

# The Freethinker

Volume LXXIX—No. 24

Founded 1831 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

AFTER THE RECENT CONFERENCE of the National Secular Society, some friends and I "improved the shining hour" by visiting famous places in the South-West of England. These included Bath, Stonehenge and Salisbury, all of which still bear visible marks of "the footprints on the sands of time" which their bygone occupants have left upon them. Actually, the comparatively short journey between Bristol and Salisbury will take one a long way in time if not in space. From the prehistoric Druids who built their primeval Temple of the Sun at Stonehenge, via the Roman proconsuls who constructed the original—and still well-preserved baths at Bath, and Alfred the Great who may—or may not—have carved out the gigantic White Horse on the Downs overlooking Westbury, to the medieval builders of Salisbury Cathedral, a whole historical panorama discloses itself to the informed traveller.

## The Church of England discovers Karl Marx

Ancient and modern nowadays appear to intermingle not only in the "Hymns Ancient and Modern" of the Church of England, but equally even in its most ancient shrines. In medieval Bath Abbey, for example, I was astonished even in this year of grace, 1959, to find prominently displayed on the Abbey's bookstall an appropriately red coloured booklet on the intriguing theme of "Karl Marx and his doctrines," by the Rev. Dr. A. C. Bouquet, and published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. Evidently Christian knowledge now includes the canonical writings of modern as well as ancient Jews! The Church of England has apparently discovered officially that there is such a thing as Marxism. Perhaps they have even heard of the Russian Revolution? Be that as it may, over the road from Bath Abbey the still admirably preserved and altogether fascinating Roman Baths preserve severely classical features, surmounted by ancient Caesars and deities. They were originally pre-Roman, but the Romans appear to have discovered the warm springs (*Aqua Solis*, the Roman name for Bath) soon after their initial conquest, A.D. 44. (Perhaps Pontius Pilate may have ended his days at the newly-opened Spa, taking the baths in the way Anatole France imagined in his story, *The Procurator of Judæa*?) Modern Bath has certainly had its celebrities. Beau Nash lived there, and the younger Pitt died there; so too did Mrs. Siddons and the Rev. Robert Malthus, who appears to be the clerical favourite of many modern Freethinkers!

## A Pre-Christian "Cathedral"

On Salisbury Plain, as one travels east, one passes the grey gaunt pillars whose presumably magical circle was constructed according to the principles of an occult theology, the key to which seems to have been irrevocably lost. Who built this solar sanctuary, upon whose altar the rising and setting sun shone at precisely calculated angles? Was it the British Druids, whose weird and ghastly rites, including human sacrifice, were described by Roman

authors like Julius Caesar? Or was it some still older Pagan priesthood, whose creed and cult have vanished beneath the ever accumulating mists of time? And how were the gigantic stones transported to their lonely abode on the plain? (It has been stated by archæologists that the blue stones were brought from South Wales.) Was religious fanaticism the driving force behind their transportation or was it simply a job done under priestly compulsion by slave labour? It has been suggested that the already civilised Phœnicians, who were established as traders in Ancient Britain for several centuries prior to the Christian era, may have lent a hand. Indeed, a friend of mine recently advanced the ingenious

theory that these oriental auxiliaries may even have brought elephants—which are known to have been used in Carthage and other Phœnician colonies—to drag these giant stones from their place of origin to their resting place on Salisbury Plain. But whatever the merits of this theory, no relics of the creatures have, to my knowledge, been excavated in the vicinity, and the animals themselves would have presented a problem of transportation to the Phœnician mariners. However Stonehenge may have originated, it must have been one of the most eerie spots in the ancient world. Even in Christian times medieval travellers passed it by in shuddering haste, and medieval chroniclers believed the monstrous circle of stones to be the work of prehistoric giants, if not of the evil one himself!

## A Medieval Miracle

Some six miles from Stonehenge the traveller gazes down from the edge of the Plain upon what must surely be one of the most wonderful sights in England: the superbly graceful spire—the tallest of any Christian cathedral—of Salisbury Cathedral. In my opinion it is the gem of medieval ecclesiastical architecture, and however superstitious its motives, it is almost as great a marvel in its way as classical Greek sculpture and Renaissance painting. For the Middle Ages, so prolific in bogus miracles had their authentic architectural ones. Cologne Cathedral at sunrise or the spire of Salisbury seen from afar at sunset. For Salisbury is the most graceful, as Cologne is the most massive of the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages. Ecclesiastical architecture is one thing; the theology which inspired it is another and far inferior one. The present writer who, in his now remote youth, spent two years in the close of Salisbury Cathedral studying Christian theology, has long outgrown that theology, but the Cathedral and its graceful spire must surely be regarded as one of the seven wonders of the medieval world.

## Medieval Cathedrals and their Social Order

I have no desire to debunk the achievements of past clerical civilisations, whether of the ancient Pharaohs or of the Middle Ages. None the less, their architectural wonders would have been quite impossible had not the reigning sacerdotal caste had at its disposal the already consider-

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## Druids and Cathedrals

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

able scientific knowledge and technical skills of their social order. If, in fact, the medieval cathedrals were built "to the glory of God," they were permanent monuments to the power of the medieval Church and its feudal allies, under whom they were actually erected. It is notable, for example, that the numerous effigies which they contain are those of bishops and feudal barons, never of the actual builders, the architects, masons and craftsmen to whose

collective labour and skill these cathedrals were actually due. In point of fact, the names of the actual builders of Salisbury *et al* seem to have been forgotten as completely as their still more ancient predecessors in the Roman Baths or at Stonehenge. We may perhaps hope that a future civilisation, inspired by secular ideals, will disinter and do appropriate honour to the memory of these very great artists?

## The Dalai Lama and John Grant Michie

By FRANK MAITLAND

WHILE THE NEWSPAPERS were full of the "escape" of the Dalai Lama from Tibet, I happened to pick out of my bookshelves a copy of *Deeside Tales* by John Grant Michie, who was born in Western Micras in 1830 and died as Church of Scotland minister of Dinnet in 1904. I found much to reflect between the two.

How extraordinary to find, in this age of scientific progress (!), atomic slaughter and computered industry, that a real live god exists and at the time of writing was sweating his divine perspiration, rubbing his divine posterior on either leather saddle or silk palanquin cushion, keeping a rein on his godly irritation, on the mundane journey from Lhasa to Kalimpong. (Kipling would have written a poem about it, I imagine:—

"Blinkin' god of flesh and blood,  
Bald as Brynner brown as mud!")

This living divinity, the modern reincarnation of the First God, has fled from the Red Army and Communist administrators of China. Centuries of civilisation divide the two, yet here they are in a head-on clash—God v. Commissar; Dalai Lama v. Mao Tse Tung; religion v. revolution. It is all a striking illustration of the greatest issue of our time—religion or revolution; an issue in which all men are compelled to take one side or the other, or else remain unalive, with a head as empty of thought as the very beast. In Tibet, the Commissar has won. He sits among the stilled prayer wheels of Tibet, while god flees across the mountains, sweating in the dust of ponies' hooves. What a feast of reflection for those who dare to to reflect in these TV times!

Can we presume that even the Catholic Press, like the Liberal and Social democratic, will also use the Dalai Lama as another means of attacking godless communism? Already we are told that Tibet is another Hungary. The international warmongers and fascists—the Black International—would like to repeat the Catholic triumph over Hungary.

The most ancient authority of all challenges the Party dictatorship! Five centuries of religious terrorism encounters the 15-year-old Party bureaucratism—no wonder the "liberal-minded" cry out about Communist aggression. Religious "freedom" is in danger! And what has all this to do with John Grant Michie? Michie was no god, nor the son of a god. He was simply a Highland schoolmaster, but his life so aptly illustrates another astonishing clash of social levels. In his case, century-old Roman Catholicism clashed with emerging capitalism. Just as all the material and social developments of the 19th and present centuries have left a monk-ruled Tibet almost untouched until it clashed with emerging communism, so the Scottish Highlands remained in their semi-tribal, semi-feudal state, almost untouched by the Reformation, the Covenants and the Improvers, until they were struck by the printing press, the plough and the stone dyke. Barbarity faced Presbyterianism; the unlettered cattle-lifter v. the

university professor; a Roman Catholicism larded over the old beliefs, after they had been washed in holy water, came face to face with a social revolution that led to atheism.

John Michie, like the Dalai Lama, ran away. He became a minister of the Kirk. For those who know the history of religion in Scotland, this is understandable. He became a considerable writer on historic and antiquarian subjects, and there is nothing of Victorian piety in his writings.

In his fragment of autobiography, Michie frankly acknowledges the leap which he took away from religion. At the age of 15, he began to doubt the doctrines that set the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, in which he had been brought up, above that of the Scriptures. The priest persecuted him

"... with threatenings and anathema, fulminating the vengeance of his Church against me if I dared to sever myself from her communion. I was in a state of the utmost distress. The terrors of the priest's denunciation were not altogether ineffectual. They did break down my resolution, but I dreaded what he might do—some dire unknown thing."

Writing years later, when a minister, Michie closes the description of his conversion from Roman Catholicism with these words:

"I do not intend, even in an autobiography meant to be candid, to say anything regarding my personal religious sentiments and struggles. These I hold to be too sacred for any eye to see but the eye of the Omniscient alone. They are matters that concern only the creature and his Creator and Judge."

Michie had leapt with a vengeance from the institution and authority of religion to a personal religion. He had arrived at a position which torpedoed religion altogether. For the removal of authority to heaven signifies the removal of authority from earth.

It remains to be shown how far the removal of divine authority from Tibet will alter the history of mid-Asia.

### Quiz

1. What was the "Sabbatical Year"?
2. What astronomical body is Eros?
3. What do these non-Christian religious terms signify? (a) Imam, (b) Karma, (c) Jihad.
4. What trade or profession did these follow? (a) Thomas Hobbes, (b) Spinoza, (c) Thomas Paine.
5. Who were the "Peep o' Day Boys" (late 18th century)?

(Answers on page 191)

NEXT WEEK  
FREEDOM OF THINKING IN  
ENGLISH SCHOOLS  
By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

# A New Approach to Christianity

By THE REV. J. L. BROOM, M.A.

*Language and Christian Belief.* By John Wilson. (Macmillan, 1958.)

IN 1956, MR. WILSON published a valuable little volume entitled *Language and the Pursuit of Truth* which, as its title implies, considered the bearing of the twentieth century "revolution in philosophy" on the perennial problems of thought. Now Mr. Wilson has written an equally concise work in which he brings some of the chief doctrines of Christianity under the scrutiny of linguistic analysis.

In his introduction, Mr. Wilson points out that religious statements and religious language must not be exempted from rational criticism. The questions raised by modern philosophy he believes strike at the root of religious belief as a whole and "represent a challenge which seems more difficult to meet and more fundamental than any previous challenge, because it is the whole meaning and verification of religious statements which is disputed." And he further claims that "in many philosophical circles the impression conveyed by Christian apologists . . . is one of evasion. They seem to want to preserve the faith at all costs, even at the price of irrationality." He has written his book to try to show (i) that religious belief as a whole can be philosophically respectable and (ii) that nevertheless, if it is to be so, we must radically alter many of our most common ideas about religion." I do not think Mr. Wilson has been successful in establishing point (i), but we must certainly give him credit for a very brave attempt.

Mr. Wilson's argument for the existence of God is not based on the classical philosophical demonstrations which he regards as outdated. He thinks, however, that the reality of a superhuman power can be, if not proved, at least made probable by the fact of religious experience. To show this, he uses a familiar analogy from aesthetic experience. "If I say Beethoven's 'Eroica' is noble, dramatic and powerful, you are entitled to assume that if you make the appropriate tests you will have certain experiences." Similarly he argues that through the practice of meditation, contemplation, prayer and so on, we can enjoy a direct acquaintance with God.

We can, I think, go so far here with Mr. Wilson as to acknowledge that experiences associated with the performance of certain religious observances occur, and that, moreover, as in the sphere of aesthetics some of these experiences are more "developed" than others. No responsible atheist would deny that the mystical visions of a John of the Cross, a Wordsworth or a Blake are on a vastly higher plane than the hallucinations of a dervish, just as the music of Bach is superior to the latest Top-20 hit. But as I have pointed out in these columns before, these experiences, high, low or indifferent, prove nothing beyond the fact of their own existence. As Prof. Ayer stated in a recent T.V. Brains Trust one cannot logically derive conclusions about the creation of life, the purpose of the universe and so on, from them. They just *are* and there's an end on't.

One of Mr. Wilson's best chapters is concerned with the old free-will and determinism dilemma. Particularly interesting is his brilliant refutation of the orthodox Christian "solution" of the problem of moral evil in terms of man's alleged free-will. His argument is remarkably similar to that propounded by Chapman Cohen in his excellent little treatise on this subject. Wilson points out that "free" does not entail uncaused or unpredictable, it

entails only *uncompelled*. The conception of choice is meaningless unless our choices are determined by anterior states of mind, character, motives, etc. When we say a man acts freely we do not mean that his acts are uncaused—that is nonsense. We mean that they are determined by the man himself and not by some extraneous force. Moreover, if we know his character sufficiently well, we can predict what his behaviour in such-and-such a set of circumstances will be. It follows therefore, Wilson points out, that "it would be possible to have people who were entirely free and who yet always chose rightly. These people would have perfect characters, i.e., characters which always resisted temptation. And the theory (i.e., of free-will) breaks down just here; for if God is omnipotent, why did he not or does he not arrange that men had characters of this sort? In simple Biblical terms, why did he not make Adam and Eve so that they resisted the serpent's temptation? He could have done so and still left them free . . . we do not have to choose between sinners and robots." Apparently, God failed to fashion man thus, and therefore, as Wilson says, he is, if omnipotent, directly the author of evil.

The logical development of these considerations would seem to be atheism, but Mr. Wilson seems determined to find a theistic loophole. He therefore produces a curious, and for a Christian, highly unorthodox alternative theory. It is that God is "actually omnipotent" only on the supernatural level. In the natural world he is only "potentially omnipotent"—he can do nothing for us unless we make contact with him. He could not create perfect men because he has no control over man's actions once they are created until they ask him for help.

Apart from its heretical quality (as Mr. Wilson himself admits most Christians would say that God *could* influence men and interfere with the natural world if he wanted but that he prefers not to) it is hard to see how this "solution" meets the problem Mr. Wilson himself poses. There is still no explanation of the origin of evil, of the source of the disobedient impulse which according to the Genesis creation legend, led Eve to taste of the apple. Why, God being incapable according to Mr. Wilson of creating perfect beings, did he ever begin the whole sorry process?

Mr. Wilson is at his weakest, I believe, in discussing the question of immortality and the doctrine of the Trinity bringing forward in these connections some very doubtful analogies. Regarding immortality he writes: "To say that all the parts or aspects of a thing have disappeared or been destroyed is not to say that the thing itself has ceased to exist. We may remember the old problem about the axe. Its owner says, 'I've had this axe for twenty years; in that time it's had three new heads and four new handles.' All its parts have gone and been replaced; but it is still the same axe . . . On this analogy it is plainly logically possible to say: 'Jones has existed now for hundreds of years; he lost his body, brain cells, etc., last December, but he's still the same man'."

Mr. Wilson here seems to me to be talking complete nonsense. The axe is certainly not the same axe when all its parts are destroyed except in a purely Pickwickian sense. And in the same way Jones, who has lost his body, brain cells, etc. (on which his whole personality depend),

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

On ITV the other Sunday, the new Bishop of Southwark, who is a Socialist, did not spare the Socialist Council at Lewisham who, he declared, were recently guilty of "as mean and dirty a wangle as anybody could do"—adding that the Tories had done precisely the same thing in Staffordshire. He was answering questions—but it was notable that he kept "our Lord" out of his remarks as much as possible. In other words, except for some suggestions on getting people to church, most of what he said had nothing to do with "religion" as such. Needless to add, no "heretical" questions were asked, so no pious viewer was shocked. What puzzles us most therefore is—why was the Bishop interviewed at all? His comments and answers could not possibly have made a single convert.

★

That blessed Christian word "Unity," which has always been mouthed by believers as their great ideal but in practice hated, got another shock recently. As the Queen is head of both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, attempts have been made to unite them. The latest has definitely failed as anyone could have predicted. The Church of England believes, like the Roman Church, in "Apostolic Succession"—that is, the laying-on of hands by Bishop to Bishop since those far-off days when Peter initiated the ceremony. Incidentally, the Roman Church has always denied the Anglican version of the ceremony since the Reformation as valid, and therefore refuses to unite with heretics.

★

The Church of Scotland looks upon "Apostolic Succession" as a fraud, and will have no truck with any kind of bishop, preferring "presbyteries," that is, boards of ordained ministers and laymen. We have never been able to see what is the difference between an "ordained" parson or a parson who has had the laying-on of hands. Both teach, like Roman priests, the same credulous Christianity based on the Bible—though it may be urged that Presbyterianism contains more sheer nonsense than its rival. However, "unity" is still as far off as ever.

★

A gentleman appeared in a Greenwich court the other week charged with not maintaining his family. As similar cases have constantly to be dealt with, we only notice this one because he came into court carrying a large black banner inscribed with the heart-stirring words upon it, "What think ye of Christ?" and he indignantly refused to take the oath because he was "a born-again Christian." The only work he did was "witnessing for Jesus"—and as he got six weeks' hard by an unsympathetic (but no doubt a thoroughly Christian) magistrate, he will have plenty of time "witnessing." In any case, this particular witness will not be cited in favour of the wonderful work "our Lord" did and still does for maintaining a pure and holy family life.

★

We always like to give publicity to the stories regularly given in books by parsons of the conversion of unashamed and unabashed Atheists coming to a clergyman for comfort and advice, and having their "stale anti-religious platitudes from the Freethinkers' library" so easily answered. The Rev. F. Jennings is one of these, and in his book, *Ye Took Me In*, he gives pathetic details of an absolutely convinced Atheist who had a beard, was shabbily dressed, who wore a much darned pullover, who had travelled widely, and read voraciously. He was always haranguing on an open air forum, and his principle expletive was, "To

hell with Christianity!" Naturally, such a man was bound to go to a parson for help and advice.

★

Our hard-boiled Atheist was no match for Mr. Jennings. He was advised to read the Gospels with an open mind. "Let the sheer splendour of their truth," cried Mr. Jennings, "sink into your soul." And resolutely continuing, the redoubtable parson finished the conversion with "Read them slowly and seriously—then doubt God if you can!" This nonsense was enough to make the "Atheist" become "a labourer for God," and Mr. Jennings gives us a marvellous letter from him which knocks the average Fundamentalist stone cold for sheer drivel and credulity. But, of course, the whole story could have been lifted from the dreary nineteenth century tracts which then flooded the country. And one thing Mr. Jennings will never do—meet a genuine Atheist in debate in front of his *Christian* flock.

### NEW APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY

(Concluded from page 187)

ceases to exist, as Jones, at death.

Finally, Mr. Wilson makes a valiant and ingenious attempt to defend logically the fantastic doctrine of the Trinity. How can there be three distinct persons of one substance? Mr. Wilson employs two analogies to try to show that no logical contradiction is here involved. He writes: "We may say: 'There is only one Winston Churchill. Yet he is Prime Minister, Defence Minister and the leader of the Conservative Party.' Can Churchill be divided? In the sense that he can play different roles (hold down different jobs), yes; but not in any other sense. He cannot be divided as Churchill; but it might be sense of a kind to say that he can be divided as a politician—he can play three political parts. To take another another analogy: a wicket can be divided into its three stumps and two bails. Yet there is only one wicket." Therefore, he goes on, "It is not at all absurd to say that there are three parts or persons of God, all of which are entities in their own right, but that 'God' is still the name of a single entity."

Now surely Mr. Wilson in his whole argument on this point has fallen into the very error which his book is designed to combat—the imprecise use of language. In the first analogy, the Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Conservative Leader are not in any meaningful sense three different individuals apart from Mr. Churchill in the same way as the three persons of the Trinity are mysteriously said to be distinct disparate entities (they are also, of course, said to be at the same time "one," but we cannot have it both ways). In the second analogy, on the other hand, while the three stumps do represent concrete realities, "wicket" is merely a generic term to describe the stumps plus the bails. There is no entity called a wicket any more than there are entities called the "British Empire" or "beauty" or "goodness." In the same way, the abstraction "God" can never represent anything "real" apart from the particular gods designated "Father," "Son" and "Holy Ghost." This is, of course, the hoary dilemma of the existence of universals all over again. And Mr. Wilson must know that whatever else they may or may not have accomplished, the modern linguistic philosophers have surely disposed of that "ghost in the machine" to use Prof. Ryle's picturesque phrase.

Mr. Wilson has, I think, failed to show that Christian belief can survive a rigorous, linguistic examination. And he has done this paradoxically, I believe, through his own brilliant analysis, for having himself destroyed, he has been unable in spite of all his ingenuities to resuscitate the corpse.

# THE FREETHINKER

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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.; half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d. (In U.S.A.: 13 weeks, \$1.15; 26 weeks, \$2.25; 52 weeks, \$4.50.)

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (rear of Morley Street Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. CORINA and DAY.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.

London (Finsbury Square, E.C.2).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and C. MCCALL.

London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER and C. E. WOOD.

London (Tower Hill).—Every 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.

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, 6.30 p.m.

### INDOOR

National Council for Civil Liberties (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, June 12th, 7.30 p.m.: Speakers: ALBERT EVANS, M.P., NIGEL NICHOLSON, M.P., Rev. A. D. BELDEN, Rev. W. JENNER, A. R. TYRRELL. Chairman: MALCOLM B. PURDIE.

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant).—Sunday, June 14th, 5.30 p.m.: G. ELKAN, "Mystical Experiences and Human Knowledge."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 14th, 7 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, B.A., "The Victorian Frame of Mind."

## Notes and News

CONGRATULATIONS to our good friend, C. E. Ratcliffe, of Clevedon, Somerset, member of the North London Branch of the National Secular Society, on attaining his 90th birthday, June 4th, 1959.

★

WHEN St. Mary's Star of the Sea, Saltcoats, Scotland, celebrated the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker this year, it was only for the second occasion but (says *The Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*) "it has already become an institution locally," and the church was filled to capacity. The sermon was preached by the Very Rev. Canon Daniel, of St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Glasgow, and his subject was the significance of the Mass. If only Catholics "understood the Mass properly and lived it in workshop, office and factory," he said, "they would have an incalculable influence on the atmosphere of contemporary society." But "there was no greater snare" than "the false expectations of materialistic utopianism," he added; and at the post-Communion supper he repeated his warning. If Catholics were relatively impotent socially, he said, it was primarily because "too many had fallen into the post-Christian habit of regarding mundane problems in purely materialistic terms." By living the Mass daily they could not only effect the reconversion of Scotland but—note this

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £223 16s. 6d.; W.H.D., 5s.; A. R. Lewis, 10s.; T. Benton, 10s.; J. C. Rees, 10s. 6d.; W. H. Cilliers (South Africa), 2s. 6d.; Mrs. D. Behr (South Africa), 10s. 6d.; A. A. Cope (Canada), £1; C.E.R., £1.—Total to date, June 5th, 1959, £228 5s.

—"also solve all of the world's outstanding social problems and bring peace, unity and true prosperity to all mankind."

★

ON Sunday, May 3rd, the Combined Cavalry "Old Comrades" held their thirty-fifth anniversary of the unveiling and dedication of the Cavalry Memorial at Stanhope Gate, Hyde Park. Quite an impressive affair it must have been, too, for those who like that sort of thing. According to the programme before us, miniature medals and decorations were out—only originals, please—and ladies and children were advised to make their way to the memorial before the column, "as they cannot walk in the ranks." Once at the memorial, the clergy took over and the chosen hymns were "O God, our help in ages past," and "O Valiant Hearts." Reading the former for the first time since childhood, we were struck by the incongruity of two lines in the second verse:

Sufficient is Thine Arm alone,  
And our defence is sure.

We wonder if the "Old Comrades" noticed it; they were remembering the dead of two Great Wars!

★

Time informs us (May 18th, 1959) that Roman Catholics have the fastest growing educational system in the U.S.A. Their "grade and high schools have nearly quadrupled in 50 years to 4,700,100 students—one out of every eight U.S. schoolchildren." But, unlike here, denominational schools get no direct tax support because the First Amendment forbids it. As here, though, the Catholics are striving like mad to get the State to pay for their indoctrination. A recent public report, *Religion and the Schools*, revealed a split vote. For State aid: Rev. Dr. F. Ernest Johnson (Protestant) and Mr. William Gorman (R.C.); against: Rabbi Robert Gordis, and Agnostic, Professor Robert Lekachman.

## Thomas Paine

A man who honoured *Albion* by his birth,  
The wisest, brightest, humblest son, of earth;  
A man in every sense that word can mean,  
Now started, angel like, upon the scene;  
Drew forth his pen of reason, truth, and fire,  
The land to animate, the troops inspire,  
And called that independent spirit forth,  
Which gives all bliss to man, and constitutes his worth.

'Twas *he* suggested first, 'twas *he* who plan'd,  
A separation from the mother land;  
His *Common Sense*, his *Crisis* led the way,  
To great *Columbia's* happy, perfect day,  
And all she has of good, or ever may.

As *Euclid* clear his various writings shone;  
His pen, inspir'd by glorious truth alone,  
O'er all the earth diffusing light and life,  
Subduing error, ignorance, and strife,  
Raised man to just pursuits, to thinking right,  
And erst will free the world from woe and falsehood's right,  
To this immortal man, to Paine 'twas given,  
To metamorphose *Earth*, from *Hell* to *Heaven*.

CLIO RICKMAN.

Reprinted from *The Black Dwarf* (Wednesday, April 22nd, 1818); suggested insertion for Joel Barlow's poem *Columbia* (see THE FREETHINKER, May 22nd, 1959).

## World Population Conference

REPORTS ARE NOW TO HAND of the recent world conference of scientists, legislators and propagandists held at New Delhi and inaugurated by Mr. Nehru, on the burning question of the world's overpopulation menace. Though the actual conference took little over a week, its ramifications are extensive: 750 delegates and observers from 28 different countries are still making their reports and comments.

There were five plenary sessions, some of the Papers being of a highly technical character. Broadly speaking, the propagandist paves the way for the scientist, and the scientist paves the way for the legislator.

We of the freethought movement can note with pride that Bradlaugh made Malthusianism one of his three cardinal principles (Atheism, Republicanism, Malthusianism), and it is the one which has come nearest to acceptance so far on an international scale. The term Malthusianism, however, has certain restricted connotations, a fact not to be wondered at in view of the date at which Malthus wrote (1798), and the term International Planned Parenthood now describes the neo-Malthusian trend. This New Delhi conference was the sixth organised by the I.P.P. Federation. It is from their Bulletins that I have assembled the following notes on the conference speeches.

Dr. H. J. Bhabha, F.R.S.(India), said that if science was to improve human life we must know how many people it had to cater for. Already we were running short of minerals, but fortunately atomic energy had arrived just in time for the job of synthesising substitutes. But how long could the world stand the present rate of population increase?

Sir Julian Huxley said there was now general awareness that overpopulation was the world's greatest problem. In the wake of overpopulation came undernourishment, illiteracy, deforestation and soil erosion, and a threat to water supplies. The chance of education, of employment, the possibility of an economic breakthrough, the opportunity to stand and stare at the wonders of nature and art, wild life itself—all were in jeopardy.

Prof. J. Kitaoka (Tokio) described how Japan had halved her birthrate in the last ten years, due to the Government taking active and effective steps to promote family planning. Nevertheless, it had been materially assisted by the unsatisfactory method of abortion.

Dr. W. Vogt (U.S.A.) said that overpopulation, even in a highly industrialised country, was downgrading the citizen and increasing bureaucracy. Dr. C. P. Blacker (Britain) put the case for eugenics in an atomic age, which "created a demand for people of high intelligence with gifts for mathematics and science. The increasing complexity of life called for a capable and upright governing class. In future, therefore, the *quality* of children would be of prime importance."

Dr. C. Chandrasekaran, Professor of Statistics, discussed the results of a field trial in the Indian setting, while Dr. S. Chandrasekhar spoke of the need for "enormous educational propaganda," advocating vasectomy as an interim measure.

During the strictly scientific sessions, Dr. G. Pincus described the striking results of field trials with norethynodrel used as an oral contraceptive: by this medication a 96% reduction in the pregnancy rate had been achieved. It is interesting to note that experiments are currently being conducted with extracts of *pisum sativum*, taken orally by *either* sex: tests await confirmation.

Dr. P. Eckstein, of Birmingham University, discussed ways of testing the harmlessness of chemical contraceptives, using rhesus monkeys for subjects. (These are chosen

because of the similarity between the anatomical and physiological sex characteristics of their females with those of women.)

Various government programmes were under examination, and subsequent to the conference the *Hindustan Times* has said the Indian government "are taking immediate steps to hold training camps to train young surgeons in the technique of sterilisation so as to meet the requests that have started pouring in from the different regions."

The U.S. Population Reference Bureau have calculated that by the end of this century world population will have doubled its 1958 figure, and Dr. J. M. Luck, of California's Stanford University, is the latest authority to describe overpopulation as a bigger threat than the H-bomb. He has estimated that, if unchecked, the world figure will be ten thousand millions in the next century, "mostly scrambling for eats."

Obviously this cannot come about, so something will stop it. What shall it be? War and famine? Or sensible precautions taken in the 1960's?

The greatest enemy, as the International Planned Parenthood movement is finding out, is the R.C. Church. There is also some Communist opposition, although, in the recent TV programme, Prof. J. D. Bernal admitted that even if food difficulties could be overcome, there were other reasons for population control. Unfortunately, with some political trends, "Malthus" is a naughty word!

G. H. TAYLOR.

## A Note on "Tolerance"

By H. CUTNER

JUST BEFORE THE WAR I spent a year or so in writing a little book designed to give the children of Freethinkers—and others, of course—an easily understood introduction to Freethought. It might have made a good birthday or Christmas present, but it is still unpublished. I mention it only because, in the last chapter, I gave what I considered the best personal quality all Freethinkers should cultivate—and that was *tolerance*.

Now it is obvious that, whatever they may call themselves politically, most Freethinkers are highly individualistic; and it would be absurd to expect them all to agree 100% on everything. As can be seen from our correspondence columns, our writers and readers are constantly challenged—and a good thing too. On some "fundamentals" we are perhaps mostly in agreement, but for the rest...?

Let us take "tolerance," for example. It is quite likely that what I mean by this will be vigorously challenged—as indeed it has been recently, hence this little article.

I wrote in a "This Believing World" paragraph that I hoped Freethinkers would never show the intolerance, say, of such a body as the Protestant Truth Society, which objected to two members of the Royal Family going on a *private* visit to Rome and seeing the Pope.

Now, it can be argued that it is impossible for any member of the Royal Family to be a private person, and so the question can be boiled down to a matter of opinion between Freethinkers. I claim, and I have read nothing to change my opinion, that unless Royalty is meant by the Government to represent it *as such*, a visit by any of its members anywhere is *private*. In the case over which the Protestant Truth Society protested, the visit to Rome was *not* sponsored by the Government and the two ladies con-

cerned went as private persons; in my opinion, they had every right to do so and even to see the Pope or anybody else. If I went to Rome, though I oppose Roman Catholicism to the utmost, I would be only too pleased to see the Pope, or the Vatican, or any of Italy's churches, or its most religious paintings. I see no reason whatever, if I can do this as a private person, why Royalty (which is trying, but only with difficulty, to break with the "holier-than-thou-tradition") cannot also do so. As a Freethinker, I am for tolerance in this as in many other things.

But, as an example of sheer *intolerance*, let us take the letter by Mr. G. Richardson in THE FREETHINKER for May 8th. This gentleman has not even read what I wrote. I said nothing whatever about being tolerant to the Roman Catholic religion. All I was concerned with was a private visit to the Pope. Mr. Richardson is so angry that he completely forgets this, and vents his opposition to the Roman Catholic Church and the Vatican and their doings. So what? I really do not know. But if he wants to oppose the Roman Church, what is stopping him?

For I would not be surprised if I learnt that I had gone much further than he has. I have more than once pointed out that in my opposition to *all* the Christian Churches, I doubted if I had 10% of Freethinkers with me. I claim that Jesus, Paul, Peter, and all the Apostles, are myths—that is, they never existed; that the story of the early Church in Acts is almost pure fiction; and that people who are helping to perpetuate Christianity are many of our erudite Humanists and reverent Rationalists with their interminable discussions on the date of the Gospels and kindred problems. There is nothing the Churches love better than these discussions.

For Heaven's sake, let us be just a little more tolerant and bear with some at least of our disagreements. But let us at least be certain what it is we are disagreeing about.

## Ghana and Psychological Independence

By ERNEST GRAVES-ABOYIL

IT IS NOT TOO EARLY yet to speak of another form of independence which Ghanaians can think about, aim at and strive after. In fact, there is hardly independence without it. It completes and crowns it.

Political, economic, financial, industrial and technological independence is of primary and indispensable importance. No one disputes that. But without psychological or cultural independence, a nation is hardly an independent and mature one. A nation is mature and on its feet only when it is psychologically or culturally independent.

If the Western World or white people, speaking generally, have and do show superiority-complex over black people, the reason, when scrutinised deeply, does not lie in the difference of skin pigmentation or in the fact that they have brought political, economic, scientific, technological, medical and educational enlightenment and progress to the Africans. The reason lies subtly in the unquestionable acceptance and assimilation by Africans of Christian religion, theology, philosophy, ethical principles (e.g., affecting divorce and polygamy), and rites.

If the superiority-complex of the white people over peoples other than Africans is far less, it is because these peoples have not discarded their own indigenous and congenial religion, theology, philosophy, ethics, customs, culture, usages and rites, however much they have accepted or assimilated other Western developments.

This is psychological or cultural independence. A nation is mature as a people when it does not discard, for instance, its marriage laws, customs and ceremonies and

adopt those of another nation. By discarding this cultural item, the nation *ipso facto* shows that its people do not know or are incompetent to know what is good, valuable and congenial for themselves. It shows that they have no thinkers among them.

Christian missionary zeal is in reality psychological and intellectual imperialism of white people over the natives of the missionary fields. By letting people assimilate Christian theology and all that goes with it, the missionaries objectively subjugate the natives to the dominance of their theological headquarters in Europe in the name of Christ. The natives look forward to what they should believe and do from the theological headquarters abroad.

The Jews themselves, who for thousands of years had been conditioned by their various prophets to expect a promised Messiah to sit on the throne of David and rule them as their king, did not and still do not accept the Christ of the Western World. Yet, ironically, the Western World, which for thousands of years, had no inkling of any Messiah, like all other races except the Jews, has wholeheartedly accepted and appropriated the Christ of the few Jewish Apostles, as the authentic Messiah promised to the Jews themselves and launched out to all parts of the world to establish his kingdom alongside political imperialism.

Up to now, Ghanaians have been concentrating exclusively on the history, theology and civilisation of the Western World. It is now time for them to do some research into their own past in order to gather, sift, compare, develop, evaluate, cherish and practise their psychological or cultural heritage.

### ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. This was instituted by the ancient Jews to give the soil a rest from cultivation every seventh year.
2. An asteroid which comes fairly close to the earth for a body of its size (nearly 20 miles in diameter).
3. (a) Mohammedan religious leader, (b) the Hindu belief that the state of a soul after bodily death is formed by its behaviour in the previous life, (c) a Mohammedan religious war on infidels.
4. (a) Private tutor, (b) lens maker, (c) staymaker.
5. Irish Protestant insurgents who ransacked their enemies' quarters at dawn in search of weapons.

G.H.T.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### LOURDES

I am much obliged to you for publishing my letter (15.5.59) and the comments of Colin McCall.

I am aware of the methods of destructive criticism which have been employed. They are quite simply: (1) "Foreigners are fools," therefore cast doubts upon the medical knowledge and skill of the professors and doctors who attended and examined these seemingly hopeless cases—Marie Baillie and Jeanne Fretel; and (2) Put out alternative diagnoses, as if the putting out of alternative diagnoses will finish all argument.

The cause of Mlle. Fretel's tuberculous peritonitis was discovered in January 1939, when a tuberculous ovarian cyst was removed by Dr. Maruelle at the Hotel-Dieu, Rennes. The subsequent laparotomy in May 1941, done for the relief of the tuberculous peritonitis, would at the same time help the surgeons to confirm their diagnosis. But as these were French surgeons, Colin McCall and Dr. West will not be satisfied. It would appear to them that the descendants of Pasteur, Charcot and Claude Bernard are imbeciles, unable to distinguish what they see inside the patient's open abdomen.

As I have pointed out before, all the evidence goes to show that Jeanne Fretel arrived at Lourdes in a moribund state after three years of lying in bed and with temperature soaring between 103-104, abdominal pain and vomiting. Forty-five days of streptomycin injections given four months before failed to relieve her, and she was getting a daily dosage of morphia of between 10

and 12 grains to ease her pain at the time of her arrival.

In the famous *cause célèbre* of Dr. John Bodkin Adams at the Old Bailey, it was agreed that Mrs. Morell had become addicted to morphia over the previous few years. Yet her dosage was not as high as the dosage being received by Mlle. Fretel at the time of her cure.

By all accepted standards of medical experience Jeanne Fretel was in a dying condition on October 8th, 1948. She was vomiting altered blood (coffee grounds) and appeared to be unconscious. Whether she was dying of tuberculous peritonitis, peritonitis caused by perforation of a peptic ulcer, or peritonitis caused by perforated ulcerative colitis hardly affects the issue. We do know that she was instantly cured, and could drink and eat anything given to her that day and subsequently, and that she also walked unaided that day after being bedridden for three years. Her drug addiction to morphia was also instantly cured. From that day there has been no recurrence of her complaint. (Dr.) N. C. HYPHER.

#### A FRENCH DOCTOR COMMENTS ON THE ABOVE

Tubercular peritonitis may have further surprises in store for us. It is sometimes a self-healing disease, and it has never been 100% fatal. Next, this practice of laparotomy which alleviated a percentages of cures. Now we have all the arsenal of chemio-therapy to fight against T.B., and this has altered the whole development of the disease.

But always we hear of Dr. Carrel personally guaranteeing the cure of Marie Baillie. In fact, he never uttered a word about it while he was alive, and he died right at the end of the war. It was his entourage who published his posthumous *Le Voyage de Lourdes* in 1954, a long time after his death. It was a piece of propaganda for Lourdes that Carrel never ventured to publish during his life.

One finds, among propagandists for Lourdes, a special mental state, of which I will give an example. Professor Jean Lhermitte, who died recently, was a member of the International Medical Bureau of Verification, which sits in Paris and compiles the lists of extraordinary cures. Dr. Lhermitte had a house at Arcachon, near to Lourdes, but he always declined to go to Lourdes. Why? Because he thought the spiritual state at Lourdes was such that he would be menaced by the "Merchants of the Temple," who require their miracles every year.

Another curious case is that of Dr. D. J. West, who went to Lourdes convinced that there were extraordinary cures but, having been permitted to examine the dossiers, reported that they were incomplete and that there were deliberate omissions because these gave non-miraculous explanations of the miraculous phenomena. In particular, in the case of Mlle. Fretel, Dr. West found that the surgeons hadn't been very inquisitive, and Dr. Hypher himself admits that the patient received 45 injections of streptomycin, which perhaps would not be a negligible factor in curing a disease which has spontaneously healed itself before without special treatment. (Dr.) GUY VALOT.

#### RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

After reading two letters in THE FREETHINKER from readers trying to make Mr. Potheary change his mind, I feel I must now come out on his side.

The decision he has taken to have his child exempted from religious worship and instruction is the right one and he should not come back on it.

It is true that a young child does not like to be separated from his school friends, but this should not last long. Children soon get used to any situation. Of course, the child should not be left with nothing to do and the best thing is to provide him with a book or comics which he will be able to look at at the beginning or read later. I do not think any headmaster or mistress would object to that. This has the advantage to increase the child's interest in reading. It is what I have done for two of my children already, with no ill effects whatsoever, and I shall certainly do the same for the third one when she goes to school also. There has been no trouble at all from headmistresses or teachers (sometimes some surprise at receiving what is still unfortunately an unusual request) and the children are quite happy. My relations with the staff are excellent and I would advise Mr. Potheary and

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his wife to join the Parents-Teachers Association and to take as much part in its activities as possible.

Now, speaking generally, I think that our "freethinker" friends are wrong who let their children attend religious worship or instruction at school. It is to encourage them to become hypocrites—one of the worst failings to my mind—to do things not because they think them right but for fear of being looked at or victimised in some way for not being one of the herd. A child should be made to realise that one has to stand for one's ideas. After all, all human progress has been brought about by people even if it is painful at times to reject traditions and superstitions who dared to break the ring of conformity in which they were living, often paying a heavy penalty for it.

Apart from the moral angle and building up of the child's character, it is evident that, should all freethinkers take advantage of section 25 of the Education Act, it is not one or two children per school but several who would be in the same case, and none of them would then feel isolated. Our position would at the same time be much stronger and show the authorities that there is a demand for secular education.

On this subject, there is a book of Bertrand Russell which I would advise your readers to get from the public library. It is *Education and the Social Order*.

I wish Mr. Potheary's child all the best in his school life.  
J. TOUDIC.

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