

The Freethinker

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THE ARRIVAL ON THE MOON of the Soviet Moon Rocket and the circling of the moon by Lunik III highlight in dramatic fashion the ever-increasing tempo of scientific research today. It is little under two years ago that the first Sputnik went into orbit around the earth, an event which was described as an epoch-making achievement at the time. I doubt if even the optimistic amongst us then really believed that an instrumented rocket would reach the Moon in much less than five years.

We talk of the ever increasing expansion of the frontiers of science in a self-congratulatory sort of way, without realising that the rate of expansion is not proceeding at a uniform pace, but is in fact increasing at an exponential rate and will continue to do so.

The fields which together constituted engineering science at one time have now sub-divided into a vast array of sub-fields, each of so specialised a character that one can merely hope to keep abreast of developments in one particular sector. One is aware in only a general way of important advances in other sectors; to comprehend them in sufficient detail is a futile quest.

Unity of Science

Yet I do not believe that in view of this nightmare of specialisation, we are in danger of becoming a nation of specialists each engaged in the pursuit of narrow disciplines and with ever diminishing contact with our neighbours. I believe that science is one. This may be seen in the manner in which concepts of proved value in one field have been borrowed and used with great success in another entirely different field of study.

It may seem at first sight that there can be little in common between a radar fire-control system and the functioning of the human brain. Yet the principles underlying the former have been refined and applied to elucidate problems of learning, thinking, memory, etc. — problems formerly believed to be quite incapable of solution along mechanistic lines.

Cybernetics

This new science, which has as its aim the study of control and communication in both the animal and machine is called Cybernetics. It has made striking progress since its inception at the end of World War II. No one who visited the Physical Society Exhibition this year will readily forget the demonstration of The Conditional Probability Computer. Here was a versatile "learning machine," an intricate assembly of electronic components possessing the ability to make inferences from past events and to use the experience so gained to demonstrate its recognition of patterns in various orientations. In fact, the machine behaved as a new born animal would. Equipped initially with a set of inborn basic responses, both machine and animal learn by establishing new neural pathways which modify the original basic reactions.

Cybernetics is a fascinating study. It has applied the concept of the closed cycle mechanism not only to matters

lying within the scope of psychology but even to economic systems and certain problems in biology and physiology. Naturally the reformulation of mechanistic materialism as applied to the above fields has yielded positive results. "(Vitalistic) objections against earlier attempts at materialist explanations of consciousness, memory, thinking, etc., in terms of the mechanics of the nervous system, are met by cybernetic analogies. The traditional problem of how organisms can exhibit purposeful activity without the intervention of some extraneous teleological system of causes is also solved by the use of Cybernetic models in favour of scientific materialism. It is shown that teleological systems controlled by end-states can be wholly

mechanistic. Thus the objections of both the idealists or mentalists in psychological metaphysics, and the vitalists in biological-cum-psychological metaphysics to any form of materialism are undermined directly or by implication. By implication, although not explicitly the answer is supplied to the whole system of philosophical disputes over the nature of causation, substance, consciousness and volition, etc." (Quotation from *Minds and Machines*, Sluckin.) Much more could be written about developments in Cybernetics; many more will certainly come from it.

Telescopes and Cosmology

Finally, to return to space rockets, or rather the means of tracking them. The U.S. Navy has announced plans to build a super radio telescope in West Virginia. This new instrument, with a bowl diameter of 600 ft. will dwarf the world's present largest instrument at Jodrell Bank which is a mere 250 ft. across! Primarily intended for military purposes, this new telescope nevertheless has some exciting possibilities in pure astronomical research. Its estimated range of 18,000 million light years should enable fresh information to be obtained on the type and distribution of galaxies at or near the limit of observation. This, in turn, might enable a decision to be made in respect of the two main rival schools of thought in cosmological theory. The one group thinks that the universe evolved from a small super-dense core, the "primeval atom," following an immense explosion which is believed to have taken place at a remote but definite past time and which is the cause of the present observed expansion of the universe. The other group, supporting the steady-state theory, think the universe is infinite and still in process of continuous creation. If these distant galaxies are found to be composed mainly of stars in the early stages of their evolution, then this would lend support to the "Big Bang" theory. On the other hand if the stellar populations of those remote "island universes" exhibit the normal energy distribution curves possessed by the nearer galaxies, then that would lend support to the steady-state theory.

Freethought and Science

Freethinkers will await these results with interest although we, as Freethinkers, are not committed to the acceptance of any particular current view of science in any

VIEWS and OPINIONS

The March of Science

By JACK GORDON

subject. Our basic criterion in assessing any scientific theory is, that no theory can be acceptable if it contains any supernaturalistic survivals expressed or implied. Once that is granted, the search for a scientific explanation of anything becomes a search for the simplest set of mutually consistent concepts which cover all the facts known at that particular time.

Mexican View

By Gen. Dr. SIUROB RAMIREZ

WHEN THE LATIN AMERICAN PEOPLES achieved independence from Europe, Mexico, because it had been the cradle of an indigenous, fairly advanced civilisation, developed more rapidly than the other countries. It separated the Church from the State even before France did, and produced the first Socialist Constitution (1910) — even before Russia — becoming, in fact, the vanguard of freethought in Latin America.

Nevertheless, in America today, freedom of thought is beginning to go by the board. The U.S.A., hoping in this way to avoid Communism, has allied itself with the Roman Catholic Church. This is a grave mistake, for it has encouraged the petty clerical tyrannies which prevail at the present time in Central and South America (Guatemala, Nicaragua, Santo Domingo, Colombia, Venezuela and the Argentine). Such tyrannies act as brakes on freedom of belief, speech, and written expression, and keep their countries in a perpetual state of revolt and alarm. The result of all this must be in direct contrast to that sought, for the inhabitants, tired of so much oppression, will end by throwing themselves into the arms of Communism — the precise event which the U.S.A. is trying to avoid.

My own country is almost the only one maintaining itself intact, but enormous political and economic pressure is being brought to bear on us. Nevertheless, we hope to resist successfully and finally convince our Anglo-American neighbours of their error.

Religion continues to be the systematic enemy of Freethought and, therefore, of science itself. And, never more than today, has Freethought been an essential condition for human culture, peace, liberty and the transformation of our environment — even of life itself. We believe it has been demonstrated throughout history, that it is the free use of thought and reason — giving their value to everything — which has led man to heights every day more elevated — of knowledge and action in the never-ending scientific evolution. We believe we are at the portal of a new culture, which we must develop to its fullest extent. To do so, our immense powers must be employed with scientific acumen, for man's good, by means of those principles of universal morality, which will have to be adopted not only by individuals, but by the nations and governments of the world.

Today, it is science, with its amazing discovery of forces, possibilities and methods, which incites Freethought to take fuller advantage of these achievements and to prevent their employment against mankind by foolish, evil or unscrupulous persons. To Freethinkers it is manifest that a universal ethical system, independent of religion, is an urgent necessity. Ethical systems based upon religion are, without exception, unsound; they are misleading as a norm of conduct; they do little to remedy human problems of upbringing, co-existence, and social co-operation. They inflame the passions, provoke fanaticism, and cause many tragedies. Indeed, it could happen — as the Archbishop of Canterbury has said — that man might disappear from the earth. This, the cleric would, erroneously, associate with an act of the deity.

The most recent developments in space travel and the possibilities ahead should be used to the advantage of our Freethought, which carries forward what science proposes — works in an unending march of progress and fulfils the potentialities of our reason, the supreme guide for all knowledge.

We affirm that throughout history, reason — in close union with freedom of thought — has been the sole effective basis for scientific progress and that, later, when this progress really began, together reason and freethought have constituted an alliance so powerful that they have pushed forward the eternal quest. The full application of the sciences will enable man to live more happily; in greater harmony with his environment; avoiding — wherever possible — pain; prolonging existence for good; without struggling for niggardly interests or on behalf of absurd deities; in the uninhibited and full use of all his faculties; able to enjoy, not only the splendid gifts of nature, but also those offered by the conquest of new worlds, with unending perspectives for those who come after. It will enable man to traverse, in thought, the marvels of the Cosmos.

Some Impressions of the Brussels Congress

BY A HAPPY COINCIDENCE my long leave from Central Africa enabled my wife and me to be present at the International Freethought Congress held in commemoration of Francisco Ferrer — a particularly happy coincidence as before the Spanish Civil War, we lived in Spain for a number of years.

For us, coming from Northern Rhodesia, where Freethought activity is non-existent and, previously from the Union of South Africa where its adherents are few, the experience was memorable. To one who has not lived in a community and has been isolated from Freethinking friends; indeed considered almost as a strange animal from some other planet, the pleasure and the thrill of being again in such company and meeting individuals with similar interests at heart cannot be explained. It was like coming out of a sojourn through dark and noisome caves into the light and glory of the sun and fresh air. To be the bearers — unofficial — of greetings from Rationalists and Freethinkers in Johannesburg and Ghana was a privilege. To meet Madame Sol Ferrer and her daughter was an experience we shall never forget and the number of countries represented was for us so heartening.

Then of course, education and its problems came in for a great deal of limelight. As an educationalist, I was deeply interested in this respect.

Let me close by stressing once again, what the social side meant for my wife and me. We feel we can almost face the prospect of three more lonely years with the recollection of the Brussels Conference to keep us going.

MALCOLM G. CLARKE.

JOINT ACTION NEEDED

ON OCTOBER 9th, 1959, *The Economist* reported that atheists need not apply for certain public offices in the State of Maryland. "On a reading of the Maryland Declaration of Rights, the state's attorney-general has denied a commission as a public notary to the office manager of a building firm who felt unable to subscribe honestly to a belief in the existence of God." It is being suggested, however, *The Economist* continued, that "this is contrary to the separation of church and state guaranteed by the federal constitution." This is clearly a case calling for joint action by the many bodies pledged to ensure that often-endangered guarantee.

German Reminiscences

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN THE COURSE OF A RECENT VISIT TO Germany, I became acquainted with an astonishing fact; a disconcerting one, particularly when one recalls the reputation for a scientific culture that the Germans have achieved in the past. However, there it is; in the "Free and Hanseatic" city of Hamburg, the largest city in Western Germany, and one of the greatest centres of maritime activity to be found in the world, one cannot get a job in some big companies without first submitting one's application along with a specimen of one's handwriting; which is then — believe it or not — initially submitted to an astrologer for his expert (sic.) opinion before the application is either accepted or rejected. (This almost incredible fact was passed on to me in all seriousness by Hamburg business people of the highest standing who themselves, I hasten to add, were not followers of the "Royal — now republican — art" of astrology.) The National Anthem of Germany is still "Deutschland uber Alles," but apparently the stars are still over Germany.

Germany has been often described as "a land of extremes," and this description appears to be justified by the rapid and incredibly violent series of transitions from one regime to another which that great but unhappy country has undergone during the past century. The century since Bismarck united it by "blood and iron," in a union which has actually proved as ephemeral as human institutions founded on such perishable materials commonly turn out to be. Actually the Founder of United Germany now sleeps his last sleep at Friedrichsruh, which is almost on the Iron Curtain that now divides two apparently irreconcilable Germanys from each other. By a peculiar stroke of historic irony which deeply impressed me at the time, I first saw the frontier guards between the two Germanys at the graveside of Bismarck, the alleged creator of "Germany, one and indivisible". And more recent examples can be cited since Bismarck's now rather remote day; the violent establishment of the Weimar Republic which followed the collapse of the Hohenzollern Empire in 1918, and then its spectacular downfall before the Hitler counter-revolution. Here, too, the law of extremes held good; most politically informed Germans with whom I have discussed the matter, agree that had not the German ruling class called upon Hitler, very reluctantly, and as a last resort, a Communist regime would have been in power within a year or two. One recalls the apt description of Hitler's own storm-troopers as "underdone meat brown" (i.e. Nazi) on top and red (i.e. Communist) underneath. This kind of stormy political evolution which is incredible to lands like our own, which proceed according to the now firmly established principle of "the inevitability of gradualness," appears to be deeper-rooted in the unequal economic and cultural development of the country. This is still very marked, particularly in the south, where the finest *autobahns* in Europe run parallel with gigantic crucifixes and with Catholic peasants who still plough with oxen as did their forefathers, and who, as the terrible recrudescence of long, outworn racist myths under Hitler so tragically demonstrated, are still widely immersed in the superstitions of the Darkest of Dark Ages. The result of which combined development is the paradoxical Germany of today, where side-by-side, cheek-by-jowl, one can observe what is perhaps the most advanced industrial technique in the world, with scientific developments of the most outstanding character broadcast to the civilised world by a galaxy of

world-famous scientists and philosophers, and that other, still medieval Germany, where in the south, the Roman Catholic Church is still virtually all-powerful. (We recall the descriptive phrase "The German Federal Republic was conceived in the Vatican and born in Germany") and where even in highly cultured cities like Hamburg, in the Protestant north, the stars rule over human destiny — and apparently, even over business transactions! The Germany simultaneously of Hitler, prehistoric mythology and of super-scientific development. Assuredly a strange but fascinating paradox!

Germany in 1959 shows little outward signs of the unexampled universal ruin which overtook the Third Reich as it crashed to final destruction amid scenes of horror probably unsurpassed in even the horror-strewn annals of humanity. The way in which the ruined cities of Hitler's bomb-blasted Reich have been rebuilt almost without trace of war damage, speaks volumes for the great qualities which the Germans have retained beneath all their fluctuations of fortune and their mental aberrations; in particular for the industry, tenacity and efficiency of the German workers. Inside 15 years, the vast heap of rubble which was Hamburg, demolished with deadly accuracy by the Royal Air Force, is again one of the richest and most prosperous cities in Europe. Dresden, in East Germany, which suffered the worst air raid of the war — there are said to have been more casualties there than were later caused by the first atomic bombs dropped on Japanese cities — had also been almost completely rebuilt when I was there in 1957. But if one wants a vivid object lesson both in the particular horrors of the last war and more generally in the utter futility of modern total war, one has only to take a tram from Hamburg Central Station to the great cemetery at Ohlsdorf on the outskirts of the great city, surely one of the saddest, as well as most beautiful places in the world. Here the utter futility, as well as horror of modern war can be seen as perhaps nowhere else in the world today.

For, in Ohlsdorf the gigantic, century-old cemetery, which has received the dead of Hamburg, one can still see fresh and terrible traces of the two terrors that swept over Germany between 1933 and 1945; the Brown Terror below and the aerial terror above. For, near the great gates of the vast burial ground stands the noble obelisk, which contains rows of urns filled with the ashes of the German victims of the concentration camps. Buchenwald, Belsen, Neuengamme, Auschwitz, Ravensbruck; the names are recorded as in some modern chamber of horrors. Every year a solemn commemoration takes place which I witnessed a few years ago. A truly impressive sight. But one surpassed in magnitude, if not in intensity, by the awe-inspiring, probably unique, spectacle to be found higher up in this vast Necropolis: the massed graves which, in the form of a gigantic cross, contain the mortal remains of the 45,000, mostly unknown, victims of the air-raids on July 27-28, 1943. (In the first World War, the total casualties suffered by Hamburg were 40,000—evolution in mass-murder!) And by a ghastly irony, a little higher up in the great graveyard, are buried the English pilots of the R.A.F. who were shot down during the attack. Thus, in close proximity, slayers and slain sleep their eternal sleep. An object lesson, surely, of the utter futility, as well as horror, of modern war.

This Believing World

Those eminent Christians who believe in the Design Argument — and very few don't — should explain why it is that dozens of "insect pests" all over the world have developed an astonishing resistance to modern insecticides, and why (as we are told in *The Observer*) "new pests have appeared." From where have these new pests come, and how and why? Moreover, it appears that "some beneficial species have been decimated" — though how a "pest" can be beneficial is not easy to understand. Perhaps a pest created by a good God can never be bad, but should be allowed to continue its pestilent work, God alone knowing why. We often wonder how the Almighty could explain the creation of bugs and fleas, to say nothing of diphtheria and yellow fever "microbes," among others. What a pity that the Lord never holds a News Conference!

★

We note that the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead is retiring from the City Temple where he has had such a distinguished career. Nobody would perhaps claim him as an outstanding theologian, and the astonishing poor show he made when he was tempted into a discussion with Mrs. Knight on TV will never be forgotten by those who saw and heard it. Mr. Weatherhead was asked why we should hate our parents as taught by the all-loving Jesus, and was so flabbergasted that he was unable to reply. In this, of course, he is exactly like other eminent Churchmen and Nonconformists who also get hot and bothered when asked to elucidate some of the beautiful teachings of "our Lord."

★

In view of all this we can well understand why the Archdeacon of Middlesex, the venerable A. J. Morcam, admonished two new bishops, lately "consecrated" in Canterbury Cathedral, in the following words: "Beware of the world that may be downright hostile to the Church. A bishop's most careless utterance, his most casual aside, may be seized upon, twisted and perverted by the enemies of the Church." A plain and unequivocal utterance whether by a bishop or a layman is extremely difficult to "twist." But to try and explain some of the holy "teachings" of "our Lord," in spite of the thousands of books written to explain them, is hopeless. Like a nose of wax, you can manipulate them into anything and, very often, quite meaningless nonsense.

★

A delightful picture of Buddhists "grovelling" is given by *The Observer* (Oct. 4) to illustrate a long and informing article on "Ceylon in Evolution." In Ceylon, there are six million Sinhalese who are Buddhists, and one million Tamils who are Hindus, and they are now "bitterly divided against one another," incidentally quite like Christians. In any case, it looks as if the people in Ceylon do not like Christians, for "how can one explain the planned expulsion of nursing nuns from hospitals overcrowded with patients and grievously understaffed?" Whatever may be the cause, religion, as such, does not seem to have helped Ceylon in any way whatever.

★

The discovery of "some new sayings of Jesus" is always considered a world-shattering event. That there is no proof whatever that there are any genuine sayings of Jesus at all, or that the "Gospel according to St. Thomas" in which we are told they are found, has any claim to "authenticity," never worries any Christian. So long as "authorities" tell us that they are "new sayings" is good enough particularly for Fleet Street journalists. For example, after telling us that "now the world can read them,"

Mr. Felix Barker in the *London Evening News* calmly adds that "their authenticity — that they really are the actual words spoken by Jesus — has, of course, to be taken with reservation. There can be no proof."

★

But a gentleman called Professor Quispel is quite sure that they are as "authentic as those in the New Testament" (which doesn't say much for them anyway) and that settles it. They must be "authentic." There is no evidence whatever that anybody named "St. Thomas" ever lived. If he did, he was called "Didymus," a "twin," and the other twin was — it is really rather funny — Jesus himself! Perhaps one day we shall discover Jesus as one of "triplets" — thus proving the Trinity beyond all possible doubt. There appears no limit to Christian imbecility.

PUBLIC OPINION POLL

DURING THE SUMMER a few members of the Slough Humanist Group carried out a Public Opinion Poll on one of the new Council Estates in Slough. About 300 people were called on and 265 agreed to answer our questions.

Question No. 1 was: "The B.B.C. sound radio and both television services devote a great deal of time to religious programmes. Do you think the time allowed is too much, not enough or just right?"

14 people said "Too much"; 25 people said "not enough"; 186 people said "Just right"; 40 people said "Don't know."

Question No. 2 was: "The Humanist movement contains a great many intelligent and decent people who not only reject Christianity as untrue but consider it to be an unsound basis for good behaviour. Do you think their spokesmen should be allowed to present their case on the air?"

224 people said "Yes"; 30 people said "No"; 11 people said "Don't know."

Question No. 3 was: "Do you think morals should be taught in schools?"

232 people said "Yes"; 26 people said "No"; 5 people said "Don't know"; 2 people refused to answer.

Question No. 4 was addressed to those who answered "Yes" to the previous question. It was: "Do you think they should be taught there by the church?"

106 people said "Yes"; 108 people said "No"; 18 people said "Don't know."

Question No. 5 was: "The Slough Humanist Group advocates morals without religion. Have you heard of this organisation?"

35 people said "Yes"; 228 people said "No"; 2 refused to answer.

Question No. 6 was: "Do you think they (The Humanist Group) are doing a good or bad job?"

14 people said "A good job"; 3 people said "A bad job"; 20 people did not know.

In Question No. 7 those who had answered the previous question were asked to give their reasons. Those who were in favour of us varied from "Agree with your views" to "Support any movement which provokes discussion." Those who disapproved said respectively "Got to believe in something," "I am a Christian" and "You are a lot of cranks."

Question No. 8 was: "Were you married in church and if so, why?"

176 were married in church; 73 were married in Register office; 11 were single; 5 refused to answer.

Of those who were married in church: 90 said it was because of their religion and 86 said it was due to social and conventional reasons such as "To please wife's parents" or "The wife wanted a white wedding."

Question No. 9 was: "Do you think school scripture lessons are a waste of time or a good thing?"

20 people said "A waste of time"; 213 people said "A good thing"; 19 people gave qualified answers; 13 people said "Don't know."

Question No. 10 was: "Would you have any objection to your children being told about Humanism at school?"

213 people said they would have no objection; 25 people said they would object; 27 people said "Don't know."

Question No. 11 was: "Would you like to know more about Humanism?"

130 people said "Yes"; 109 people said "No"; 26 people said "Don't know."

JIM RADFORD,
Hon. Secretary, Slough Humanist Group.

THE FREETHINKER

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours. Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN and MURRAY.
- 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.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (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.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute) Lectures every Sunday, 7 p.m.
- Central London Branch N.S.S. ("The City of Hereford" Blandford Place, Blandford Street, W.1.) Sunday, October 18th, 7.15 p.m. I. FINLAY, "Policy for the West."
- Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, October 20th, 7.15 p.m.: J. HUTTON HYND, "John Dewey on Religion".
- Dagenham Branch N.S.S. (214 Fitzstephen Road, Dagenham) Friday, October 16th, 7.30 p.m.: THE REV. T. POWNALL, M.A. Introducing the Case for Christianity.
- Glasgow R.P.A. (Central Halls, Bath Street.) Sunday, October 18th, 3 p.m.: Debate; "Does Man Survive Death?" For, D. R. SMITH (Glasgow Psychic College). Against, J. P. MORRISON (R.P.A.)
- Leicester Secular Society (75 Hurnberstone Gate.) Sunday, October 18th, 6.30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Fairies, Spooks and Flying Saucers".
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street) Sunday, October 18th, 2.30 p.m.: E. A. GOWER, "The Illusion of Thought".
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, October 18th, 11 a.m.: JOHN LEWIS, Ph.D.: "Henri Bergson: His Philosophy re-considered".
- West Ham and District Branch N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre).—Thursday, October 22nd, 8 p.m.; F. A. RIDLEY, "Jesus Christ, God, Man, or Myth."

Notes and News

CARDINAL SPELLMAN OF NEW YORK, the Roman Church's wealthiest Archbishopric, made his own unique contribution to world peace on Monday, September 21st, during Mr. Krushchev's visit to the United States. "The American people have gazed on the face of the enemy too long," said the Cardinal, "and now they are deaf to all save the husky voice of the Sorcerer, as he glibly talks of peaceful co-existence and competition in consumer goods" (*Daily Express*, 22/9/59). Not for Spellman, glib talk of "peaceful co-existence"! He hoped that "duty, leadership and discipline shall once again bring us victory despite the narcotic so skilfully administered that we do not realise that liaison with the assassin can end only in the end of the victim." The Cardinal, it must be said, was speaking at the dedica-

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged £284 10s. 2d.; M. McCalpin, 2s. 6d. W.H.D., 10s.; Wm. Mawhinney, 4s.; W. J. Bennett, £1 5s.; Miss A. Muspratt, £4 2s. 6d.; H. Etherington, £1 7s. 9d.; Mrs. B. Allbon, 2s. 6d. Total to date, October 9th, 1959: £292 4s. 5d.

tion of a new Roman Catholic Chapel at West Point, America's foremost military academy. But did we call his contribution "unique"? Excuse us; Cardinal Cushing of Boston and Bishop John Wright of Pittsburgh also attacked the Russian leader. And they, so far as we know, were not speaking at West Point.

TWO DAYS LATER (*Daily Express*, 24/9/59) came the news that the Democrats of New Hampshire had "declared unanimously" for Senator John F. Kennedy, Roman Catholic candidate, for the U.S. Presidency.

FROM THE U.S.S.R. came a rebuke for the "Red Dean," Dr. Hewlett Johnson. Dr. I. Krivilov, described by the *Evening News* (3/10/59) as "one of Russia's leading philosophers," in an article in *Kommunist*, criticises Dr. Johnson "for neglecting the fact that 'science and religious thought are incompatible'." We agree with Dr. Krivilov here, of course, though we beg leave to doubt that Marxist-Leninism is completely synonymous with science, as he presumably believes.

ALL THE SAME, we were amused by an item in *The Faith* (Malta) for October, 1959. "It has always been the gibe of Communism that religion offers only 'pie in the sky,'" it read, "but does it give people anything instead? It is easy to promise happiness on earth, more difficult to fulfil that promise." True, indeed, but what about eternal bliss, which *The Faith* continuously promises?

THE SAME COPY OF *The Faith* had a column report of the speech by Archbishop O'Gara (a misprint, we assume, for "O'Hara") to the Catholic Universities of America beginning "Communism is an evil that menaces us from without; Secularism is a cancer eating at the very vitals of our national life. The corrosive influence of Secularism has already made tremendous inroads into every phase of our national existence." It was, said the Archbishop, being preached in the churches, taught in the universities and "its evil influence has reached even into the guarded precincts of our Catholic institutions of higher learning." The picture was uniformly black: "Every organ of communication — the stage, television, radio, moving pictures, the Press — all carry their message of raw materialism." As for "spiritual values," they were non-existent. This, mind you, in a country where 63 per cent. of the population go regularly to church.

WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED the syllabus of October-December meetings of the Central London Branch of the National Secular Society. The "Centralon Forum," as it is styled, will meet each Sunday at 7.15 p.m. at the "City of Hereford," Blandford Place, London, W.1. Mr. G. H. Taylor opened the session on October 4th; next week's speaker will be Mr. Ivor Finlay (see Lecture Notices). Mr. H. J. Blackham will close the three-monthly session on December 20th, and a New Year Social will be held the following week.

NEXT WEEK
DARWIN'S YEAR
 By H. CUTNER

The "Index"

By COLIN McCALL

THE VATICAN recently announced (THE FREETHINKER, 28/8/59) that Pope John XXIII is considering a revision of the Roman Catholic *Index of Forbidden Books*. And it occurs to me that this interesting little volume is not so well known as it might be. Not that I regard it as in any way sinister any longer; once, of course, it was; now it is a curio, about which many stories can be told, but in itself practically worthless. To what use could it be put, anyway? In Italy, as Mr. Bernard Wall has said, "the literary intelligentsia is anti-clerical almost to a man, and priests, peasants and members of the clerical bourgeoisie either do not read at all or do not read 'profane' books." The same would be largely true of Belgium, France and Mexico. In England, so far as I know, the *Index* has never been enforced, while Ireland has its own censorship, which is far more systematic than the Roman.

The unsystematic nature of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* is obvious at a glance, and continues today. Among living writers is the Italian novelist, Alberto Moravia, all his works having been added in 1952, presumably for "indecentcy." But, if Moravia, why not Gabriel Chevallier, whose *Clochemerle* and *Sainte Colline*, for example, deal equally frankly with sex, and with specific reference to the Catholic religion. Again, Draper's *Conflict* is on, but not White's *Warfare*. Agreed, the former is more open in its condemnation of the Church, but the effect of the latter is quite as damning. Bruno, one expects, but Copernicus is missing, having been removed in the last century. Guicciardini is here, but not Machiavelli. Under "Darwin," we have Erasmus, but not Charles.

And there is an enormous amount of dead matter in the 500-odd pages: one could veritably say dead *letters*, because there are 79 *Lettere*, *Letters* and *Lettres* on or to this, that and the other. Conyers Middleton's *Letter from Rome shewing an exact conformity between Popery and Paganism, or the Religion of the present Romans derived from that of their Heathen Ancestors*, is legitimate, one would think, and it fittingly heads the list. It was probably reasonable, in 1912, to add *Letters to His Holiness Pope Pius X*, by "a Modernist," but I fancy one or two of the older ones might have been removed at the same time. The two separate Letters from a French barrister to one of his friends, written in April and June 1664 (both added in 1695) for instance. And perhaps one of our French readers will tell me whether Jean-Baptiste Langlois's three *Lettres* and one *Memoire* have any significance, 250 years after they were condemned.

For that matter, does anybody read Andrew Lang's *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, which was included as late as 1896? Perhaps they do, unknown to me, but I'm sure James I's *Basilikon Doron* is a rarity. Still, it's encouraging to know that an English monarch is on the *Index*, even if it is for defending the divine right of kings. I don't think many will seek out Addison's *Notes on Italy* or Goldsmith's *Abridged History of England*, but Browne's *Religio Medici* probably still decorates a lot of bookshelves, and may be taken down occasionally. Can the same be said of Gideon Harvey's *The Art of Curing Diseases by Expectation* (on from 1701) or Ralph Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe, Wherein the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is Confuted* (from 1739)?

Calvin, of course, is a "must," and Casanova makes an admirable companion. The Book of Common Prayer is not unexpected; it was added in 1714. Twenty years later,

Instructions and Prayers for Children with a Catechism for Young Children must have been important enough to go down, and the year afterwards, William Sherlock's *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions* joined it. They would hardly be missed now. Nor would, surely, 90 per cent. of those in other languages.

But what of the remainder? English novelists are not well represented, but Richardson's *Pamela* and Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* are here. France, however, can boast Balzac, Dumas, father and son, Flaubert (*Madame Bovary* and *Salamambo*), Anatole France (complete works) Victor Hugo (*Notre Dame de Paris*, *Les Misérables* has recently been allowed in an annotated version so, presumably, needs deleting), George Sand and Stendhal (both of whose *Omnes fabulae amatoriae* are on — literally "all amatory fables," taken to mean all novels) and Zola (complete works) — an impressive list. Another Frenchman, Taine, is condemned for his *History of English Literature*. Philosophically, though, I feel we hold our own, with Bacon, Berkeley, Bentham, Hobbes, Hume, Locke and Mill, against Bayle, D'Alembert, Descartes, D'Holbach, Diderot, Helvetius, La Mettrie, Sartre and Voltaire. (The Encyclopedists certainly got what they deserved, you will notice. The Holy Office made no mistake here!) The Italian, Benedetto Croce, was probably the last philosopher to be added before Sartre (whose complete works are banned by the way) joining, apart from the above, Kant and Spinoza. Poets, a little surprisingly, are not prominent (perhaps the Holy Office doesn't read much poetry or doesn't think Catholics do) but Italy has D'Annunzio and Leopardi; Germany, Heine; and Marvell and Milton find their way in, though not on poetic grounds.

Among historians, of course, Gibbon could stand alone against all comers if need be, but, apart from Goldsmith's *Abridged History* mentioned earlier, he has the support of Henry Hallam and Hume, whose complete works are down. France has Michelet; Germany, Ranke; and U.S.A., Draper.

Who else of moment? Well, miscellaneously, there are Boyle, Danton, Lessing, Maeterlinck, Mandeville, Pascal, Proudhon, Sainte-Beuve, Saint-Simon, Savonarola, Steele (*An Account of the State of the Roman Catholic Religion*), Swedenborg, Talleyrand, Woolston and Volney. There is the *Life of Jesus Christ* trio, Loisy, Renan and Strauss, though the first two have many other works on the list, and there is an intriguingly titled French work *Les mystères satanique de Lourdes à travers les âges* (*The Satanic mysteries of Lourdes through the ages*) by Léopold Goursat, that I must look out for. And French Freethinking critics are conspicuous: Alfarc, Bayet, Couchoud, Coulange and Turmel will be known to many FREETHINKER readers. Their presence is an indication of their great scholarship, and their undermining of Christian claims and unravelling of Christian origins. Anthony Collins, too, gets in on merit, with his *Discourse of Freethinking*.

The same may not be said for all the names here. Indeed, the bulk of them are forgotten and, probably forgettable. Some might contain buried treasures they will reveal to assiduous students in the future. All have their tale to tell, great or small, momentous or trivial. All, at least, have been considered at one time, a menace to Holy Mother Church and the faith of her devotees. And that is something to be proud of! So, despite its surprises and its omissions, the *Index* is a book worth having and knowing.

Fiction for Freethinkers

By E. COXON

AS F. A. RIDLEY REMARKED TRULY (THE FREETHINKER, 7/8/59) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a good hand at historical fiction. His *Rodney Stone*, a fine story dealing with the Regency Period in England, is rated highly. I also agree that *Micah Clarke* is very good. Conan Doyle hadn't much to learn, concerning the religious fervours and differences of Christianity, in the ill-starred Duke of Monmouth's time, as at the present day. Equally his short stories of Brigadier Gerard, a commander of a cavalry brigade in Napoleon's army, are vividly exciting and do, as history, convey to the reader a great deal of authentic historical fact. I had an argument with a history student concerning a fact Doyle comments on in his "Brigadier" stories, and consulting the Memoirs of M. de Bourruine, a secretary of the French Emperor, I discovered Doyle was apparently quite correct! His *Uncle Bernac* is another historical tale of the Napoleonic period, but his collected short stories are very numerous, and treat of Pirates, Pugilists, the Roman Empire, and land adventures, of different kinds, vividly and entertainingly. Then there was his *Lost World*, a story of finding prehistoric beasts in the depths of South America, inhabiting a lost plateau. A great tale, this — to those curious to see brought to life something of those strange and forgotten eras science can tell us of in this planet's earlier days of life — and Doyle remarks, it is well for man he wasn't alive and a species in this nightmare world!

Ridley also speaks truly of Sir H. Rider Haggard. What a fine novelist he was, too! *Montezuma's Daughter*, a story of the last years of the Aztec Empire is quite true historically. The Aztecs were the dominating Indian people over a number of large tribes (really nations) and occupied a great capital city situated and built upon the then great lake of Mexico — Tenochtitlan in the Indian — now called Mexico City. The Aztecs followed the Toltecs and were noted for great cruelties, particularly religious cruelties — human sacrifice in the great Tzacalli, or truncated pyramidal temples — was a daily event. Sacrifices at different festivals ran into the thousands! The Aztecs were highly cultured in many ways — and had a man-god who was selected and revered for a whole year, and then sacrificed and presumed to enter into eternal life. There was a rite of baptism kept and also, if the writer is correct, this people had a story of a "Noah" and a great deluge story. Also a type of Eve, who plucks not an apple, but a rose!

How much of Aztec culture came from the Mayas through the later Toltecs isn't clear. The Aztecs were held by historians to have invaded Mexico — which the Indians called "Anahuac" — from the north — and gradually conquered all the surrounding tribes, or nations. Only a few remained unsubdued — notably the fierce tribesmen of Tlascalala — a hill-state — and it was these Indians (the Tlascalalans) who, after conquering them, the Spanish conqueror of Anahuac and the Aztecs, Hernandez Cortes, used as allies. The Aztecs, because of their greed and cruelties, were disliked by many of the conquered Indian nations. "Divide and Rule" proved, in the hands of an intrepid man of war like Cortes, a singularly effective policy to outmatch, outwit, and finally subdue an enemy who outnumbered all he could muster to his banner 10,000 — 1. But also superstition played a part in the defeat of Anahuac at the hands of the Conquistadores. Montezuma II was convinced the invaders were the returning Quetzalcoatl and followers, a "white god" who had visited the Indians in earlier remote times, promising he would return

to rule! Because of this superstition, Cortes and his 600-odd whites, four small cannon, and about 5,000 allied Indians, were permitted to advance into the very heart of the capital itself. Haggard's story thrillingly depicts the strangeness of this magnificent Indian Empire to white eyes — and he tells us truly of the treachery that was committed by the Castilians—"all's fair in war" is exemplified. Nevertheless, Cortes was a great man. He easily dwarfs any other historical figure for the immensity of his achievement in two short years, against seemingly insuperable odds.

For vivid and enthralling historical reasons, as well as cleverly depicted human interest, Doyle and Haggard can afford much to read for the present day to anyone.

Ridley isn't a bad historian himself, and all he says in his letter about Doyle and Haggard, I can endorse with gusto, adding these details. *King Solomon's Mines* (Haggard) is another real thriller.

Theatre

"THE GINGER MAN"

The Ginger Man, by J. P. Donleavy (Fortune Theatre, London) has outward similarities with *Look Back in Anger*, but the title character, well played though he is by Richard Harris, never evokes the sympathy than John Osborne's does. The Ginger Man is, in fact, repellent — to me, at any rate — and the play therefore lacks balance. It may be said that he is a caricature. I sincerely hope he is, but the other male in the cast of four expresses my own feelings when he asks, "What the hell's the matter with you?" Ronald Fraser, in this second role, engaged my sympathy and my attention much more, though he, too, is outrageous. At least he has reasons, of a sort.

There is no strong story: the wife (Wendy Craig) understandably fed up with her no-good "student" husband, takes their baby and leaves him and his hovel; he joins her in her new house; she leaves him again; he makes love to the new lady lodger (Isabel Dean), who fears she will be damned for this mortal sin, because she daren't confess it. The Ginger Man's almost-saving grace is wit. "Hell is the worst thing that can happen," he tells her, "and I'll bring my fire-extinguisher." As long as he has a drink in the house, he is "ready for the priest." Work, he regards as "a very necessary characteristic — for most people." Mr. Fraser also has his good lines: "The Irish think kids are the wrath of God brought down on their heads for sex." But good lines are no substitute for a good play.

C. McC.

CITY LUNCHTIME MEETINGS

The National Secular Society has just concluded a very successful series of lunchtime meetings at Finsbury Square, London. Fourteen meetings were held and hundreds of people heard the Freethought case for the first time. Highest praise is due to the speakers: the manner in which they spoke and answered questions was most impressive.

Audiences ranged from 50 to 100, which is very gratifying in view of the fact that the hot gossellers seldom attract more than 20 hearers, while the Catholic Evidence Guild has given up the struggle and no longer holds meetings on the site. There was a determined attempt to break up the first two meetings by a group of hysterical Pentecostal fundamentalists. However, despite the efforts of these bigots, audiences listened intently and also bought a fair amount of literature.

Our warmest thanks to the speakers, Len Ebury, Colin McCall and David Tribe. Thanks also to Mrs. Ebury who sold most of THE FREETHINKERS and pamphlets.

W. McI.

CONGRATULATIONS

NEXT TUESDAY, October 20th, Arthur W. Davis of West Wickham, Kent, will celebrate his ninetieth birthday in the company of his wife, his widowed daughter and three grandsons. We take particular pleasure in wishing Mr. Davis a very happy birthday, knowing that THE FREETHINKER is sure to be near at hand, as it has been for seventy-three years. Yes, Mr. Davis started reading our paper as long ago as 1886, and he still reads it today. We trust he will continue to do so and we hope he will enjoy relief from his present slight infirmity in the years ahead.

* * *

THE BOGEY-MAN AND THE BARK OF PETER

(After the 19th Century Portuguese writer, Guerra Junqueiro)

At dead of night the children fear the bogey-man, who is waiting behind the door to carry them off. But you religionists shouldn't laugh at the children, for you too fear a bogey-man, who roars thunder from his mouth and blesses the bloody hands of tyrants; a bogey-man who is, as the priests tell you, waiting behind the door to eternity, to pounce on you.

*

In the bark of St. Peter there are so many chests of gold, scapulars, images, wines, choirboys, standard-bearers, rosaries, galleys, barrels of miraculous water, that the vessel is overloaded, and the wind of unbelief is so vigorous, the sea so turbulent, that it is heading for the port of Vigo, where it will sleep for ever alongside the galley ships. N.F.

[Note: At the time there were several original galley ships lying in the port of Vigo.]

CORRESPONDENCE

"MISS NEW MEXICO"

Re THE FREETHINKER (28/8/59) Miss Sue Ingersoll's father is a former Catholic; she has recently married a pre-law student in a civil ceremony in Mexico. Could she possibly have been taking the Archbishop for a ride?

SONJA BIERSTED (U.S.A.)

[Possibly. We had previously mentioned (14/8/59) that Miss Ingersoll's father had left the Church. Archbishop Byrne's threat was therefore directed mainly against her mother. But, whatever Miss Ingersoll's motives may have been, the Archbishop's are clear and contemptible.—Ed.]

THE "LOST GOSPEL"

The London *Evening News* (29/9/59) reported a document called "the Gospel of Thomas." From the quotations given I am inclined to regard this new "gospel" as the production of a Jewish Christian who was familiar with the extant Rabbinical lore of his period. The oracular tone, the dark hints concerning the marvels and mysteries that are awaiting revelation to those fitted to receive and understand them, the ever-present atmosphere of things too "awesome," in truth, for profanation by the vulgar gaze; all this sort of thing is the very substance of Rabbinical writings throughout the years. In short, I think we can safely aver that whoever wrote "Thomas" wrote another one of those historical romances around the enigmatic figure of "Jesus of Nazareth." He had probably read dozens of "gospels," including the famous four, and as none of them suited his purpose, decided to write one himself!

S. W. BROOKS.

INTELLECTUAL GULLIBILITY

It is extraordinary how easily educated people can dupe themselves. First, they assume that the Cosmos is a dark mystery; this is followed by an assumption that the "ultimate" is solvable; but the *pièce de résistance* comes when two postulates are made, one called "god," and the other, "soul." These were the inventions of our uneducated ancestors, who imagined they would account for much of the unknown phenomena around them. In assuming that these ancestors, who must have been scared to a degree difficult for us to realise, had special access to unprovable knowledge that we have not, is foolish. Far better accept the astrologers or fortune-tellers as tutors; they have at least some physical, even though stupid, grounds for their speculations. The

only apparent knowledge of god and soul is unsupported suggestion.

I am curious to know how it is possible for highly cultured people to be so easily deceived.

P. TURNER.

ADVICE WANTED

While in hospital recently, I was given a tract by the visiting priest. It stated that Catholics were permitted to believe in the evolution of man's body from a monkey ancestor. I respectfully inquired what became of original sin, urgency of infant baptism, and the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. The priest could not answer, but approached the Parish Priest who, despite a lengthy correspondence, never came to grips with the problem. I then wrote to the Catholic Enquiry Bureau, enclosing a stamped envelope, but I received no reply. Can anyone suggest what I should do?

J. R. DUNCANSON.

FROM SOUTH AFRICA

There are numerous religious sects in South Africa and, at the outset of the Government- and Durban Municipal-built native better-housing village, Qua Mushu, there were applications for sites to erect places of worship from about 30 different religious sects. I wonder what opinion a thinking Bantu (native) has of these contestants for his soul.

Roman Catholicism is very strong and increasing in Durban, but the Dutch Reformed Church is, of course, favoured by the National Government and God-inspired Prime Minister. Hope, as I see it, for both Africa and the world, lies in the spread of Freethought and Secularism, and I wish you every success.

W. T. H. (Durban).

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