

The Freethinker

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DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST I visited both West and East Germany, crossing the political and ideological Equator of Europe (the so-called Iron Curtain) at about 9 a.m. on August 8th. By an irony which students of modern history will appreciate, the tomb of Prince Bismarck—creator of a united Germany in 1871—is now only a few miles from the present dividing line between two Germanys, two civilisations and, in point of fact, two worlds.

I went to West Germany to study the set-up for the General Election on September 15th—in view of the possible consequences that may be expected from remilitarisation if Dr. Adenauer wins, the most important political event since the Nazi debacle in 1945!

From the point of view of religion and the current social and political influence—with which THE FREETHINKER is primarily concerned—the German election is undoubtedly also an event of considerable significance.

Religion in German Politics

The historic connection between religion (both the Catholic and Lutheran Protestant Churches) and the evolution of German politics has been intimate. There was, of course, the Holy Roman Empire, and at a later period, the Holy Alliance: both events in which religion and politics were closely intertwined. Today this traditional connection persists, as is indicated by the name of Dr. Adenauer's own party, the *Christian Democrats*—the dominant political party in the present coalition. Dr. Adenauer himself is a reputedly fanatical Catholic, a former Lord Mayor of the Catholic Cathedral city of Cologne and—like his American "associate," John Foster Dulles—father of a priest. From the religious angle, the C.D.U. is not a specifically Catholic party, like the powerful Centre Party was under the Kaiser; both Catholics and Protestants are to be found in it, though the influence of the Catholic hierarchy is said to be predominant. Actually the most significant evidence of the role of religion in current German politics is to be found, not in the C.D.U., but in the main opposition party, the Social Democratic Party. This party, formerly classical Marxist, has now, for probably the first time in its long history, opened its doors to religious influence. Two leading Christian politicians, Dr. Heinemann—a former member of the Adenauer government who resigned on the question of rearmament and a prominent layman in the Lutheran Church—and Frau Helen Wessel—a former M.P. in the old Catholic Centre Party—have recently joined the S.P.D. and are playing leading roles in the election. I heard Frau Wessel speak recently in Hamburg. For Christians, even Catholics, to speak on Labour Party platforms in England represents nothing new; but for a Catholic to appear on the Social Democratic platform—the traditional anti-clerical and materialistic party—that is something hitherto unheard of in Germany.

Church and State in West and East

Though the respective political regimes in West and East Germany are at daggers drawn with each other and have

no official relations of any kind, their current attitude to the problems of Church and State is remarkably similar. The only German state in which religion has no official connection with the State is the West German "free city" of Hamburg. The separation of Church and State is complete in this traditional Lutheran stronghold. In all other West German states—which together constitute the Federal Republic of West Germany—official recognition is given to

both Catholic and Protestant Churches. Financial support is also given. That is in the West. In the East, the German Democratic Republic set-up is more complex. Here it is necessary to distinguish between the official policy of a regime and its ideological origins.

A Christian party officially sits in the East German parliament and, despite Catholic denunciations of "Godless Bolshevism," etc., the government pays subsidies to both Catholic and Protestant Churches. The Mayor of the great industrial centre of Stalingrad on the Polish frontier, told me personally that one of his official duties was to pay their stipends to the clergy! He added that he personally thought the amounts too much, but the clergy themselves thought it too little! From which episode we may perhaps conclude that clerical nature east of the Iron Curtain remains much the same as it does west of the famous piece of drapery! However, whilst this is the attitude of the government, it is not that of the all-powerful Marxist ideology. Religion is not taught in the State schools, and Marxist professors whom I met were emphatic that the future would witness the progressive decline of religion. This, however, would be due to State-sponsored scientific education, they added; and in fact the regime does not encourage anti-religious propaganda. Nor, as far as I could find out, are there any Freethinking societies in East Germany. From the current Marxist point of view they are regarded as unnecessary. This appears to represent the official "party line" throughout the Communist world. I was told, for example, that the League of Militant Atheists (formerly affiliated to our World Union of Freethinkers, and represented at its London Congress in 1938) no longer existed. In West Germany, of course, the German section of the World Union is an active and militant body.

In the Footsteps of Luther—and the Devil!

Naturally, I did not spend my whole time in the East inquiring into the complex relations of Church and State. Nor did I deal with religion purely in the abstract. I was able to see tangible evidences of some famous chapters in the religious annals of Germany and the world. On a moonlit night I stood opposite the gate of the old University of Wittenberg: the self-same gate, still religiously preserved, upon which, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous theses denouncing the Papacy—an epoch-making event which launched the Protestant Reformation upon the world, and certainly one of the most beneficent events in human history. Not far off, in the historic city of Leipzig, Lenin similarly launched the Russian Revolution, also with

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Some Impressions of Germany

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

printed word—his famous journal *Iskra*, usually regarded as the starting point of Bolshevism. "From what small beginnings do we come!" remarked the present Soviet leader, Mr. N. K. Krushchev, who was there a few days before me. (I signed the visitors' book on the same page.) Not only Lenin, but Marx and Engels *nearly* visited Leipzig. Curiously, the author of the phrase, "Religion, the opium of the people," and his friend were invited to attend the baptism of Wilhelm Liebknecht in the—one presumes—unusual capacity of godfathers. However, they

could not come, and St. Thomas' Church has to be content with reminiscences of Luther, who preached there; Bach, who was the organist; and Wagner, who was born there. An illustrious band; but just across the road one finds traces of an even more illustrious figure. Here is the famous Auerbach cellar of Faust, where Mephistopheles made one of his most famous appearances! In the room above is preserved an IOU from Goethe for a bottle of wine, for which the author of *Faust* could not pay on the nail. The road to Hell is paved with IOUs!

Report on British Freethought since 1954

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

[Given to the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers in Paris this week.]

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS Freethought in the sense of rejection of traditional religious observance has continued to gain ground despite the evangelical efforts of the Anglican Church, of revivalists such as Billy Graham and of the steady flow of Roman Catholic immigrants. This has been shown by the reception accorded to Mrs. Knight's broadcasts on *Morality Without Religion*; by an Easter investigation by the Liberal daily newspaper, the *News-Chronicle*; and by the recent staging of an anti-religious comedy *The Making of Moo*. In each case the popular press thought the occasion worthy of at least a depreciation of freethought, if not of a vituperative attack; and certainly in two cases the support given to the expression of liberal thought must have surprised the Press Barons. Mrs. Knight gained the suffrages of 45% of listeners; and she has not relaxed in her evangelism against supernatural religion since that time. Far from that, she has shown herself to be a very forthright champion of Rationalism and opponent of Catholicism. The attack on the play missed fire, and it was well spoken of by radio critics as well as by Sunday conservatives. Statistics show that more than one-third of our young people have doubts as to the existence of a god; that not more than ten per cent. of the whole population attend church with any frequency or regularity; that under a third still believes in a Devil, and still fewer fancy that religion has any influence on contemporary events.

This steady expansion of liberal thought has been mainly at the expense of the Protestant sects; the Roman Catholics appear more nearly to have held their own, and they wield an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. This may be due in part to Vatican pronouncements on Birth Control, but it is more to the influx of immigrants from Catholic countries such as Ireland, Poland, Hungary and Italy.

Thus far we may hail the over-all change as satisfactory; but this liberalisation of the mind is not displayed proportionately in the daily press, on the radio or on television; nor in Parliament (although there may be some eighty M.P.s more or less rationalists, few of these will declare it in public); nor, it is my duty to report, is there a proportionate increase in the membership of organised Freethought.

This is perhaps not surprising. Freedom of Thought does not mean Unity of Outlook; and Freethinkers tend to combine more for mutual support against attack than for combined action against archaic systems of belief. Many a doubter has been surprised to discover that he was not unique in his milieu. At a meeting not long ago, I overheard one man say to another, "I have known you fifty years and never realised you were one of us." And this

although there are societies deriving in unbroken line from the eighteenth century.

Alas, the movement is poor; poorer in some respects than of yore. Its policy is divided, there being a lamentable fission between U sheep and militant goats. It is perhaps in keeping with history that after the deaths of dominant leaders such as Chapman Cohen and A. Gowans Whyte there should be a period of reaction; and the very difficult financial strains have been badly felt. Wealthy sympathisers are fewer and their surplus for the encouragement of approved projects is small; since so much of their surplus is required by the State. The hard-won sixpences of the so-called working class once generously given for the Good Cause, are outweighed by half-crowns to the pools and pounds to the never-never. For Hard Thinking and Straight Speaking the revenue is small and costs are sky-high. But in this we do not differ from our neighbours.

Three societies maintain their support of the World Union: the National Secular Society, the Leicester Secular Society and the South Place Ethical Society, all of long standing, united in a federal committee. Frequent lectures throughout the autumn and winter, social gatherings, a weekly review, a monthly bulletin and all the usual activities are carried on with unflagging energy. And there is a splendid sense of loyalty and dedication among members of all three Societies.

We have lost two outstanding supporters in Lord Horder, physician to kings and prime ministers; Sir Sheldon Dudley, Surgeon Vice-Admiral and Director of the Naval Medical Service; and a third whose sympathy was always forthcoming, though he preferred to give his whole support to the service of world peace, Prof. Gilbert Murray. What will surprise many of our friends is that although Murray was recognised as a forthright agnostic he was given a burial ceremony in Westminster Abbey, as a famous man. What will not surprise our friends is that an attempt was made to claim him as a Roman Catholic since it was in that creed he was baptised, and a priest administered extreme unction when Murray was too old and too ill to know what was happening.

In Britain there is a regrettable lack of appreciation of the present menace of the Church of Rome. In our fairly tolerant, more or less democratic society, that efficiently organised body has made inroads into government departments, press, radio and television. The majority of people are blissfully unaware or unconcerned. The British representatives of the World Union of Freethinkers differ from their countrymen in the International Humanist and Ethical Union principally in believing that religion—and particularly the Roman religion—cannot be civilised; it must be destroyed.

Freethought Televised to Millions

(Continued from page 283)

The following dialogue took place on Mike Wallace's TV programme "Night Beat" on the American station WABD from 11 p.m. to 11.30 p.m. on May 22nd last. The estimated audience was between three and four millions.

WALLACE: How did you become an atheist? Your parents were Jewish, is that not a fact?

LEWIS: Yes, they were Jewish.

WALLACE: Orthodox?

LEWIS: No, sir, they were not. One of my brothers brought a copy of Ingersoll's lectures into the house. It was left for me, when I found the book, to read those lectures to my mother.

WALLACE: At the age of . . .

LEWIS: I started about the age of fifteen or sixteen. They impressed me very much. They impressed my mother very much. One thing led on to another. After I read Ingersoll, I began to read Thomas Paine, and between the two they became my educators.

WALLACE: As a boy, before you got to Ingersoll, had you attended synagogue or Sunday school?

LEWIS: I have a very slight recollection of having attended Sunday school probably once or twice in my lifetime and at a very early age.

WALLACE: You were not Bar Mitzvahed? Confirmed?

LEWIS: No. No, sir. I was not.

WALLACE: When, as many intelligent people as do subscribe to various religions, get as much solace, as much comfort, do as such good in the name of religion, how in the world can you . . . we are not here questioning your belief, your desire, your understanding of yourself as an atheist; what we are questioning here is your desire to tear down the house of religion. Why do you want to take away from these people something they find so fulfilling, so comforting?

LEWIS: I don't believe they find it comforting. I believe that they live in great fear. I believe they suffer from some form of fear complex. I believe that they tell you that they get some kind of a consolation because they love God. Why the necessity of loving God? (If there is such a thing as God.) Does He need our love? What can we do for God? How does He know that we love Him? They love God because they fear Him; their so-called love is based upon a deep-rooted fear of a jealous and vindictive God. They fear that He's going to inflict some punishment upon them, and therefore they devote themselves to prayers or supplications and fastings and what not to appease Him. They fear the wrath of God. I want to emancipate them from this frightful fear.

WALLACE: But if these people need this, want this, why do you want to legislate against them? Why don't you just leave them alone and then you go your own way independent?

LEWIS: Oh, no, on the contrary. I want them to let us alone. I don't want them to encroach upon the educational system. They're constantly hammering to break down the secular public schools of this country. The public schools were established, they were thriving, they were doing very fine, and all of a sudden you get released time. For what purpose? To send the children to religious school. Now they want to bring in some other things, like Bible reading. They want the people to bring the preacher into the public school. They want to teach religion in the schools. They want to get control of the public school system. What was the matter with the public school system when it was first established? When it was first started, it was perfectly satis-

factory to everybody. It is they—the religionists—who are pressing themselves upon the body politic. We want to hold inviolate that wonderful Constitution of ours, and particularly that first article of the Bill of Rights. We don't want them to violate it. We also want them to pay their rightful share of taxes.

WALLACE: Mr. Lewis, have you ever in your life felt a real desire to pray, did you want to turn to somebody, some thing, some one and therefore want to pray?

LEWIS: I have never had the desire to pray. I may have gone to people in times of uncertainty and asked their advice about the matter, or talked to them about the problem, but as to praying, no, sir.

WALLACE: No?

LEWIS: Absolutely not.

WALLACE: You abhor prayer?

LEWIS: I think it's wasted words on the desert air. I don't know to whom they're praying. No prayer in the whole history of mankind has ever been answered.

WALLACE: You say, I understand, that prayer is a form of humiliation.

LEWIS: I do, sir. I believe a man who prays humiliates himself because he hasn't the strength to fight his own battles, and he's calling upon some mythical force to help him.

WALLACE: In other words, you regard prayer, as used by those of us who are religious more or less, you regard it as a crutch.

LEWIS: I would say that self-reliance is a better staff than the crutch of religion. I'd say no prayer has ever been answered and I say it's a humiliating gesture to get on your knees or raise your hands in prayer. No results can come from it, and it defeats its purpose by preventing you from using your own energies to solve your problems.

WALLACE: We talked with the Jesuit, Father Le Farge, about your ideas about prayer. He said, "Mr. Lewis' idea of prayer is rather crude. Prayer is not just asking for something, but being attuned with God." And Dr. Langmead Casserley, whom we quoted earlier, said, "Prayer is not to get God on our side, but to get us on God's side."

LEWIS: I think what they are saying is utterly ridiculous and without foundation. What do they mean by getting on God's side? It's too silly for words. There's no such thing. They're talking in riddles. They're talking of things about which they know nothing.

WALLACE: It is evidently something that *they* understand.

LEWIS: I don't believe they do. If they say they know, then I believe that they are under some kind of a delusion. I don't think they can demonstrate in the slightest degree what they're talking about when they say they want to get on God's side.

(To be concluded)

RED CATHOLICS

RED CHINA has now formed a "Patriotic Association of Chinese Catholics" and 240 members are reported to have attended a Peking conference on 17/6/57. Rome has taken speedy action and the International Fides Agency has warned Chinese Catholics to refuse membership of the Association. In China religious bodies are under the Cabinet Administration for Religious Affairs. Protestant organisations already have an association of this type and there is little doubt that the Communists are anxious to bring the Catholics into line.

This Believing World

We are afraid not many of our readers pore over and study the Bible's last book—Revelation. If they did they would read about the three "unclean spirits" the author (supposed to be John) saw come out of the mouth of a dragon. The Free Church of Scotland has finally located these spirits—they are Russian Communistic Imperialism, Afro-Asian Nationalism, and Western Capitalism, though it is not quite clear who exactly is now the dragon from which these "unclean spirits" emerged. However, Revelation also warns us solemnly to be prepared for the Second Advent, when Jesus is to come "as a thief." We are told, "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." It would be a shame to spoil this delightful verbiage by an irreverent and beastly militant comment!

★

A 58-year-old gentleman had the impudence to steal 2½d. from an offertory box and was jailed for a year. Taking any sum of money from a church is a heinous crime which cannot be too severely punished. Yet if the gentleman had been a well-trusted secretary to a business firm, or a cashier in a bank, and had absconded with thousands of pounds, it is more than likely justice would have been tempered with mercy, and a few months only in jail would have been his lot—and he could even have kept the swag. A year for 2½d. should warn similar would-be offenders what it means to offend a Divine Institution.

★

Everybody knows, of course, of the marvellous cures of incurable diseases performed by spirit doctors, but we are glad to record that even the much despised Witch Doctors have now been acknowledged by the World Health Organisation to be fully worth serious consideration. After two months studying the methods of Witch Doctors, the Organisation was told not "to write off native witch doctors as bone-flouting primitives." The Commission found "they had herbal and psychiatric cures for many illnesses"—but no doubt Spiritualists would agree that spirit Witch Doctors also helped. After all, spirit doctors don't use herbal remedies, so why should spirit Witch Doctors?

★

And talking again about Spiritualism, we note that the BBC Press Conference with the "well-known" medium, Mrs. Ena Twig, as the heroine, did not seem to impress even Spiritualists. One lady wrote to *Psychic News* that "she was just not equal to the occasion." Her "answers to her enquirers were deplorably inadequate," and it was "a very poor introduction to the general public." Well, should anyone be surprised? The real success of mediums can only be performed in the dark, and requires a very reverent atmosphere, with plenty of hymns solemnly sung together with unlimited faith. Mrs. Twig hadn't a single answer to any searching question and, as we pointed out, she was as big as a fiasco as was Mr. H. Edwards trying to reply to doctors on "spirit-healing."

★

One of the latest writers on "Ghosts" is Mr. Alasdair Alpin MacGregor, and we note that he has discovered a lady called Mrs. Done who never had any difficulty photographing them with an old but still workable vest-pocket Kodak. Whenever she heard "unaccountable noises," she would get out her camera and easily photograph the ghosts causing them. She appears never to have failed, and Mr. MacGregor has seen them — not the ghosts but the photographs — "remarkable psychic photographs" he calls them. There is one answer to our "spirit photographers" — all

spirit photographers are fakes. Nearly all professional photographers would agree with this.

★

We are always astonished at the very few "miracles" of healing taking place at Lourdes. So far not a single Pope or Archbishop appears to have been cured there when sick, and pilgrims even with undying faith who fall sick are more often than not whisked away to an ordinary hospital. The other day, fifteen young British pilgrims in Boulogne all got an attack of Asian 'flu while forty-one who had 'flu symptoms were roped off on the ship taking them to Folkestone. They had become ill soon after leaving Rome—but why were they not taken to Lourdes? Perhaps it was because they all had Faith but not that much Faith.

Facts for Freethinkers—19

SCIENTISTS AND GOD

REPORTERS for the Christian press are often sent on the desperate mission of trying to collect testimonies from men of science, in an effort to re-establish the Christian creed on a majority vote of scientists instead of on the facts of science.

But the last inquiry to be conducted scientifically on anything like a comprehensive scale was by Prof. James Leuba in 1933, when he gathered statistical information regarding the attitude of American scientists towards the beliefs in God and a future life, and was able to compare the results, group by group, with figures obtained on a previous occasion. The scrupulous way in which this inquiry was conducted, and the use made of Cattell's *American Men of Science* is detailed by Leuba. He also takes note of the beliefs of scientists of greater and lesser eminence. (Some of Cattell's names are starred; they are those of the more eminent, the selection being the work of a dozen prominent men in each science).

To the question as to the existence of a personal God he obtained enlightening results. In each case the scientists of greater eminence were the less inclined to belief. Not only this, but the more complex sciences showed less believers than the more simple. Whereas 17 per cent. of the greater physicists believed in God, the percentage dwindles through the biologists (12) and sociologists (5) until only 2 per cent. of the greater psychologists profess belief.

Again, when compared with 1906, Leuba notes a decrease in every group, the greater physicists, for instance, dropping from 34 per cent. to 17.

He also investigated two colleges. In one he found that 20 per cent. of the Freshmen held belief, the number dwindling through the Sophomores (second year men), who showed 14 per cent. believers, Juniors (6 per cent.) to Senior (5). Thus, as the students pass through their college years, i.e., as more is known, they relinquish belief.

There is, in all this, a recapitulation of what happens on a vaster scale in the history of man. In the development of his knowledge man gradually drops the primitive beliefs with which he started. Similarly, as students pass through college, as scientific men pass from 1906 to 1933, as the complexity of the science increases, belief diminishes. Thus the argument used by many Theists to the effect that there is a primitive universality of belief, if it is true (and it is with a few exceptions) actually works against the Theist's position when contrasted with such statistics as Leuba's.

Man at his lowest stages of knowledge believes in the operation of Deity; man at his highest does not.

G. H. TAYLOR.

THE FREETHINKER

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

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

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Room 4, Birmingham International Centre, 83 Suffolk Street (opposite West End Cinema, 1 minute from Town Hall, along Paradise Street). Advert. in *Mail* and "What's On," previous Saturday, September 15th, 7 p.m.: T. D. SMITH, "Russia Re-visited, 1957."
Portsmouth Branch N.S.S. (Foresters' Hall, Fratton Road).—Thursday, September 19th, 7.30 p.m.: General Meeting and Social.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs DAY, CORINA, 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.
London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. D. TULLMAN and L. EBURY.
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).—Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: R. POWE. Thursday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE. Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE.
Wales and Western Branch (The Downs, Bristol).—Sunday, 6 p.m.: D. SHIPPER.
West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
Worthing Branch N.S.S. (Sea Front).—Sunday, September 15th, afternoon and evening: Portsmouth Branch N.S.S. speakers—P. G. YOUNG, R. DE SALLE, J. POTHECARY and P. POTHECARY.

Notes and News

MR. NIGEL DENNIS, author of the brilliant satire, *The Making of Moo*, which we reviewed recently in these columns, has agreed to the use of its script in Mr. Taylor's forthcoming talk to the Conway Hall Discussion Circle on November 19th. Mr. Dennis expresses warm appreciation not only of Mr. Taylor's review, but also of THE FREETHINKER in general, to which he is a newcomer. We trust that *The Making of Moo* will get the support of our free-thought comrades in America and that the play may soon be seen on the American stage.

In his annual report, Canon Charles B. Flood, Administrator of the Crusade of Rescue, complains bitterly about the

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £239 1s. 9d.; Anon, 2s.; M. J. Bennett, 6s. 6d.; Mrs. F. Hayhow, 5s.; A. Hancock, 3s.; A. W. Coleman, £1 12s. 6d.—Total to date, September 6th, 1957, £241 10s. 9d.

backwardness of Catholic couples in adopting the children of Catholic unmarried mothers. "Non-Catholic brethren seem to have greater charity and understanding," says the Canon. Worse still, "It is hard to convince the best-intentioned non-Catholic social worker that material prosperity is not the first consideration." (It would be hard to convince the child!) The number of Catholic unmarried mothers registered with the Crusade of Rescue during 1956 was 768. Of these, only 139 were British, and 463 were Irish. Nothing like a good Catholic upbringing for keeping a girl on the straight and narrow path!

We learn that the Dutch Parliament is expected to accept a recommendation that the Government find a third of the costs of new church buildings. As Holland has embarked on an extensive building programme, this will mean a great deal of financial assistance being provided for religious bodies.

WITH Malaya celebrating its independence on August 31st, the R.C. hierarchy are fully alive to the possibilities of extending their power in this multi-racial state. Already their first success has been announced, the appointment of Chinese Catholic Leong Yeu-Koh to be Governor of Malacca State. The Malayan population is a mixture of Malays, Indians, Chinese, Eurasians, Pakistanis, Europeans and Melanesians and much miscegenation has taken place. Although the *Statesman's Year Book* gives a total of 86,000 R.C.s in 1948 (and 47,000 Protestants) in an approximately 6,000,000 population, the *Catholic Times* recently claimed 171,000 Catholics, 2.3 per cent. of the total. The R.C.s control 173 schools, which are attended by 93,000 children, many of whom are non-Christian.

Fifty Years Ago

CHRISTIAN MINISTERS are showing a disposition to fight shy of the second half of the last chapter of Mark, where Jesus is represented as saying to his apostles, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Some of these ministers tell us to look at the Revised Version, where we shall see in the margin that this portion of the chapter does not exist in the earliest manuscripts, and they innocently expect that Freethinkers will quietly drop the offensive passage. Oh dear, no! Before they claim such indulgence they must put forth a new edition of the whole Bible, showing us what they desire excised, and what they wish to retain and are ready to defend as the infallible word of God. We should then discuss whether their selection is justifiable and after that we should discuss whether the amended Bible is any more divine than the original one. But we cannot allow them to keep the Bible as it is, to call it God's Word, to revile people who doubt it, and to persecute people who oppose it; and yet at the same time evade responsibility for every awkward text. This will never do. The clergy cannot have the authority of inspiration in their pulpits and the ease of eclecticism on the platform and in the press.—THE FREETHINKER, September 15th, 1907.

NEXT WEEK

CATHOLICS AND EUTHANASIA
By D. SHIPPER

The Population Problem of India

By DR. S. CHANDRASEKHAR

[A Paper delivered to the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, Paris, this week.]

THE POPULATION PROBLEM has become one of the most fundamental of all human problems. It affects every aspect of man's social life—individual, national and international. It affects the health and happiness of the individual and of his family; it influences the material prosperity and social progress of nations; it can threaten international security and peace. In overpopulated countries rapid population increase militates against any attempt to raise the standards of living. This incompatibility between people and the resources at their disposal is complicated by factors such as political status, religious and social taboos, colour and cultural barriers, and by obstacles to free migration.

The world's population has grown from about 540 millions in 1040 A.D. to 2,600 millions today. This population is unevenly distributed over the earth's surface; and the regional increases are also very uneven. Despite the great advances made in recent years in the application of science to human needs, the bulk of the world's people are denied the bare necessities of existence and in many regions the natural renewable resources are dwindling.

In India the problem takes on a severe form. In the past ten years the population has increased by more than the whole population of France. Four centuries ago the sub-continent had about 100 million inhabitants. In 1871, when the first proper census was taken, the population numbered 254 millions. In thirty years it gained 30 millions; in the past ten years the increase has been about 50 millions. These overall gains are impressive; but the rate of increase has not been excessive. In 70 years, 1871-1941, it was 54%, whereas in the same 70 years the United Kingdom gained 56% and Japan 136%. The controlling influence in India has been not so much fertility as mortality. With the general improvement in public health, the expectation of life is likely to be considerably prolonged, unless there is severe famine. The mere addition of a population as great as that of France or of the United Kingdom every ten years to a population already in excess nullifies almost all efforts to improve the painfully low standard of living and progress in education, in sanitation and public health, and in rural recovery becomes desperately slow.

Indian statistics are too often inadequate and unreliable, but they show that the average Indian mother is likely to have six or seven children, of whom three, perhaps four, may survive to adult life. The highest regional birth rate is 44 per 1,000 in Central India (compare Egypt 44.4, Mexico 43.9 and Brazil 42); the lowest is 36 in South India. In 50 years the overall rate has slightly declined. Urban districts, as might be expected, show a lower rate than rural ones, but income groups show little variation.

The Indian death rate is high, 30 per 1,000 per annum, ranging from 34 in Central India to 27 in South India. Of the 10 million Indians who die each year a painfully high proportion consists of first year infants and women in childbirth. In Sweden, Holland and New Zealand the rate is 20-22 per 1,000 births; in India it has been reduced from a peak in 1918 of 261 to the present 116.

83% of Indians live in villages without available hospitals, clinics or any medical service worth the name. Every year, it is calculated, 10 million suffer from malaria and three million die of it; those who survive are of depreciated efficiency. And there are other diseases with similar effects, so that the blind, deaf, halt, lame and mentally deranged pullulate.

That, briefly, is the demographic situation in my country. Thirty-five years ago, Keynes declared that the time had already come when every country needed a population policy which, once decided, must then and there be put into operation. For India there is one possible policy without which all efforts to improve the very low standards of living must fail. That is Birth Control, or, if you will, Planned Population. Of course we wish to give all our people the desirable standards set up by dietitians; but we are hard put to it to maintain the present pitiable standards of food. Of course we wish to increase the food productivity of every part of the country; but we have difficulty in maintaining the present levels. It is too late in the day to discuss in India the pros and cons of Birth Control. The question has been thrashed out *ad nauseam*. Nevertheless, our newspapers debate it as if it were something utterly new, and the ignorance of the debaters is equalled only by the heat they display.

By Birth Control is meant the prevention of conception and not abortion; hence the emptiness of the Catholic argument of "embryo murder." It is in the grand march of science a control of nature, even as the control of infection in medicine by asepsis, of pain by anaesthesia, or any other scientific control of nature. Contraceptive practices were known to the ancient Egyptians (Kahun Papyrus, 1850 B.C.; Eber Papyrus 1550 B.C.), and are no more unnatural than shaving, cooking, aviation or television. Nor are they immoral. Morals are man-made and depend on the stage to which society at a given moment has evolved. What is immoral is the refusal to face facts and the fear of change.

Some religions and religious leaders are opposed to Birth Control, largely for fear that the followers of other religions may outbreed them. "The Lord fights on the side of the largest battalions." But of recent years there has been a shift. Orthodox Jews condemned the use of all contraceptives until 1930, when the General Convention of American Jewish Rabbis endorsed Birth Control. The Lambeth Conference of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America viewed any artificial restriction of the family with alarm in 1908, but in 1930 reversed its stand.

Mahatma Gandhi advocated only sexual abstinence, as a "method handed down from ages past and an infallible sovereign remedy, doing good to those who practise it." It is idle to expect any useful guidance from the ancient Hindu scriptures on such a specific modern problem. The Hindu *dharma* permits a social flexibility reflected in a differential morality distinguishing between the ideal and the permissible, the accidental and the essential. A Hindu, however, if he wishes to be saved from the hell *puth* must have a son to deliver him. There is also a Vedic injunction to beget 10 children. On the other hand, there are abundant directions which could, if acted on, regulate successfully the social and sexual life of a community so that there would be no population problem in India. However, most of the reformers and teachers from Ram Mohan Roy to Radhakrishnan have been in favour of planned parenthood.

The importance of the Muslim attitude towards family planning is obviously most important for, despite partition, there are still 36 millions of Muslims in India. There are no available statistics giving the necessary information, but there is no reason to believe that the fertility, morbidity and mortality among them differ basically from those of the Hindu population. Women have a better legal status

and there is social equality; but traditionally large families are encouraged. Nevertheless, the fact that the Muslim teachers have in recent years given a definitive and permissive ruling on contraception is not generally known. Islam, like Hinduism, has no organised clergy, no church and no true liturgy. Problems are submitted to a mufti (teacher). In 1937 the Grand Mufti of Egypt issued a *fatwa* based on the Hanafy School of Law declaring contraception permissible by mutual consent.

Apart from the objections of the Roman Catholics, who form a small minority of India's people, there is no real religious opposition to planned population. The problem is how to put it into execution. The Commission planning the Five Year Plan of 1951 drew up a fairly comprehensive programme for the investigation and teaching of the subject, for which the Government has allocated 65 lacs of rupees (about half a million pounds). Further at the Government's request an expert was sent by W.H.O. to organise a "pilot study of the rhythm or safe period

method." This line of action was due to the Protestant Christian Minister of Health, Mrs. Rajkumari, whose objection to scientific contraception derives from her loyalty to Gandhi. Apart from the centres set up under this scheme, there are over 70 birth control clinics already in operation, of which Madras was the pioneer city. Most of these work in conjunction with hospitals. What can now be claimed is that India as a whole has become aware of the problem and that there has come about a perceptible change in the public attitude towards it, which is leading to increased action.

In India human life is subjected from birth to death to needless, preventable and incalculable suffering, misery and unhappiness, and the expectation of life is short. It is a challenge to all of us to change this sordid order; we should work so that the precious heritage of life entrusted to our care is handed down enriched and valuable to the generations yet to come.

The Saviour and the Sage

By G. I. BENNETT

THERE IS NO AGREED DEFINITION of a Christian and I doubt whether there will ever be. It has been said—by Anglican Churchmen among others—that Unitarians are not Christians, since they believe only in Jesus the man, but not in Jesus the Christ, immaculately conceived and born of a virgin. Now, it is obviously desirable that the term Christian should have a specific meaning. But Christian is an attractive word to many people and they are loath to give it up, however much of Christian doctrine they have over the years ceased actually to believe in. And this applies to most Unitarians. If, they argue, we believe in Jesus the moral teacher and try in our lives to apply his teachings, then why should we not call ourselves Christian? Christian in this sense has become synonymous with a particular sort of ethical sentiment that has not and never has been practicable in our harsh world—although most men and women, in circumstances of relative comfort, somehow find it spiritually edifying and congenial to browse upon.

Well, Jesus (whether he be legendary or historical I do not much care, but for convenience here I assume him to be historical)—Jesus is not my *beau ideal*, and the older I get the less I like the so-called Gospel of Love associated with his name.

In the first place, love as *love* is unselfish and disinterested. It is not inspired by the prospect of gain; it does not ask for a return, now or at some future time. But the love that Jesus entreated men to let into their hearts would be rewarded hereafter in bountiful measure. To do well for one's fellows was to do well for oneself. In the second place, such love as Jesus professed was limited to mankind. He did not feel for animal life with that tenderness and compassion which makes Francis of Assisi not only the most adorable of canonised saints, but plainly the moral superior of Jesus. In the third place, Jesus himself never consistently practised his Gospel of Love. Absolute tolerance and forgiveness, which are necessary to the expression of love unbounded, were not his. His enemies were obviously the Pharisees, the priestly orders, the cultured and socially advantaged, the rich and powerful and worldly. On his principles he should have loved them—hard though love may be where there is an irresolvable conflict of interests. But he did not—unless they were prepared to capitulate to his will. A man endowed with wisdom would at least have kept his hate for these people

to himself. But Jesus did not and could not. He called them serpents and "whited sepulchres," and how many other uncomplimentary names we do not know. He whipped the money-lenders out of the Temple. They felt the bitterness of his contempt for them; they knew the fury of his tongue.

Was Jesus (assuming his historicity) a social revolutionary, an ethical evangelist, or both? Or was he, as Schweitzer very credibly portrays, a child of his time, accepting undoubtingly the current eschatology about the imminent end of the world, seeing himself cast in the role of God's vicegerent on earth to tell men that they had yet time to repent of their ways and show them how, through his Gospel of Love, they could save their souls before the impending cataclysm that would sweep away the temporal world, and all material power, possession, and pride? Social or ethical revolutionary, or both, or mission-conscious eschatologist preaching an interim ethics—whether one or the other we do not know: all is conjecture. But if we can place any reliance at all upon the Gospels we do know he was an extremist who contemned even modest material comfort and well-being; who saw the inherent fitness of a man's roaming the world as a begging, penniless outcast with no roof over his head; who demanded unquestioning faith and the glad forbearance of poverty and injustice in this life, so that in the life to come there should be treasure and joy abounding.

For my part, I see precious little of humility, goodness, or disinterested love of mankind in Jesus. Far more to my taste as spiritual guide and mentor is the Roman emperor who left behind many pages of lofty moral self-counsel that we now call the *Meditations*.

Marcus Aurelius, who regulated his whole life by the severe dictates of reason, was the complete antithesis of a fanatic. He could not understand the spirit that animated those professing Christianity, which made them seek a happy martyrdom. As in life so in death he was the accomplished sage. While Jesus of Galilee is credited with those last tragic words from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", it is recorded of Marcus Aurelius that he uttered, as he lay dying, this dignified rebuke to those about him who were giving vent to their sorrow: "Why weep for me? Think of saving the Empire. I do but precede you."

Marcus was disappointed in the motives that governed

most of the men about him—especially of his son—but he did not complain. Through the trials and troubles of a turbulent reign he bore himself as an exemplary philosopher. He had to contend with pestilence, earthquakes, and inundation at Rome, and almost continuous wars on far northern frontiers of the Empire against encroaching barbarous hordes—wars that drew him away from the pleasant quiet of a studious home life to the din and stridence of the military camp, where congenial companionship he had none. In such years of unrest and upheaval, and of loneliness of soul, did he pen his meditative fragments; and anyone who has studied them will know how essentially and fundamentally secular is the basis of their ethics. "In his *Meditations*," says Prof. M. L. Clarke in his book, *The Roman Mind*, "he writes of God and the gods . . . but he remains an orthodox Stoic whose god is reason, the universal spirit in man and in nature. He has less sense of a personal god than Epictetus, and less than any man perhaps would he feel the need for the support of ritual or myth in his personal religion. . . . In (him) the relation of religion to philosophy was much as it had been in the days of Cicero. Religion appealed to sentiment, philosophy to the intellect; religion belonged to the public personality, philosophy to the private."

In his mode of life the Roman emperor is simple and austere, laying down the precepts on which a good personal life shall be based. With rare singleness of mind he pursues what he conceives to be the right and the true and the noble, and we cannot doubt he attained them. And yet Archibald Weir, an admirer of Marcus Aurelius, to whom he freely acknowledges his debt even to the extent of dedicating to him his book, *The Anthropological Point of View* (published in 1924), concludes his chapter on "The Sainthood of Marcus Aurelius" by remarking that the imperial philosopher "remained nothing more than a saint unto himself." This recalls to my mind Matthew Arnold's criticism that Marcus "saved his own soul by his righteousness, and he could do no more." But is it not enough that a man should save his own soul? Perhaps, after all, he will save the souls of others by his example. What usually drives men who would be "saviours of mankind" except vainglory and overweening confidence in their own virtue, as the case of the Galilean Jesus I think testifies?

Whatever influence they may perchance have on their fellows, men of finer character do not, in their humility and consciousness of their own defects, presume to save the soul of anybody. If they can save their own then they have accomplished no mean thing.

As I Was Saying

A pulpit is a place where a man who has never been to Heaven brags about it to people who will never get there.

★

The Christian conscience does not prevent the Christian from sinning; it merely prevents him from enjoying his sin.

★

The objection to Puritans is not that they try to make us think as they do, but that they try to make us do as they think.

★

The Christian devotes all his life to the development of one part of his body—the wishbone.

★

Most Christians usually think by infection, catching opinions like a cold.

D.S.

CORRESPONDENCE

QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS

Just why did the almighty "God" have to turn into flesh and blood, to be able to improve the world? If this God, whose immense goodness and great wisdom is constantly praised, created the world, why didn't He make a better job of it from the beginning? But let's say He only noticed after a few million years what a mess He'd made of it; then why did He not regulate it any better from where He is, if He is supposed to be so omnipotent and omnipresent and nothing ever happens without His will and consent? But if He wanted to live for a while amongst His "masterpieces of creation" and it was His will to get crucified by them in order to save the world (the world could hardly be in a greater mess if he had died a normal death), why did He not turn into a grown-up man right away, when He had all the power to do so? Why go through the complicated birth of a virgin? And why the still more complicated conception through the "Holy Ghost" in the form of a dove? Could He not find a simpler and easier way, with all His power and wisdom? And what was the dove for anyway, when according to the "Holy script," Mary got pregnant through the "Holy Spirit" only? But if the dove was necessary for the conception, what did the dove do to Mary, or Mary to the dove? How could such a conception take place, and how could she receive human seeds from a dove? Did she have some sort of intercourse with the bird? In the Catholic Church everything is possible, even the most impossible and absurd things. It talks of "gospel truth," but carefully refrains from telling us how this miraculous conception with the Holy Ghost, that is to say, the dove, was performed.

C. HOLME.

MATERIALISM AND MILITANCY

We Materialists *must* be more and more militant if we hope to recapture the ground gained by Bradlaugh. The Secular Society's Almanacks during the 1880's to the early 1890's prove there were then flourishing branches in towns all over the country. Recently, when I presented Ambrose G. Barker's Bradlaugh collection to Northampton Reference Library, the Borough Librarian informed me there is now no branch of the N.S.S. in that town! In A.G.B.'s early years his native county was a stronghold of Freethought. We must provide a strong, militant united front. We need more enthusiasm, more activity, and above all, more *definitiveness*. Many who claim to be Atheists and Agnostics are not Materialists—there are a great number of well-meaning, but ineffectual members of the N.S.S. who seem quite indifferent to fundamental facts, not always through lack of culture, but because they prefer to be vague and indefinite.

ELLA TWYNAM.

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