How long back would one have to look in the annals of the Society for such a crop of new talent?

LIVERPOOL

The Liverpool Branch President and outdoor propagandist, Mr. C. T. Salisbury, informs us that when outdoor meetings were resumed last year the most formidable hostility was met with in this largely Catholic city, no doubt the result of some years of comparative inactivity. In place of the constant threats of violence a totally different state of things exists today, and it is the Christian who is now on the defensive, and at the receiving end of the derisive laughter. Afternoon meetings have also been held and it is hoped that the converts to secularism will now crystallise their support by becoming branch members.

Several debates have been held with a nonconformist pastor with audiences numbering several hundreds, but usually the challenges to Christians for debates have not been taken up.

CENTRAL LONDON

For many years freethought meetings have been held in that well-known centre, Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, off Edgware Road, W.1, and this year the meetings will pass under the auspices of the young Central London Branch of the N.S.S. The organising secretary, Mr. J. Martin Alexander, is busy preparing what should be a most interesting session, containing lectures by well-known speakers, of whom one is expected to be Mr. Avro Manhattan. A syllabus, when ready, may be obtained from Mr. Alexander at 249 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N.1. The first meeting will be on October 7th, when Mr. F. A. Ridley will speak on "Secularism and the Future."

BLACKBURN

A beneficial neighbourly interest is being taken in Blackburn by the much stronger Manchester Branch N.S.S. A recent Sunday evening meeting, partly promoted from Manchester, was quite successful, being addressed by three of our speakers, Mr. F. Rothwell of Blackburn, Mr. George Mills of Manchester, and our old stalwart, Mr. Jack Clayton of Burnley, who is not able to give as much time to outdoor propaganda nowadays as he would wish.

The Mills of God, we are told, grind slowly—unlike those of the N.S.S., and as a new speaker, Mr. Mills, according to reports, has made vast progress in a short time. With his occasional help, and that of other Manchester members, it is hoped that Mr. Rothwell's efforts to revive Secularism in Blackburn will eventually be successful. G.H.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

[N.B.—In his *Nature of the Universe* Fred Hoyle writes: "... people ask where the created material comes from. Well, it does not come from anywhere. The material simply appears..." In his *Creation of the Universe* Gamow comments: "Hoyle is inclined to think hydrogen is created out of nothing."—Ed.]

If matter is created out of nothing, then I must ask—

- (1) What is nothing? What are its properties?
- (2) Are there two kinds of nothing—the kind out of which nothing comes, and the kind out of which matter comes? If so, how does one distinguish between these two kinds of nothing?
- (3) If I have a sealed vessel containing one gram of hydrogen how long shall I have to wait for it to contain two grams?
- (4) Is the statement, "The world is created out of nothing, or out of that which was formerly created from nothing," a piece of rubbish if enunciated by John Smith, D.D., and a sober scientific statement if made by John Smith, n.s.c.?

W. SCOTT.

MIRACLE IN REVERSE

Reading Mr. Cutner's interesting articles on Lourdes reminds me that the most remarkable "miracle" of all took place this year. William Bird, of Sheffield, a sick man, had expressed a wish to die in Lourdes (we are told). Going there with the Leeds diocesan pilgrimage, his wish came true; he died in Lourdes.

In *The Catholic Times* this was solemnly claimed as a "miracle in reverse"!

In a two-horse race an each-way bet ensures a place!

DAVE SHIPPER.

SUPPORT
THE HUMANIST COUNCIL'S CALL FOR
"FREEDOM ON THE AIR"

at the Caxton Hall (York Hall), London, S.W.1
 on Wednesday, October 3rd, 1956, at 7.30 p.m.

(Doors open 7 o'clock)

Speakers will include

MARGARET KNIGHT KATHLEEN NOTT

E. M. FORSTER, C.H. R. W. SORENSEN

CHAIRMAN: JOSEPH REEVES, M.P.

★

ADMISSION FREE

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. (a) Winwood Reade, (b) Holyoake, (c) Cassells, (d) Prof. J. W. Draper.
2. Miss E. Vance.
3. Dr. E. B. Aveling.
4. Fyzabad; Wales and Western.
5. Glasgow.
6. Leicester Secular Society.
7. To safeguard legacies to the movement by making them unquestionably legal (proved in the Bowman Case of 1915-17).
8. (a) James Thomson ("Bysshe Venalis"), (b) Philip Vivian, (c) W. S. Ross, (d) John Smith.
9. Margaret Knight (February 24th, 1956). [N.B.—Neither Annie Besant nor Hypatia Bradlaugh was a FREETHINKER contributor.]
10. Secularism affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement; it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.
11. October. G.H.T.

OBITUARY

ON September 9th, Arthur Hepworth's 1957 subscription to the National Secular Society arrived at the office. The letter accompanying it told of a very tired man who had been confined to bed for 18 months. On that very day Arthur Hepworth died; the letter was probably the last he wrote. With his death in Dewsbury at the age of 72, the Society lost one of its most loyal members. Mr. F. J. Corina conducted a secular service at Cottingley Hall Crematorium on September 12th. We extend our sympathy to Mrs. Hepworth.

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