

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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I PUT A QUESTION-MARK IN MY HEADING, because I am not so sure as *Time* (28/9/59) that "The French worker-priest movement, one of the century's most exciting and most debated religious experiments, finally died last week after a long illness." Theoretically, perhaps, it should be dead. The death sentence has been pronounced — by Giuseppe Cardinal Pizzardo, Secretary of the Holy Office, to be precise — in a letter to Maurice Cardinal Felin, Archbishop of Paris, for communication to all other French bishops; a letter which received the approval of the Pope on June 11th. And, incidentally, a letter intended to be confidential, which leaked out (via an intransigent bishop?) and was published in *Le Monde*.

Holy Office Directive

"The Holy See," it declares (and I take my text from *The Guardian*, 15/9/59, and *Time*, as above), "considers that work in a factory is incompatible with the sacerdotal life and obligations." Even if a priest managed to find time to say Mass and perform his other priestly duties while working in a factory, he would still be spending time "on manual labour that should be devoted to sacred studies." The apostles created deacons precisely in order to liberate themselves from temporal tasks. Moreover, "work in a factory or even in a smaller undertaking, gradually exposes the priest to the influence of his surroundings. The working priest is not only plunged into a materialist atmosphere deleterious to spiritual life, and often even dangerous for his chastity, but is even led in spite of himself to think like his worker comrades on trade union and social matters, to take part in their struggles, which gravely involve him so that he is led to participate in the class struggle which is inadmissible for a priest."

Gone Wrong

The Holy See is right. However well intentioned the movement might have been since its beginnings in the "Mission to Paris" in 1943, it was doomed to failure, for the reasons lucidly outlined in the letter. The French Cardinals, worried by the irreligion of French workers, sent specially trained priests into factories and workshops, to live with the men, the better to understand them and administer to their "spiritual" needs. Alas, the priests came to understand the workers too well! As *Time* puts it: "By 1953, it was obvious that something had gone wrong; of almost 150 worker-priests, some 20 had married and left the church, while others had joined the Communist unions or Red-line causes." *Time's* "scarlet-fever" — as it might be called — needs to be borne in mind in the last part of that sentence. "Red-line" may only be a synonym for "left-wing," and its presentation as an alternative to "Communist unions" indicates its distinction from them, but it certainly means a tendency to think like one's "worker comrades on trade union and social matters."

Temptation

And, of course, those twenty provide a terrible warning. Dangerous, indeed, was factory life for their chastity! The

priest is a delicate animal. Living precariously in an alien climate, he needs insulating. Dress him up in special clothes, with a "Please do not touch" notice; give him a regimen; direct his attention to things of the spirit, abjuring the flesh; immerse him in studies (preferably useless) if you like; but for God's sake (and his own) don't expose him to the real world! That way lies temptation, as a score of worker-priests can testify. *Delicious* temptation, no

doubt, for them, but Cardinal Pizzardo's adjective would be different, we may be sure. Veritably, "a materialist atmosphere deleterious to spiritual life."

Well might Pius XII, after approving (presumably in a moment of aberration) Cardinal Suhard's

original conception, withdraw that approval when the results were seen. He ordered a three-hour limit per day for priests in factories. But, says *Time*, "only a handful submitted; others left the church, and only 25 continued in their mission, eventually won limited approval from their bishops." It is well known that the French Church expected changes with the advent of John XXIII who, it was thought, appreciated their problems better than his predecessor. Last Spring, however, when Cardinal Felin sought Vatican permission to revive the worker-priests "under strict control," this was refused. Now comes the letter, ostensibly the last word on the subject.

Failing Hold

But the French hierarchy, with its independent tradition, may not be so easily subdued. And *Time's* typically persevering reporters found at least one "church official in Paris" (name not given) prepared to speak his mind. "Rome could tell us to stand on our heads and, of course, we would," he said, "but even upside-down we would hold fast to our view on what is at stake here." And what is at stake is, quite literally, everything, so far as the Church is concerned. The French Church, more than any other, is aware of its failing hold on the people, and particularly, the workers. Aware, too, that the old methods — threats and promises, etc. — will never reverse the secular trend; that something more imaginative is necessary. And the worker-priest project certainly caught the imagination of socially-minded Catholics. It was, in *Time's* word above, "exciting."

Yet, as I have said, and as the figures confirmed, it was doomed to failure. The Roman Catholic religion requires a rarefied atmosphere for its performance. It needs a theatre for its elaborate mime and recitative. Given that theatre, that atmosphere, with a well-trained chorus receiving the proper cues, the result is "suspension of disbelief." Once outside the portals, things are different. No longer a world of magic, but one of stern reality to be faced. Nowhere more so than in the factory: no place for transubstantiation, or even — as Cardinal Pizzardo reminds us (and as the figures again confirm) — for chastity: a world of flesh, not spirit; of action, not prayer.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The End of the Worker - Priests?

By COLIN McCALL

Incompatible

Yes, the Holy See is right. Factory life is incompatible with priestly life. And the priest, when all is said and done — when the Church has done its all — is human. Not only sexually, though this is clearly relevant, but in the wider sense, too. Living the life of a worker, he sees the view of the worker; is led “to think like his worker comrades,” in spite of himself, as the letter has it; even — horror of horrors! — “to participate in the class struggle.” To recapture the workers, the French Church sent priests after them. It lost the priests and gained no workers.

Still, the French hierarchy realises that inaction is impossible. And the Vatican “secular institutes,” with lay apostles under priestly guidance, continuing the mission in factories, is quite inadequate. It is, in fact, only Catholic Action under another name. But, perhaps Cardinal Pizzardo's letter isn't quite as final as it seems at first sight. This, at least, would be in keeping with Catholic practice,

which never says a thing clearly if it can avoid it; always leaves a loophole if it can. *The Guardian* Correspondent (15/9/59) has already hinted as much. “It is not quite clear,” he wrote, “how this new decision affects that which was made six years ago by which priests could at all events work for a limited time of three hours a day in workshops and factories. It may be that this will continue to be tolerated and that only the renewed experiments with full-time work in factories are now banned.”

I think that he, too, would put a question-mark after the title of this article. But — this is the great comforting thought for France and the world — the real question-mark should be placed beside the Church of Rome itself. Whatever its gains, its losses far outweigh them. It is doomed. Once the priest leaves his refuge he is defenceless. All-dominant in his own theatre, he has no role on the stage of modern life. There the trappings and the masks are off, and he is a man like the rest of us.

Friar Genebro

By. ECA de QUEIROZ

(Concluded from page 319)

A FEW YEARS LATER, on one Easter Eve, while resting on the steps of the Church of Santa Maria, the Friar saw in the clear suave air a great luminous hand spread open over his head. “Behold the great hand of God, extended to gather me to Him!” Giving his only earthly possession, a dirty, much-used copy of the Gospels, to a beggar praying beside him, he asked the onlookers to take him to a stable and put him on a bed of ashes. In holy obedience to the Abbot of his monastery, he let the monks divest him of his rags and clothe him in a new brown habit. With eyes full of tenderness he begged that when he died his body should be placed in a borrowed grave, as was the body of Christ. Sighing, he complained: “Oh Christ, who suffered so much, send me some blessed cleansing pain!” In the morning, bidding the monks to open the stable door, he gazed at the cloudless sky and listened to the swallows twittering on the eaves; smilingly he recalled just such another morning, while walking with Francis of Assisi on the banks of the River Perusa; the divine master stopping by a tree and saying to the birds: “My dear little brothers sing always in praise of your creator who gave you this tree in which to build your nests, the clear water for you to drink, those feathers to keep you warm.”

Then, humbly kissing the hand of the monk who was tending him, Friar Genebro died.

When his eyes closed in death, a great angel with snow white diaphanous wings entered the stable and transported the soul of the monk in a serene noiseless flight through the clouds. Nesting in his arms as in the sweetness of a cradle, the soul of Friar Genebro conserved the form of the body which it had held on earth; the Friar's habit with its thick folds, still held the ashes of the stable; with a new sense, the monk dazedly contemplated that limitless space till, in the end, the angel paused, and the Friar realised that they hung suspended between Paradise and Purgatory. Then suddenly from the heights appeared the two great plates of a scales — one which shone like diamonds, reserved for his good deeds; the other, black as coal, to weigh his bad deeds. The soul of Friar Genebro trembled in the arms of the angel as the shining plate began to descend slowly, its cords creaking with the great weight. Oh happy and glorious packet holding his good deeds and dispersing light all round! There were the numberless charities he had sown in the world, now blossomed into pure white flowers full of aroma and light. His constant

prayers were wound round the cords as a dazzling mist of gold. In the end, the plate with his good works stopped and the horrid black plate remained in the air — useless, empty. Sonorous bands of angels, waving palms, flew round the scales. A shiver of joy passed through the light of Paradise at the thought of the new saint who was to join the heavenly band.

But suddenly the black plate moved as a heavy weight dropped on it. Sadly it descended, casting dark shadow on the celestial light. What bad deed did it bring, so small that it was barely seen, and so heavy that it forced up the luminous plate? Oh pain! Oh despair! The black plate descended with its cords taut, and stopped. Now all could see what had condemned a saint — a piglet, its leg brutally cut off, dying in a pool of its own blood.

A great hand descended from on high, opening its sparkling fingers. It was God's right hand now extended to expel the soul of Friar Genebro. All the light and all the shadows from fulgent Paradise to sombre Purgatory struggled in love and terror.

Then the angel with its face full of pity, opened its arms and let fall into the blackness of Purgatory, the soul of Friar Genebro.

[Editor's Note: October 4th was “World Day for Animals,” the day dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi. We thought it appropriate therefore, to print this story by the famous Portuguese writer, in a new special translation by Nan Flanagan.]

“ENVOY”

THE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER ISSUE of the magazine *Envoy* (founded by V. K. Krishna Menon to promote friendship between India and Britain) contains an article by F. A. Ridley on “Charles Bradlaugh: the Member for India,” which our readers will find very interesting, though it naturally deals more with Bradlaugh's political activities than his Freethought ones. The same issue also has an article on the England-India test series by another FREE-THINKER contributor, Peter F. Moore. *Envoy*, price 1s., is obtainable from 31a John Adam Street, London, W.C.2.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE MARCH OF SCIENCE

By JACK GORDON

Edgar Allan Poe

By H. CUTNER

THE YEAR 1809 WAS NOTABLE for the death of Thomas Paine, but it was also notable for the birth of Edgar Allan Poe, considered by many critics one of the greatest of American writers — or at least one of the most *original*. Accounts of his tragic and sombre life have often been related, and the marvel is that so much of his work as a poet, a critic, and a short story writer, is of such high literary value and quality.

Of English and Irish extraction, he was left an orphan at the age of two, and adopted by a Mr. John Allan; and when old enough, he was sent to school at Richmond, Virginia. Later, when Mr. Allan came to Europe, Poe attended a school in Stoke Newington, and there learnt French and Latin among other things. He was a brilliant boy, and his knowledge of history and literature outshone that of many other boys of a more advanced age. Details of his life in England are graphically given in one of his most famous stories, *William Wilson*.

Poe completed his education at the Virginia Academy and in 1830 was sent to West Point Military Academy only to find that he was totally unsuited for a military life. However, he found time to publish in 1827 his first book of poetry containing some poems written when he was only 14 or 15 years old; and two years later, another work containing *Al Aaraaf* and most of his previous poems.

He quarrelled with Mr. Allan, and tried to earn a living with his pen — an almost impossible feat for a young poet in the early part of the nineteenth century anywhere at any time (as, in all probability it is now). We know nothing of his struggles at this stage of his career, but he won a literary competition for the best short story, *MS. Found in a Bottle*, and the kindly notice of one of the judges who at once did his utmost to help the almost starving young writer. He had several stories accepted by the *Southern Literary Messenger*, the editor of which he later became. His stories raised the greatest interest as did indeed his trenchant literary criticisms; and he raised the circulation of the journal from 700 to 5,000. He married his cousin Virginia in 1836, and left the *Messenger* for the *New York Quarterly Review* for which, says Poe's sympathetic biographer, J. H. Ingram, he wrote many reviews which "display his immense learning, and the extraordinary range of subjects with which he was conversant, but it is impossible to peruse them without grieving at the loss literature sustained by his dissipating his powers over such *ephemera*."

Later, he went to Philadelphia as editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and in 1839, Poe issued most of his stories in two volumes as *Tales of the Arabesque and Grotesque*. It would be fair, I think, to say that here were some of the most famous short stories ever written, each different from the other; and any reader who does not know them is forthwith prayed to read *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *Ligeia* and the other masterpieces which have made the name of Edgar Allan Poe so famous all over the world.

When George R. Graham acquired the *Gentleman's Magazine*, he called it *Graham's Magazine*, and Poe raised its circulation from five to fifty-two thousand. In it he published the first three (and still perhaps the best) short detective stories ever written, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and its two sequels with their "Sherlock Holmes" in the person of C. Auguste Dupin. The *Murders* is remarkable also for its defence of the modest game of Draughts against the more elaborate and picturesque game of Chess as being the greater of the two games. Chess

players have been annoyed with Poe ever since.

If Conan Doyle made his own Sherlock Holmes a greater and more world-famous figure than Dupin, none-the-less Dupin's analyses in the three stories can easily bear comparison with any by Sherlock Holmes. Poe, in fact, invented the detective story as we know it at this day.

And he also invented the "buried treasure" stories in *The Gold Bug* which is also perhaps the most fascinating of all "cryptogram" stories. Poe claimed that he could decipher *any* cryptogram, and that it was impossible for human ingenuity to "construct any cryptograph which human ingenuity could not decipher." When cryptograms poured into the office, he took the trouble to "examine and solve them in triumphant proof of the truth of his theory." Not one baffled him.

So famous did his *Tales* become, that the great French poet Baudelaire spent some years of his life translating them — and his translations are so magnificent, "that Poe's tales have become standard classic works in France." They were reproduced "with little loss of vigour and originality."

Poe's unrivalled powers of deduction were particularly evident in his famous review of the prospective notice of Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge*. Says Ingram, it

drew from Dickens a letter of admiring acknowledgment. In this notice, the poet with mathematical precision explained and foretold the exact plot of the as yet unwritten story.

Poe left *Graham's Magazine* for some unknown reason, and he had the misfortune to encounter at about the same time the Rev. Rufus Griswold who, when Poe died, was more than anyone else responsible for a "Memoir" of Poe described by Ingram as "that masterpiece of envy, hatred, and malice," which unfortunately "has been unwittingly and almost universally accepted as the truth." Like many of the literary men of his day, Poe certainly drank whisky or brandy, but it was his misfortune that the smallest glass of either made him drunk. He simply could not take alcoholic liquor. On that, the unspeakable Christian Griswold, who hated Poe, built up an edifice of lies and libels which the dead poet could not refute. Not these Christian lies but the work of Edgar Allan Poe should be his monument — as indeed for most of us it is.

Although his poetical work is so comparatively small, how great it is for those who love the music of words! Poe had the gift of melody in poetry as great as the greatest of poets. The (early) stanzas of "To Helen" are surely immortal. His "Raven" and "The Bells," "The Haunted Palace," "Ulalume," "The Conqueror Worm," and a few others I never tire of reading. And the poem he wrote on the death of his young wife, which we know as "Annabel Lee," surely is one of the most haunting in all poetry: Its last verse is

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes
Of the Beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea —
In her tomb by the side of the sea.

It is intriguing to find that a year or so before he died, Poe wrote a Pantheistic "prose" poem called *Eureka* of which he thought very highly and which few, even of his admirers, have been able to read. Yet it is well worth the effort for it shows his extraordinary knowledge. "God" of course is in it, but its main theme is Poe's own views of Astronomy and the Universe. *Eureka* has, however,

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

One of the most interesting things about the General Election is the way in which the three (or four) parties have left religion severely alone, and have concentrated on purely "secular" issues — not exactly Secularism as such, of course, but far nearer to what we mean by the term than to Christianity. It is doubtful whether any election in the past has boycotted religion and all it implies so thoroughly as this one. So that the only point about it which emerges is that, whatever the result or whoever gets real power, religion will be taught in schools exactly as at present.

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Yet the fact remains that what is called "juvenile delinquency" is a dreadful problem, and will have to be faced by both Tories and Socialists in the next Parliament. And when we say "faced," we mean that the question will have to be asked — what good has religious teaching in schools been when so many young people leaving school begin a life of crime and violence? The problem is just as acute or even more so in the U.S.A., particularly as so many of the young hooligans there are Roman Catholics. We ask, as we have asked so often in these columns — why is it that Christian priests and parsons have to be provided for the criminal population in our jails, while purely "secular" padres would have so little work to do that they are quite unnecessary?

★

Continuing on these lines again it is surely significant that now so many of our national journals stick to a purely secular line. For example, in the issue of *The Observer* for September 27, there is an index of 38 items dealt with in its columns, but only one purely religious is a list of "church services." Several articles deal with "money" — more money for old-age pensioners, more to be raised through taxation, and so on. We had hopes that Mr. A. Schonfield's article headed "Too Little Faith" would be a slashing attack on the way candidates in the Election are dodging religious issues, but we were quite mistaken. It was all about taxation and inflation and industrial output — not a line about the Faith, whichever it is. Religion has never had it so bad.

★

Still, there was one item of news in which religion played a little part. It was the assassination of the Premier of Ceylon by a Buddhist who was either a Buddhist monk or dressed like one. We have heard for generations that Buddhists never use violence of any kind. They would never kill even bugs and fleas. They have never killed in the sacred name of religion. Well, here was a cowardly assassination if ever there was one. And factions of Ceylon Buddhists hate each other just as strongly as if they were Christians. We hope at last this myth about Buddhists has been exploded.

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In the ITV's "About Religion" the other Sunday, we were shown the evangelistic work given to the hop pickers in Kent by about 80 students of King's College. Most of the people spoken to were buxom ladies from London who all agreed that the "mission" was wonderful — though no doubt the chance of speaking for the "telly" helped them to be in favour of it. We were shown a "service" by the local parson, and it would have been hard to beat for sheer primitive Fundamentalism. It was probably a replica of the kind of thing John Wesley initiated in the 18th century. Still, the "mission" did little harm — and, of course, still less good.

A correspondent to the "Daily Express" recently pointed out that the plea made by Mr. Krushchev for the abolition of every known means of war was, if nothing else "ironical." Why? Because Cardinal Spellman, speaking at the opening of a Roman Catholic chapel at *West Point Military Academy*, called the Russian leader "a sorcerer" and "an assassin." Krushchev, the Atheist, in fact wanted war to be completely abolished; Spellman, the all-believing Catholic, blessed part of the training ground for military operations. It certainly was "ironic."

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How splendidly belief in Christianity opposes all murderous violence can be seen in the way a negro evangelist in Milwaukee, about to be arrested for murdering his wife, pulled out not a prayer book, but a gun, and shot and wounded a policeman before being shot dead himself. According to the *Daily Express* his last words were "I'm from the Gospel."

THANKS TO WHOM?

"HIGH OVER THE ATLANTIC an airliner's two starboard engines cut out . . ." So began a *Daily Express* leader (21/9/59). "The chances of survival seemed impossible," it told us, but "after skimming the ocean for 400 miles" it made a safe landing. And one of the 12 passengers reported: "We prayed. Everybody was praying." Some people will say that the safe landing had nothing to do with the prayers of the passengers, said the *Express* — quite rightly — "But there are 12 people who do not believe that. They give thanks this morning — that their prayers were answered." Of course: so do savages when rain follows a rain dance, but there is some excuse here. The *Daily Express* doesn't report whether the pilot and crew of the airliner prayed, or whether they were too busy with the job in hand, but if we had been on the plane, they would have received *our* thanks!

EDGAR ALLAN POE

(Concluded from previous page)

never been taken seriously. But the point to note is that religion as such is hardly mentioned anywhere else in his work. I think it is safe to assert Poe was *not* a Christian in any accepted meaning of the word. He just ignored it.

Conan Doyle, who had a great admiration for Poe, considered *The Cask of Amontillado* not only his greatest story but one of the world's masterpieces of short story writing, and he was no mean judge. In this, I agree with him.

Poe wrote one long story, and it is also, in my own opinion, a masterpiece, entitled *Arthur Gordon Pym* which foreshadowed so many of the sea stories of those fine story tellers for the Victorian youth, Kingston, Ballantyne, Manville Fenn, and many others. For those who like something exciting in the way of sea stories, I can heartily recommend it.

In the last years of his life Poe gave a series of lectures which have always been to me intensely interesting, particularly his judgments on contemporary poets. He greatly admired Tennyson and Mrs. Browning and Thomas Hood among others.

The work of Edgar Allan Poe reads as exciting today as it did when it was first published. I envy the reader who comes fresh to *The Imp of the Perverse*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, and others of the *genus Arabesque*. Poe left no successor. He was unique.

THE FREETHINKER

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will Mr. W. Ridley please send his address to BM/VIOL, London, W.C.1.?

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN and MURRAY.
London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Saturday from 6 p.m. and every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.
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.: Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute) Lectures every Sunday, 7 p.m.
Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street.) Sunday, October 11th, 6.45 p.m.: R. MORRELL, "Population—A Crucial Issue".
Central London Branch N.S.S. ("The City of Hereford" Blandford Place, Blandford Street, W.1.) Sunday, October 11th, 7.15 p.m. BONAR THOMPSON, "The End of Idealism".
Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, October 13th, 7.15 p.m.: Dr. E. A. SEELEY, "Ethics and Technology".
Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, October 11th, 6.30 p.m., S. J. HOOKER, "New Aspects on Richard Jefferies".
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street) Sunday, October 11th, 2.30 p.m.: W. L. ELLIS, "Coal, Crisis, Consequence".
Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant) Sunday, October 11th, 5.30 p.m.: Speaker from "The Company of Free Men".
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, October 11th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A. "History as Science and Art".

Notes and News

MR. WALLACE NELSON, President of the New Zealand Rationalist Association, who, with his charming wife, attended the International Congress of Freethinkers in Brussels, told us how his Association had "made the most" of Billy Graham's New Zealand crusade. But we have only just seen a copy of *The New Zealand Herald* for June 20th, containing one of the Association's advertisements. It is 3½ inches long and is virtually a small tract. Here is an excerpt: "Billy Graham is perturbed that Christians are not as moral as atheists. We say Christians can be just as moral as atheists, if they will only throw off the demoralising influence of their creed."

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged £278 12s. 11d.; R. V. Ross, £1 14s. 3d.; A. J. Wood, 2s. 6d.; F. B. Bolton, £3 10s.; F. Baker, 3s.; Anon, 2s. 6d.; R. Brownlee, 5s. Total to date October 2nd, 1959: £284 10s. 2d.

WE DON'T OFTEN SEE the *Western Evening Herald*, and it's obvious we miss a lot. Fortunately, though, a reader has cut some important bits out for us lately. So, in the September 19th issue we are able to read that an Anglican missionary on arrival in Sydney "said he had seen human figures in flying saucers over New Guinea," a Reuter report that had escaped our notice in other papers. Father William Gill, it went on, "was emphatic" that he had seen the saucers with his own eyes near Boianai on three days last June. "We watched the four figures appear on top of the object — there is no doubt that they were human" and one of them "seemed to be standing looking down at us." "I waved to the figure," Father Gill continued, "and to our surprise he waved back." It doesn't surprise us a bit, and it shouldn't really have surprised the missionaries. They believe in angels, don't they? And devils? Both these appear in human form — there is plenty of Christian testimony to that — and why shouldn't they use the latest form of transport when operating over New Guinea?

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A FORTNIGHT BEFORE, the *Western Evening Herald* (5/9/59) in its apparently regular "Saturday Sermon" asked a real teaser: "Is not *Heaven* a happier place than earth because there are *no half-views there?*" We have to confess, in all honesty, that we just don't know. Consolation in our ignorance came from the rhetorical nature of the question. The *Western Evening Herald* doesn't know either: it was a question only "arsked," not answered!

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ANOTHER PAPER THAT thoughtfully provides its readers with a Saturday Sermon — though it calls it "A Saturday Reflection" — is the (London) *Evening News*. September 19th was a choice example. "To the Pharisees" — it said — "sinners were, like lepers, outside the pale. Jesus, on the other hand, saw good even in all of them . . ." "Reproof," it went on, "often hardens a man's heart . . . but a word of praise for what is good in him may make him realise that he could do better." To appreciate this to the full, we suggest a reading of Our Lord's words of "praise" to the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew, Chapter 23 or Luke, Chapter 11. Matthew (verse 33) records the tender and encouraging: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" By which words, no doubt, "Our Lord induced a complete change of heart in the most unlikely people" — to quote the *Evening News* at its (Saturday) reflective best!

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AN *Evening News* READER, Rene Davies, may have been rather naive in a letter printed on September 21st, but at least he was compassionate. It was cruel, he wrote, to equip the porch of St. Paul's Cathedral with electrified wires to prevent pigeons and starlings from roosting there. "Have not the Church dignitaries heard of the hymn which says:

Happy birds that sing and fly
Around thy altar, O Most High?" he asked.

Mr. Davies will have to learn that singing hymns is one thing: preserving St. Paul's is quite another. The Church of England (like the Church of Rome) has recognised the distinction between religion and life, and confined the former to quarters.

The International Congress of Freethinkers

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER
(President of the World Union of Freethinkers)

(Concluded from page 318)

ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, the first public meeting was held in the Great Hall of the University, a magnificent new building of excellent acoustics. The President introduced the speakers with a reference to Prof. Rousseau's book *The Conquest of the Stars* (Prof. Rousseau is a member of the Congress Committee of Honour) in which he contrasts the Magdalenian sorcerer of 30,000 years ago painting in darkness what he fancied would give power over the world about him, and the scientist of today in a brilliantly lit laboratory formulating equations which do give him such power. The speakers would reveal to what extent the processes of thought of the Magdalenian sorcerer still influenced the world and how they can be met by modern science. The first speaker was Mdme. Jeanne Vandervelde, widow of the well-known Socialist leader in Belgium, Emile Vandervelde. Mdme. Vandervelde is a doctor of medicine, a psychiatrist and a Senator. She is also an excellent speaker of originality and wit. There were not enough militant Freethinkers, she declared, far too many allowed themselves to be lulled into inertia or even conformity. The first duty of a good citizen was to cultivate impertinence; not to allow any reverence or veneration for the traditional or for common custom to silence his questioning nor his determination to obtain answer. Science was making the world ever more magnificent, but with the splendour there were terrible possibilities, to avoid which will require the best minds and clear knowledge of facts.

Maitre Gremling, after thanking on behalf of the foreign delegations, the Belgian hosts for the efficient organisation of the Congress, read most eloquently the French version of Dr. Brock Chisholm's important paper, which has already appeared in English in *THE FREETHINKER*.

Professor Henri Laugier of the Sorbonne, former Assistant General Secretary of UNO, called on Freethinkers of all lands to rally together, for never had the liberty of the mind been so threatened as it was today. He warned his audience that this came in part from a false assurance of knowledge. Scientific advance was spreading ever faster and faster; the accumulation of factual knowledge becoming vaster and vaster. Attempts at popularisation of this knowledge were leading people to fancy they knew and understood things of which they had no proper knowledge or understanding. Once it had been possible for an encyclopedic knowledge of facts and of methods to develop in the mind of a man; now this was becoming less and less possible. It was therefore necessary in the schools and universities to concentrate on the methods employed to arrive at a limited and circumscribed domain of facts. By encouraging independent thinking in such a small area the student should learn to apply his mind to other problems in a free and independent manner.

Professor George Homès, Professor of Physics at Brussels University, took up Prof. Laugier's theme, emphasising with sparkling and mordant wit, the need of the research worker in science for liberty; he must be freed from military, political and religious interference. Today he could obtain large sums of money for any scheme which was thought to have military value or to produce results redounding to the credit of the government in competition with some other country; but if he tried to obtain finance for any other sort of research, he could fritter away hours filling up forms and not get a five pound note unless he was a member of the right Church in the right sort of

institution.

In view of the absence of three of our distinguished scientific speakers — Dr. Chisholm, retained in Canada for a special conference; Dr. Siurob of Mexico, incapacitated by a serious heart attack; and our Australian friend Dr. Duhig — and since the Congress had heard what several eminent scientists had to say on the subject of Freethought, the President invited a militant Freethinker to say what he thought of modern science. Vice-President André Lorulot, speaking with over 50 years' experience of the struggle for Freethought, humourously describing himself as a Parisian *gavroche* born at the foot of the Eiffel Tower (before the tower was built), claimed that Science was based on Free Thinking and that Freethought advanced step by step with Science, which alone can produce lasting progress.

The level of oratory was high and all speeches were enthusiastically applauded.

Sunday morning the Ferrer Commemoration Cortège provided a contrast which was as successful and impressive as anything we have had in recent congresses. Assistant-Secretary Colin McCall has given his version, so I shall not dwell on it. As a leader of the procession I was preceded by a vanguard holding aloft what organiser André Koeckel-enbergh called a "calico" bearing in huge letters "Congrès International de la Libre Pensée, 1959"; then came the silken banner of the Belgian Federation flanked by stalwarts carrying sheaves of flowers to be placed, one on the monument to Paul Janson, the other on Ferrer's monument. Looking back I could see the procession, band and banners, winding its way out of the streets of central Brussels, some 600 yards in length, sometimes more and sometimes compressed to less by the helpful police. The sun shone brilliantly; all Brussels was beflagged. As we came into the great square and halted at the plaque to Egmont and Hoorn, the tourist multitude left their aperitifs and grabbed their cameras. Two coachloads of German Freethinkers were waiting for us by Ferrer's monument. At appropriate moments the trumpeters sounded their calls. After the speeches, the band played the Marseillaise most effectively and affectingly.

If we had fears that the great assembly of the morning would leave the afternoon meeting sparsely attended, such fears were soon dispelled. The counter-attraction of the exhibition in the corridor outside the hall made some wait till they could hear the chairman opening the proceedings before they took their seats. Prof. de Brouckère, daughter of the Belgian Liberal statesman who died a few years ago and Professor of Chemistry at Brussels University, has evidently inherited her father's ability as a speaker, for she spoke clearly, cogently, powerfully, yet with humour. She had travelled the evening before from a conference of chemists at Munich specially to take part in our Congress. The miracles of science throw those of the Bible into the shade; and men must free their minds of out-of-date rubbish and face up to the terrifying problems of today with unprejudiced minds if they wish to discover valid solutions.

Prof. J. M. Romein, History professor of Amsterdam University and UNESCO expert, followed, speaking in English (he speaks French well, too; even as Prof. de Brouckère speaks excellent English). The human mind, he pointed out, has been dominated by three sets of influences, religious, political and social. The students of Natural Science began the emancipation of their studies

from religious influence in the 16th and 17th centuries. Thanks to the freedom they gained, Natural Science was able to make immense progress in the following centuries. Nineteenth century liberalism allowed a relaxation of political influences; but political and social factors still hamper the progress of knowledge and thought. It is then the duty of the Freethinker to make men of science clearly aware of the influences under which they work, and hence to emancipate themselves so that Churches cannot fetter them, nor states dictate to them, nor social divisions hamper them.

The psychological equilibrium of the men today was Montpellier Professor Ernest Kahane's subject; and he made of it a most moving plea for the freedom of the mind, a remarkable feat of oratory. "Confronted by the unknown, to which I deny the title of unknowable, I shall keep my mind free; between the known and the unknown there is continuity, as between the past, the present and the future. The future is soon the present and awaits its turn to become the past. What I do not know today is not of any other quality than what I know; it is potential knowledge. Serene in this certainty, in untroubled peace of heart and mind, I maintain the free working of thought which accepts no hindrance from any man."

The fourth speaker was English sociologist Dr. Ronald Fletcher, of whose paper a summary will be given in a later issue of this paper. His analysis of the present situation was followed with keen appreciation by the many of his audience who understood English; for the others, M. Doreau gave an excellent version in French.

On Monday, September 7th, the duties of the administrative Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers were to elect the General Committee which would be in office till the next Congress; to consider suggestions for the next Congress; and to pass resolutions based on the discussions of the preceding days or proposed by affiliated societies. It must be borne in mind that proper notice, i.e., three months, should be given of any such resolution. Even that period is too often insufficient to obtain an adequate consideration of proposals by the affiliated societies.

Save that we had the sad news of the withdrawal of Arnold Boulanger not offering himself for re-election to the Committee after 50 years' service on it, Paul Braun taking his place, the Committee and officers remained as before. It was felt that they had done an excellent piece of work in organising the present Congress. It was left to the Committee to find a centre for the next Congress, due in 1962 or 1963, and to organise it on similar lines.

The resolutions submitted by the Resolutions Committee were passed unanimously and were as follows:—

That the educational principles of Ferrer are more vital than ever and should inspire an active demand in all countries to further them, emancipating and reviving education. The Congress expressed its sympathy with the Spanish people still under the heel of a clerico-fascist tyranny.

That the Congress considers sectarian schools produce a spirit of division and opposition among men from their early youth and that completely secular schools are alone capable of uniting men in a spirit of liberty, tolerance and brotherhood. The rights of children, still rarely observed, must be recognised and fought for.

That the Congress congratulates itself on having heard the addresses of such eminent scientists of several countries and disciplines, and declares its opinion that science and the scientific method have ever been, throughout the ages, the essential element in the progressive evolution of mankind, and remain the chief weapon in the struggle with obscurantism in all its forms. In view of the prodigious developments in recent years of technical science, the Congress expressed the hope that these would give rise in the near future to a world in which mankind, living in peace,

freedom and justice might make parallel progress towards its full evolution.

The Congress passed votes of thanks to the Brussels organising Committee, particularly to the Organising Secretary, M. André Koeckelenbergh, and also to the Secretary of the World Union of Freethinkers, Mlle. Pardon, who in spite of ill-health had coped indefatigably with the formidable work entailed, and to the Treasurer, M. Louis Courtois.

On Monday evening at the dinner held at the Cité Universitaire (so good that we all envied the students) gaiety was the note, with occasional touches of gravity for contrast. Prof. de Brouckère gave us the right opening note for the University and Professor Homès sang us the students' song as a curtain; in between it was fine to hear the veteran Nicholas Smelten, still hale and hearty, as well as our Rhodesian friend, Malcolm Clarke, who spoke in Spanish, English and Chinjanga (he had already addressed the Congress in French and Afrikaans which shows what mathematicians can do, doesn't it, Mr. Clarke?).

All good things come to an end. Our New Zealand President, Mr. Wallace Nelson (who is an expert bee-keeper) would like an international congress every year. We should much like to see and hear you every year, Mr. Nelson. "Out of the strong cometh forth sweetness."

And our Swedish friend, ex-Senator Ture Nerman, gave a highly appreciative broadcast account of the Congress to his fellow Swedes on September 10th.

The standard of the discourses was noteworthy; in this the Congress compared with any that preceded it. We did not have this year the numbers which gathered at Rome in 1904 or in Paris in 1905. It is, just between ourselves, whispered that Dr. Janne will be a Minister of State in the next Belgian Socialist government. Why not one of the Secretaries of State of Her Majesty's government addressing our next Conference in England? Remember, at Luxemburg five years ago *four* Ministers of State attended the opening meeting of our 31st International Congress of Freethinkers.

The Bomb, God, and Dr. Soper

By PETER SINCLAIR

I AM A YOUNG MAN. My recollections of the last war are not very clear. I just remember sirens, and sweet coupons, my father's big army boots, and the nice young man, wearing a soldier suit and a parson's collar, who came to visit my smashed-up uncle.

I am married now, and although my cup is not exactly overflowing, I am happy. My wife and I smoke, we like a drink, and enjoy watching Sellers films and Ibsen's plays. We live in what is laughingly called a "self-contained flat," and we look forward to Friday and stray publishers' cheques.

Despite our lack of the green stuff, however, it can be safely said that we enjoy life.

There are odd moments though, when we worry. What if they commit the final crime and press that little red button which will release a Hydrogen Bomb and make my wife and me into a sticky mess of cinders, mixed up with our Dylan Thomas books, a few odds and ends of furniture and an extremely prolific cat?

Our happiness will be gone.

Of course, if there is a Heaven it will be all right. But I am not sure about that. Christians like Dr. Soper should be sure though, so why do they spend so much time and energy campaigning to prolong this life? Maybe nuclear death, being a kind of suicide, doesn't qualify one for Summerland.

Anyway, God can't think very much of us mortals to allow us to make the Bomb in the first place. Unless H-War is to be the long-awaited Armageddon of our friends the Jehovah's Witnesses? Perhaps the Russians will be the sinners. Those on pious Ike's side will be the Saved!

Yes, if I was sure about Heaven I wouldn't worry. But when Dr. Soper talks about the wonderful time we are going to have up there, and then in the next breath shouts "Ban the Bomb!" my doubts are understandable. I mean, after all, Dr. Soper should know about these things and be consistent.

Christians should look forward eagerly to nuclear war if they want to join their Maker. Unbelievers, and the not-so-sures, should fight against the Bomb, and try to make the best of the seventy-odd years allotted(?) to us.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE MONARCHY

Mr. W. E. Huxley does not seem to understand that the atheist movement was founded by Republicans. The Monarchy is not supported by the will of the people, it is supported by a certain section who have a motive in sustaining monarchy by turning it into a sort of Barnum and Bailey show. True, some of the common people like these shows. However, the cliques who run the show will soon get rid of monarchy when it becomes superfluous just as a clique did long ago when it ordered the decapitation of King Charles, and Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The will of the people is a superstition. It is minorities or cliques who always rule. The intelligent Republican is the real friend of the monarchy. "Kill the system," said Thomas Paine, "and not the Monarch." For saying this, he was sentenced to the guillotine, which fortunately he escaped by an error. Our present Queen and Royalty must be very sick of the fawning and pandering sycophants who surround them and order them about. Today, these hypocrites pretend to worship, but tomorrow they destroy their victims.

Could I advise Monarchy, I would advise them to retire from the scene, say to the "Establishment" "To hell with you," and settle down in some peaceful part of the world away from the cant and hypocrisy that holds them in a frightful grip.

PAUL VARNEY.

FREUD AND RELIGION

Apropos your article "Three Lies," THE FREETHINKER, 18.9.59, by Mr. H. Cutner, I should like to bring to your notice that yet another story of "infidel" conversion appears to be going the rounds.

A few months ago, in conversation with my doctor on the subject of religion, I mentioned a number of famous people who were unbelievers including the great psychologist, Sigmund Freud. Imagine my astonishment on being informed by the doctor (a Christian) that Freud had in fact recanted his atheism towards the end of his life and "turned to God." Then, quite recently, a lady friend who is a psychiatric social worker told me she had also heard the story.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, neither of my informants was able to indicate a printed source of this legend. It is not, of course, claimed that the Jewish doctor of psycho-analytic renown became converted to Christianity — that might be too much to expect — but for the man who called God an illusion and religion a mental disease, "the universal obsessional neurosis of mankind," to have

embraced any brand of Theism is most remarkable — or rather it would be if true.

For my part, I am convinced that this is just another Christian lie to deceive the credulous. Should it spread, I trust your redoubtable Mr. Cutner will take urgent steps to expose it.

E. S. IRWIN.

DEMONS

In THE FREETHINKER for September 18, Peter F. Moore in his article entitled "Demons," quotes an "undistinguished scholar" as putting the number of devils at 6,572,839. Chapman Cohen in his pamphlet *The Devil* quotes "one religious authority" as placing the number of devils at work in the world at 7,405,926.

I am not much worried about the difference of 838,087 of the species, but as a matter of interest could Mr. Moore or anyone give me the names of the two devil-authorities in question?

ROGER THOMAS.

[Mr. Moore writes: There have been many Christian estimates of the number of devils and I cannot at present check where I got the number I gave. However, here are two estimates I have at hand. The Blessed Reichelm of Shōngan (end of 13th century), 1,758,064,176; Jean Wier (physician to the Duke of Cleves), 7,409,127. These two examples are taken from Pennethorne Hughes's *Witchcraft*, Longmans, Green, 1952.—Ed.]

ANTICIPATION

The writer of "This Believing World" is undoubtedly right when he says that it is only a matter of time before Jesus becomes "the greatest family planner of all time."

The relevant text in "God's precious word," just waiting to be interpreted or otherwise wrenched out of its context is undoubtedly Mark XIII. 35.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY.

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