

The Freethinker

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INTRODUCTION by MARGARET KNIGHT

THE LATE ASHLEY SAMPSON was a High Church Anglican layman, and was well known in academic Christian circles. He was a friend, and to a large extent a disciple, of C. S. Lewis, and was the author of a book on Martin Luther, a pamphlet *The Psychologist turns to God*, and a number of articles on Christian apologetics. I had known him slightly since childhood, but had seen little of him for many years, until in August 1946 we met at a friend's house, and got involved in a lively religious argument, which we afterwards continued by letter.

The correspondence went on for months, and we must have written, between us, enough words to fill a book. But at the beginning, unfortunately, I did not realise what we had embarked on, and it was not until four or five letters had passed that it occurred to me to preserve all Ashley's letters, and to keep copies of my own. So only the last two-thirds, or thereabouts, of the correspondence survives.

The argument of the earlier letters developed roughly as follows. Ashley began by using the "good implies God" argument, to which I replied that if good implies God, then evil implies a devil. To my surprise, he accepted this conclusion unhesitatingly. Belief in a personal devil, he said, had been the orthodox teaching of the Church for two thousand years, and though a few liberal theologians had tried to water the doctrine down, modern apologists like de Rougemont and C. S. Lewis had thoroughly reinstated it.

Ashley himself, incidentally, regarded the devil, quite literally, as a fallen angel; and he described him in terms (such as "that recalcitrant Prince of Darkness") which suggested that his attitude towards him was not untinged with respect.

I replied enthusiastically that now we were getting somewhere; that the idea of the Universe as a battlefield between God and the devil, with the odds on God, involved no logical contradiction, but that it did, of course, imply the abandonment of the view that God was omnipotent. But Ashley fought this conclusion with vigour. Divine omnipotence, he said, was perfectly consistent with the devil's having free will; and the devil's misuse of free will was responsible for physical evil, just as man's misuse of free will was responsible for moral evil. It was at this stage of the argument that I began to keep the letters.

Two other topics had been raised in the missing part of the correspondence, and I was still pursuing them in the letter published herewith. They were:

(i) The argument from religious experience. Ashley argued that people (like myself?) who were incapable of religious experience, should be willing to accept the statements of those who were not thus handicapped, just as we accept the statements of those who have been to the Himalayas, though we have not been there ourselves. We subsequently referred to this as the "Himalayas parallel".

(ii) An argument about wishful thinking. Ashley's position here can best be summarised by a quotation from his pamphlet *The Psychologist turns to God*. "It is indeed curious that this universal search for God should be supposed by certain schools of psychology to imply that he does not exist. . . Nobody in their senses would suggest that [a physical or mental craving] presupposed the non-

existence of that for which it craves; but unhappily, this is supposed by certain eminent psychologists to be the case as far as religious experience is concerned. As has been well said, the fact that I have a liking for mince-pies possibly proves the existence of mince-pies, and quite certainly does not

disprove it. That is the heart of the matter". We subsequently referred to this as the "mince-pie argument".

BUCKSBURN,

October 30, 1946.

DEAR ASHLEY,

The week-end was full of social junketings connected with the installation of a new Lord Rector of the University. However, all is quiet now, so here's to it again.

I'm afraid I can't accept your Himalayas parallel. In the first place I doubt very much whether you have any special *kind* of experience that is not shared by unbelievers. Mystical experiences are common to people of all creeds, or of none (I have had them myself), and we all interpret them in accordance with our own preconceptions. However, I mustn't start another hare—we have enough up already. Even if you *have* some unique kind of experience, if it leads you to make statements that are on other grounds wildly improbable, I shall simply conclude that the experience has misled you. If you come back from the Himalayas and tell me of

The Anthropophagi, whose heads

Do grow beneath their shoulders

I shan't need to go to the Himalayas myself to be quite sure your observation was at fault. As MacTaggart says in *Some Dogmas of Religion*, "the Christian is not merely asking me to believe that there are tulips in the garden when it is dark and I can't see them; he is asking me to believe that the tulips I *can* see are really hydrangeas.

You repeat that Christianity "works". But this is the same old confusion again—between *fitting the facts* and *satisfying the emotions*. What can you possibly mean when you say Christianity "works", except that it satisfies you emotionally? You can't claim that it "works" in the sense that a hypothesis "works"—i.e. in the sense that it explains many facts and conflicts with none—for you yourself admit that it creates "agonising" intellectual problems.

Now for the mince-pie argument. I think we had better retrace this from the beginning:

ASHLEY: There is no physical or mental craving that is not met by some reality in practice.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Margaret Knight-Ashley Sampson Letters

MARGARET: But we all have lots of emotional cravings that are never satisfied.

ASHLEY: I don't mean that the craving must be satisfied. I mean that its object must exist.

MARGARET: But we crave for unrealisable ideals, like permanent happiness, completely altruistic love, etc.

ASHLEY: Yes, but I don't mean things like that. They are ideals — abstractions. I'm talking about *facts*, such as the Resurrection, the Incarnation, etc.

Well, now I'm completely at sea. How can one crave for a fact (or, we'd better say, a belief) except in the sense of wishing it to be true? And you're surely not arguing that everything we can wish to be true is in fact true?

And now for King Charles's head! I think your argument can be summed up roughly as follows:

"Moral evil (i.e. sin) and physical evil (i.e. pain, disease, etc., both in men and animals) are quite compatible with the omnipotence and benevolence of God. *Moral* evil presents no difficulties; it is simply due to man's misuse of free will. *Physical* evil is more of a problem — admittedly one can't say it was man's misuse of free will that produced tapeworms and cancer cells, and inspired cats with the desire to torture mice, etc., etc. So we must assume that all these evils were the work of the Devil — who is operating at present by God's permission, but whom God could destroy at any time if he so desired. Physical evil, in short, is due to the Devil's misuse of *his* free will.

I hope I have got you right here, but I think you *are* taking this line, and not the alternative (and less plausible) one that tapeworms, etc., were created by a benevolent God for our good "if we could only see it".

I'm afraid neither part of the argument convinces me at all. The first part (about moral evil) is the more plausible, but even this breaks down. I'll allow, for the sake of argument, that man *has* freedom of choice, and that this implies the possibility of evil. But it only implies the *possibility*, not the *actuality*. A perfectly virtuous individual would have freedom of choice, but he would never in fact choose evil because he wouldn't want to — it would be "against his nature". So in a Universe of such beings there would be freedom but no sin, as is presumably the case in Heaven, and will be the case on earth after the Millenium. Why not create such a universe straight away? You may say it would be very dull, but the theological implications of that view are surely disturbing.

This really disposes of the second part of your argument too. But as I'm sure you won't accept this, I'll approach the second part from another angle. Suppose I admit (again for the sake of argument) that God's omnipotence and benevolence are consistent with the Devil's desiring evil. But why is he allowed to indulge his desires? Why does God (if he is omnipotent) allow the Devil to go around creating tapeworms and inciting cats to mouse-torture? You will say (I expect) that God can't restrain the Devil once he's granted him free will. But freedom of *choice* doesn't imply complete freedom of *action*. One must surely assume that God restrains the Devil to some extent, otherwise the Devil would be even more successful than he is.

But I am really putting this point much too mildly. Why — once it was clear that the Devil had misused his free will and was up to no good — didn't God destroy him completely? He is presumably going to destroy him in the end (or consign him to eternal torment — I am not sure which view you hold. But in either case, he'll be incapable of further harm, I imagine). Why not do it at once, instead of waiting? I understand the feeling that it is only sporting to give the Devil a run for his money, but it seems a bit hard on suffering humanity, to say nothing of the animals!

About the animals, what you *seem* to be saying is that God couldn't start to put right the chaos caused by the Fall, without tormenting animals. In this case, of course, he is clearly not omnipotent, and you have granted my point. But as I'm sure you don't mean to do this, there must be something that I have missed. But your whole tone suggests that you are having a struggle to convince yourself at this point — and, that being so, you won't expect to convince me!

Well, well — I suppose as a psychologist I ought not to expect anyone to modify an emotionally satisfying belief merely because it's intellectually untenable. But don't you think you might get just as much spiritual nourishment, and not nearly such intellectual collywobbles, from a more realistic creed? Do you really need to believe anything more than that there is a spiritual reality underlying the visible world; that our highest aspirations provide a clue to the nature of this reality; and that union or harmonious relation with it is the chief end of man? (Not that I personally think there is much ground for believing this — but it is obviously quite a possible view, and I have no quarrel with those who hold it.)

With best wishes, MARGARET.

P.S.—I have an inquiry from Rex*. He says, can we be sure that the revolt of the angels was final, or must we face the possibility that the angels who have so far remained loyal may one day go over to the Opposition?

*Mrs. Knight's husband, Professor R. Knight.

The Passing of the Hangman

ON November 15th, 1955, the President and Secretary of the National Secular Society attended at the House of Commons and heard Mr. Sydney S. Silverman, M.P. for Nelson and Colne, plead for the abolition or suspension of the death penalty. Mr. Colin McCall wrote (THE FREETHINKER, 2/12/55):

This, I felt, was the voice of humanity, transcending the gilded splendour of the Palace of Westminster. I was genuinely moved, not by oratory, but by sincerity and sensitivity of speech. Mr. Silverman had been, most fittingly, the distinguished guest at the N.S.S. Annual Dinner of 1951. He was expounding one of our objects: a reform for which the N.S.S. has continuously worked. His able and dignified plea for the abolition of "this obscene futility" made my first visit to the House of Commons a memorable one. If reason prevails and the Bill becomes law, the occasion will have been momentous.

Such it has proved to be! We have seen the last of the hangman. The House of Commons has realised that — as Mr. F. A. Ridley indicated (THE FREETHINKER, 9/12/55) — "the time has now come to take a yet further step in legal reform, to bring law into conformity with justice by declaring that that offspring of primitive superstition, the *Lex talionis*, has no place in a civilised community. The National Secular Society wishes Mr. Silverman and his colleagues every success in their present undertaking".

On November 17th, the Executive Committee of the Society sent a letter of congratulation and support to Mr. Silverman, and N.S.S. speakers have ensured that it was more than mere "paper" support. They have consistently urged the abolition of the death penalty.

Thus one of our objects has been achieved and we again congratulate Mr. Silverman and his colleagues. Most of all we congratulate the British public, which has assuredly made its presence felt, not for the first time, on the side of decency and humanity.

—NEXT WEEK—

ASTRO-NAUTICS AND RELIGION

By F. A. RIDLEY

The Vatican Claims the Moon

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN 1492 Columbus, flying the flag of "the most Catholic Queen of Castile", discovered what he thought was a new Asiatic island, but which actually turned out to be a new continent, now styled, not Columbia, as it should be, but America, after one of Columbus' fellow countrymen. The next year the Spanish born Pope Rodrigo Borgia (Alexander VI) solemnly divided the "new world" between the two leading colonising powers; Spain (or more accurately Castile), which had just discovered America; and Portugal, already *en route* for India and the Far East under the banner of the Cross. With a reckless courage only matched by their complete ruthlessness, the Spaniards proceeded to the conquest of the "new world", from which they extracted fabulous treasures in gold and silver by the systematic exploitation of the unfortunate "Indians".

At a much later date the English statesman, George Canning, boasted that he had "called in the New World to redress the balance of the Old". This famous phrase appears to have been based originally on the actual practice of the Papacy at the time of the Reformation, for, as Macaulay so forcefully demonstrated, it was in the New World that Rome discovered a new empire to compensate for her losses to the Protestant Reformers.

In Latin America the Catholic Church soon acquired an ascendancy, religious and economic, which equalled what she had previously enjoyed in Europe during the "Age of Faith".

Today the exploration of our planet is virtually concluded, apart from the polar ice and perhaps a few South American Jungles and Asiatic deserts. But, unlike the great King Alexander, whom an ancient legend depicts as weeping because he had no more worlds to conquer, the human race now looks outside its own planet. It is scarcely disputable today that mankind is on the verge of a new era, that of astronautics, of space travel. Discounting the usual legends and distortions which accompany every innovation, here represented by illusory "flying saucers" and improbable Martians, the sober fact remains that mankind is on the verge of technical facilities which will enable him to penetrate the hitherto uncharted wilderness of outer space. After all, the fact that they did not find the mythical unicorns which they expected, Columbus and Co. *did* succeed in finding America. Similarly the conquest of space is nowadays no more unlikely than was, say, the invention of the aeroplane in the days of, say, Jules Verne.

The Vatican, which profited so substantially from the discovery of the New World, no doubt hopes to "be in on" the discovery of celestial new worlds. Rome, in fact, already staking its future claim! Evidently the "infallible" Papacy thinks there is, or may be, something in astronautics. In this the Vatican, which is a worldly-wise organisation, may perhaps be wiser than some professed devotees of science, who yet depend on its future progress, which the present progress of science hardly seems to warrant. Rome recently manifested an increasing interest in space travel. Is she, in a world which increasingly tends to break away from her authority, again seeking to bring "new worlds" into her fold? Not long ago, a learned theologian pronounced that when Christ declared in John, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold", he was referring to the hypothetical dwellers in outer space. In the formal scholastic formulations reserved for official pronouncements the official paper of the Vatican, *Civiltà Cattolica*, not long ago issued an article publicly approved

by the Pope. It may perhaps be taken that this formal pronouncement marks the official opening of a new department of theology! Theology returns to the skies!

We subjoin essential extracts:

Some experts believe flying saucers are manned by space dwellers. This theory cannot be rejected *a priori*, because experimental science does not exclude with absolute certainty the possibility of human life outside the earth.

Maybe there are beings of anatomical and physiological constitution notably different from ours, capable of resisting conditions of a different environment, but always composed of a body and soul, so as to fall under the definition of human beings.

If, in more or less the near future, science should be able to ascertain the existence of human beings in the worlds outside the earth, neither dogma nor theology would find themselves in any difficulty.

If space-dwellers are human beings in our sense they certainly would not be part of the human family whose progenitor is Adam, since their origin could not be explained by the emigration of earth-men. Consequently they would not be tainted by original sin, at least not that one committed by Adam, nor would they have been redeemed by Jesus Christ who came on earth to retrieve original sin.

The inhabitants of the outer worlds, if they exist, are not subject to the destiny of Adam and his descendants.

Well, there it is, all cut and dried! Somewhere in the starry sky celestial Gardens of Eden are twinkling down! There appears, however, from the angle of the Vatican, to be one unfortunate conclusion to be drawn from the above statement. If the hypothetical space-dwellers are not subject to original sin, then Rome surely has no theological jurisdiction over them.

The moon, at any rate our nearest neighbour in space, is almost certainly uninhabited. There, we recently learned from the press, the R.C. Church has already staked its claim. It has gone into the "real estate" business and has actually bought land there on which to erect a church as soon as circumstances permit. Also, the first moon liner has already booked a seat for its R.C. chaplain! Who said the Church was an institution behind the times? In the *Daily Express* we recently read the following information. One dollar—seven shillings in English currency—per lunar acre! Such is the present price of lunar soil on the New York market today. Among the earliest purchasers we learn, is Fr. Alfred Baldwin of St. Annes' R.C. Church in Buxton. We learn he "has believed in interplanetary travel ever since he studied astronomy as a student in Rome". He is now prepared to put his belief into practice! With a providential dollar note put into his church collection he has invested it in the Interplanetary Development Corporation, Inc. of New York. In return for this modest charge, Fr. Baldwin has received "the title deeds of an acre plot, large enough for a church and a presbytery".

"They confer on Fr. Baldwin the rights to the minerals and oil deposits, the fishing (in the waterless moon! — F.A.R.) in the Sea of Nectar, and winter sports on the lunar alps".

The Reverend Father makes no disguise of his, and of his Church's, intentions, and he is going there to see that they are carried out; he has already rather optimistically booked three seats, for himself and two pupils in the first lunar liner! The first lunar landlord informs us: "Although

[Continued on next page

This Believing World

The second of the two radio discussions between two Christians and two Humanists was on the "key-word", Jesus, and the way the two Humanists, Mr. D. Routh and Mr. H. Hawton, almost fell over each other in their anxiety to assure the two Christians that they had no truck whatever with the absurd and quite out-of-date theory that "Jesus of Nazareth" was not an historical personage, brought in the thoroughly reverent attitude one gets at a Church Assembly. All the debate centred on afterwards was whether Jesus was the Messiah and whether he performed miracles. Messrs. Routh and Hawton said he wasn't and didn't, and the Revs. Robinson and Walls insisted that he was and did. All four, however, were in full agreement that something "unique" really happened at the time of Jesus, and the Church was left in almost full possession of the field. ★

Freethinkers must not complain. The great Frenchman, C. F. Dupuis, foresaw this kind of debate as far back as 160 years ago, and its utter futility. It would be safe to say that all the Christians who heard it were not in the least shaken in their belief in the truth of Christianity; and all the Humanists believed exactly what they did before the discussion took place. Nobody was a bit wiser about anything. It may be that the script was heavily censored, or it may be that the Humanist speakers had to censor themselves. But so long as "Jesus of Nazareth" is put forward as someone exceptional we must expect such inconclusiveness. ★

All Christians will tell you that marriage is a "sacrament" even when it is not always Heavenly. There is a picture of Mrs. John Wesley dragging her saintly husband round a room by the hair of his head, but it is not so well known. In the meantime, we have a delightful modern proof of the sacrament where the wife of a vicar, the Rev. H. O. Wilton, was granted a divorce on the grounds that he (vulgarily speaking) "knocked her about a bit", kicking her, twisting her arms, and slapping her face! He even dragged her along by the hair of her head. Perhaps Mr. Wilton is one of those Christians who declare that theory and practice in Christianity are two totally different things; in any case, the newspaper report of the case makes one wonder about the "sacrament" business. ★

Readers of our great national daily newspaper, *The Times*, were told all about the Christian conception of the Creation the other day. We, who are not in the know, so to speak, used to think that the Creation meant that God created the Universe and everything in it—the Sun and Moon and all the stars, also in six days by ordering it—"Let there be light" and so on. But present-day Christians appear to find a little difficulty here, for it appears from *The Times* writer that there is something else meant by "Creation", namely, "Man's attitude to the world and how God deals with him in it here and now". To bolster this up he took over seventy lines of valuable space in which incoherence and ignorance struggle for supremacy. ★

It will certainly be a new one to most people that the Creation and the Incarnation—both completely historical events—mean that "God's choice of human life in this world (is) the best medium for his self-revelation, his acceptance of it even at the points of pain, frustration and death". But one must marvel at the way these pious writers know so much about God and his way and what he means. Poor God—nobody more than he should cry, "For Christ's sake, save me from my friends!"

SPECIAL NOTICE

We regret to inform our readers that the present difficulties in the printing trade make it impossible for us to guarantee the regular appearance of THE FREETHINKER in the weeks ahead. We can only promise that we will do our utmost to produce the paper and, in the meantime, we trust that our readers will make the necessary allowances for circumstances beyond our control.

OBITUARIES

JOHN ARTHUR HAMMOND

ALAS, another link with the past has been severed! John Arthur Hammond, associate of G. W. Foote and friend of Chapman Cohen, died at Teignmouth on Tuesday, February 14th, at the advanced age of 92. A lifelong Freethinker, Mr. Hammond was one of the pioneers of the N.S.S. on Merseyside and remained an active member of the branch there for over 30 years. After his retirement to Devon 33 years ago, he joined the parent branch and was a member until his death. The President of the N.S.S., Mr. F. A. Ridley, conducted a secular service at Torquay Crematorium on Saturday, February 18th, paying tribute to Mr. Hammond's work for the movement. Readers will join us in expressing our sympathy to the deceased's widow and relatives.

JOHN SAMUEL BARWELL

WE record with deep regret the death on February 7th of John Samuel Barwell. His sudden death at the age of 55, when in robust health, was due to an accidental leakage in his gas-heater, which has provoked much comment in the Press and has led to a demand for more stringent regulations. A New Zealander by birth, and a former schoolmaster in Chatham Island, N.Z., Mr. Barwell was in the Army Educational Department during the war. He contributed to various English periodicals and lectured in philosophy for the L.C.C. He was a regular reader of THE FREETHINKER and occasionally reviewed books on philosophical questions in these columns (e.g. *Six Existential Thinkers* by H. J. Blackham). We convey our sincere regrets to Mr. Barwell's family in New Zealand. F.A.R.

THE VATICAN CLAIMS THE MOON

—concluded from page 59

a landing on the moon may not be made in my lifetime. I have at least made certain that a church will be one of the first considerations when this happens. Whenever explorers have reached a virgin land they have almost immediately offered thanksgiving to God, and I intend this to happen when the first space ship lands on the moon".

We can only hope that any lunar inhabitants, whether endowed or not with original sin, will be more fortunate than were the wretched Red Men whom the Papal explorers exterminated so ruthlessly in the terrestrial "new world". A final query to Fr. Baldwin. Since there is no atmosphere on the moon, how will God hear their prayers?

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY CENTRAL LONDON BRANCH

CHAPMAN COHEN — JOSEPH McCABE MEMORIAL MEETING

HOLBORN HALL, GRAY'S INN ROAD, WCI
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Speakers

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AVRO MANHATTAN, HECTOR HAWTON, COLIN McCALL
and J. M. ALEXANDER

Chairman - S. L. SALTER

Doors Open 7.0 p.m.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World", or to our spoken propaganda.

W. MILES.—You quote John, 21, 31: "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his Name". Wo do not see how this militates against Mr. Ridley's estimate of the Fourth Gospel.

L.W.—Fundamentalists do not—indeed, could not—read THE FREETHINKER, so articles attacking them serve no purpose in this medium. Such articles would merely make our Christian reader think we were behind the times.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 1 p.m.: Speakers — J. M. ALEXANDER and others.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and WOOD. THE FREETHINKER on sale at Marble Arch.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, February 26th, 7 p.m.: N. P. BECKETT, "The World on my Doorstep".

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—February 26th, 6.45 p.m.: F. L. AGAR, "The Fount of Inspiration".

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 28th, 7.15 p.m.: W. T. ROGERS, "Social Equality and Wage Differentials".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, February 26th, 6.30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Message of Freethought to the Modern World".

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street, City).—Sunday, February 26th, 7 p.m.: T. MOSLEY, "Was Jesus a Humanist?"

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, February 26th, 2.30 p.m.: W. L. ELLIS (N.U.M.), "A Visit to the U.S.S.R.".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, February 26th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The New Reformation".

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, February 26th, 7.15 p.m.: E. S. HILLMAN, "Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi Philosophy and Religion".

For Your Bookshelf

Bound Complete

THE FREETHINKER, 1955

Volume 75

Green Cloth, Gold Lettered. Price 25/-, including postage

Notes and News

THE ROLE played by India in world affairs is becoming increasingly important and though—like all others—her statesmen are fallible, they seem singularly able to see and to express the necessity for cultural diffusion as a prelude to international understanding. In his Presidential address to the Indian National Commission for UNESCO at New Delhi on February 6th, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Minister for Education, National Resources and Scientific Research, called for the creation of a special international fund for education, science and culture to help developed or undeveloped areas of the world to catch up with the more advanced countries. The first step towards the peaceful co-existence of different ideologies, he declared, "must be on the intellectual plane". One condition for such co-existence was respect of man for man, continued the Minister, and it was one of the tasks of UNESCO to disseminate oriental culture in the West and western culture in the East. A good deal of conflict and misunderstanding between East and West could be removed if all that was best in these areas was made known to one another on a sufficiently large scale. In this connection, Maulana Azad proposed that there should be a permanent fund for the translation and publication of works of art to which all countries might be invited to contribute. Another major project on which UNESCO might concentrate in the coming years, he suggested, was production of material for neo-literates in South-East Asia, which was one of the important needs of this region in the field of educational reconstruction. "It is surely better to accomplish one or two important projects than to attempt a dozen programmes of varying importance and leave them all unaccomplished", he said. (Details taken from *India-gram* No. 29, February 7th, 1956.)

★

It is appropriate to mention here that a large selection of periodicals from different countries is available at the Office for the use of National Secular Society members. *Indiagrams*, issued by the Information Service of India, are regularly received. So are such specifically Freethought papers as *La Raison* (France), *Der Freidenker*, *Geistesfreiheit* and *Frau und Frieden* (Germany), *De Vrijdenker* (Holland), *Freidenker* (Switzerland), *The Indian Rationalist* and *The Radical Humanist* (India), *The Rationalist* (Australia), *The New Zealand Rationalist* and, from the U.S.A.: *The Age of Reason*, *The Liberal*, *Progressive World*, *The Ripsaw*, *Secular Subjects*, *The Truth Seeker* and *Voice of Freedom*. We might also remind members that they are welcome to use the N.S.S. library for borrowing or reference.

★

NOTTINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. has followed the practice of Manchester and the recommendation of the 1955 Annual Conference in issuing a Branch bulletin to members "in order to encourage and maintain interest in activities". *The Nottingham Secularist*—as it is called—is under the editorship of the Branch Treasurer, Mr. R. Morrell, and all communications should be sent to him at 94 Loughborough Road, West Bridgeford, Nottingham. We wish success to Editor, paper and Branch, while (quoting Scripture for our own purposes after the fashion of the Devil) we say to other branches: "Go, and do thou likewise".

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READERS are again reminded that from next week the price of THE FREETHINKER will be 5d.

Religion in Australia

By G. H. TAYLOR

FIGURES FROM the 1954 Commonwealth census, compared with the 1947 figures, show that

- (1) All major religious denominations except "Catholics and Roman Catholics" have lost ground in that period. (N.B.: As R.C.s were told to answer to "Catholic" the whole category is probably predominantly R.C.)
- (2) Minor cults have increased appreciably in adherents.
- (3) There are now more non-Christians than in 1947, without doubt due to immigrants.
- (4) The number declaring themselves as of "no religion" has decreased.

These general results are of course proportional in respect of the increase in population.

In the 1954 census, 855,819 people did not answer the question as to what was their religion. Of those who answered, the changes, in percentages, are as follows:

	1947	1954
Catholics	23.5	25.4
Church of England	43.8	41.9
Methodists	12.9	12.0
Presbyterians	11.0	10.7
Baptists	1.7	1.6

The above figures account for 91.6 per cent. of those who answered the questions. The fluctuations, though *apparently* small, must, of course, be taken in conjunction with the size of the population. For instance, the Lutherans increased their 1947 figure by 74 per cent., but as they are only a minor denomination the numerical increase is here less than 50,000. The number of non-Christians, according to declaration, is now about 55,000, representing a gain of nearly 50 per cent.

23,684 people declared themselves as of no religion, nine for every ten who did so in 1947.

Figures for New South Wales alone are available to me in great detail, and are in general a reflection of the whole Commonwealth. Notable increases are shown in minor sects, particularly Greek Orthodox ("minor" so far as Australia is concerned), Hebrew, 7th Day Adventist, Lutheran and Brethren. Except the latter, these have gained from the influx of immigrants from Europe since the war. Heavy additions from Poland have increased the numbers of Catholics (and here, possibly, the term Catholic is more appropriate than Roman Catholic, as Poland has a tradition of lesser dependence—comparatively—on Papal authority).

It is worth noting that Greek Orthodox adherents use Anglican churches where they are without a building of their own.

It is now pertinent to inquire how many of these people who declare that they have a religion *actually go to church*. It is one thing to write "C. of E." on a piece of paper, on the grounds that your parents once went to church, and quite another thing to attend public worship or, for that matter, worship privately. One feels that the figures quoted give evidence of so many *paper Christians*, rather than actual believers. An exception may be made in the case of the small sects of peculiar people, who are probably *genuinely* stupid, if one may put it that way!

A Gallup poll of May 1954 covered a sample cross-section of all people in the Commonwealth, and is the best available guide as to the churchgoing habit. It showed

- (1) That one in three Australian adults claims to be a

regular churchgoer with an average of 44 attendances a year. The category of habitual churchgoers contains more women than men.

- (2) 63 per cent. of Catholics are regulars, 28 per cent. of Methodists, 22 per cent. of Presbyterians, and 19 per cent. of Anglicans. (N.B.: These are percentages of denominations, not of total churchgoers.)
- (3) The 1953 average attendances were: Catholics 41, Methodists 18, Presbyterians 14, and Anglicans 12, times in the year.
- (4) The following figures represent an excellent picture of churchgoing (for 1954): Of every 100 times churches in Australia were entered for worship, 45 people went into Catholic churches, 21 into Anglican, 10 into Methodist, seven into Presbyterian, four into Baptist, and 13 into other churches. This proves, in conjunction with the other figures, that the Anglicans are the most apathetic about church attendance. Their greater numbers are not reflected in their actual attendances. On the other hand, Catholics are kept well up to their duties, and the "queer folk" (7th Day Adventists, etc.) attend with a discipline, not from their pastors, but self-imposed.

Statistics not only give valuable current information but also facilitate prediction. It is expected with some confidence, for example, that at the next census Catholics will be the largest denomination in Canberra, the capital.

Investigations at Newcastle, in the interests of Anglicans, disclosed that more men attend church than women, a greater proportion of older people than younger, and more country folk than city folk. One imagines that this is a fair reflection of the whole of Christendom. In the same investigation 85 per cent. said they used to attend church regularly but had stopped. They excused themselves by throwing the usual polite bouquets to religion, a phenomenon commonly met with and one which should interest the psychologist.

In N.S.W. there was very little actual hostility to the churches, and this is no doubt the case over the whole Commonwealth. The Rationalist Association has a financial membership of only 200, mostly in Sydney itself, and it is a sorry fact that Freethought (in Australian terminology this is Rationalism) does not thrive in Australia as it does in New Zealand.

Recruitments to the clergy are slow, except in the case of Catholics and lesser sects, particularly the Adventists, whose fanatical supporters contributed £30 a head in 1954. The Hebrew religion flourishes, with six synagogues in the Sydney area alone, but the Methodists and Congregationalists in N.S.W. have not kept pace with the rising population.

There are also in N.S.W. small bodies of Buddhists, Sikhs, Mohammedans, Swedenborgians, Spiritualists, Jehovah's Witnesses and House of David (who grow their beards and long hair for fear of interfering with the Lord's handiwork, and live a communal life on a farm).

Those of no religion, it will have been noted, are not converting their Christian neighbours to Atheism, and are themselves declining in number (possibly because they do not reproduce so prolifically as Christians?).

The overriding feature from the figures is perhaps the decline of Anglicanism and Nonconformity through apathy, and the increasing strength of Catholicism, which, as our contributor Mr. F. A. Ridley has repeatedly stressed, ultimately means *political* strength.

On Evolution

By H. CUTNER

(Concluded from page 50)

ONCE again I must warn the reader not to be misled on the question of "Natural Selection" and "Evolution". No one at the moment knows precisely the "how" of Evolution. Darwin's own theory was "Natural Selection", which is sometimes called "the Survival of the Fittest", and it was this contribution to the theory of Evolution which put it on the map, so to speak. Darwin was not, of course, the first Evolutionist by a long way; but his own theory was "an exposition of a probable cause of Evolution", as one writer puts it, "so clear and cogent as to remove the theory from the sphere of philosophical speculation to that of practical life". The distinction between "Darwinism" and "Evolution" must always be kept in mind, for our Jesuit enemies have the happy knack of confusing them, that is, of bringing forward a genuine Evolutionist as an "anti" if he is not a "Darwinian".

As for Huxley's "trenchant remarks" — his books are full of them, and no doubt he had many things to say of scientists who make "*ex cathedra* pronouncements". Here again I must ask — so what? Do they form an impressive repudiation of Evolution? That is all that matters. Huxley, like all scientists, was always ready to listen to arguments, but no one was more deadly in his attack on such religious obscurantists as "Soapy Sam" (the happy soubriquet of Bishop Wilberforce) when that follower of Christ crossed swords with him. The Bishop never tried again.

To save himself, however, Mr. McKeown quotes Huxley stating, "I accept Darwin's hypothesis subject to the proof that physiological species may be produced by selective breeding". And then? It is not Huxley, but Mr. McKeown who pontifically adds, "This has never been done". That great authority, that marvellous investigator into natural history and biology and palaeontology and embryology and anatomy, the world-famous Mr. McKeown himself, assures us, "This has never been done"! If this is not supremely amusing, may I fly to heaven in Elijah's chariot forthwith!

That Huxley was perfectly well satisfied that Darwin had proved his case can be seen in the following extract which is taken from his *Science and Education*:

Those who wish to attain to some clear and definite solution of the great problems which Mr. Darwin was the first to set before us in later times must base themselves upon the facts which are stated in his great work, and still more, must pursue their enquiries by the methods of which he was so brilliant an exemplar throughout the whole of his life. You must have his sagacity, his untiring search after the knowledge of fact, his readiness always to give up a preconceived opinion to that which was demonstratively true, before you can hope to carry his doctrines to their ultimate issue; and whether the particular form in which he has put them before us may be such as is finally destined to survive or not is more, I venture to think, than anybody is capable at this present moment of saying. But this one thing is perfectly certain — that it is only by pursuing his methods, by that wonderful single-mindedness, devotion to truth, readiness to sacrifice to all things for the advance of definite knowledge, that we can hope to come any nearer than we are at present to the truths which he struggled to maintain.

In the face of this, Mr. McKeown has the impudence to quote Huxley — Huxley the great "populariser", if you like, but like Darwin himself, the great scientist for whom truth always came first. He himself said, "The only question which any wise man can ask himself, and which any honest man will ask himself, is whether a doctrine is true or false".

I am asked to "consult" Dewar and Finn — and I

certainly would if these old fossils could provide us with something a little more up-to-date than the completely pulverised book of Genesis which the intellectuals of the two Churches — Roman and Anglican would give a lot to give up. That Messrs. Dewar and Finn believe with Mr. McKeown and his like that a Serpent talked pure Hebrew to the "first" woman, Eve, is history, need not of course surprise us. When we get Christian sects like Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Scientists with thousands of followers, to say nothing of popular preachers like Billy Graham doing a roaring trade in "shekels" through selling the fairy stories of the Bible as "history", anything can happen. Believers like Mr. McKeown can be found in their millions all packed with Faith and all of almost no use whatever to the world. It is our scientists who have made the world fit to live in. The Dewars and Finns and Lunn (and Chestertons, for that matter) would all like to see a return to the Golden Age of the Church with its Inquisition, its tortures, its burnings at the stake, its foul prisons, its slaves, and hunger, and plagues and sanitation — in short, the Dark Ages, when the Church was all powerful and God and Jesus reigned supreme.

In Evolution, these people see its greatest enemy — the enemy which has undermined for ever the whole fantastic story of Christianity, and has put the Christian Churches among the most primitive of beliefs and taboos. That is why you get such despairing letters even in this journal from believers who feel that if only a pin prick gets home they have done their bit. That is why we get these "resurrections" of the "Jesuit exposure" of Haeckel of which "no doubt we have heard", or snippets from Evolutionists like Poulton and Huxley which "Mr. Cutner in his review has omitted to mention", because they "may weaken his case". The dear man!

Evolution is not "my" case. It is the case of practically every scientist living. I except, of course, the professors who teach science in theological or religious colleges, and I am told that there are some scientists who are not biologists or anatomists who still believe like Dewar and Finn in the Grand Old Story. But if Mr. McKeown knows any 1956 scientist (apart from the exceptions I have noted) who is now teaching biology in a great university who is an opponent of Evolution, I should like to know his name and read his books. Could he give us six names?

Naturally, we cannot produce mathematical proofs of Evolution. We cannot even give, as I have already stated, the "how" or even the "why". Man in some primitive form may have appeared on earth 100 million years ago, and it is only within the past two or three *thousand* years that we have made any progress in discovering our origins. The Bible story has been discredited for centuries by most intelligent people, and nothing has so certainly pointed the way to the "beginnings" of mankind as the theory of Evolution.

But there is one rather interesting fact which should not be forgotten. It is that not only most of the Church of England "intellectuals" — like the late Bishop Barnes — accept Evolution, but even the Church of Rome does not forbid its followers to believe it. Of course, "our souls" are given by God — but as for our bodies, well, a Roman Catholic can believe as he pleases. In other words, in spite of Dewar and Finn and Lunn, Evolution holds the field.

N.S.S. TRADE UNION COMMITTEE

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY speakers continually warn their audiences of the menace of Roman Catholic infiltration into the Trade Union movement. The combating of Catholic influence has now become so important that a special N.S.S. Trade Union Committee has been formed to concentrate on this aspect of the struggle against religion. The Committee will consist of Mr. F. A. Ridley, Mr. S. L. Salter, Mr. J. L. Shepherd, the Secretary, and one other member to be appointed. Both Mr. Salter and Mr. Shepherd are experienced Trade Unionists and their knowledge will be of great value in the difficult but vital work that the Committee has undertaken. N.S.S. members who are also members of a T.U. are asked to give all the help they can. The first requisite is as much information as possible. Please write to the Secretary, National Secular Society, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, marking the envelope "T.U. Committee", and giving details of the branch and union of which you are a member, with any additional items that are likely to be useful. And please treat the matter with urgency. Reports will appear from time to time.

C. McC.

CORRESPONDENCE

DEITY DISPOSSESSED

For those who believe, or wish to believe, in God.

This question is quite adequately dealt with in the first of the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. "God is a spirit", says the Article, "without body, parts or passions". This efficiently disposes of the Presence of God, the Eye of God, the Hand of God, the Will of God, the Love of God equally with the Wrath of God, the Justice of God; in fact of God, for there is eventually nothing left. No doubt the framers of the Article, whoever they were, did not intend thus to dispose of deity, but it is as simple as that. And that leaves us *Man*, to be his own saviour, defender and inspiration.

(Mrs.) G. MATSON.

FROM AN OLD READER

Allow me to wish you all of the best for 1956. I am a few weeks off my 70th birthday and have been a reader of your paper for nearly fifty years, and never was the need for it more pressing than it is today. I am completely in agreement with the policy of the present editorship.

Most young people, living today in an atmosphere of world tension, prefer crooning, cuddling, cricket and cinemas. We Free-thinkers must recognise this and shape our approach accordingly. We must steer a middle course between the old methods and the political fanaticisms and quaint mysticisms which appeal to many of the more serious minded.

Unless a profound change takes place in the genes of the race, Freethought will always attract only a minority. We must aspire to be the ferment in the yeast and cling to the faith that the best is still to be. Good luck!

ERIC A. McDONALD (South Africa).

EROS AND AGAPÉ

"Was Jesus a homosexual?" asks C. G. L. Du Cann, and seems to regard the description of John the Evangelist as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" as indicating an affirmative answer. If it comes to that, was Simon Peter a homosexual? (See John XXI: 15-17).

Shakespeare makes Mark Antony say of Brutus: "Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him!" Does this make Julius Caesar a homosexual? The classical Greeks, from whose speculations the culture of the Western world mainly derives, never talked loosely and vaguely and confusedly of "love". They had two separate and distinct words to describe two separate and distinct things. Sexual desire and excitement they called "Eros"; for an affinity or sympathy devoid of sexual implications they had the word "Agapé".

In the Greek text of the New Testament the word rendered into English as "love", or (in St. Paul's famous panegyric) "charity", is always "agapé". If we moderns had followed the example of the Greeks in this matter, the confusion and ambiguity now shrouding the discussion of "love" would never have arisen.

When we speak of "love" in the Hollywood-novel-popular newspaper sense of "romance" we mean "eros". When we speak of the "love" shown by a St. Francis or a Father Damien we mean "agapé". Let us follow the example set by Plato and Aristotle, and *purge our minds of indistinct and ambiguous ideas.*

S. W. BROOKS.

THIS BELIEVING WORLD

A popular argument in science versus religion is: "But, after all, God gave the scientist brains".

It does not appear to be a stroke of All-Wise genius to create the universe out of nothing, and follow this achievement up by giving scientists brains to investigate the matter and then to proclaim on T.V. that the universe must have always existed! It is surprising that no outcry from the Church has appeared since the "Modern Universe" series was completed.

Are religious bodies maintaining a guilty silence on this matter?
S. McGRATH.

AGNOSTIC OR ATHEIST?

The Agnostic does not want to be dogmatic and the Atheist does not want to compromise. Huxley, who coined the word Agnostic, said he "neither affirmed nor denied the existence of God".

Chambers' Encyclopædia in a previous edition gave three types of Atheists. 1. *The Dogmatic Atheist*, who positively denied the existence of God. 2. *The Sceptical Atheist*, who doubted very much if the human brain was capable of contemplating God; and 3. *The Critical Atheist* who, having examined the arguments for the existence of God, found them too weak on which to rest his convictions.

Surely this last category fulfils most of our requirements. If somebody affirmed the existence of pink elephants or white crowns, it is for him to prove their existence. Since we can only examine the arguments for theism, and if we feel satisfied that none of them will stand up to the test, then we are in order in denying God's existence and calling ourselves Critical Atheists.

HORACE JARVIS.

POINTS FROM LETTERS

MRS. KNIGHT has been a decided capture for your movement, which sorely needed a name to propagate. Not that we in the opposition camp are perturbed.—R. McKEOWN.

*

A PARLIAMENTARY choice of sovereign would bring up the right of several Dominion Parliaments to have a voice in the matter and the scheme would become enormously cumbersome.—G. W. CLARK.

*

HONEST examination of the Bible puts "God" where he belongs: among the fetishes. The scrappy scriptures, with their antique English, are very impressive by association and not by their truth or wisdom, and quite evidently were never meant as fact, as, for instance, the story of "creation". Who was there to see! Religion has outdone Barnum for fakery.—JIM KIRKHAM (Canada).

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