

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVII—No. 40

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

ALTHOUGH there have been many revivals of some sort or other—like the Revival of Learning or the Renaissance—it is always a revival of religion which causes more or less mass hysteria. It is true that there was little of this in the London audiences of the Rev. B. Graham when he set out to convert not only the capital but the whole of England. But there must be many people alive who remember the mass hysteria caused by Evan Roberts in Wales over fifty years ago.

The astonishing thing about all these religious revivals is that they are still deemed necessary, that without them the "people" would drift back to paganism—as if that were such a bad thing. Every so many years appear a few men or women who get religion badly and deem it their duty to get everybody else into the same primitive state. In the 18th century, John Wesley went stumping all over England with the Message of Christ, and he certainly left some mark on Christianity in England. That it has weakened so much this century need cause no surprise, because Wesleyanism or Wesleyan Methodism, based as it is, on nearly pure Fundamentalism, could never stand up to the history and science of the day taught in our schools. It is almost pathetic to see how our parsons and bishops and priests are imploring us to recognise that "fundamentally" there is no disharmony between religion and science. One is the complement of the other. So let's all be friends.

Where are the Converts?

We have the right to ask: what did the Billy Graham campaign do for England? Its organisers know perfectly well that the greater mass of the people who went to his services were all Christians to begin with, and the numbers who attended were always swelled by thousands who attended on every possible occasion. Dr. Graham himself could not point to one eminent Freethinker or scientist or, for that matter, any prominent intellectual he had converted to his very primitive type of the Christian faith. In this, he was a great follower of another famous revivalist who came to England with a tremendous flare of trumpets. This was the notorious Dwight L. Moody, who in 1874, with his partner, Ira D. Sankey—with whom he was associated for nearly 30 years—went all over England preaching "the old-fashioned Gospel, square, with no round corners." With the passionate hymn singing of almost incredibly silly hymns which Sankey introduced to bolster up Moody's equally passionate exposition of pure Fundamentalism, the two revivalists undoubtedly had a measure of success except with those who could think a little. On the other hand, the later Torrey-Alexander team who tried in 1905 to repeat whatever success Moody had, proved ignominious failures. Torrey, though a Christian, was an unadulterated liar and ignoramus—he was unable to spell Thomas Paine's name correctly—and was eventually hounded out of England. Billy Graham has followed the Moody-Sankey method rather than the Torrey-Alexander dubious ways of bringing people to Christ. For him, it has

always been the old-fashioned Gospel, square, and no round corners.

Bringing Them In

He has just finished his campaign to bring the whole of the population in New York, including the two or three millions of Jews, back to Christ. During his crusade of many weeks, he claims that 1,949,600 people had heard him—though, as in London, it was impossible to say how many were repeats.

We can ask the same question of New York which we asked of London—how many "intellectuals" did he convert? How many Jews have gone over bodily to Christ as the result of his

campaign? How many "infidels" or Freethinkers? It would be safe to say that almost all who were "converted" or reassured in their faith were already Christians, and had never read anything savouring of heresy in their lives. For them, as for Billy Graham, the sum of human wisdom, science, and history is contained in the Bible. If it there says that Methuselah was 969 years old when he died—who are we to contradict the Word of God?

Nor must we be surprised that in these matters New York is not a whit ahead of London. People jammed into Graham's meetings—as one enthusiastic lady told her friend (reported in the *New York Times*)—"I've been hearing Billy Graham for years, and he has everything." Of course, Christianity is not to be questioned because one of its preachers, the Rev. B. Graham, "has everything." Well, we can grant his sincerity and his command of evangelical oratory and his ability to sway thousands of emotional people. But from any intellectual standpoint, can anything be imagined much lower than his turgid appeals to accept Christ? Can anything more pathetic be imagined than the shopgirls who slowly walked to his platform when he was in Harringay and "accepted Christ." Did they have the least idea of what the conception "accepting Christ" means?

A Prayerful Good Time

For his last appearance on this year's evangelistic mission, Graham staged an enormous demonstration in Broadway—and it was highly successful. The people went to have what one young woman described as "a prayerful good time." Graham gave the number as 200,000, but the police, who had to keep order and herd in the worshippers, said it was no more than 75,000. But of course God only knows the precise figure.

Naturally, they all sang popular hymns—as if that proved anything—but the 38-year-old evangelist insisted that this demonstration proved how Times Square, "primarily a place of amusement, money making, drinking, and merry making," had been turned into "a symbol of the spiritual revival that is now in progress in America. Let us tell the whole world that we Americans believe in God."

Of course, Graham could not exactly avoid the atom bomb, so he wanted America "to tell the world tonight that we desperately want peace but not peace at any price ... that we are morally and spiritually strong as well as

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Billy Graham in New York

By H. CUTNER

militarily and economically." But above all, "Let us frankly admit our moral and social sins and humbly bow in repentance before God." We were also told that the greatest love story of all time was "when God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Personally, reading this I have often wondered at the fuss and seances which Spiritualists deem so necessary to prove that we have "Everlasting Life." All anyone need do is "to believe," and he will never perish but go on living for ever and ever. It takes that horrid sting out of complete annihilation which some of us suppose is the fate of all living beings.

Dr. Graham was naturally warmly thanked for his campaign, for now "New York will never be the same." We wonder. London at all events did not appear to change at all after Billy Graham's ballyhoo and circus disappeared three years ago. We never now hear anything of the "converts." Perhaps they pray in silence too much. Perhaps they need another revival.

The Chronicler as Arithmetician

By JOHN BOWDEN

To the Chronicler and the priests of his time "the correct interpretation of their people's history was to be found in the story of the establishment of the Temple with all its huge interests: priests, levites, sacrifices, ceremonies, taxes, purification laws, vessels, robes, furniture, musicians, gatekeepers—and a thousand and one details of ritual. It was one vast scheme of holy things closely knitted together in all its parts. When we read the two books of Chronicles we are really soaking up church history; it is as though a group of London prelates had written the story of Anglo-Saxon civilisation in terms of the established Church of England."—*Trattner*.

(2 Sam. 24 : 24) has it that David paid 50 shekels only for the piece of ground on which the Temple was subsequently built and had an unspecified number of oxen thrown in! The Chronicler doubtless regarded 50 shekels of silver as a paltry sum for the site of the holy Temple and boosted the amount to a sum more in keeping with the importance of the building.

King Hiram of Tyre was of great assistance to the Israelite king in the building of the Temple. He had previously sent David a considerable quantity of material to be used in the work of construction; he now, at Solomon's request, sent additional material. He also made available a skilled metal worker (whose father was a Tyrian and whose mother was a daughter of Dan, according to the Chronicler; the mother was of the tribe of Naphthali, says the older authority). For these services, says 1 Kings, 5 : 11, Solomon undertook to give Hiram each year 20,000 measures of wheat and 20 measures of oil. Not enough, thought the Chronicler. According to him there was double the quantity of grain, 20,000 measures of barley being added to the 20,000 of wheat. The 20 measures of oil became 20,000 baths of oil (*i.e.*, 2,000 measures). To all this was added 20,000 baths of wine of which the earlier writer knew nothing.

At the end of 20 years, after both the Temple and king's palace had been built, Solomon made over to Hiram 20 Israelite cities as additional payment for services rendered. (1 Kings 9 : 10-11.) The Chronicler was unable to admit that territory sacred to Jahweh could be handed over to a "heathen" monarch, so he transposed the names of donor and recipient. It is Hiram who donates the cities to Solomon, who thereupon peoples them with Israelites. (2 Chron. 8 : 1-2 R.V., R.S.V., Douay and Moffatt. To cover up the

Any More Revivals?

One thing does stand out not only of Billy Graham's campaigns but of most similar ones. Given a first class speaker, and they will always bring in the emotional and unthinking as well as those whose only reason for attending is pure curiosity. No one, for example, could easily beat perhaps the most famous of all 19th century preachers—C. H. Spurgeon. Combining his tremendous enthusiasm for Hell and the Devil as necessary additions to our police force, with a wit and sense of humour rarely found in preachers, Spurgeon was always able to attract vast congregations; but his theology is as dead these days as that of the Salvation Army. No one remembers the Fundamentalist nonsense of D. L. Moody, and who will remember Graham's equally puerile theology in the years to come?

Revivals in the Wesleyan sense are archaic. They belong to an age never again possible; but, like religion itself, we may have still to bear them. They may command crowds for a time but fewer conversions. In fact, it is Freethought which is, however slowly, conquering the world.

contradiction the A.V. has it that Hiram "restored" the cities to Solomon, making it appear that Solomon first gave the cities to Hiram and that the latter then handed them back.)

The Chronicler could not resist embellishing the description of the Temple given by the older writers. According to 1 Kings 6 : 2-3, the length of the building was 60 cubits (approximately 90 feet), the breadth 20 cubits (30 feet) and the height 30 cubits (45 feet). There was a porch of 20 by 10 cubits, the height not being given. There were also two brass pillars, respectively named Jachin and Boaz, in front of the Temple, and these were "18 cubits high apiece" (1 Kings 7 : 15). The Chronicler repeats the dimensions of the main building, but lets his imagination run away with him when it comes to the porch and pillars. He represents the porch as 120 cubits high, an absurdly disproportionate height in comparison with the 30 cubits height of the Temple. He almost doubled the height of the pillars, making them to be 35 cubits high. A molten sea made for the Temple by Solomon contained 3,000 baths, says the Chronicler (2 Chr. 4 : 2-5); only 2,000 baths, says 1 Kings 7 : 23, 26.

It was easy for the Chronicler to get away with such embellishments. When he wrote, all memory of the first Temple had been lost; and it is evident that the people generally were unacquainted with the older records.

In his account of the dedication of the sacred edifice the Chronicler repeats the older narrative almost verbatim. There are a few minor omissions and only one addition: but that addition is startling. We are told that at the "psychological moment," a fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, the glory of Jahweh filling the house. It is added that because the "glory of Jahweh" had filled the Temple the priests were unable to enter therein. The older writer has not one word to say about this all-devouring celestial flame. Had such an awe-inspiring spectacle occurred, or anything like it, it would have been unforgettable and the older writer would most assuredly have included it in his narrative. One has the feeling that the Chronicler read the story of Elijah's performance on Mount Carmel, and decided that it would read well in a new setting.

The Evolution of French Freethought

By F. A. RIDLEY

I HAVE JUST RETURNED from Paris, where I had the honour of taking part in the Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers. The Congress was actually held in the rue Saulnier, in a hall belonging to the Grand Orient, the traditional Masonic movement which has been so closely associated with the historic battles of anti-clericalism and republicanism during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Geographically, the Congress was in a somewhat incongruous vicinity, with the *Folies Bergères* just round the corner on one side and the headquarters of the French Communist Party round the corner on the other! The World Union was between the devil and the deep sea; between Marx and Marianne!

The doings, grave and gay, of the 1957 World Congress have been reported elsewhere in these columns by our eminent World President, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner. But I think that it may be a matter of interest to readers of THE FREETHINKER to recall at this juncture the brilliant past of the French Freethought movement who were the hosts of the World Congress. For it is indisputable that France has been the native land of Reason, anti-clericalism and, in general, of the militant Rationalist movement which first began with the great French Freethinkers of the 18th century, and not only provided international Freethought with so many of its literary and philosophical classics, but did so much to create the modern secular state which, historically, began largely as a result of its efforts. The American and French Revolutions were both inspired and led by Deists and Freethinkers.

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's"—give honour where honour is due! Actually, the pioneer of French Freethought was neither Voltaire nor the *Encyclopædia* but the now mostly forgotten country priest, Jean Meslier. Meslier it was whose posthumously published *Testament*, summarised by Voltaire, represented the first freethinking classic which directly assailed the Catholic Church and the Christian religion in the persecuting France of the "most Christian Bourbon Kings." Meslier it was who predicted the coming French Revolution, then only on the historical horizon, and it was he who actually initiated the famous slogan—so often quoted and so often plagiarised—that mankind would never know happiness until "the last king had been strangled with the entrails of the last priest"; a somewhat risky prophecy to utter in the France of Louis XIV and of Bishop Bossuet!

However, Meslier was a kind of freethinking "John the Baptist," a lone pioneer crying in the wilderness. In the next generation after his death (about 1730), Freethought emerged from the social underworld to which clerical intolerance had confined it so long, as a great French, and simultaneously European, power. This transformation it owed primarily to the magic pen of Voltaire, certainly the most influential, if not the greatest Freethinker who ever lived. Never has the current orthodoxy in Church and State been fought as mercilessly and effectively as Voltaire fought it from his Swiss exile near Geneva. In this herculean task, Voltaire was powerfully supported by his colleagues, who collectively produced the great *Encyclopædia*, the learned contributions to which undermined and ridiculed traditional religious dogmas from a hundred different angles. The names of the leading contributors to the *Encyclopædia*, Diderot, D'Holbach, D'Alembert, *et al*, rank not far below Voltaire himself. They were indeed often more learned men than he was, but none of them

could match—in its incomparable invective and satire—the sharpest wit and most mordant pen in the annals of modern literature: *Athanasius contra mundum!* Voltaire versus Rome!

The French Revolution—1789-94—was about equally a political and an ideological revolution. In its former capacity the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau was, perhaps, greater than that of Voltaire; and Rousseau, despite his Deism, was too totalitarian in his political philosophy to be styled unreservedly as a Freethinker, a criticism which incidentally may be held to apply to his modern Communist successors. However, the influence of Freethought and of what may be termed its political expression, Freemasonry, on the ideology of the Great Revolution was profound and permanent. Since 1789, the Secular State and the laic educational system, both products of the French Revolution, have come to stay. In France, in particular, it may be noted, Freethought and Republicanism have been synonymous terms since the Revolution and remain so today. This historical fact, incidentally, was made abundantly clear by the slogans and cartoons which decorated the hall in the Salle Saulnier where our Congress met.

As the Oxford historian, H. A. L. Fisher, once noted in a passage which I have reproduced in this column, the history of France throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries has witnessed a succession of violent struggles between French Catholicism, usually allied with Royalism or (Bonapartist) Imperialism, and Republicanism, inseparably allied with the French Freethought movement. High-lights of this prolonged and extremely bitter conflict were the decision of the Masonic lodges in the Grand Orient to expunge the name of God—"the Supreme Architect of the Universe"—from their ritual in (I think) 1878. This was a protest against the intolerant drive of the Church against Freemasonry in the course of its nearly successful attempt to restore the Bourbon monarchy, and later in the century the embittered struggle with military clericalism in the celebrated Dreyfus case. As Dr. Fisher indicated, from the time of the French Revolution to the end of the Third Republic (1789-1940) Catholicism and Freethinking Republicanism fought each other continuously and bitterly.

A temporary triumph was gained by the Vatican when the Third Republic crashed before Hitler's panzer divisions. Since 1905, when the Monastic Orders had been dissolved by the French Government, the Secular State had been very largely realised. One Republican deputy went so far as to declare: "We have put out the lights of Heaven, and they shall not be relit."

Under the clerical fascist Vichy regime of Marshal Petain, however, pre-revolutionary conditions were restored, and the Church again enjoyed a status and power which recalled the days of the *ancien regime*; and though the Allied victory put an end to this clerical restoration and established a Fourth Republic with a secular constitution, the strength of Catholicism in France would appear to be on the increase. Despite the officially laic constitution, clerical privileges have increased and the status of the French Church has improved. The French Freethinking press repeatedly complain that the French State tends more and more to give a *de facto* recognition to the Church, whilst public money is voted for the private confessional schools run independently of the State under clerical auspices. A particular complaint is that the parties of the Left,

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Even Dr. Fisher has at last succumbed to the persistent protests from Freethinkers about our Sabbatarian laws being "out of date, ridiculous, and the cause of offence." And this after centuries of tyranny and impudent repression, and even much worse. Why does not the Archbishop point out that Sunday is *not* the Sabbath Day—but a day for "sun" worship?

★

TV's "Brains Trust" was asked the other Sunday, if they destroyed religion, what would they put in its place? Some of the experts treated this question as if it had never been put forward before, but Prof. A. J. Ayer insisted that there was enough in life to enjoy without religion. Miss Laski felt it would be a pity to deprive some people of the joys and comforts of religion. Prof. Kennedy didn't want to destroy religion at all, while Mr. Monsarrat agreed with Prof. Ayer. And, of course, we were told by Miss Laski what a joy religion was for lonely people—not herself, of course, as she wasn't lonely. But wasn't it Voltaire who said the *first* thing was to get rid of a painful boil if you have one? Healthy flesh was then bound to follow.

★

We are always pleased to record on this page the names of "confirmed free-thinkers"—as the *Sunday Express* prints it—who, after coming across a "Saint," become in a very little while confirmed and devout believers. The latest is Mr. Arthur Calder-Marshall, whose book *No Earthly Saint* describes how one of the late Admiral Jellicoe's signal officers, "a man called Woods"—actually he was an admiral too—became a priest when he gave up the sea. Mr. Calder-Marshall found that Woods was a Saint and had converted Sinners; and one day, "while sitting as an Agnostic," he saw on the lawn "the light of God. It was amazing." It certainly was.

★

The point to note is that in most cases, if not all, when an Agnostic or an Atheist sees the light of God, it is proof that he never had the ghost of an idea what really constituted his "unbelief." It is not enough to say, "I don't believe" this or that. It is necessary to have some reasoned philosophy. When a man says he once was an Agnostic and now he has seen the Light, we want to know what are the arguments which made him an Agnostic, and how he now proposes to answer them? Merely to say that he saw on a lawn "the light of God" may satisfy *him*, of course. But it also proves he never was an Agnostic.

★

The Rev. G. Earl, Vicar of St. Mary's, Peckham, has made the astounding discovery that women in his church outnumber men by three to one. And he adds, "This is the case in almost all churches." Surely a suspicion of this tragic revelation might have flitted across his clerical vision before this? The sacred joke is, however, that though outnumbering men, the women have to keep silent in church—or more vulgarly, shut up. And the outstanding truth is that—except for hymn-singing—they do!

★

It is a pity that the Pope's latest pronouncement, that widows should never marry, cannot as yet be made compulsory. Catholic women in particular should be only too glad, not only to follow the Pope, but to take as a Divine Example the way Mary after the death of Joseph resolutely refused to be anything but a widow. If Mary could do it, why not all widows? Still, we have not seen any enthusi-

astic response to the Pope—who as a bachelor himself ought to know exactly the wants and wishes of widows.

★

And in the news also was the parson who—in spite of the supposed prohibition of Jesus against divorce—had married a lady who had to divorce her husband. Two church councils very solemnly and piously discussed the marriage and decided to do nothing about it, in spite of the fact that the Bishop of Worcester presided and the proceedings began with a prayer. Of course, some of the council decided not to go to the church in future, and we hope the Almighty will duly record his approval of their loyalty to Christ. For our part, we wish the parson himself good luck for his courageous stand against impudent Christian bigotry.

From Poland

I HAVE been in contact, through a friend of mine who lives in a camp of Polish peasants, Catholic almost to a man, with the Association of Polish Atheists and Freethinkers, Bydgoszcz branch.

This town, also known as Bromberg, is about 85 miles south of Danzig. They have received copies of various world freethought magazines, and at their request I have sent them about 31 lb. weight of FREETHINKERS. Their Secretary wrote:

"Our Association, despite many difficulties encountered from all sorts of Catholic fanatics and their kind, makes slow but sure progress. This has especially been so in the field of secular education. Now we have two secular schools in our town and increasing numbers in other towns. At the moment we are making arrangements for a meeting of local sympathisers, followed by a National Rally in October.

"Recently we have published a daily, *Głos Wolnych* (Voice of the Free), and this month will start a new fortnightly, *Argumenty*, the voice of our Warsaw H.Q."

C.H. HAMMERSLEY.

THE EVOLUTION OF FRENCH FREETHOUGHT

(Concluded from page 315)

Socialist and Communist, no longer show their traditional anti-clericalism. In which respect, M. Guy Mollet's recent government does not appear to have differed from its predecessors.

At present the French, like the European, Freethought movement, is slowly recovering from the ruthless Fascist repression of the war years, for Hitler probably damaged Freethought more than even the Vatican had been able to do. Nowadays it is again the Vatican, Voltaire's *l'Infame*, that is the major enemy. Let us hope that the recent impressive demonstration of international solidarity witnessed at the Paris Congress will inspire our French comrades to fresh efforts in this decisive struggle.

WEST HAM AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S.

STRATFORD TOWN HALL, LONDON, E.15

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6th, 7.30 p.m.

Dr. DONALD MACKAY (Physicist, London University)

and Mrs. MARGARET KNIGHT (Psychologist,
Aberdeen University)

will discuss

CHRISTIANITY OR SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM?

as a guide to modern life

ADMISSION FREE.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.
TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

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.

ELLIS ALLEN.—The Roman who said "Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful," was Seneca.

K. LISLE.—The psychologist Jung was a disciple of Freud. Some of his writings have been interpreted as support for astrology! We cannot join you in regarding him as a "scientist of importance." He has penned a good deal of rubbish.

J. HUNTER.—December 25th had been kept as a religious festival for several centuries before the alleged birth of Jesus. It was unknown to the early Church and only become the holy "birthday" in the 4th century.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, October 6th, 6.45 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Sarah Jenkins and the Pope."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Edgware Road).—Sunday, October 6th, 7.15 p.m.: Debate, "Will Secularism solve Working-Class Problems?" Yes: L. EBURY (N.S.S.). No: R. COSTER (S.P.G.B.).

Leicester Branch N.S.S. (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 6th, 6.30 p.m.: Tea, followed by Social Evening.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square).—Sunday, October 6th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Humanist Hope."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 8th, 7.15 p.m.: "The I.H.E.U. Congress—in Retrospect." Speakers: H. J. BLACKHAM, B.A., H. D. JENNINGS WHITE, M.A., PH.D., Miss B. SMOKER. Social Interval.

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Stratford Town Hall, London, E.15).—Sunday, October 6th, 7.30 p.m.: Dr. DONALD MACKAY and Mrs. MARGARET KNIGHT will discuss "Christianity or Scientific Humanism?" (See displayed advert.)

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 N.S.S. (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.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £246 12s. 9d.; A. Hancock, 2s.; G. Swan, 5s.; Wm. Scarlett, 5s.; A. J. Wood, 2s. 6d.; D. Pezze, U.S.A. (a tribute to H.C.), £2; D. C. Polden, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. N. Rutherford, £3.—Total to date, September 28th, 1957, £252 17s. 9d.

Notes and News

THE Portsmouth Evening News (21/9/57) devoted part of its "John Citizen's Diary" to the local Branch of the National Secular Society, "one of the principal objects of which is 'to protect and advance the interests of non-Christians in Portsmouth and district.'" Reporting the last meeting, the Diary went on to mention some of the Branch's specific aims, namely: "to supply suitable arrangements for secular funerals to advocate the improvement of standards in the Register Office so that civil marriages may be solemnised in a pleasant and suitable atmosphere; and to strive for the formation of schools, Scouts, youth clubs and orphanages, free from religious ties."

★

PORTSMOUTH Branch has a number of active young members—President Mr. A. Conway and Secretary Mr. P. G. Young among them—and its modern outlook was well illustrated in a recent letter to the press from its Secretary. Mr. Young called for "a little more tolerance towards the things that interest" young people today, instead of the condemning of them as "modern trash"—as had been done by a previous "Methodist" correspondent. Many enlightened people have learned to tolerate these new tastes, added Mr. Young, "and I feel that your correspondent should join this company and move or 'rock' with the times."

★

DAGENHAM Branch N.S.S. has started a new series of informal meetings at the home of Secretary Mr. G. W. Warner, 214 Fitzstephen Road, Dagenham. N.S.S. President, Mr. F. A. Ridley, was the visiting speaker on September 21st, and his talk on the Roman Catholic Church as an enemy of freedom was well received. Questions and discussion concluded a lively evening. Dagenham, it might be added, was one of the first Branches to arrange regular visiting of sick people in hospital.

★

A RECENT octogenarian visitor to the office was Mr. T. L. Peers, of Nottingham Branch, National Secular Society, and formerly of Bury, Lancashire, where he was a close friend of the late Fred Casey, populariser of Joseph Dietzken. Mr. Peers is a Secularist of long standing, having been responsible for arranging a debate between Charles Watts and a parson way back in 1902. He celebrated his 80th birthday last year by lecturing to the Nottingham Cosmo on one of his favourite authors, Anatole France. Another favourite is Bernard Shaw—Mr. Peers has produced and acted in Shaw's plays and is a member of the Shaw Society.

★

THE Catholic Missions Office in Sydney reports about 47,000 full-blooded and 27,000 half-caste aborigines in Australia. Of these about 15,000 are Catholics. Australian Catholics subscribe about £45,000 per annum for aborigine work and about 400 priests and nuns are working among them.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
AND THE ROYAL MARINE

Freethought and the Democratic Press

By JEAN COTEREAU

(A summary of a Paper given to the Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, Paris, September, 1957.)

DEMOGRAPHY is a new science, the statistical study of problems arising from population. As it is in its infancy, its specialists expound the most varied opinions and indulge in the most violent polemic.

One of the dangers deriving from the ever more intensive and narrow specialisation in a science is that the expert tends to be regarded by the layman as an inspired oracle. Yet this expert is just as much a man as any other and equally liable to error. Hence, if it is possible in the physical sciences for theories to be affected by the religious outlooks of their authors, e.g. the theories of indeterminism; it is even more possible in a new and groping science such as demography for a Church such as the Roman to pretend to lay down the law. The Freethinker must then not only beware of dogmas expressed by his friends, but view with critical caution conclusions apparently well supported advanced by eminent persons of a religious outlook.

The first theory to come to mind will certainly be that of the English cleric Malthus, who declared that, whereas world food resources tended to increase merely in arithmetical progression, human increase was by geometrical progression. Incontestably two-thirds of mankind is under-nourished and often lives in appalling conditions; two men out of three lack not only the necessary calories, but even the indispensable food factors; whence derives a state of apathy and ill-health from which the sufferers are incapable of rescuing themselves. This is particularly the case in Asia and Africa; it is also to be found in Latin America and, alas, in some European and North American regions.

These unfortunates do not, as might be expected, fade and die away; they proliferate abundantly. Hence the more successful the efforts of the more highly civilised peoples to reduce the terrible mortality among their less fortunate comrades, the more numerous these become.

The solution seems simple: Birth Control.

The American William Vogt asserts that because these people multiply abundantly they are under-nourished; Josue de Castro, light of U.N.O., declares the reverse, that because they are dying of hunger, they multiply. A psychologist may oppose both, asseverating that this increase is due to the brutish state to which they are reduced. To say nothing of beliefs such as those of the Chinese peasant who required a son or sons to till the ancestral plot, to sustain their parents in old age and to pay the due veneration to the family ancestors. Vogt also thinks that the earth itself becomes steadily impoverished through the action of the elements and of man; whereas de Castro holds that the cultivable areas may be extended, their production augmented, and the food supply itself enriched.

Both are agreed in denouncing superstitious beliefs, such as the reverence for the cow in India and the caste system, such as Mohammedan fatalism, the cult of ancestors, and the role of the Roman Church in Spanish or Hungarian feudalism. Whether the raising of the standard of living will automatically reduce the birth rate, or whether planned reduction in the birth rate will automatically raise the standard of living, let us aim at raising the standard of living; it will be more comfortable. Not all liberal thinkers have called for a reduction in births; nor have all clerics preached an increase. Malthus himself was a clergyman; and a Father of the Church, Tatian, a Syrian of the second

century, denounced marriage and procreation altogether, though he was later regarded as a heretic. Diderot, Karl Marx and Zola were opponents of Malthusianism.

Optimists would have us believe that technical progress in food production will catch up on the population increase in a relatively short time; pessimists protest that this is impossible and that the sole solution is an immediate and comprehensive reduction of population. Statesmen such as Nehru and Mao seem to have been partially converted to this latter outlook, and it is open to us to agree with them. The French Institut Démographique considers—and we can go with them—that to raise the standard of living without reducing the increase in population could be done only (1) by large subsidies to the underfed countries from the well-fed, which would mean by the U.S.A.; (2) by the constitution of an authority within the state able to take from the rich a large portion of their wealth and from the poor a sufficient part of their pitiful wages. The former has its limits; the latter produces fascism or communism. These systems have shown that it is possible to transfer whole peoples from one land to another, but at what a price!

We have, then, come face to face with that very poignant question briefly set out by Devaldes: "To increase and multiply; that leads to war." Eminent demographers have endeavoured to disprove this statement, but, in my opinion, vainly. To pretend that overpopulation is not really a cause of war, but only a pretext employed by demagogues, is to overlook that such demagogues can appeal only to a people which feels itself cramped for living space. History may not repeat itself, but Devaldes' book has received noteworthy confirmation of recent years in Germany and Japan.

In overpeopled countries the sole measure capable of reducing demographic pressure is the limitation of births; the constant increase of population can but increase the already existent sufferings of the masses and must lead to revolt to obtain a fairer division of the good things of this earth.

Birth Control in these countries can be established only with difficulty. It is objected that the best elements would tend to be overwhelmed; certainly propaganda in its favour must meet with opposition from religious and other customs as well as from mental ineptitude. Whatever may be the cost of mass education, it will be less than the vast subsidies which would be needed to allow unchecked proliferation of the species or the cost, waste and suffering entailed by war.

New states, especially ex-colonies, are often, we are assured, inspired by excessive nationalism, which would lead them to see ulterior motives in propaganda for a reduction of population advanced by the Western Powers. This may be; but if recommended by an international body which is free from any such suspicion, such proposals should have due weight, especially if uttered by people of their own race or colour.

The most difficult obstacle to surmount is undoubtedly the religious one. Even the most conformist of experts is forced to recognise the responsibility of religious beliefs and organisations not only in the production of the present situation, but also in the opposition raised against the remedies proposed. It is the Freethinker's duty to denounce such opposition without compromise, not because he is opposed by his traditional foes, but in order to render service to mankind. It has been with amused satisfaction that

the Freethinker has observed how the theologians of no matter what religion have racked their brains to find interpretations of their texts which permit, nay, teach, birth control whenever need may be. But do not smile at these subtleties of casuistry if they lead to a lessening of human suffering. Among Christians, the Protestant sects have long been largely converted to a generous liberalism; and, since in certain countries their power to resist Catholicism lay largely in their numbers, they have some merit in this conversion. Even the Vatican, the most obstinate of opponents, has of late softened its attitude. The Pope has declared himself in favour of painless delivery in certain cases, and approves the Ogino method of contraception—which has been shown to be just humbug. The Vatican has given then a little lip-service, but no more. The day may come when the Church will brazenly declare that it has never opposed birth control. That day seems as yet far off.

Birth control also meets with nationalist opposition; some nations encourage large families for political purposes, thinking to gain power; some encourage them through fear of extinction, apprehending a diminution of vitality due to an increase of the proportion of old people. We might even imagine that Freethinkers, threatened by complete annihilation before a vast multiplication of the credulous, might practise a "populationist" policy!

The Catholic Church, and, under its influence, French legislature, effectively declares that "a child has a right to be born." Biologically this is a curious argument in view of the millions of sperms and ova necessarily condemned to destruction, whether they may be sound or carriers of harmful elements. The production of children is a matter for the parents to decide, and to decide with the most careful reflection; Church and State have no right to interfere. Eugenics is not just a matter of discouraging the continuation of bad elements in the human race, but of encouraging the production of good ones. What worse legislation can there be than the French law of 1920, made still worse by the later additions and interpretations, contrary to all principles of human liberty and dignity. (Note: It forbids not only the sale of all contraceptives, but all instruction in their use.)

This paper is only an introduction to an immense and urgent subject which has been several times debated by international organisations, notably UNESCO and UNO, but it has also run up against the unyielding opposition of official Catholicism. During the past half century the problem has become urgent. At the same time, the rationalist outlook has become more and more widespread. Now it must make itself felt practically.

[Translated from the French by C. Bradlaugh Bonner.]

Chosen Question

By G. H. TAYLOR

A RECENT CONVERT and newcomer to THE FREETHINKER, Mr. E. Preston, writes:

I am as yet a newly found Agnostic and cannot come at the present moment to call myself an Atheist... For example, the following question remains for me unanswered: In view of the scientific formations of the earth and the many laws which scientific formations of the earth and the many laws which matter obeys, coupled with the wonderful processes of nature, does not this suggest some planning?

Now let us for the sake of argument grant all that is implied in the question. Let us suppose that there is a Great Lawmaker who issues formulæ for the behaviour of matter, which then has to keep to His rules. Let us call this law-giver, this universal legislator, God. He then becomes the Prime Being and everything that happens follows from his existence and status.

Right. We are now confronted with the following lines of reasoning:

Natural laws were imposed by God. Now, if He chose the laws for no reason at all, then the sequence of law is broken. Moreover, we should question the wisdom of a deity who was not actuated by any motive, but merely imposed laws in a careless haphazard way when the happiness of his creatures was at stake.

If, on the other hand, he chose the laws deliberately and with reason, then from his own nature we should expect the best possible laws since He was not limited in power: He existed alone, so there was nothing to *limit* his power. Here the facts of cruelty—useless and purposeless cruelty and pain—and the meaningless waste in nature strongly condemn Him. For such a price, you can retain the noun God, but you must be prepared for some devastating adjectives to describe His fiendish character. No Christian would retain his God at that price!

Now to take the argument further. If God chose the laws deliberately and for reason, then He chose from alternatives. He retained the laws that exist only because He rejected the alternatives. We now have to posit the existence of alternatives for God to choose from. If He generated the alternatives, and chose the best, then he generated bad ones too, and how could a perfect Being generate

evil? If he chose the worst, then He not only generated evil, but chose evil.

If He did *not* generate the laws, but merely chose from them, then he did not exist alone to start with, and we have destroyed his priority. We have also destroyed His omnipotence, because we have admitted the existence of something He did not create; that is, laws which already existed for Him to pick from.

If, then, the laws existed *before* Him, then He forfeits his priority. If they came into being *subsequent* to Him, then his choice is devoid of moral judgment when compared with His status. If they arose simultaneously, then He was not the only power at work, and His priority and omnipotence are both destroyed.

Finally, who or what determined the difference between good and bad laws? If God arbitrarily made the difference between them, then, previously to His fiat, good and bad, right and wrong, did not exist, and so He could not have chosen right from wrong, for there was no distinction. If, however, He chose right and eschewed wrong, then right and wrong had previously some meaning, some distinction, apart from God and quite independent of His feelings in the matter! They precede and endure Him. They are therefore logically anterior to Him, and we have divorced Theism from morality.

So much for the logical consequences. But the basic confusion of the argument for a Lawmaker is the confusion between two sorts of law; natural law and civil law. It is the latter that is the work of a lawmaker. The law that traffic shall keep to the left implies law-making as we know it, with law makers. Natural "law," like the "law" of gravity, is the scientists' picture of how things behave. In the case of the traffic, the law precedes the behaviour, which it dictates. In the case of gravitation the "law" is a formula which catches up with the event. It is perhaps an unfortunate term in view of its linguistic connection with civil law. A natural law is simply a way of saying that the properties of matter result in such-and-such behaviour. It holds no brief for Theism.

The Koran

By A. R. WILLIAMS

PENGUIN CLASSICS have issued a translation of the Koran at five shillings, translated by N. J. Dawood, whose competence is already assured by his translations from the Arabian Nights.

The Koran has little to tell that is new. Like all Gods created by men, Allah is well disciplined, agreeing entirely with his Prophet. What Mohammed dislikes Allah disapproves. What Mohammed likes Allah favours. He encourages polygamy; Mohammed left nine widows to mourn him.

It must be noted that Allah is emphatically masculine, a male God, preferring men of Mohammed's tough type. Thus he condones slavery, which made life easier for men to idle. Also by command of Allah slave-owners could have sexual intercourse with their female slaves, which was in accordance with the androcentric set-up of Middle Eastern society.

As did Dante, Mohammed sees his enemies in hell, suffering all the agonies of fire and thirst, the latter intensified by offerings of stinking water to drink. So in life good Mohammedans are ordered to fight and slay infidels, even as Allah's prophet Mohammed did.

Women seem to be of no account in the Koran. Their lot is polygamy, child-bearing, slavery and concubinage. In the sensual Paradise depicted by Mohammed they do not appear at all. The male True Believers lounge on luxurious couches, eating the richest of foods and celestial fruits and drinking unlimited quantities of flavoured waters from huge silver goblets. For their further delectation are provided crowds of coral and ruby maidens, fascinating in the highest degree, but there is no mention of wives or other mundane women in Paradise.

These houris are often spoken and written about in England, sometimes with regrettable levity. What never seems to be told to the Western world is that the Paradise of True Believers also offers a supply of beautiful boys, fair as pearls, endowed with eternal youth so as to minister to the desires of the Faithful for ever!

Additionally the Koran quotes freely from legends current in other religions, largely Judaic, many of them Biblical, though varying much in detail from those found in the Old and New Testaments. In these, instead of Jehovah, conversations with legendary characters are carried on by Allah, recorded by his Prophet with stenographic or tape-recorder detail and accuracy, and of course, all confirming the opinions and actions of Mohammed himself.

As an advertising agent Mohammed distinctly knew his job. Repetition is one of the most effective persuasive tricks practised by advertisers and religionists, and the Prophet employs it to the full. The name Allah appears thousands of times in the Koran. The behests of belief, submission and prayer, with promises of eternal bliss on brocaded couches, eating and drinking supernal foods and wines, while dallying with bashful virgins and pearl-white boys; meanwhile aware that infidels groan under everlasting tortures; these are repeated innumerable times.

The outstanding repetition is at the beginning of the more than one hundred chapters: "In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful."

Some readers may find this ironical.

TODAY'S Horseman's Sunday ceremony will be held under the auspices of the British Horse Society for the first time. It begins at noon with a religious service at Tattenham Corner on Epsom Downs.—*The Observer*.

Did we hear a horse laugh?

CORRESPONDENCE

THE LEWIS INTERVIEW

As an avid reader of your paper for about 25 years, I would like to say how much I have enjoyed the articles, "Freethought Televised to Millions." What a change from the silly shadow-boxing and innocuous rubbish we put up with in this country from the Press and BBC.

Wallace's questions were very fair (up to a point) and Mr. Lewis's replies very forthright. The questions concerning Mr. Lewis's personal ethics, Would you kill? Would you steal? Would you commit adultery? were quite irrelevant and have nothing to do with the truth of the farago of nonsense called religion. No doubt this was just a bit of "window dressing," as the bulk of the listeners would be more interested in Mr. Lewis's personal morality than the actual subject under discussion. May I in conclusion say how greatly I appreciate your grand paper? ROBERT CLARKE.

STRAIGHTFORWARD ATHEISM

People engage in all sorts of pious bleatings under the impression, no doubt, that a Big Something hears their every prayer, watches their every motion, reads their every thought. Yet we know, if we know anything, that Nature is simply unconscious—completely, utterly, always. If it were otherwise, every prayer would be heard, every tear shed would not be shed in vain, and suffering, pain, misery, would simply be a delusion. Religion cannot help to ease suffering, pain and misery. It adds more to it by constantly keeping in front of the deluded believer "sin," "God's wrath," "Satan," etc.

The only answer lies in Atheism, which directs attention to this world, *here and now*. It teaches that if you desire to reach a goal, you will have to work for it, and rid your mind of any god or God, before you can start to take the steps necessary. D. PEZZE.

PROPAGANDA METHODS

The Medicine-men (Jaiwas, houngans, Voodoo, Priests) have got the gift of the gab and if Rationalists want to make any headway, they must cultivate the same.

Rationalism is the opposite of Emotionalism (Religion), but one must fight the Devil with his own weapons, and if we are to turn people's minds to channels of reason there is no great harm in using a bit of emotionalism and "gab" to do it.

Not, if you please, "facetiousness." Mere jeers at the Church will not convert anyone to reason. SEABURY EDWARDS.

"THE FIRSTBORN"

The Pharaoh had a daughter with a most attractive smile, Who found the infant Moses while bathing in the Nile; She took him home to her papa, and he believed the tale— Which was just about as probable as Jonah and the whale.

ANDREW DICKSON.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H. Taylor. Price 3/6; postage 6d.

FREEDOM'S FOE—THE VATICAN. By Adrian Pigott. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN: Its Character, Methods and Aims. By Avro Manhattan. 2nd Edition—Revised and Enlarged. Price 21/-; postage 1/-.

CHALLENGE TO RELIGION. A re-issue of four lectures by Chapman Cohen. Price 1/6; postage 3d.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL. By Chapman Cohen. Well illustrated. Now available. Price 6/-; postage 6d.

AGE OF REASON. Thomas Paine's masterpiece with 40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen. Cloth 4/-; Paper 2/6; postage 4d.

HOW THE CHURCHES BETRAY THEIR CHRIST. British Christianity critically examined. By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 1/-; postage 3d.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING. By Chapman Cohen. Series 1, 2, 3, 4. Cloth bound. Price 6/- each series; postage 6d. each.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (10th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4/6; postage 4d.