

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVLL—No. 24

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

THE RECENT declarations of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the (Anglican) Bishop of Chester on the subject of the hostile attitude of English Roman Catholics to the Church of England, raise a number of interesting points. Time was, when the current hostility of English Roman Catholics to the Church of England could have been taken for granted.

However, much water has flown under the world's bridges since the now distant days of the Penal Laws and the summary execution of Catholic priests at Tyburn as enemies of Church and State. Nowadays, the growth of forces antagonistic to all forms of Christianity has tended to diminish the mutual hostility between the Christian churches in the face of the common enemy. Rome, however, has not in any way relaxed her *exclusive* claim to be the "One True Church" and this necessarily makes her an untrustworthy colleague even in matters of mutual concern. The Vatican knew all about the devious tactics of the Trojan horse long before its present rival the Communist International.

Canterbury speaks up

Dr. Fisher, the official head of the Anglican Church has, at last, spoken up. He complains of the open hostility manifested by *English* Roman Catholics in contradistinction to the more friendly attitude of Roman Catholics elsewhere. Neither the Archbishop nor the Bishop of Chester who echoed his complaint, can be regarded as profound students of Papal claims and history. Dr. Ellison, the Bishop of Chester, is an expert on the University boat race — of which he has acted as starter on several occasions — but he evidently has never studied the 19 centuries' voyage of the "Barque of Peter", the Papacy. Rome can never relax her *exclusive claims*: the Pope cannot, even if he would, renounce his Infallibility. Similarly, when Dr. Fisher went on to say that the World Council of (Protestant) Churches would welcome the Pope as its constitutional chairman, he merely indicated his total ignorance of the nature and extent of Vatican claims. The Pope, in the language of his coronation service, which we may perhaps expect to see and hear on television at the next Papal coronation, is the "Father of Kings and Princes, the master of the universe, the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ", and the three crowns which he still wears on state occasions, indicate his supremacy over the three worlds of Heaven, Earth and Hell: a peculiar sort of chairmanship. Since at least the Vatican Decree of 1870 abolished the last vestiges of democracy and constitutional rule in the Roman Catholic Church by bestowing both spiritual infallibility and unlimited personal sovereignty on the Pope, there cannot conceivably be any reunion between Rome and Canterbury — or for that matter, between Rome and *any* other Christian church on equal terms. Even making the highly improbable assumption that any Pope might wish to waive his exclusive claims in the future, it would now be constitutionally impossible

for him to do so; the motto of Papal Rome as of the earlier secular Roman Empire, is *Caesar aut nihil* World domination or nothing! If Drs. Fisher and Ellison had made any serious study of Papal claims and of the historical evolution of the Vatican and of its canon law, they would not either entertain such false hopes themselves, nor raise them in the minds of their supporters. They should consult the work of Dr. Dallmann recently reviewed in this column, or if they think it beneath their episcopal dignity to read THE FREETHINKER, they might at least consult the book of their former colleague, the late Bishop Gore of Oxford, entitled *Roman Catholic Claims*.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Rome and Canterbury

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

The Malines Conversations

When Dr. Fisher contrasts "the friendly attitude" of Continental Roman Catholics with the bitter hostility of the English-speaking Roman Catholics, he is, we presume, referring to the famous "Conversations" held at Malines a generation ago between the late Cardinal Mercier and representative High Church Anglicans, including the late Lord Halifax. The object of these discussions was to bring about "reunion" between Rome and Canterbury, not on terms of complete equality, which as already noted, Rome could not possibly grant, but at least to give "Dominion Status" inside the world wide Roman Catholic Church. These Malines discussions in the early twenties which excited tremendous interest in ecclesiastical circles were sponsored by the late Cardinal Mercier, perhaps the most eminent ecclesiastical figure of his era who enjoyed the double distinction of having been runner-up for the Papacy and tutor to the Rev. Father Anthony, later better known as Joseph McCabe. Mercier favoured reunion between Rome and Canterbury on terms, but the matter never got any further because the new Pope Pius XI, Mercier's successful rival at the 1922 Papal election, intervened directly to suppress the negotiations which, as far as we know, have never been resumed at any rate officially. In more recent years, the present Pope has intervened also directly, to suppress the short-lived experiment of the "Worker Priests" over the heads of, and apparently against the wishes of, the local French hierarchy. Both these autocratic actions incidentally, go to prove that the Papacy is a despotism, and *not* the mere chairman of a committee as envisaged by Dr. Fisher.

A Plan for Reunion

As far as we know no definite plan for a reunion between Rome and Canterbury ever emerged from Malines. But a curious pamphlet appeared on the subject by a Belgian Jesuit. I believe that he was later expelled by the Jesuit Order, that great protagonist of ecclesiastical Fascism which has always stood for the most extreme assertion of Papal claims. The author advocated the reunion with Rome by the Anglican Church on, if I may repeat the political

metaphor "Dominion Status" terms: the Church of England was to become the *official* Roman Catholic Church in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury was to become the official head of the reunited Church, of course under Papal supremacy and the present Roman Catholic hierarchy in England, then included with the Anglican hierarchy, was to be under the control of Canterbury as at present Primate of England. Presumably the Protestants and Modernists in the Church of England would get notice to quit. However, whilst the Belgian Jesuit's pamphlet excited a ripple of interest in ecclesiastical circles at the time, its suggestions cut no ice in official circles either at Rome or Canterbury. The author was expelled by the Jesuits and I believe his pamphlet had the honour of being placed on the list of prohibited books.

Reunion and Anglo-Catholicism

This abortive suggestion is the only *concrete* plan I can remember as ever having been put forward for reunion between Rome and Anglicanism. But whilst Rome will never tolerate reunion between *equals*, it is still possible that what I termed the "Dominion Status" plan may be revived at some future date. For the powerful Anglo-Catholic party in the English Church would probably be willing to "submit" to Rome on terms such as the above. Rome would have to make further concessions as she has already done in the case of the *uniata* Churches in the East with a married clergy — an insistence on compulsory celi-

bacy would disqualify most Anglo-Catholic clergymen — and a ritual in *English* and not Latin which few Anglican clergymen understand.

Rome and the Establishment

The great, indeed *insuperable* obstacle to any reunion on terms between Rome and Canterbury is represented by the official State connection of the *Establishment*. Whilst the ultimate control of the Anglican Church is in the secular hands of Parliament no reunion on terms with Rome is possible. The Anglo-Catholics know this perfectly well; that is why they are opposed to the present set-up, so too do the now minority Protestant and Modernist groups within the English Church who know that the end of the present Establishment would probably mean the end of them. So also does the present Roman Catholic Hierarchy, Westminster and colleagues who have no desire to be placed under the Archbishop of Canterbury and who, ever since the days of Cardinal Manning, have been the bitterest opponents of any reunion on terms between England and Rome. At present, and under the present set-up it rather looks as if the Anglicans will have to put up with the continued hostility of their Roman "brethren" of which Dr. Fisher complains. But the Vatican is a worldly-wise institution. If it eventually thinks the only way to recover England to the "One True Fold" is by making concessions, Dr. Fisher or his successor may still succeed Wolsey and Newman in the College of Cardinals.

Militant—Why Not?

By H. CUTNER

MR. BENNETT'S interesting article *Why be Militant* would have better succeeded if he had given us some clear examples of what he calls militancy. He must have had many such in his mind or before him when he wrote his article, and which made him write it. And I for one would have been greatly in his debt if he could have reproduced some glaring examples of the kind of thing which he so strongly opposes.

Like himself, I too owe a great deal to the RPA, and the books it published in its early days — but if they were not militant I'm prepared to eat any old hat. Nobody was more militant than Ingersoll, and the RPA published three volumes of his lectures and essays at 6d. each; and surely there is no need for me to point out that both Joseph McCabe and John M. Robertson were among the most militant of writers. In fact, wherever possible our reverent Rationalists now try to repudiate both writers mostly for their militancy. Neither pulled any punches, and Robertson in particular hit Christianity so hard, that dozens of Christians (and a few Rationalists) earlier this century were compelled to write what they called "replies" to his arguments, and almost tearfully did their best to "prove" how little he was to be relied on. Robertson weighed in with half a dozen books all published by the RPA, to show that "our Lord" was a myth — and he appears not to have been forgiven even now. Will Mr. Bennett seriously contend that these books were not "militant"?

It is of course true that some of our open-air speakers are "aggressive" — but as a rule, their audiences were brought up on the narrowest of Fundamentalism, and it is useless to speak to these people as if they were cultured university graduates.

What would Mr. Bennett say to them on Hell and the Devil? Would he be so cautious, so gentle, that not a single person could possibly be hurt? Would he treat the Devil with all the reverence possible for those who sincerely

believed in him—or what? I wonder whether he has read Fr. Furniss's delightful pamphlets on Hell, and his vivid and thoroughly Christian pictures of babies frizzling and frying in its flames? Would he avoid all militancy, and, with gentle mercy and kindness, merely treat Furniss as a misguided priest, and say nothing whatever to shock his feelings? Up to very recently, the BBC would have shuddered with horror at the idea of a "Rationalist" on the radio or on TV saying he did not believe in Christianity. Broadcasting has been captured almost completely by the Churches, and the task of Freethought is far more difficult now than it was when Mr. Bennett and I were imbibing RPA literature, in spite of the fact that far fewer people believe, that is, *really* believe, in Christianity now than then, in proportion to the population. They are mostly *indifferent*. Does he believe that these people would actively support Freethought if only we were less militant? Or that we can bring them over?

Still, if Mr. Bennett has some constructive ideas on the problem, by all means let us hear them.

QUIZ

1. Are these characters historical? (a) John Gilpin, (b) Good King Wenceslaus, (c) Homer, (d) King Arthur.
2. Complete these biblical trios: (a) Shadrach, Meshach and —; (b) Shem, Ham and —.
3. Who was the "Gloomy Dean"?
4. What have the lives of these in common?—Socrates, Cleopatra, Hannibal, Hitler.
5. "What a profitable superstition for Popes is this fable of Christ!" Who said it?
6. What Holy Roman Emperor used Moslems to fight the Papacy?
7. Famous last words of father and son: (a) "Remember!"; (b) "Do not let poor Nelly starve." Who were they?
8. Which of those in Question 4 remembered, when dying that he owed for a cock?

Answers on page 192

Public Education versus Clerical Interference

By LEON SPAIN

(U.S.A.)

THE OLD CLERICAL ADAGE that the doctrines taught in our childhood will, at least to a considerable degree, remain with us in our later years, is almost indisputable. With the increasing inroads of Secularism in all spheres of modern industrial society, the most reluctant concession surrendered by the various clergies has been the right of public education. However, despite an acknowledged system of public education not under the control of vested ecclesiastical interests, the educational authorities in many countries have made more than token concessions to Christianity by permitting Bible readings at the opening of the school day, the singing of Christmas carols, in which great emphasis is placed upon the coincidental birth, in the same infant, of the human incarnation of deity and the earthly son of that deity, and the feat of celestial navigation performed by the divine son during the Easter week—at least as established by primitive Christian authorities.

In the United States today a controversy is raging in many States and communities concerning the two vital questions: Should religious instruction be permitted in the American public schools? And should the parochial education system receive subsidies from public funds? These were dealt with in an article entitled "The Battle Over Religion in the Schools," by William Peters in the ladies' magazine, *Redbook*, May 1957. The author was requested to consult educational authorities and leaders of many religious denominations for their respective attitudes and opinions relating to religious instruction as part of the school curriculum. Much vital information was gained on this important issue which should be of interest.

The article proves conclusively that, by and large, the bulk of Protestantism is decidedly in favour of religious education, and that the Roman Catholic authorities are wholeheartedly and unanimously in support of a move of such a nature.

In its most basic aspects, the subject in dispute, as seized upon by those religious bodies favouring religious instruction during school hours, is the interpretation of that provision of the Bill of Rights which explicitly defines the separation of Church and State. The first amendment to the constitution of the United States states clearly and definitely in its opening words: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ." While Congress is definitely restricted in creating an establishment of religion, as outlined in the Bill of Rights, many denominational leaders are seeking to manipulate and stretch the explicit wording contained in the first amendment, in order that they may be assured of establishing some form or other of religious instruction in the American public school system. With that accomplished as an entering wedge in the school curriculum, the instruction in various sectarian dogmas would, by degrees, become increasingly possible. The bulk of the religious leaders in the U.S.A. are seeking to have religious instruction placed on the school curriculum.

In 37 of the 48 States, daily Bible readings are either required or permitted in public school classrooms, while the remaining 11 do not permit daily Bible readings in their public schools. In four States textbooks are issued free to parochial schools, and in 18 States pupils attending parochial schools are provided with transportation paid for out of public funds.

In many States public schools are violating the laws of their respective States, decisions of their State court, and

interpretations of the constitution by the Supreme Court in matters of public school issues relating to Church and State. As an instance, Mr. Peters cites the fact that in various parts of the state of Virginia, and undoubtedly in other States, public school property is still being used for released time religious instruction during school hours, despite a Supreme Court decision in 1948 which declared such practices unconstitutional. Within recent years in many places, and as late as last year in six Kentucky counties, Roman Catholic parochial schools were virtually included in the public systems.

In many public elementary schools throughout the South, periods are devoted to "Christian Bible Study." During these "lessons" non-Christian students are permitted to leave the classroom. In Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1955, religious appreciation courses were made part of the social studies programme, on behalf of which Mr. Shibley, General Superintendent of Schools, made the following explanation: "We aren't teaching religion. We are teaching *about* religion."

In Cliffside Park, New Jersey, a Catholic clergyman offered to supply copies of the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible to every public school classroom. He maintained that his reason for such an offer was due to the fact that the King James, or Protestant, Version was used in the classroom, while 50 to 80 per cent. of the pupils were Roman Catholic. His offer was accompanied with the specious statement that, for Catholics, to read from a Protestant Bible is "contrary and forbidden by their religious belief."

Mr. Hollis Moore, Executive Secretary of the Committee for the Advancement of School Administration, in Washington, D.C., believes that many community groups bring pressure to bear upon educational administrators for various reasons. However, he recently stated that "the biggest single problem comes from religious groups."

There are Protestant groups who favour a stricter interpretation of the First Amendment, and who take a forthright opposition to the encroachment upon the separation of Church and State. Among them are the Universalists, Unitarians, Seventh Day Adventists, many Baptists, and factions of Episcopalians, Methodists, and Congregationalists. *The Christian Century* and *The Churchman*, two leading Protestant publications, have on many occasions taken a determined stand in favour of the separation of Church and State. But invariably the major portion of American Protestantism, regardless of the stand taken by such publications, subscribes to religious education in the schoolroom and the daily readings from the Protestant, or King James, Version of the Bible.

As for the Jews, they are determined in their opposition to the introduction of religion in the public school curriculum. The Synagogue Council of America and the National Community Relations Advisory Council included the following in their joint statement upon the issue: "The maintenance and furtherance of religion are the responsibility of the synagogue, the church, and the home, and not of the public school system; the utilisation in any manner of the time, facilities, personnel, or funds of the public school for purposes of religious instruction should not be permitted. . . ."

The stand of the Roman Catholic Church is strongly on the side of religious instruction and has on numerous occasions
(concluded on next page)

This Believing World

The "Sunday Express" compares Scotland's "Wee Frees" with the Whirling Dervishes of Damascus—they are just as "odd," it claims, in their way. Well, we have often maintained that basically there is little difference between an Archbishop and an African Witch Doctor. Both are in constant touch with the Almighty, both pray for rain when the occasion demands, and both are dab hands at spotting heretics. The world would go on its sweet old way even if there were no Archbishops or Witch Doctors.

★

And now there seems some talk of "unity" between the Churches of England and Scotland—though the question of Bishops in particular for Scotland will no doubt be hotly argued. So will the question of instrumental music, and the singing of hymns, and the length of the prayers and sermons which England likes short, and Scotland "exhaustingly long." Moreover, the idea of indulging in sport on the Sabbath Day is for Scots almost as bad as insulting the Holy Ghost.

★

Rome — or its spokesmen — is very angry with the Church of England for saying that it (Rome) is always attacking its rival for Christian honours, and the two sects are now arguing as to which is getting more converts. This should easily be settled. Why are not full lists prepared and then we can count them? And also, why aren't full lists prepared, not only of "backsliders," but of those Christians who have severed their connection with Christianity altogether and are now convinced Freethinkers? We have an idea that both Rome and England would have the shock of their lives—that is, if they haven't had one already.

★

Convinced Communists — like Mr. Douglas Hyde and others—often go right over to Rome, thus changing one Totalitarian system for another; but we have rarely found one who can so happily mix Communism and Spiritualism like a Mr. E. A. Tooke in *Two Worlds*. He accepts "survival" with all the enthusiasm of the most credulous believer, but he does kick at the way Spiritualists contemptuously reject Materialism. "Why," he joyfully cries, "it was Materialism which led me to Spiritualism," though he qualifies this by insisting that it was "Dialectical" Materialism. It would be thrilling to see how Spiritualists now tackle the invincible logic of Dialectical Materialism especially when, as in Mr. Tooke's case, it is anchored to his own wonderful clairvoyance.

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Spiritualism is not always confined to its own journals for here we have the *Sunday Graphic* devoting nearly two full pages to the way "a well-known doctor has been successfully treating neurosis with the aid of a psychic medium." The "medium" is Miss Geraldine Cummins, who is an "automatic" writer, and as such has given us a series of books dealing with early Christianity in which she makes the old rabbis in Palestine speak in the style of the Authorised Version of the Gospels. She got in touch with their "spirits" and they spoke the more or less good Elizabethan English used by our translators. The fact that the language was not then in existence never worried Miss Cummins.

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In the case of neurotic patients which the doctor cured, Miss Cummins delved into the past history of their ancestors three or four hundred years ago. The spooks told how they were tortured or hanged or otherwise maltreated, and this accounted for the patients being alcoholic or asthmatic (or what you like because it doesn't matter). When

the doctor heard what happened centuries ago, he immediately cured the patient. The writer in the *Sunday Graphic* calls this "phenomenal," and so it would be if it wasn't all nonsense. The patients might just as well have been cured without calling up their ancestors by having another doctor! Haven't they ever heard that medical specialists are often called in to "give another opinion"?

★

In truth, it is astonishing how far credulity will go as soon as one gets in touch with spooks. The latest is about the late Dr. Winnington Ingram, whose elevation to the Bishopric of London was always a minor mystery that Chapman Cohen never solved. When the Bishop was alive—according to a medium in *Two Worlds*—he called Spiritualism "a lot of lies and imagination." However, he has "returned" in spook form, and no doubt his experiences in Summerland have converted him, for he admitted at a seance "he was quite wrong." Poor Winnie—he was always wrong even in his Christianity.

PUBLIC EDUCATION versus

CLERICAL INTERFERENCE

(concluded from page 187)

sions denounced the "godlessness" of the public schools. In 1947, Archbishop McNicholas, General President of the National Catholic Education Association, said "There must be no wall of separation between God and the child. The secularistic educators who raise this wall are, in reality, fascist educators, who, perhaps without realising it, are planning to give our country uncontrolled juvenile criminals." This is, indeed, a ludicrous comment coming from a spokesman of a group which, while unalterably opposed to a public system of education beyond ecclesiastical control, seeks to have some say on matters of public educational policy. If, as many theological casuists contend, the knowledge of deity is unfathomable to finite humans, then the removal of "the wall of separation between God and the child" which exists in the parochial school classroom is meaningless. The likening of secularist educators to unwitting fascist educators is a misleading comparison intended to deceive the uncritical and uninformed, for, if anything, dictators such as Franco and Salazar have not been proponents of secular education.

The concerted drive for religious indoctrination via the public school system proves that the Sunday School harvest of children in America is a glaring failure. What religious bodies have failed to attain during non-school hours has proved convincingly, to them, that other avenues of approach for the minds of the American youth are necessary. Even the contention of leading American theologians that no religion in particular will be taught in the classroom, but the "principles of religion" and "spiritual values," is a hollow absurdity. The instruction of theological mysteries to unreflective children, about which there is even no unanimity among professional theologians of different shades of theology, should have no place in the public school classroom. And the pretext of instruction in "non-sectarian" religion should be exposed at the outset.

We rely no longer on religious sentiment or belief in the supernatural. We appeal solely to reason or nature.

J. G. Compayre (French Educator)

—NEXT WEEK—

CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS

By COLIN McCALL

THE FREETHINKER

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All Articles and Correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or 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.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are always welcome at the Office.

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.

A. WARREN: It is estimated that there are about 3-million Jews in U.S.S.R.

WE REGRET that, in the Obituary on page 181, a letter was dropped out "Mr." on the last line but one should have been, of course, "Mrs."

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON, and SHEPPARD.
- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston, Surrey).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, FINKEL, SMITH or CORSAIR. Sunday, 3 p.m. (Platt Fields) Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, etc. Sunday 8 p.m. (Deansgate Blitzed Site): Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH or WOOD.
- 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: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square) — Thursday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE. Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE
- West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

INDOOR

- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1). — Sunday, June 16th, 11 a.m.: KATHLEEN NOTT, "Psychology and Practical Morality".

Notes and News

WE often have occasion to deplore the suppression of the anti-Christian point of view in the big British newspapers. It is pleasing to record, then, that the Glasgow *Evening Times* recently printed a letter from an "agnostic sixth former," A. McNeil. This, of course, brought the usual Christian outcry about Doubting Thomases; but the young man had his supporters, too; those who praised him for forming his own opinions. And "S.C.M."—one of our readers—contributed a particularly telling letter on creation. The *Evening Times* was not only fair but courteous—a copy of the issue in which his letter appeared was sent to S.C.M.,

At Goodrich, in Herefordshire, a duplicated grotto of Lourdes has been built by a Roman Catholic organisation. Blessed on Whit Sunday, it is now ready to receive, according to the R.C. rector, a million pilgrims a year. But the pertinent comment comes from the local hotel manager: "It may bump up business a bit."

THE detailed questionnaire which the C. of E. is putting out to its clergy in an attempt to discover some accurate details about the state of the Church, has already led to a hot dispute with the Catholics at Lichfield. The claim made by the Bishop of Lichfield to the effect that his diocese has gained from the Catholics four times the number of converts lost to them, was met with a spirited denial from the Catholics, who suggested he had got his numbers the wrong way round. As there has been no public notification of any mass transference from the Anglicans to the Catholics, we should like to know how the Bishop can possibly keep track of his lost members. How does he know what proportion are now R.C. communicants? Would he allow that some have given up religion altogether? We regard his claims, from any angle, as wholly insupportable.

ADMIRERS of Herbert Spencer are reminded that, on Saturday, June 15th at 3 p.m., a wreath will be placed on his grave in Highgate Cemetery. We hope that readers who can, will attend this interesting ceremony. Lord Boyd Orr will officiate.

AN interesting debate was held when some M.P.s attempted to insert an amendment, making Navy divine worship voluntary, in the Naval Discipline Bill. Although the M.P.s were told that it had not been compulsory since 1947, except for boys and on "certain special ceremonial occasions, there is little doubt that strong pressure is exerted in most sections of the services." Mr. Chuter Ede (Lab., South Shields), agreeing with this, recalled that on many of these "voluntary" church parades many soldiers would sing lewd parodies of the hymns during the service. Mr. J. P. W. Mallalieu (Lab., Huddersfield East) told the House of an even worse heathen. "One man," he asserted, "spent every service trying to see how many times he could spit into the hat of the man in front of him." Mr. Mallalieu, an ex-Navy man, said that no man had the right to compel another to worship. To make worship compulsory produced a state of "bloody-mindedness" in some men. Another aspect was brought out by a military man, Lieut.-Col. J. K. Cordeaux (Con., Nottingham Central), who believed that a man who was obliged to spend most of his week-end pressing his uniform and blanching his equipment was unlikely to form a good opinion of the religious ceremony which necessitated this. The amendment was defeated.

AS we go to press, we were pleased to learn that the National Secular Society Conference at Leicester was a great success. Members and delegates were cordially received by the Leicester Secular Society, and the Social Evening last Saturday enabled many old friends—and new ones—to spend a happy evening over the liberal refreshments provided. At the Conference itself, Mr. F. A. Ridley was re-elected as President, the other officers being returned without opposition. Some of the motions on the Agenda were vigorously discussed, and many other knotty points in procedure solved. There were many speakers at the evening Demonstration in the Market Place, and on the Monday, Mr. Kirk led an excursion into the country. A full Report will appear next week.

A Plea for a Rational Approach

By G. I. BENNETT

A RATIONAL approach to so many of the problems facing us in personal, social, national, and international life would improve enormously the contemporary lot and future prospects of humanity, were it to become characteristic of men's thinking. It would be a new approach certainly, considering that, in a sense, mankind lives today much as its distant forebears did, many thousands of years ago, by blundering along darkened pathways. It has never been safe to blunder, although in the past man got away with it pretty well. But from the international standpoint at least, the present is vastly more dangerous than the past; and since as human beings we are equipped with thinking and reflective powers, it is not only sensible to use them — it is a crass folly not to.

Many are the matters on which a great deal of heat is generated one way or another to the obfuscation of important underlying principles. Nowhere is this more striking, or more fraught with the consequences of evil, than in international relations. It is popularly and superficially supposed that conflicting ideologies are the chief, and even only, cause of the international animosities of our time. But at bottom what bedevils amicable settlement of outstanding differences between nations is the idea of the sacrosanctity of national sovereignty, under which a nation arrogates to itself supreme right to act as it pleases in pursuance of its own interests regardless of how its conduct impinges on its neighbour-nations. Yet both history and direct experience should have taught us, again and again, that national sovereignty is a conception that became out-of-date with the coming of steamship, railway and electric telegraph, and has assumed proportions of sheerest lunacy since the invention and development of aviation and of nuclear weapons.

Actually, a world government of federal structure was a desideratum forty or fifty years ago. It is now a long overdue necessity. The unhappy record of the United Nations is an eloquent demonstration of the absurdity of trying to settle disputes between nations on the principle that each nation shall at all times be "sovereign and free", and from first to last have armed forces under its control to employ at will against an aggrieving nation. But the idea of world federal government cuts at the root of national sovereignty — and there's the rub! In a world organised for peace there cannot be the anarchy of each nation-state's assuming the role of arbiter in its own disputes and policeman in its own cause. In inter-state affairs there can be only one court and it must be a world court, only one police army and it must be a world police army, acting under the sovereignty, not of self-interested national governments, but of a disinterested world government.

Yet no world government, however sound in constitution, that ignored the fact of world population expansion could hope to be ultimately successful. The birth of as many babies as came along was once looked upon as an ordinance of Providence. It was wicked to cry out against it and still more wicked to seek ways and means of preventing, or reducing the frequency of, birth. This point of view, essentially ecclesiastical, permeated the public consciousness, and the emotions it aroused blinded many to all sensible and humane considerations relating to birth control (just as earlier many had been similarly blinded to the sufferings of their fellows in terms of physical pain, and had strongly opposed the use of anæsthetics). Fortunately, reason and humanity finally prevailed, and the battle for the right to contraception has, on the whole, been won in our western world — although in the poor backward regions of the earth

the situation is plainly serious. There remain to be broken down the great evils of ignorance and illiteracy, and one might add, almost as a corollary, religious superstition and reverence for age-old traditions and customs. This will not be easy, but it is necessary if birth control is to become universal — and unless it does, world peace, even under the best political conditions, will not be established beyond jeopardy.

From issues of international concern to the subject of marriage may seem a far leap, but it is a matter that vitally affects the lives and happiness of millions of human beings everywhere — although it is of this country I write here. Only too often do opponents of marriage law reform take refuge in emotional attitudes that hide from them the real facts of the case. Marriage surely cannot simply and primarily be a contract between man and woman to live together — whatever the circumstances — until the separation of death. But there are numerous individuals who cleave to this conception of marriage as to a dogma, and are apparently content for it to be a meaningless form where it cannot be (as it ought to be) an intimate union of heart and mind of two people. The officiation of priest or registrar at a wedding ceremony may give legality to a sexual relationship, but it does not give marriage substance and reality. The Church, naturally, is loath to recognise this. There is in its eyes such a thing as Christian marriage, but there cannot be Christian divorce; and it is theologically bound to be influential in resisting efforts to secure easier legal dissolution of marriage for those who have made an unhappy match. And if the Church cannot accept divorce, and cannot, of course, accept the re-marriage of the divorced, it clearly cannot accept that a couple living together out of wedlock may be more happily and completely married in the deepest sense than many who have, in fact, been formally joined in matrimony. Public opinion, as usual, follows the Church, and there is still a general feeling that unmarried love is a matter for shame, as the old phrase applied to it — "living in sin" — obviously suggests. Yet when we have before us the example — classic in its way — of George Eliot's unwedded union, chaste and lifelong, with George Henry Lewes, how can we pharisaically condemn others in the same position, whose lives are perhaps no less chaste and pure?

But however hidebound may be the commonly-held moral ideas about other sexual relationships, there is no question that gives rise to more unreasoning prejudice than that of homosexuality. Homosexual practices under English law are criminal, and because they are a deviation from normal accepted behaviour many people regard them with revulsion. Even where the ordinary man does not approve of punitive action against the homosexual offender (and more frequently than not he *does* approve), he shows marked reluctance to consider the matter objectively and constructively. The majority are always prone to persecute him whose habits by their standards are "unnatural." That the homosexual may be a psychologically sick and not morally evil person who requires psychiatric treatment, in the same way as one physically sick requires a physician, does not occur to them. And curiously, some individuals, liberal in their attitude to marriage law reform and to greater freedom in sex relations, are among those who look upon the homosexual with obvious repugnance without understanding, or desiring to understand, his malady.

(To be concluded)

The World Union of Freethinkers Paris Congress

Report of the New Zealand Rationalist Association

From JAMES O'HANLON, *President*

THE RATIONALIST Movement in New Zealand is in a satisfactory condition. This Association which is the sole body of its kind in the Dominion has a slowly increasing membership of nearly 800 (total population of New Zealand 1,939,000). The roll is purged each year so that we have always a true indication of our numerical strength. Besides the actual membership of the Association there is a large number of people who are not members, but whose views are indicated by the census.

The Census for 1951 showed that there were 3774 Freethinkers, 2083 Agnostics, 1746 Atheists, 2088 Rationalists and 23 Materialists in New Zealand, as well as 11,475 who stated that they had no religion, making a grand total of 21,189 who had no religion. It is interesting to note that, although the female population in 1951 numbered 965,504 as against 973,968 males, the former outnumbered the latter in church adherence in most cases, the exceptions being the Lutheran Church and one or two minor sects. This clearly indicates the greater support given to the churches in this country by women as compared with men. On the other hand 7084 males were shown in the returns as Freethinkers, Rationalists, Agnostics, Atheists and Materialists as against 2630 females; and there were 7568 males recorded as of no religion compared with 3907 females.

Organised Rationalism has existed in New Zealand almost from the establishment of British rule in the country, but not continuously. From 1927, however, without a break the movement has been carried on, though under different names. In recent years incorporation has been effected under the title of the New Zealand Rationalist Association.

Last year a determined effort was made by the Roman Catholic Church to secure State aid for its schools. The matter aroused considerable opposition and, when the claims for State aid came before the Parliamentary Committee, the Roman Catholic Church was the only body to come forward in support of the proposal. The other church bodies and other bodies interested in the matter were unanimous in their opposition to the scheme. The N.Z. Rationalist Association made submissions against the proposals and was ably represented by its secretary Mr. E. A. Miles, at the hearing before the Committee, which eventually dismissed the claims put forward by the Roman Catholics. The matter is by no means finally disposed of as far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, but you can rest assured that the N.Z. Rationalist Association will play its part in resisting any attack on our secular system of education. The possibility of the Catholics getting their way seems remote, but the Association nevertheless recognises the need for continued vigilance.

Although we have secular education, we also have a system of religious instruction known as the Nelson system. This was the result of a discovery by the Churches of a loophole in the Education Act of 1877. The Act required two hours of continuous teaching in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. In actual practice the schools are open each day for more than the statutory four hours daily required under the Act, and the Churches conceived the idea of going to the schools for the purpose of giving religious instruction during school hours but outside the statutory hours. Although the Secularists at the time protested, the Crown lawyers could find no valid objection, thus religious instruction can be given in the schools provided it is outside the hours required by the Act. Legally, when religious instruction is being given the school is deemed not to have opened, or is held to be closed when

such instruction is given after school hours. Whenever irregularities, such as interrupting school lessons for religious instruction because the instructor has not been able to attend before or after school hours, have occurred, the Association has taken the matter up with the authorities and has been successful in having the irregularities stopped.

Our propaganda is largely carried on by means of our journal, *The N.Z. Rationalist*. We have issued this journal continuously since 1927, when the first issue of *The Truth-seeker* appeared. In 1939 the name was changed to the present one. Our education in Rationalism is also maintained by the bookroom. Constant supplies are received from England and the United States, and these are sent to purchasers throughout New Zealand. We have also a well-stocked circulating library available to members; and have been bequeathed the rationalist section of the library of the late Mr. S. Udjur. His estate has not yet been settled, but we shall eventually acquire over 1,000 volumes from it.

In Auckland, which is the parent centre of our movement, we hold monthly Open Forum meetings, which are well attended, and, besides dealing with purely rationalist problems provide a wider education per the medium of qualified speakers on various topics of interest, and through the screening of educational films.

Although New Zealand is far away from the Congress, we are keenly interested in it, and from this remote corner send our greetings and our best wishes for its success.

Religious Chaos in Japan

By D. SHIPPER

FOLLOWING the horrific bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which led to the eventual capitulation of Japan, a period of confusion resulted, as always in a defeated and terrorized nation.

The termination of the era of Shintoist control and Emperor-God worship, combined with the superstitious cravings and the intellectual vacuum left by the discrediting of the man-God and the Hirohito regime marked the commencement of a period of freedom for minority religions and, possibly, a period of further intellectual enslavement for the ceremonial-indoctrinated Japanese masses.

Shintoism suppressed minority religions, but the setting of the Rising Sun in 1945 saw the eruption of a multitude of "new" sects released upon the brain-washed Nipponese, many of them helpless before the volcanic flow of new-found "One and Only Truths". The customary machinations of the Vatican oriental agents-provocateurs, usually concealed beneath the mantle of welfare services and Catholic schools to "hasten the intellectual development of the new generation", are too notorious to necessitate a summary here, but the manifold array of fanatics leading the present onslaught have, to a great extent, escaped notice by Europeans.

For example not far from the snow-capped "sacred mount" Fuji is the busy sea port of Shimizu. Here, in April 1949, the International General Headquarters of Ananai-Kyo was established "in fulfilment of God's promise." The Ananai-Kyo has the authority of the Japanese Government to operate and is a member of the Japanese Religious Union. (The kind of Union which has *never* gone on strike! —Withholding the goods would end the demand!)

"Ananai" is an old Japanese word meaning the unity of God with man, or a bridge between heaven and earth. (A heavy toll-fee still operates!)

The Ananai-Kyo doctrine is Cosmo-Religion. Instructions are "not only for Japanese but international", a useful asset. Among its characteristics is its basis of "Spiritual science", a long-lost science, re-discovered by Chikaatsu Honda (1823-1890), a noted scientist who made the startling discovery, during his experiments, that "man may sometimes be possessed by a fox or animal spirit."

For posterity he wrote (not being much appreciated whilst alive) *Michi No Taigen* (Principles of the Way), *Shinden-Hisho* (Secrets given by God), and, among other works of enlightenment. *Kami No Mokuji* (Divine Revelation).

The Ananai Kyo worship Kami, the "Creator of the Universe", the "only spiritual God of Cosmos (the unique God)", also, "the angels deeply related to our instructions".

They have dedicated a shrine to every founder of every religion and to every enlightened person in the world." One of them, Deguchi, had an unusual experience when "God's spirit descended on him and spoke through the medium of his body." Nagasawa, his teacher, slightly puzzled, made a full inquiry into this phenomenon and declared that God, tired of materialism, wished to make radical improvements to the world by establishing a new religion "with a view to purifying and enlightening the people's mind". Naturally the supporters of the Almighty Hirohito did not take kindly to such rivalry.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. (a) No, (b) Yes, (c) Doubtful, (d) No; 2. (a) Abednego, (b) Japhet; 3. Inge; 4. All suicides; 5. Pope Leo X (1513-21); 6. Frederick II in the 13th Century; 7. Charles I (giving the self-chosen signal for his beheading), and Charles II (remembering Nell Gwynne). 8. Socrates. G.H.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

TOO Highbrow?

JACK GORDON is right: THE FREETHINKER is not for the mob. But we "simplifiers" don't say it is. My own slant is that it lacks the human touch as compared with similar American mags that I take. It has more "class", certainly. This is no gripe. But only "This Believing World" has any humour. I get my money's worth. A knock is better than a boost when it helps, at that. I'm sure you get a lot of slams that would make amusing reading. The Yanks print 'em for the laughs. J. F. KIRKHAM (Canada)

WHY BE MILITANT?

MR. GORDON does not wish to attract empty headed readers but would leave them to Churches and Chapels. He forgets that these people can, and do, increase and multiply, and that so long as our arch-enemies can rely on such recruits they will always be a menace to us. Every effort should be made to wean these numbskulls from their religious organisations.

The primary aim of THE FREETHINKER should surely be to bring secularism to the notice of the largest possible number. We need the high-brow articles for the likes of Mr. Gordon, but there must be lighter stuff for lesser minds. With a vastly increased circulation it would be possible to cater for all. W. E. HUXLEY

OF MY three critics in your May 17th issue, Ernie Crosswell comes nearest to my position. He appears to favour amiable agreement to differ in matters of private belief, reserving militancy for those attempts by the Church to "force itself upon us or our children." Mr. Varney, for his part, wonders where freedom of thought has been won and cites the BBC, the press, and the schools to show that it hasn't. But while it is eminently desirable that these institutions should be unsectarian, I would remind Mr. Varney that they do not constitute freedom of thought — though they *could* and *ought* to be vehicles of a freedom of thought that in law, or in effect, already exists. Provided I adhere to proprieties, no one can legitimately prevent my standing up, in this country today, and saying what I think in regard to our national constitution, our monarchy our Empire (or what remains of it), our politics, our Christian faith and Bible (God bless 'em!), or anything else.

Yet I can think of two great countries, geographically widely

separated but almost at daggers drawn, where such broad freedom to think and say what you please does not exist. Did it exist, the world with all its difficulties and differences would be a happier one today, I feel. We may not make the best use of our freedom, but it does, nevertheless, exist, and we have chiefly our intellectual pioneers to thank for it.

I would use this opportunity to say that I have had, on the subject of my article, a letter of cordial agreement from a gentleman in Western Australia. I tend to think there are perhaps many more like-thinking freethinkers who are not vociferous except when stung into sharp disagreement. It would be interesting if we could have some measure of their strength. G. I. BENNETT

THE OATHS ACT

AT THE recent meeting at Holborn Hall, an individual who claimed to represent the National Council for Civil Liberties said that there was a right "to affirm".

There is an Oaths Act, (1888) which commences "if any person objects to being sworn", he may "solemnly affirm." Nevertheless, (1) he will have been 'legally sworn' in the terms of the Perjury Act 1911 (which repealed the concluding phrases in Section 1 on that Oaths Act); (2) there never were any proper "words prescribed by law" for use in the Courts, so he who asseverates, i.e. "solemnly, sincerely, and truly, declares and affirms", must follow with "the words of the oath prescribed by law" (Section 2, Oaths Act). Even so, those words are not prescribed by Statute Law, and differ from Court to Court; (3) He who would affirm should know well that he cannot be omniscient nor infallible, and that the rules of evidence will prevent him telling all he may know.

Surely, since "children of tender years may be deemed, though unsworn, to understand "The duty of telling the truth" (Section 38: Children and Young Person's Act, 1933) their elders must have a like duty not to mislead, nor to prevent the ends of justice? It follows that he who may be deemed "Innocent in law until proved guilty" must have a right (perhaps simply "affirmed") to give evidence, and for his veracity to be assumed, subject to testing.

Bradlaugh was prepared to swear, if they accepted it as a meaningless formula—for him. I'd be prepared "to affirm" on the same terms! But that would also be a contempt! Nevertheless, what do you think of Section 3 of the Oaths Act, 1888?

H. G. EVANS

ONE suspects that the Secularists of the 1880s were in some ways more enterprising than those of today. In order to attend the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. in 1884, at Plymouth, Mr. R. Porter and his daughter travelled from Beeston, Nottinghamshire, by means of a *tandem tricycle*.

—National Reformer, June 1st, 1884.

OBITUARY

WE REGRET to announce the sudden death, while on holiday, of Albert Hewitt of Windle, St. Helens, Lancashire. Mr. Hewitt had been a member of the N. S. S. for many years, as had been his father before him. A secular service was read by Mrs. Hilda M. Rogals, Secretary of the Manchester Branch, at Anfield (Liverpool) Crematorium on Friday 31st May. Our sincere sympathy is extended to Mrs. Hewitt and to her daughter and son-in-law. H.M.R.

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