

The Freethinker

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FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE 17TH CENTURY, when the Royal Society was founded and the first major materialist thinkers of modern times—Spinoza and Hobbes—advanced philosophical theories, the scientific revolution has been forging ahead and has struck at the very foundations of Theism. Nowadays, its effects are universal—or at least, they would be but for the unfortunate fact that several departments, still very important departments—of human society still remain on the pre-scientific level. It is scarcely necessary, writing here in *THE FREETHINKER*, to point out that religion ranks conspicuously among atavistic phenomena, but economics, law and perhaps most influential of all, politics, may still be classed as in the self-same category.

VIEWS and OPINIONS

Science, Ethics and Progress

By F. A. RIDLEY

The Conflict of Religion with Science

The above represented a commonplace during the 18th and 19th centuries when, along with the then rising Industrial Revolution, powerful critical and anti-clerical movements arose to challenge both the still omniscient dead hand of the Churches along with their obsolescent pre-scientific theological systems. From the days of Voltaire and the *Encyclopædia* onwards, critical thinkers forcibly contrasted the progressive outlook of science with the still medieval outlook of organised Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant. In the mid-19th century this attitude was powerfully reinforced by the current theory of Evolution, the scientific proofs of which, when advanced by Darwin and Wallace in the sphere of biology and adapted by Marx and Engels in sociology, shook organised religion to its foundations by, so to speak, removing the theistic hypothesis from its central position and by proving it, not metaphysically, but scientifically, to be an unnecessary and superfluous hypothesis. Hereafter, evolution based upon continued scientific discovery, would continue to advance indefinitely on and on and up and up—to borrow a hackneyed metaphor from that former optimistic disciple of biological politics, the late Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald. But far greater thinkers than Macdonald, Herbert Spencer and T. H. Buckle, also committed themselves to a similar standpoint. Buckle, as also Marx, openly committed themselves to the certainly pleasant doctrine of the “inevitability” of progress; Herbert Spencer, certainly neither a Marxist nor a biological socialist, summed up the perhaps general view of the century of stupendous progress when he pronounced the obviously optimistic generalisation—“It is certain that mankind will become perfect.” One cannot forbear to add that it would be very interesting to know if the illustrious sociologist would have stood on the literal integrity of his very optimistic statement had he lived through the first half of *our* century and seen with his own eyes the worse than inquisitorial horrors which we have seen with ours.

Progress and Retrogression

I would not dispute either the contention that organised knowledge—*e. science*—represents the major dissolvent

of religious dogma and of the whole metaphysical outlook of religion, or that evolution and its sociological equivalent, progress, are, if not constant, at least recurring factors in human history—whether any form of evolution in the non-human world can accurately be described as “progress,” is a complex and problematical question which I lack the technical knowledge to discuss. But I do know something about human history and while progress there is a sociological fact, it is historically questionable how far progress can be termed as wholly continuous, while to state that it is either inevitable or uninterrupted is surely to substitute an optimistic

myth for the cold realities of scientific history. Chronologically, the Dark Ages in Europe came *after* “the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome,” but will anyone therefore say that they were superior to them; or that as compared with Athens and Alexandria and their brilliant philosophical and scientific culture, the priest-ridden slum that was the Europe of the Dark Ages was in any way superior? In modern times, we ourselves with our own secular eyes have seen the Germany of Goethe, Heine and Thomas Mann transformed into the bestial horrors of the Third Reich of the Gestapo and the gas chambers.

This, too, came after the classic German culture, but was it accordingly a fresh proof of “inevitable” progress, such as the more optimistic Victorians forecast? For that matter, the torture chambers of the Gestapo were equipped with all the latest technical gadgets only made possible by a scientific culture. I have spoken with actual survivors. The late Editor of *THE FREETHINKER*, Mr. Chapman Cohen, may or may not have been a greater thinker than Herbert Spencer—one will not provoke ribald mirth by comparing that lucid thinker with Ramsay Macdonald!—but he was certainly far more accurate and in line with observed historical reality when he used to point out, as he so often did, that progress and retrogression are both recurring facts in human experience; or if one prefers the metaphor, reverse sides of the same medal, which complement each other like, say, those other permanent facts of human experience, sleep and waking, youth and age, death and life. Progress certainly exists and will go on existing as long as at least the human race does, which, according to his Grace of Canterbury, may not be very long. But we can be reasonably certain that it will not be continuous; or at least this would seem to be indicated by past experience. And to say outright that humanity *must* become perfect—whatever that may be—would appear to be wishful thinking of a markedly unscientific character. How, for instance, can we now confidently predict in the current circumstances of 1958 that some atomically-equipped sadist or downright lunatic may not do an Hiroshima on our entire planet? The technical prospects for such an act of planetary suicide will soon exist, if they do not already, and it is not only in Belsen or Nagasaki that scientific technique can be twisted for immoral ends

and into anti-social acts.

The Place of Good and Evil

The fact, of course, is that the use made of anything must always be carefully distinguished from its own intrinsic value. While religion, for example, is always founded on fiction, some religions have, historically, been more practically harmful than others, not only because of their varying beliefs, but also because of the practical uses which their adherents made of these beliefs in *this* world. The Spanish Inquisition was certainly a greater obstacle to human progress than is, say, the present-day Church of England. Both are founded on myths but differ in their current relations with society. Science, unlike religion, is always founded on fact. But facts can be distorted as well as fiction. I recall the old tag about astrology and astrologers at a time when almost everyone gave credence to the "Royal Art." "The stars cannot lie but astrologers who read them, both can and do." Similarly, while knowledge, *i.e.* science, is always potentially progressive, it is not always so in fact. In this year of Grace—and science—when one can hardly open a newspaper without reading about the possible violent obliteration of mankind in a future super-scientific nuclear holocaust, it is surely hardly necessary, in Disraeli's phrase, to "expatiate on the

obvious." The fact is that science, like nature, is amoral; it is the social order whose representatives use it for their own purposes who are moral or immoral, as that great French sceptic, Montaigne, so aptly noted: this world we inhabit is in itself neither good nor evil. "It is," he asserted, "the place of good and evil." That is to say, it is the place, the historic background where human beings do good or evil as their interests and fancies dictate. Science, by itself, is neither for nor against progress; it possesses nowadays almost unlimited potentialities for both good and evil. Which way it goes is decided by men—good or evil as the case may be. The ultimate terrestrial result can be equally either Spencerian perfection or atomic annihilation. Modern scientific knowledge will soon now reach the stage where its technical resources, suitably directed, can achieve at least approximately either of these so glaringly contrasted aims. Which of them it will achieve depends on human beings and ultimately upon the ethical directives which they accept. Scientific progress certainly, but science enlightened by ethics, by social and not supernatural ethics represents the Humanist formula for the future evolution of our species. It may be expressed in the formula: science plus ethics=human progress and who knows, perhaps an ultimate Utopian perfection—if the actual phrase itself is not too Utopian to be scientific?

Concord in Brussels, 1958

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

IT WAS WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27TH, when the first foreign Freethinkers joining in the social gathering of the World Union of Freethinkers arrived in Brussels making their way to Concord Street, where they met with a warm welcome. It was early on that morning that the writer left a little village in the Jura mountains to travel by bus, slow train, fast train, and finally by one of the new extra express trains to the picturesque city of Luxemburg, there to meet the leaders of the Grand Duchy Freethinkers: Maître Jean Gremling, M.P., Benelux representative, etc., Charles Tommes, the first Luxemburger to be married by civil registration only, a walking encyclopedia of rationalism, Charles Knaf, who organised the 1954 Congress, and Pierre Becker, the present energetic secretary, and discuss with them their problems and ours of the international movement. This formed a delightful hors d'œuvre to the days to come. The next day I too joined the happy party at Concord Street. The weather which from cold and wet in the mountains, had turned fine as I left them, was now really hot, and those who had been visiting the Exhibition had derived a special enjoyment from its fountains of changing hues and from cool corners of his lofty halls; one member from a comparative study of beer in *quality*, not quantity, of course.

The Committee members worked hard all Friday, also in Concord Street, a few doors from our hotel, and in concord, which is not always the case with committees. We were glad to see that the Union had a balance on the right side—our neat and natty Treasurer, Mr. Louis Courtois, of Belgium, produces his accounts with appropriate neatness. We were even more pleased to see arrive our French Vice-President, André Lorulot, who has been seriously ill; at Paris last September he rose from a sick-bed specially to take part in the Congress, which he did with his accustomed gaiety and wit; but after a bad winter he had to return to hospital this summer for a major operation and it was not thought possible for him to travel to Brussels. Nevertheless there he was, supported by Mme. Lorulot,

who has never failed him in nigh fifty years now of partnership. Belgian President Arnold Boulanger carries his eighty-three years as though they were twenty-three, and gives us all lessons in punctuality and frugality of speech. The American Rationalist Federation not only sent a greeting, but also a representative to wish us well in at least two languages, Mr. Martin Lechner, of St. Louis. Martin also photographed us grouped in the doorway of the Institut des Hautes Etudes (where, by the way, courses in Ergology are given; do you know what this is?) However, missing were architect Prof. Angelo Crippa, unable to escape from business at Genoa, and Hubert Freistühler, like Lorulot, a victim of surgeons, but unlike our Vice-President, quite unable to travel. I cannot reveal the secrets of the Committee, but will just say that we carried out the decisions of the last Congress with regard to our regulations and also matters arising from resolutions, and that we heard reports on the progress being made in the preparation of *next year's Congress*, which we wish to make a particularly *noteworthy* gathering. It will be combined with the commemoration of the birth 100 years ago and the martyrdom 50 years ago of Francisco Ferrer. We already have the support promised of Dr. Janne, the Rector of Brussels University and of several others of the leading professors, Major-General Dr. Brock Chisholm, first director of the World Health Organisation, and Prof. Henri Laugier, former assistant secretary of U.N.O., are among those who have promised to speak. The proceedings will be held at the University in Brussels from Friday, September 4th, to Tuesday, September 8th, 1959. (*Readers, please note.*)

During the afternoon we were glad to be able to listen to a report from N.S.S. member Mr. D. Shipper on his noteworthy activities during the last year. It warmed the hearts of the old hands to see such oncoming young men as Vice-President Gremling, joint-Secretary McCall, and greatly assisting, unofficial secretary Shipper with us. Free Thinking is the Young People's Thinking, the revolt against

(Continued from page 300)

Facts and Fancies on Lourdes

By J. M. CROWLEY

IN RECENT MONTHS THE FREETHINKER has given much space to the ever-interesting subject of Lourdes, and two controversial points of particular interest have emerged, thus: (1) Does the "miraculous" water come from the spring or from the river? (2) Did Bernadette, on her first visit to the grotto, see a *real* person there?

On these points and others, Dr. Duhig and Dr. Valot (both ex-Roman Catholics, as I am) seem to have shown a fault which is typically Catholic!—they provide plenty of evidence for their rather dogmatic beliefs, but when examined closely it turns out to be worthless or, at least, inconclusive.

Dr. Duhig has told us how the Lourdes authorities protested over the proposal to weir off the river. But, in the absence of chapter and verse, it seems almost certain that their complaint was about an alleged threat to the water supply of their hospital. If the grotto supply were threatened, why should they admit this (think how damning such an admission would be!) when they could solve the problem by running a pipeline from the hospital? And if the hospital supply were threatened too, they could speak up about that without giving the game away; why should they admit that they wanted the hospital water to supply the grotto as well?

Dr. Duhig has a better point when he mentions the large quantities of water taken from the grotto taps on busy days, but this is no more than suggestive, so far as his own evidence goes, because Dr. Valot has told us that a large reservoir has been constructed to allow for this. A far more precise investigation would be necessary to prove that the pilgrims were getting quarts out of a pint pot, which Catholics would claim as a miracle if they could show that no water was introduced from an outside source.

It would certainly be easy to run river water into the grotto and baths, and the Lourdes authorities wouldn't hesitate to do it if it suited them. But to say they do this is one thing; to prove it is another. On Dr. Duhig's evidence, the only sensible verdict is "Not proven." He mentions his medical colleague who was sure the holy water came from the river, but *his* reasons for believing this may be no better than Dr. Duhig's.

The really important point is that the Catholic authorities rather welcome criticisms which cannot be substantiated. If they can be disproved, better still; but in either case the Church gets a chance to wear the martyr's crown, to pontificate on the infamy of her wicked adversaries. It is quite possible that they sometimes put about such stories themselves, simply in order to refute them. Dr. Valot says they do, and he specifically referred to the water-from-the-river and the young-lady-in-underclothes stories as instances of this. But here again, where is the proof? If Bonnefon had a church funeral, how is that "convincing proof" (Dr. Valot's words) that the Bishop of Lourdes paid him to tell lies about Lourdes? Isn't it equally likely that he was just a mischievous and mercenary liar who staged a deathbed repentance to be on the safe side? And why is Dr. Valot so sure that the Catholics invented the story of the young lady in underclothes? Such accusations, if unsubstantiated, only provide further ammunition for the Catholic arsenal.

Turning to the question of whether Bernadette saw a real person in the grotto, I am amazed that Dr. Duhig and Mr. Ridley hold the views they do. Mr. Ridley seems to be wrong on an obvious point of fact, for in his article of June 13th he says: "Bernadette undoubtedly saw and

heard *someone* in the famous grotto. . . . But the actual words she heard, 'I am the Immaculate Conception,' were too much in line with . . . ecclesiastical politics to have been purely the effect of chance." Now, it is worth pointing out that, although Bernadette was on her own during the *first two* apparitions, after that she was always in the company of other people when she visited the grotto, and none of them ever saw or heard anything. But during the first two apparitions, according to her story, the "lady" did not say either "I am the Immaculate Conception" or anything else; it was only later, *when others were present*, that Bernadette ever "heard" the voice at all. Therefore, although theoretically she may have *seen* a real person in the grotto during one or both of her first two visits, it seems almost certain (contrary to Mr. Ridley's belief) that she never *heard* any such person saying "I am the Immaculate Conception."

This being so, Mr. Ridley's contention that what she "heard" was "too much in line with the then current pattern of ecclesiastical politics to have been purely the effect of chance" loses much of its plausibility. Certainly Bernadette came in extremely useful to Pius IX and his allies, but this hardly suggests that her meeting with the Virgin was, in Mr. Ridley's words, "a put-up job if ever there was one." Why not? Because for centuries past the Virgin had been constantly "appearing" to peasant children throughout the length and breadth of Europe, and in these apparitions she frequently said or did things that were relevant to matters of current interest with which the visionaries were acquainted. Now "the Immaculate Conception" was very much a topic of interest in the Catholic world during the 1850's, so it was a safe bet that some of the visionaries of that decade would mention it, and the only problem would be to decide which one of them should be utilised. Had Bernadette not been chosen, some other young peasant girl (not necessarily in France, of course), whose "visions" have long since been forgotten, would have served equally well. In short, the odds are that the Vatican did not create suitable circumstances for the Virgin's revelation, but merely utilised existing circumstances.

Finally, we should note that during the last sixteen apparitions, at which other people accompanied Bernadette, there was certainly no one in the grotto. Why, then, should we suppose that there was anyone there on the first two occasions either?

From Singapore

A CORRESPONDENT in Singapore, Mr. E. S. Moorthy, asserts that Malaysians are "even more deeply steeped" in the prejudices and falsities propagated by religious bodies than the religionists of European and American countries and unfortunately there are few persons in a position to challenge the religionists openly.

In Singapore and the Federation of Malaya, Christians and Muslims have a very great influence and hold on government policies and "generally bring their strength on the side of all reactionary political and social movements. Although Mr. Moorthy knows many individuals who are sympathetic to the Freethought cause, some are too apprehensive of possible discrimination to join together with their fellow-freethinkers in any association. We hope he finds some friends to join with him in freethought activity ere long

D.S.

This Believing World

One of the subjects treated in the I.T.V. series "The Verdict is Yours" recently was the "trial" of a medium for fraudulently causing the "materialisation" of a woman who was still alive. This court scene was *unscripted* and it was very well done, the defending counsel doing his very best for his client. As the "dead" lady was obviously alive, the only conclusion the jury could bring in was "guilty"—but even if the lady had been dead, the jury would have found it very hard to bring in any other verdict. No one has yet come into contact with any spooks from the mighty deep, or even from the ludicrous Summerland they are supposed to inhabit.

★

Southsea has produced a brilliant innovation in Evangelism. This is to bring forward two small boys or two small girls about 9 or 10 years of age to testify to Jesus. They tell other small children—and even adults—how Jesus died for them and lots of similar rigmarole under the strict tuition of a male Evangeliser, and of course embellished with popular hymns in which the audience join. It is all very pious and intensely funny. Some of our Bishops ought personally to support this edifying spectacle. Or ought they?

★

"Family Planning" is now definitely Christian. All (or nearly all) our Bishops have called it so—and, perhaps in the near future, they will also find out that "our Lord" is the greatest Family Planner that ever lived for two reasons. The first is because he never married, and the second is because he obviously practised "moral restraint" with the emphasis on the word "moral". There is nothing to beat moral restraint for Family Planning. But if not moral restraint, what contraceptives do our Bishops advise?

★

In the "Daily Telegraph" recently, Dr. W. R. Matthews, the Dean of St. Paul's, referred to the Acts of the Apostles as an "invaluable historic document". It is difficult to imagine that a man of his wide reading could make such a definite pronouncement. There is actually not a scrap of history in Acts. It is all pure fiction from the beginning to the end. Josephus, who dealt in the most minute detail with the period the book covers, knew literally nothing of Peter or Paul or Barnabas or Stephen or the conversion of Jews to the new religion. Acts is a fraudulent work made up in the second century and there isn't a Christian living who can prove otherwise.

★

The lady who was unable to find a verse from the Bible in Cruden's *Concordance*, and who eventually was shown it in Habaakuk by a "ghostly hand" springing from nowhere and attached to nothing (we referred to it recently in this column) very lamely "passed the buck" on to an old edition of Cruden with "small type" which, owing to her bad eyesight, she was unable to read. However, thank God, the "ghostly hand" did not require good eyesight—or for that matter the truth either!

★

According to the "Sunday Dispatch," Bertrand Russell, "the great disbeliever," the other week said, "God knows which way the world will go. We are balanced on a knife edge." We suspect "God" here was used colloquially as a synonym for *ignorance*. However, Lord Russell added that he welcomed the Church's acceptance of "family planning," which he himself had been advocating for fifty years, and he thought it might take another fifty years before the Church accepted artificial insemination.

★

All the same it was a pity that he did not point out that

Charles Bradlaugh was advocating Birth Control 100 years ago, that it was he and many of his followers who bore the brunt of the infamous Christian attacks and vituperation poured out by all the Churches, and made it possible not only for our Bertrand Russells to advocate artificial contraception without anybody turning a hair, but also paved the way for the Church to advocate "family planning" with only a few ignorant religious cranks opposing it.

CONCORD IN BRUSSELS, 1958

(Continued from page 298)

Tradition and the Dogmas of the Conservative Old; Free-thought is the Great Adventure. But there are too many in proportion among us who are sixty-years-or-more young; hence it was a delightful privilege to see with us not only David Shipper, but also Mrs. Shipper, devoting part of their honeymoon to the Cause.

Friday evening we devoted to the "Expo" and its magic illuminations; in fact, we must admit, the enchantment brought us into Saturday morning, so that those who made a "grasse matinée" (slept late) were excused. Nevertheless, most of us, a party made up of English, Dutch, Germans and Belgians, as a contrasting change from the ultra-modern "Expo," paid a visit to The House of The Swan at Anderlecht, where Erasmus lived the last decade of his life. This was the house of the Chapter of Anderlecht and many distinguished and learned men, e.g., Mercator, found shelter here. A remarkable museum of Erasmus relics and of the ancient Chapter is housed here; and near by is the Béguinage, the house of a religious sisterhood of the Middle Ages, also irreverently called the "klaphuis," or chatter mill, where the visitor today can see the rooms much as they were when the talkative sisters dwelled and toiled there many centuries ago. It is not on record what they said of "The Prince of Humanists"; but I doubt they read his *Praise of Folly*.

On Sunday we joined the Belgian Freethinkers for an hour in the second day of their national conference and in the afternoon partook of their "democratic banquet" at the Patisserie de la Maison du Peuple. One of our British members who had spent part of his youth in Brussels recalled that in those somewhat distant days the Maison du Peuple, the H.Q. of the Socialists, was notorious for the rioting which took place in its precincts. There was nothing in the nature of a riot on Sunday, August 31st. We found Mme. Vandervelde, Senator (or should it be Senatrix) waiting to greet us; she is the widow of the Belgian statesman, Emile Vandervelde, after whom the adjoining square is named; she is also a distinguished doctor of medicine, and it was an agreeable honour to see her with us.

All good things have their end; good food, good company and after-dinner speeches (thank the hypothetical heaven!). My way took me back to hospitable Luxemburg *en route* for the home of Voltaire.

To see gathered together Dutch, French, German, Luxemburg, American, British and Belgian Freethinkers was to know that Freethought is "one and indivisible" and not isolated, or parochial. In saying this I know that I speak for all the English-speakers, including Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright, Mr. and Mrs. Fairhall, Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths, Mr. McCall, Mr. and Mrs. Shipper, Mrs. Venton and Mr. and Mrs. Warner.

—NEXT WEEK—

FREETHOUGHT AND FREEMASONRY

By H. CUTNER

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY and CORINA.
- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. F. HAMILTON, E. MILLS and J. W. BARKER.
- London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
- London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.
- 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).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. (Mansfield Market Place).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Ethical Union.—Week-end Conference, September 19th-21st, at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts. Speakers: Prof. H. LEVY, MARY HOAD, MARY BROWN, H. J. BLACKHAM, STEPHEN SCHENK. Inclusive charge, 35s.; from Saturday, 29s.; coach, 3s. 9d. each way. Full programme from M. L. Burnett, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, W.8.

Notes and News

THERE is a fascination about incongruities and we have experienced it several times lately. Reading, for instance, in the *Daily Herald* (28/8/58) that three elderly nuns would take their bow before the British Association in Glasgow and that one, Sister Marie Josephine, had said: "Budgies show so well Mendel's laws—the laws of inheritance of colour." But the Brussels International Exhibition provided us with our best example. We do not mean the sight of Franciscan friars mounting the steps to the Russian pavilion, though that had its appeal. No, we refer to a prominent exhibit in the City of God pavilion. At first we could hardly believe it, but our companion confirmed that the statue really was Rodin's "Thinker." Perhaps it was only our imagination that he seemed to be hiding his head in his hands, but at least that would have been appropriate.

★

WE liked Mr. W. Walker's letter to the *Evening Chronicle* (Newcastle) printed on June 5th last. A clergyman, commenting on the film, "The Quiet American" (based on the book by Roman Catholic convert, Graham Greene) had

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £348 3s. 11d.; H. Howard, 5s.; S. C. Merrifield, 2s. 6d.; In memory of G. Seibel (U.S.A.), £8 18s. 7d.; M.B., 10s. 6d.; G. Swale, 12s.; L. Hanger, 2s. 6d.—Total to date, September 12th, 1958, £358 15s.

said it "shows up the modern agnostic position . . . a cowardly running away from the real meaning of existence." Mr. Walker admitted that there are, no doubt, "weak and immoral" agnostics." But—he asked—is it fair and logical to generalise from the behaviour of a fictional character created according to the whim of the author? After all, he pointed out, in *The Power and the Glory*, the same author creates a "dissolute priest" who was also a "pitiable object of contempt." But, said Mr. Walker, "no fair-minded unbeliever would adduce this portrayal as evidence of the moral turpitude of the priesthood in general."

★

MR. WALKER also sends us an article by the Rev. Charles Haig, which appeared in the same paper last May. It follows the now familiar pattern of Christian apologetics. The first three chapters of Genesis should be read as "great poems": the Christian "welcomes the help of the geologist and biologist in explaining the long processes through which God perfected the birds and animals," etc. It is extremely nice of the Christian to make this belated welcoming gesture, but if the Rev. Haig really welcomed the help of the biologist he might learn that birds are animals. However, we are prepared to overlook Mr. Haig's ignorance, if only because he goes on to charm us with this little gem: "Indeed he [the Christian] marvels more than ever at the patience of God who spent a million years perfecting the feathers of a bird..." Truly a divine image.

★

WE are sometimes told that we can "depend" on the *Daily Telegraph*, and it may be so. But depend on it for what? In relation to Mrs. Margaret Knight's opinions, the *Telegraph*, it seems, may be depended on to be as rude and impertinent as is possible this side of libel. The other week (September 2nd) Peter Simple's "Way of the World" column excelled itself in this direction. Mrs. Knight, it said, "is an interesting woman. Interesting, not for anything she says but as the possessor of a finely developed conditioned reflex. The notoriety she earned by her broadcast is evidently associated in her mind with extreme pleasure and excitement. So now she has only to see the words 'God' or 'religion' mentioned, without being condemned, in a newspaper or periodical and in a flash she is at her typewriter, hammering out a scientific humanist rejoinder." Simple then likens Mrs. Knight's actions to those of Pavlov's dogs, and concludes: "In the end, when Mrs. Knight's conditioning is complete, the actual offending words will be unnecessary. Any words of similar sound, such as 'bog,' 'golf,' 'pigeon' or 'Belgium' will send her foaming to her typewriter." We recommend to Mr. Simple that he read again the script of "Morals Without Religion," along with his own paper's exhibition on that occasion. Then ask himself honestly, who foamed?

★

ON Saturday, September 27th, the Welsh Nationalist Party is organising a Robert Owen Commemoration meeting at Newtown, Montgomery. The National Secular Society will be officially represented by Mr. A. R. Williams of Worcester, and we can think of no more suitable representative.

"Creation's Amazing Architect"

By H. CUTNER

(Concluded from page 283)

ON THE FIFTH DAY, we get at last God creating "Great Monsters" and making, insists Mr. Beasley, "Winged Things fly." The A.V. says, "great whales," but then Mr. Beasley can give any meaning he likes to Hebrew words. Hebrew "has words that have rather elastic meanings," and never more so than when he tries to show how Genesis "anticipated" modern geological discoveries. "Great whales" can mean anything whatever, especially as Mr. Beasley knows perfectly well that the average reader of his book will never check his statements.

Let us look again on the word translated "day," and which Mr. Beasley, hastily dropping the first chapter of Genesis and turning to chapter two, tries to prove from that, that the writer "certainly suggests" the word specifies a "period other than merely daylight or 24 hours." It "specifies" nothing of the kind.

The word in Hebrew is "yom" or "ium," and one of the great Jewish commentators of Genesis, Dr. Kalisch, says, "In order to gain scope for the geological periods, many critics have proposed to interpret the term 'day' as a period, or an indefinite epoch. This is inadmissible . . . the term 'evening and morning' describes indisputably the lapse of one complete day of twenty-four hours . . . the device that the days denote epochs is not only arbitrary, but ineffective; for the six epochs of the Mosaic creation correspond in no manner with the gradual formation of cosmos." Needless to say, Mr. Beasley never mentions Kalisch.

As for the word (or words) translated "great whales," it appears it also can mean anything for the various Hebrew scholars seem to be quite unable to give us its real meaning. It is "tinim" and it might mean "sea monsters," "water animals" (even crocodiles and hippopotami), serpents and dragons. From this we can see how the Great Architect in his Sacred Record anticipated modern geology.

In his 14th example, Mr. Beasley is very careful to point out, "let the earth bring forth the living creature *after his kind* . . ."—he calls it, the "Era of animals (modern)." Why "after his kind"? Simply because he is, as all true Christians should be, opposed to Evolution. And he considers that Genesis is "devastating to any unsupported theory." Everything in the first chapter is literally true—except, of course, the word "day," though Mr. Beasley would find scores of both Jewish and Christian authorities who would here disagree with him. Either the earth with its contents were "created" in six days, or they were not. If the "days" of Genesis mean *days*, then every geologist speaking as a scientist is bound to admit that the Sacred Record was talking nonsense.

In any case, "after their kind" can mean even the Evolution theory if we take its meaning as recognising the enormous length of time required for evolutionary changes in man and animals. It is by subscribing to this fact, and changing "days" into epochs, that Christians can now subscribe to Evolution. But it is very amusing to find Mr. Beasley telling us

Great confusion of mind exists today because of the tremendous volume of literature that exists upon the subject of early man, and which is quite contrary to the letter and spirit of the Genesis record.

Of course. The findings of Science—geology, anthropology, ethnology, etc., contradict nearly everything in Genesis in spite of the laboured attempts by our Beasleys to find how

right it is in everything. Moreover, he constantly repeats that it was all written by Moses, of course, with or through the inspiration of the Great Architect—about 3,500 years ago. Again this is sheer nonsense. Genesis was written about 300 B.C.—and perhaps even later than that. Its cosmology was stolen from more ancient cosmologies it is true, but God had a hand in writing *them* about as much as I had.

In any case, it should not be forgotten that there are *two* conflicting cosmologies in chapters one and two of Genesis. In the first, God is "Elohim"—the Gods, for it is a plural word. In the second, he is IHVH or Yahweh or Jehovah—you can take your choice.

Briefly, in the first the earth is "chaos" covered with *water*. In the second, it is a *dry* plain. In the first, fowls are created out of the *water*. In the second, they were created out of the *ground*. In the first, trees were created *before* man; in the second, *after* man. The same thing with fowls—*before* man in Genesis 1, *after* man in Genesis 2. Gen. 1 says man was created *after* the beasts. Gen. 2, man before the beasts. In Gen. 1, man and woman were created at the same time; in Gen. 2, woman was created after man. In Gen. 1, the earth and everything in it were created in *six* literal days. In Gen. 2, we get them created in *one* day—"the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens."

There are plenty more contradictions in the two accounts, and the idea that "Creation's Amazing Architect" could give two completely different accounts of his work, but of them also completely contradicting the findings and discoveries of modern science, can only come from a Fundamentalist believer who is ready to swallow everything, even the most ignorant contradictions.

Let me add that I would have ignored this silly book were it not for the fact that its author is the President of the Australian Institute of Archaeology, and a F.R.G.S. The battle against the primitive speculations and absurdities of the Bible was won centuries ago, and books like Mr. Beasley's are the last spluttering efforts of believers in defence of an outworn creed in a scientific age.

Will Mr. Beasley have the courage now to *defend* his book?

TO ETERNITY

All systems rise and fall,
But what are they?
But shadows on a screen,
Brief is their stay.
Ten millions years to thou,
Is but a day.
All things that live and grow,
Must pass away.
Small is the part in which
We have to play.
And laws beyond control,
We must obey.
Age marks you not, you have
No wrinkled brow.
Man in time grows weary,
But not so thou.

PAUL VARNEY.

Review

Universitas is West Germany's premier research publication and is advertised as "A German Review of the Arts and Sciences." Previously issued only in its monthly German-language form, it is now available in an English quarterly edition.

It features reports and accounts of current research in all fields dealing with the development of modern civilisation and the problems of life today. The English edition is intended to serve the international exchange of ideas and to give English-speaking readers an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the German contributors, all of whom are of professorial rank.

Evolutionary students (who are enjoying a good year) will find Prof. Wilhelm Ludwig's "Man: The Last Stage of Evolution" a thought-provoking article. Prof. Ludwig forecasts that the physical size of man will increase at the rate of one centimetre per century, his bones will become thinner, skull broader, features finer, his facial expressions more lively (compensation for a dwindling inclination to speech). The hair should disappear from the head (the interim period should prove profitable for the trichologists), teeth become smaller, wisdom teeth and little toes disappear, etc., etc.

As the Dead Sea Scrolls are the subject of much current controversy, the article by Prof. Kuhn (Professor of Theology at Heidelberg) on "The Dead Sea Scrolls and their Significance" is of particular interest. Prof. Kuhn criticises Mr. John Allegro and the Frenchman Dupont-Sommer in scholarly manner, but those who have read Mr. Allegro's book may not care to change their allegiance.

Single copies are 7s. 10d., and the annual subscription £1 8s. 7d. Order from Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft MBH, P.O. Box 40, Stuttgart 1, West Germany.

DAVE SHIPPER.

Chosen Question

By G. H. TAYLOR

OUR READER Mr. Anderson writes:

Materialists contend that mind is nothing more than an epiphenomenon or by-product of the brain, and that when the latter perishes, the former does too.

On this hypothesis, then, mind is merely a dummy which can have no interaction with, or in any way affect, an organism. Accepting the fact of evolution, I nevertheless find it difficult to understand why natural selection would have maintained a useless characteristic over millions of years.

The gradual elimination of man's appendix and cæcum shows clearly that unwanted characteristics, organs, etc., are soon relegated to an inferior position, and finally die out altogether. Not so with mind: its complexity increases with each advance of the species. Why?

The answer is obviously that mind is not a dummy or a "useless and unwanted characteristic." On the direct contrary, it has survival value at the highest level. When Mr. Anderson introduces the term "by-product," he is using teleological language which can have no meaning in a scientific investigation. A by-product can only exist when there is a central purpose. But science knows nothing of such purpose in evolution; therefore there cannot be by-products. Mother Nature is quite neutral and has a blind ethical impartiality to all her offspring. It is her offspring Man who says this is better than that; it is he who decides that roses are better worth preserving than weeds, or that minded organisms are usually "better" than inanimate matter.

"Mind" is the name given to a system of behaviour patterns characteristic of the organism at the cerebral level.

At a sufficiently complex stage of development, awareness, memory and prospective reference emerge, and the result is the evolution of a personality. This rare trend in evolution seldom becomes established but, where it *has* succeeded, it has multiplied, and it has done so not because of any Directive Hand behind things, but because of the inexorable workings of natural selection preserving the fit and eliminating the unfit.

Thus it was that the brain of man enabled him to maintain his existence against physically more powerful members of the ape family. Through the invention of tools man was able to reduce other creatures to comparative ineffectiveness. The whole story of man's emergence is the story of the advantage he enjoyed from his superior brain. How can Mr. Anderson possibly contend that man's mind is of no more use than his appendix!

A much finer development of the forebrain, for example, is the variation which gives an immense advantage over our ape cousins, for here we come to a field where man is able to have social intercourse with his fellows far beyond the reach of the apes. Whereas the latter can give signals to one another, man has been able to develop not only signals but the most complicated abstract symbols and entire languages. Man and ape are civilisations apart, yet research has shown how physiologically near they are to us, yet how culturally afar!

No, mind is not a useless bit of side-play in evolution. It is a most powerful agency. And its history can be told without departing from the language of materialistic science.

George Seibel

(IN MEMORIAM)

THE FRIENDS in this country of George Seibel, the eminent American librarian, man-of-letters, broadcaster, columnist, Shakespearean scholar, and, not the least, a poet who dared to put into his verses, published in religious America, his Freethought opinions, will be grieved that the voice of this sturdy and able fighter for the truth should be heard no more. His charming and crudite widow has sent the writer of this notice a letter that he had passed away in his eighty-sixth year at Lynbrook, Long Island, N.Y., U.S.A.

It was to this pleasant retreat of New Yorkers that he retired four years ago on his resignation after many years' supervision of the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh, Pa., the first Carnegie Library of the many score scattered about the world by the old Scots ironfounder who made steel (and dollars—put to such good use) in Pittsburgh at the world-famous Bethlehem Steel Works ("Little Steel"). He died, from a cerebral ailment, on July 24th, which showed itself in December last.

The list of his versatile attainments enumerated above is far from complete. From a cutting from the front page of *The Post-Gazette* of his home state one learns that he was a literary and dramatic critic, beginning on the *Gazette-Times* in 1896 in the capacity of Literary Editor, and passing on, in 1927, to become drama and literary critic for the *Sun-Telegraph*. This account of the *Post-Gazette* adds that Mr. Seibel wrote more than twenty books, including several studies of Shakespeare. It adds [queer expression!]: "He also turned out poetry, plays, and essays." So far as plays are concerned, one of George Seibel's on a social subject was anticipated by Ibsen and followed by Brieux. It was probably the first time in America that this particular aspect of the social problem

was put on the boards there. It earned a later revival.

Mr. Seibel's librarianship brought him in contact with many leading American authors, and naturally it is not surprising to find that for many years he was president of the Authors' Club in Pittsburgh. As this is but a brief memorial note it is impossible to deal with other aspects of this versatile, able-minded, and truth-seeking man. But we must just mention his love of Shakespeare and his great collection of Shakesperiana. Over 1,000 volumes in his personal collection were by him bequeathed to the Library over which he had so long and worthily presided.

Mr. Seibel is survived by Helen, his wife, a daughter, and a grandchild. I am sure I shall not be presuming if I pass on to the widow and family of this sturdy sceptic the condolences of those who were fortunate to meet and greet George and wife in London when they called on Secularists and Rationalists. It is interesting to note that George was cremated without ceremony, religious or otherwise. There you have the man, faithful to the end in his abhorrence of humbug and sentimentality. B.S.

CORRESPONDENCE

LEST WE FORGET

In July 1906 a substantial work was published entitled *The Salvation Army and the Public* by John Manson. All sections of the religious press at that time demanded with practically a unanimous voice that an answer be made to Mr. Manson's serious charges. But none was forthcoming. Re the ferocious looking brute who handed the late General Booth a wad of greasy notes remarking "Let me get hold of those blasted yids", I would remind your correspondent Paul Varney, that the late Harold Begbie in his life of William Booth (Vol. 1, page 3.) reveals that William's father, Samuel, in marrying Mary Moss, a Jewess, contracted a second marriage and William Booth was the third child of that marriage.

R. G. FORSTER.

CATHOLIC IMMORALITY

One might add to Dr. Duhig's considerations (THE FREETHINKER, page 280) about Catholic immorality that the "sinner" automatically transfers to "God" the quality of the person (or ethical interest) wronged by the "sin." By squaring accounts with God instead of the wronged person in the way provided by the cult, he escapes all further responsibility. Hence, perhaps, the small weight of simple morality for a R.C. L. DOREAU (France). E.S.P.

If Rhine *did* allow Pearce to check the cards in sets of five, from the same pack, before the end of a deal, I agree that this would be a flaw in those particular experiments. It has nothing to do, however, with the fallacy about "chance expectation" in Mr. McCall's previous article.

The elimination of bias in probability experiments is a difficult technical problem. As Rhine deliberately varied his routines, it is not surprising that some sources of bias may occasionally have been overlooked. The fact remains that he and other investigators have produced a substantial number of results which satisfy any reasonable mathematical tests of significance.

I do not contend that the purely statistical case for E.S.P. is or can be conclusive. Those who reject it, however, should explain (a) why they think the E.S.P. hypothesis is so inherently improbable that it can only be accepted as a last resort; (b) how is it that results of high mathematical significance can occur, without E.S.P., in the most carefully conducted experiments. G. Spencer Brown's *Probability and Scientific Inference*, which Mr. McCall referred to in his note on my previous letter, suggests a plausible answer to the second question, based on the behaviour of chance machines, which will no doubt be welcomed by inveterate opponents of E.S.P. With regard to the first question, however, this author's views are, by implication, as critical of materialistic dogmatism as of psychic credulity. For example: "If we do consider nature to be uniform... we must either (a) not count the bits which appear otherwise, or (b) not talk about them... This sort of behaviour is called science." (Page 24.)

I am less impressed than Mr. McCall by the "boldness" of Mr. John Scarne in offering to wager \$100,000 on the non-existence of E.S.P. If he is so sure of keeping his money, why not simply offer a reward to anybody who can demonstrate E.S.P. under

test conditions? Why confine his challenge only to those who possess \$100,000 and can afford to risk losing it? D. BEAR.

[Mr. McCall writes: Mr. Bear (like Dr. Rhine himself) continually stresses the 'high mathematical significance' of E.S.P. experiments. But—also like Dr. Rhine—he gives insufficient consideration to the test conditions. If Dr. Rhine's results are taken at face value they may "satisfy any reasonable mathematical tests of significance," but they certainly don't satisfy scientific test standards. Rhine, as I have said, is aggravatingly imprecise in his reports. That he is credulous and easily deceived is shown by the Lady Wonder affair, and by the way he "fell for" the medium, Mrs. Garrett. That, for one reason or another, he refused to accept advice on eliminating the possibility of fraud from his experiments may be seen from the late Joseph Rinn's *Searchlight on Psychical Research*. In short, Rhine's experiments, as reported, are totally inadequate. Mr. Bear sees a flaw in a particular set, now it has been pointed out to him. He might see many more if he weren't obsessed with "mathematical significance."]

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1958.—Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (chair), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Corstorphine, Ebury, Gordon Hornibrook, Johnson, Moore, Shepherd, Taylor, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Transfer of £250 from the Trustees account was authorised. New members were admitted to Manchester, Merseyside and North London Branches which, with individual members totalled 11. The Secretary had received no reply from the Rev. C. A. Bridge about a debate. Correspondence with Rhodesia House re religious question on immigration form was reported. National Council for Civil Liberties and Humanist Council reports were accepted and the Catholic Action Sub-Committee was authorised to purchase necessary books and papers. Mr. Ebury gave details of recent objections and apparently bogus threats in connection with speeches at Tower Hill. These would not prevent Society meetings there. Mr. A. R. Williams of Worcester would be asked to represent the Society at the Robert Owen commemoration at Newtown on September 27th. Requests for Messrs. Barker and Ebury to visit Birmingham Branch were approved.

[Since the above meeting, we are pleased to say that a reply has been received from the Rev. C. A. Bridge accepting our offer to debate.]

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A CHRONOLOGY OF BRITISH SECULARISM. By G. H. Taylor. Price 1/-; post 2d.

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

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