

The Freethinker

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ACCORDING to the Christian era, long accepted in, and by, Christian lands, we are nowadays living Anno Domini, "In the year of the Lord", 1956. This Christian chronology, doubtfully attributed to a Russian monk, Denis the Little, in the sixth century, is itself of highly dubious origin and even granted the existence of an historical Jesus, appears to be scarcely compatible with the extant records in the Gospels. However, the Christian chronology is not the

only chronology in existence. Nor is "The Lord" always and only Jesus Christ. In India, his reputed birth-place, and in other lands of Buddhist persuasion, such as Burma and Siam, there has recently been celebrated with pomp and rejoicing the 2,500th anniversary of the "Lord Buddha", an older

Saviour than the Christian one. According to this apparently officially accepted chronology Gotama Buddha was born in 554 B.C. Thanks to such English Buddhist writers as Sir Edwin Arnold, Fielding Hall and others, the details recorded in Buddhist circles about the Founder are fairly well known. How much, if anything, is authentic in the current saga of the Enlightened One (Buddha), who left wife, home and family to meditate and find "enlightenment" under the Bo-tree? Have we here, as in the analogous case of Jesus Christ, to deal with pure myth, with pure history, or with history heavily distorted by legend? The problem is one for Oriental experts and the present writer confesses his inability to solve it. Let us confine ourselves to the earliest Buddhist teachings, ignoring for the moment whether they were the work of a single outstanding personality or of a group of religious reformers. Here we appear to be on firmer ground, for Buddhism at least is a fact, whatever may be the ultimate verdict of the science of Comparative Religion on Buddha himself, which we are technically unqualified to solve.

The Rise of Brahmanism

The evolution of that complex social phenomenon nowadays known as Hinduism is actually fairly well known. Coming down from the northern passes, the fair-skinned Aryans actually conquered the greater part of the vast Indian sub-continent, subjugating the darker-skinned natives completely in the north, less completely in the south. Confronted with a racial problem much more complex than that which confronts their descendants — the champions of Apartheid in both Nazi Germany and Dutch South Africa — since the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India were more and not less civilised than the Aryans, the conquerors of India evolved a complete social system based on the idea of the Herrenvolk which expressed itself in the caste system. This tenacious social system, which has now lasted and dominated Indian society for perhaps 3,000 years, represents the religion of Racism, which its German imitators have unsuccessfully attempted to impose upon Europe under the so remote conditions of the present age. The Hindu word for caste is *varna* or colour, and society was, and still

is, divided into castes on the basis of their percentage, or supposed percentage, of the sacred blood of the Aryan supermen. The "outcasts" were the pure non-Aryans and we know how they were treated until recently. To repeat our Nazi analogy, the outcasts were the Indian "Jews".

The Brahman Ascendancy

Originally the Aryan invaders of India were obviously warriors and presumably in the earliest Aryan kingdoms of India the warrior caste was the ruling caste. Gradually, however, the Brahmins, the priestly caste, rose to the top, and has now long been the undisputed master of Indian society; present-day Hinduism is as entirely dominated by the Brahmins

as the medieval European society was by the Catholic priesthood. Both priestly castes pressed theology into the service of their political and social ascendancy. We know the use made of Purgatory by the Catholic Church and the enormous revenues that it derived from delivering souls from Purgatory. Long before this the Brahmins had hit on the even cleverer device of reincarnation, by which future happiness depended on submission in *this* life; whilst the masses were given a post-dated cheque on future lives as long as they behaved themselves down here, the Brahmin rulers had the good things of *this* life. And it worked — and apparently still works in contemporary India. Long before Marx the Brahmins had discovered, and had acted upon the discovery, that religion is the opium of the people.

Revolts Against Brahminism

By about 600 B.C., perhaps a thousand years after the first Aryan invasion of India, the Brahmin priests were definitely on top. But their usurpation of power, and the creation of a totalitarian society under their auspices, did not pass without challenge. Opposition movements appeared in revolt. The most thoroughgoing of these, and the most interesting from a modern rationalist standpoint, was that of the Indian materialists, of whom we would gladly know more, and who, perhaps equally with their Greek contemporaries, Thales, Democritus *et al*, may be regarded as the pioneers of materialist philosophy. These Charvakas (Indian materialists) attacked not only the priestly caste but the entire domain of the supernatural. However, like most movements too far in advance of their day, they eventually died out, and, as in the case of their Greek contemporaries, only a few fragments of their writings survive. However, more moderate movements of religious reform met with better success. Of these, by far the most influential eventually was Buddhism, the traditional origins of which also date from the sixth century B.C.

The First Positivist?

The earliest Buddhism was, if its earliest records are approximately authentic, a movement of religious reform and in particular a revolt against the spiritual and tem-

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

2500 A.D.

By F. A. RIDLEY

poral ascendancy of the Brahmin priesthood. Buddha, if the earliest tradition reports correctly, struck at the roots of Brahmin power by denying, *in toto*, the entire caste system upon which that power was based. It is, perhaps, not irrelevant in this connection to recall that tradition represents both the Founder and his earliest disciples as members of the warrior caste, the original masters of Indian society, who had been displaced by the Brahmins. Philosophically, early Buddhism appears to have been a compromise between the whole-hog materialism of the Charvakas, who seem to have been still active then, and the traditional Vedic religion. Buddha rejected the holy books (the Vedic scriptures) but he did not reject immortality, at least not altogether.

By what must appear to Western students as an illogical contradiction, Buddha, or the early Buddhists, accepted reincarnation, but at the same time rejected the concept of an individual soul (*atman*). What, then, passes on? But Buddhism retained asceticism, quietism, other-wordliness, and even a special religious class of monks. Unlike some modern Buddhist sects, early Buddhism did not regard Buddha as a god but rather as "the just man made perfect". But I do not agree with the learned editor of the *Indian Rationalist*, Mr. Ramanathan, who recently stated that Buddha was an atheist. Contrarily, if ever there was the complete agnostic in the literal sense of the word, it was Buddha. Again and again we have the insistence that

all metaphysical speculation is a waste of time and that ultimate reality was forever beyond the range of the human intellect. There are no "final truths" in the recorded sayings of Buddha. The gods, indeed, are represented as existing, but they are secondary beings, transitory like everything else, and definitely inferior to the human Buddha.

The Rise and Fall of Indian Buddhism

For the first two centuries of its existence Buddhism had only a local reputation. In his own lifetime Buddha was nothing like so well known as is Mr. Nehru. Eventually it became the state religion of India under the Buddhist "Constantine", King Asoka (third century B.C., an historical character whose monuments have been excavated). In the early centuries of the Christian Era, Buddhism declined in India and eventually Brahmanism resumed its totalitarian sway over Indian society. The decline of Buddhism was due partly to the Brahmin revival in the eighth century, but perhaps chiefly because the pacifist tenets of Buddhism, were impotent to defend India against the Muslim invaders from the north. In the recent celebrations the Republic of India has officially taken part. The next step will probably be to incorporate Buddha among the Brahmin gods. Outside India Buddhism still exists, but the Chinese revolution is probably the beginning of the end and I do not think there will be any such celebration in the Buddhist year 3500.

Translation or Imagination?

By COLIN MCCALL

IT IS WITH NO WISH to disparage the brave efforts of a priest to save the life of a wolf-cub that I refer to the case reported in the press a few weeks ago. Father Ronald Aylward, the cub-master, risked serious injury in his attempt to rescue 10-year-old Tony Murphy who was being mauled by a lion at Whipsnade Zoo, and fully deserved the praise of the coroner's court jury for his efforts.

I was surprised, nevertheless, to see a large coloured illustration in the Italian paper, *La Domenica del Corriere* (The Sunday Courier), June 17th, 1956, depicting the unfortunate incident — and depicting it very inaccurately.

It will be remembered that Tony Murphy climbed over the wire netting which provided additional protection from the animals, and then ran between the bars and the mesh. Whether or not he teased the lion by poking at it through the bars is not clear, but it struck at him with its paw and pinned him down. First, Air Vice-Marshal Graham, and then, Father Aylward, tried to free him, the latter striking the lion with an iron bar. All this, however, took place through the bars. The boy had climbed the mesh but was never actually in the lion enclosure: the bars were between him and the animal. Regrettably, they did not provide sufficient protection and the boy was fatally injured.

Due to some misunderstanding or mistranslation, the Italian version of the terrible affair differs on some minor points and one major point. That the priest is drawn too old and the wolf-cub represented as a boy scout are unimportant; that they should both be right inside the lion enclosure is a serious, though no doubt unintentional, mistake.

The lurid picture portrays a savage beast with the screaming boy pinned beneath its heavy paw, while the black-garbed priest summons all his strength to deliver a crushing blow with the iron bar. Both boy and priest are in the centre of the lion pit — sheer walls on all sides and a lioness in one corner — while frightened onlookers peer through the bars. The artist (W. Molino) has used his

imagination to some effect. But the caption supports his interpretation. "Into the lion pit to save a boy," it begins, and proceeds to describe how Tony eluded the priest in charge, climbed the rails and descended into the pit containing four lions; how Father Aylward fearlessly hurled himself into the pit after him and, by striking the wild beast on the head, managed to free the boy, whose arms, however had to be amputated.

Apart from the inaccuracies, it is deplorable that *La Domenica del Corriere* should choose to treat the affair on an adventure-story level. Tragedy has become debased into melodrama.

History Quiz

1. Which of Henry VIII's wives were Catholics?
2. When and by whom was the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) founded?
3. When was the last witch burnt in this country?
4. In which century did Bulgaria become officially Christian?
5. When and where was the Christian doctrine of the Trinity adopted? Who sponsored it?
6. Which Norman King of England was suspected of religious heresy in his day, and subsequently has been supposed to have been connected with a Black Magic fraternity, with his death ritualistic?
7. What was the ecclesiastical crime of Julian the Apostate?

(Answers on page 233)

But we, the great, the valiant and the wise,
When once the seal of death has closed our eyes,
Lost in the hollow tomb obscure and deep,
Slumber to wake no more — one long, unbroken sleep.
— MOSCITUS (c. 250 B.C.)

—NEXT WEEK—

WHO MOVED THE STONE?

by T. R. FERNANDO

REVIEW

The Concordat

By DAVID SHIPPER

The Concordat between Spain and the Holy See. 87 pages. Published by the Diplomatic Information Office, Madrid, 1953. THIS BOOK is put out as propaganda for the English-speaking world by the Spanish Government and the Vatican, and, as it says on the first page, "In the Name of the Holy Trinity". The combination of the Spanish Government, the Vatican, God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost should be sufficient guarantee of its authenticity. A perusal reassures us that Spain is still the land of Holy Freedom. For instance, Article 26:

In all educational institutions of whatever kind or grade and whether or not belonging to the State, the teaching shall conform to the principles of Dogma and Morals of the Catholic Church....

The Ordinaries may demand the banning or withdrawal of books, publications and teaching material opposed to Catholic Dogma and Morals.

In Article 29:

The State shall take care that in the institutions and services which form public opinion, and more particularly in radio and TV programmes, a proper place shall be given to the exposition and defence of religious truth....

Having removed the means to attack, they then prepare to defend themselves against a non-existent aggressor. Under Article 30, just in case God should fail to provide,

The State shall endeavour to give financial aid, as far as possible, to the training houses of religious Orders and Congregations, especially those of a missionary character.

Next, what does the Concordat do for the Spanish servicemen? As is well known, the greatest grievance of servicemen is the lack of facilities for religious worship. Article 32 therefore ensures complete happiness for Spanish soldiers thus:

The Diocesan Ordinaries, conscious of the need to ensure adequate spiritual assistance to all those serving under arms, shall consider it a part of their pastoral duty to provide the Army Vicariate with a sufficient number of zealous priests well trained to discharge their important and delicate mission worthily.

The same Article similarly provides for the religious sustenance of the inmates of hospitals, prisons and mental asylums. The return to health, the return to responsible freedom, the return to sanity — what could be more helpful than that these roads should be paved with the pious prayers of the predatory priest? O, happy, happy Spain!

In Addendum V we have some interesting tables for the student of Theological Finance. Take, for example, Table C: Ordinary Teacher of Fundamental Theology, 12,000 pesetas. Teachers of Special Dogmatic Theology, 48,000 pesetas. Of Special Morality, 24,000 pesetas. Of Fundamental Morality, 12,000 pesetas. Of Ecclesiastical History, 24,000 pesetas. Of General Introduction to Sacred Scripture, 12,000 pesetas. Of Biblical Theology, 24,000 pesetas. Spanish Theology, 12,000 pesetas. Pastoral Theology, Liturgy, Catechistic Pedagogy, 12,000 pesetas.

And so it goes on till half a million pesetas have been used up in the worthy cause. Readers will have noted some real bargains in those I have mentioned. And this money is multiplied many times by various Universities and Major and Minor Seminaries.

For these glorious benefits in the Spanish National Health (religious) Scheme, the Catholic peasants of this Welfare (religious) State are, of course, happy to exist at one of the lowest standards of living in Europe.

In Addendum VI we learn that

The auditors must be priests, Spaniards, born in lawful wedlock... of stainless repute and eminent for their prudence....

It is, of course, not always easy for the potential auditor to arrange for his having been born in lawful wedlock, but for the rest, so long as the budding saint stifles his natural desires, he should fill the bill admirably. If the wedlock snag is insuperable he should turn barrister or solicitor, in which case there are no questions asked.

Barristers and solicitors must be Catholics of excellent moral and religious conduct. Non-Catholics will not be admitted save in exceptional cases of need... (i.e. the State's need).—Art. 43.

An Article of the Concordat of 1851 is reintroduced: it requires for sacred ministers "due respect and consideration" and instructs that

nothing shall be done which may cause them offence or bring them into contempt. His Majesty and Royal Government shall likewise extend their powerful patronage and support to the Bishops whenever it is requested, chiefly when they have to oppose the malignity of such men as seek to pervert the minds of the Faithful and to corrupt their morals, or when it shall be necessary to prevent the publication, introduction or distribution of harmful books.

Now in case anyone thought these Hitlerite flunkeys in Spain won their Civil War because of aid from the Nazis and the Mussolini jackals, I must quote Addendum IX, the message of Franco, in which he says:

Persecution in religious matters caused our Crusade to be impregnated with spirituality, setting the seal of a religious restoration on the national rising. This no doubt drew down upon our side the favour and protection of God, so highly important to victory

Which means, obviously, that the help from Hitler and Mussolini was really unnecessary. The Almighty needs no props.

The Hierarchy issued a "memorable pastoral letter" which "clarified the facts" and "the real principles, reason and aims of the Crusade", and thus "reassured consciences" which for lack of proper information (i.e. Catholic) had believed the Franco rising to be merely a "questionable military pronunciamiento".

In his illuminating message His Excellency boasts of his legislative achievements, with his wholesale repeal of the "sectarian legislation of the Republic". He boasts of such things as the abolition of Civil Marriage and divorce, the restoration of the Jesuits ("the foremost chosen victim of Republican sectarianism") and the "reinstatement of Christian doctrine and morality in the whole field of culture, schools, universities, etc.". His only wish is that

men might go on in Holy Freedom believing in the true Church of God.... Tolerance towards different beliefs and religions does not imply freedom for them to engage in propaganda that might foment religious discord and disturb the sure and unanimous possession of the Truth and religious worship in our country. We cannot allow dissidents to engage in proselytism or attempt to lure Catholics away from their religious duties with gifts, when practically the whole nation wishes to preserve its Catholic unity at any price."

And what a price!

HEINE (died 1856)

HEINE'S genius almost defies analysis. He is, and must ever remain, a problem. He is multifarious, luminous, brilliant, like a diamond giving light from a hundred facets. He appears as a youthful champion tilting against the enemies of humanity; but it seems well-nigh impossible to reach the roots of the man's nature. He is a bundle of contradictions. A Jew who despised money; a convert without zeal; a model of resignation, and yet no Christian; a poet living amidst the sternest conditions of prose; a comedian whose life was a tragedy!

MIMNERMUS.

This Believing World

The "Sunday Times" religious luminary, the Rev. Dr. Sangster, is out to "evangelise" a number of provincial towns with another veritable Christian commando. These valiant warriors are going to invade the homes of reluctant churchgoers and prove that they cannot be true Christians unless they go regularly to church. As far as we can gather from the newspaper accounts of this tremendous evangelical drive, no attempt will be made to persuade *unbelievers* to go over bodily to Christ. Only Christians. Which is as well, for even the most courageous and the most pious commandos might find it a heart-breaking task to convert back anybody who has "found out" Christianity. No one living can prove Christianity to be true.

★

We knew it would come one day. The Vice-President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, recently declared that Buddha was the greatest Rationalist that ever lived — about the only outstanding "greatest ever" that can be truly filched from Jesus Christ. It has not yet been said of the Christian Deity but it will come. Jesus could never allow anybody else to be called the greatest of anything and so we shall expect Christ Jesus one day to be called the Greatest Christian Atheist that ever lived.

★

In the meantime some facts do emerge about Buddhism. They are that Buddhists everywhere appear to grovel in front of Buddha's statue, and talk about him as the Blessed One, the Holy One, and so on. Whether he ever said anything attributed to him has never been proven. Even his veritable existence is quite doubtful. And the curious thing is that in the country of his birth, India, it has never flourished — though it is contended that all that happened is that it was swallowed up by Hinduism and that therefore true Buddhism has merely had some Hindu beliefs incorporated in it. Dr. Radhakrishnan appears to think that if he calls the Blessed One a Rationalist, we shall all immediately become Buddhists. Some hope!

★

Reverting again to Virgin Births, and the possibility that a skin graft can compete with the Holy Ghost in this matter, we note that Mgr. J. Ward claims that only one Virgin Birth has taken place in history, that of Mary. All the others are "impossible", and we are sure that if any Catholic lady were to come to him and insist that she was going to have a baby with God Almighty as the Father — whether in the form of a Dove, a Holy Ghost, or the Angel Gabriel — Mgr. Ward would indignantly deny it. The Virgin Birth was a "miracle", he contends, and "there cannot be another."

★

On the other hand, the Rt. Rev. D. B. Porter of the Episcopal Church in Scotland, while believing "without question" in the Virgin Birth of Mary, does not take the view that "there was only one virgin birth". He thinks that "parthenogenesis" regularly happens, thus differing almost entirely from another fully believing Christian — name not given in the *Sunday Mail* — a Church of Scotland minister, who, admitting that the Virgin Birth of Mary is "generally believed", insists that "it is not a fundamental teaching of the Church of Scotland" and considers another Virgin Birth "extremely unlikely". How divine all this is!

★

That blessed word "Unity" has cropped up again, as it has done for nearly 2,000 years. Ever since Paul, Peter, Barnabas, and many other (supposed) Church leaders quarrelled violently over what the Church should or should

not believe, the dissensions have grown bigger and wider. The Archbishop of York holds out the hand of friendship to all Methodists "in gratitude for John Wesley" and prays "may God forgive us for all the arrogance which has spoilt our dealings with one another." No doubt that one day Christians will be compelled to join forces to meet the common enemy — Freethought. But if "Unity" means also unity with the Roman Church, "swallowing-up" would be a better word. The only unity the R.C. Church will allow is swallowing-up the other Churches.

The Rising Generation

VIII—THE DELUGE

NO STORY in the Bible is better known than the one describing Noah and the Flood. In actual fact, it is extremely well told and quite exciting — as fiction. But nearly all Jews and Christians claim that it really took place exactly as described, though very few of them attempt to prove it. In the *Bible Handbook* (not the one compiled by Foote and Ball) published by the Religious Tract Society, the author, Dr. Angus, and the latest Editor, Dr. S. G. Green, quite rightly from their point of view, say as little as they can about it. Even the name Noah does not occur in the Index, nor the word Flood. They devote *seven lines* (in a work of nearly 900 pages) to the miraculous event, admitting that there are two accounts, but triumphantly claiming that, unlike "the same event preserved in the annals of Babylon and other nations"; in the Biblical account there is an "absence of mythological details". And all that the "inspired narrative" does is to prove "God's abhorrence of sin". Drs. Angus and Green knew perfectly well that not only could they produce no evidence that the Deluge ever took place, but also that it was their duty to say as little about it as possible.

Of course, there have been floods all over the world, just as there have been fires. But the Biblical one insists that, except for the animals and birds and insects, etc., Noah took with him in the Ark and his own family of eight, every living thing on the face of the earth was destroyed. The Bible is packed with "untruths", of course, but there never has been a bigger one written anywhere than the story of Noah's Flood.

Ask the average Christian how old was Noah when he died. He will not know it if he is the average Christian: but Noah was 950 years old. He died in the year 2006 B.C., and some idea of what this means can be gathered from the fact that his great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson Abraham was then an *old man*.

The reader can rest assured that though there has been the most extensive archæological attempts to prove the Bible story, *no evidence whatever* has been produced anywhere that the Deluge is true, or that anybody called Noah, who lived for 950 years, ever existed. Like nearly all the stories in the Bible, it was pinched from pagan sources and embellished into a Hebrew myth.

TRUST IN THE LORD BUT . . .

MR. P. G. WODEHOUSE — writing in *Punch* (11/7/56) — reported that Mike Souchak, winner of the Texas Open Golf Championship with a record score for 72 holes, is a very religious man. When asked how he managed to play four such superb rounds, he revealed the secret . . . he left it all to God. "Yes, George," he told his inquiring friend, "the good Lord was with me all the way. I couldn't have done it without His help." He paused, and then added: "Of course, I was putting awful good, too." Neither his putting nor the good Lord was up to scratch in the British Open Championship. Mr. Souchak finished eighth.

THE FREETHINKER

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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.

A. F. HARRIS.—It is easy to say that every new Biblical manuscript discovered confirms all the others in "major details". The truth is that the principal MSS. contradict each other in hundreds of passages. Ask a Christian to explain the differences between the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Bezae—or find out for yourself.

J. DOWDING.—In reply to your point about an international language, Mr. Cutner writes:—"There are about 1,000 languages and dialects in Asia, to say nothing of fantastic scripts. Why don't orientals tackle their own international language? If they find ours too difficult, they need not learn it".

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON and SHEPPARD.
- Bristol (The Downs).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: D. SHIPPER (Cardiff).
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston-on-Thames).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.
- Platt Fields, 3 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and others.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Park).—Sunday, July 22nd, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY.

Notes and News

A NUMBER of people have inquired about the next step to be taken regarding the BBC. The Humanist Council—comprising representatives of the Rationalist Press Association, Ethical Union, South Place Ethical Society, English Positivist Committee, and the National Secular Society—is arranging a meeting in the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Wednesday, October 3rd, 1956, to call for greater facilities for the expression of the Humanist viewpoint on radio and television. Mrs. Margaret Knight has already consented to speak, and it is expected that other prominent persons will do so. Mr. Colin McCall (N.S.S.) is the Organising Secretary, and further details will be announced when available. It is hoped that the meeting will be followed by similar ones in other towns.

HOLIDAY time provides an opportunity for Freethinkers to make contacts. If readers visit London they will be very welcome at the office; if they are going abroad, we can often supply names and addresses of similar organisations in other countries; if they are holidaying in Britain, they might like to call on local residents with similar views to

their own. Long-standing friendships are often formed in this way, and it is good for the movement that its supporters in different places—often rather isolated—should get to know one another. We have recently been able to help several travellers—including one from South Africa—and we shall be pleased to be of service to others.

THE best opportunity to meet Continental Freethinkers, of course, will be provided by the Voltaire Celebrations at Geneva, details of which were given last week. Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner would like to know quickly who is likely to make the trip from England. They should arrange their own transport and accommodation and then let him have particulars at 23 Streathbourne Road, London, S.W.17. The meeting place in Geneva is the Voltaire Institute, on Saturday, August 18th, at 2.30 p.m.

RESOLUTION from Rationalist Publications Ltd., St. Louis, U.S.A.: *The American Rationalist* extends to THE FREETHINKER on the occasion of its 75th anniversary its congratulations and best wishes. It is our hope that THE FREETHINKER will still be going strong when the year 2031 rolls around, when our magazine—just born into the family of Freethought publications—will celebrate its 75th anniversary of service to the American Freethought Movement.

The Church and Science

HAS SCIENCE ever retreated? It is Catholicism which has always retreated before her, and will always be forced to retreat. Never does Science stop; step by step she wrests truth from error, and to say that she is bankrupt because she cannot explain the world in one word and at one effort is pure and simple nonsense. If she leaves, and no doubt always will leave, a smaller and smaller domain to Mystery, and if supposition may always try to explain that mystery, it is none the less certain that she ruins, and with each successive hour will add to the ruin of the ancient hypotheses, those which crumble away before the acquired truths. . . . It makes one laugh to hear people assign a rôle to Science, forbid her to enter such and such a domain, predict to her that she shall go no further, and declare that at the end of the century she is already so weary that she abdicates! Oh! you little men of shallow or distorted brains, you politicians planning expedients, you dogmatics at bay, you authoritarians so obstinately clinging to the ancient dreams, Science will pass you and sweep you all away like withered leaves! —Rome by EMILE ZOLA.

ANSWERS TO HISTORY QUIZ

1. Catherine of Aragon (first wife) and Katherine Howard (fifth).
 2. Loyola, 1739.
 3. The last legal burning was in 1722 in Scotland. (In Europe witches were disposed of by various methods for some years later. The last to be decapitated in Germany was in 1749.)
 4. The first Christian King was Boris (852-84).
 5. At the Council of Nicea, 325, presided over by Constantine, the trinitarian doctrine of Athanasius was chosen in preference to the unitarian one of Arius (who was then persecuted).
 6. William Rufus (1087-1100).
 7. Attempting to substitute Mithraism for Christianity.
- G.H.T.

POOR CHURCH MICE

A RECTOR appealed last night for the loan of 50 white mice for a day. The Rev. Arthur Higginson wants them for a "White Mice Derby" with cheese at the winning post, at a garden fete at Weldon, Northants, next week. The church was hoping to provide its own mice. A parishioner was rearing about 70 for the occasion. But three cats got into their cage and ate the lot.—*Daily Express* (4/7/56). Text for Sunday: Revelation XIV. 13—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. . ."

Religious Conquest

By ERNEST BUSENBARK

THE DEVELOPMENT and perpetuation of religious systems over long periods cannot be attributed solely to belief in the existence of a god or gods. It requires, also, that worshippers be given reason to believe they possess definite means of knowing the will of the deity in order to know how to avoid offending him. It is necessary that he have intermediaries or spokesmen on earth to receive and transmit his commands to the people. So it has been that, from the beginning of history, down to Mormonism and Christian Science, every religion has had medicine men, shamens, prophets, or priests, as intermediaries who reputedly spoke for and in the name of the supreme deity.

The sacred books of the various great religions, in which are recorded the revelations of these intermediaries, differ greatly in spirit and content; the proponents of each religion declare that their particular version of the creation of the universe and of man, and the statutes which were handed down by the deity, is the only true version. The members of one religion have no difficulty in recognising the mythical nature of the records of other religions but are singularly unable to realise that their own are of the same character.

The patriarchs and prophets who "heard voices" and saw strange visions served the same purpose for Hebrew monotheism that astrologer-priests served for the earlier sun and moon worship. Their rôles as custodians, interpreters, and teachers of the reputed commands of an omnipotent, supreme ruler gave them tremendous power over the minds of the great mass of simple, uneducated worshippers. The people were warned daily of the terrible punishment awaiting those who disobeyed God's spokesmen.

The doctrines upon which Christianity was based made it possible for the hierarchy to achieve even greater power over the common people than had been wielded by the priests of Israel. Whereas the laws contained in the holy books of the Jews had been transmitted to the people by the great patriarchs and prophets, the Christian Gospels were claimed to contain the very words of Jesus, who was not only the Son of God but also God. As soon as the Church became completely organised, the hierarchy began to tighten its control over the people, its authority for this action being based upon the claim that the Popes were God's sole spokesmen and interpreters on earth, being the true successors to St. Peter, who established the Church at the direct command of Jesus.

For more than a thousand years after Christianity spread over Europe, its inhabitants were in servile subjection to the ruling clergy. No one dared to question their authority; no one dared to engage in scientific research because everything was regulated by ecclesiastical prescription and those who proposed theories which conflicted with views of the Church were excommunicated, banished, persecuted, tortured, or even burned at the stake. By the eighth century the Church began to gather converts by force and from the tenth century the practice became general. In this connection, Gibbon says, in the 16th chapter of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, that, in the Christianisation of Europe, only five per cent. of the people joined the Church of their own volition, the others being driven in by intimidation and force.

The sins of the Church were facilitated by other forces, social, economic, and political which had kept the people illiterate and in a condition of near or actual enslavement. All governmental affairs were kept in the hands of a relatively small ruling class which was obsessed with the notion

that it had a divine mission to rule; that it was the natural order of things that the many should labour for the glorification of the few. Inasmuch as any improvement in the status of the masses could take place only at the expense of the ruling class, the latter took precautions to maintain the status quo by every conceivable method. It was well realised that a religion which taught meekness, humility, and non-resistance to oppression could be of great assistance in preventing insurrections by serfs; therefore the kings and nobles generally worked hand in hand with the clergy to Christianise the masses. Under such conditions the perpetuation of established beliefs over long periods became practically certain.

A final, and very important, factor contributing to perpetuation of established religious beliefs has been the fact that they are usually transmitted from father to son, generation after generation. Individual religious beliefs are very much a matter of birth and geography, being instilled into the minds of children by their parents, teachers, ministers, priests or rabbis before the children are able to think for themselves. Children born in India automatically become Buddhists or members of one of the many branches of Hinduism. Children born in western countries usually become Catholics, Protestants or Jews. Only a small percentage of the world's population ever acquires sufficient knowledge of the origin and implications of the many religious beliefs to form a mature opinion about them.

[*The Truth Seeker*, New York.]

"Bigoted and Hidebound"

By H. CUTNER

AMONG the many journals who have protested against the way the Secretary of the N.S.S. was treated by the BBC over a commissioned broadcast is *Psychic News*, and we are pleased to note and commend this fact. Unfortunately, in its leader in which the protest is made is an attack on THE FREETHINKER — "some of its staff and contributors are as bigoted and hidebound as the most ignorant theologian". In addition "the blind prejudice they often show towards psychical research and Spiritualism is the reverse of rational".

We, on this journal, have never shown any blind prejudice towards psychical research. On the contrary, we welcome it with all our hearts. It is not we who object to psychical research but Spiritualists when the researchers, as is almost always the case, prove the fraud and imposture which goes on in Spiritualistic circles. A case to point are the "hauntings" discovered by Harry Price at Borley Rectory. The Society for Physical Research recently went into the "evidence" given by a number of Spiritualists, including Harry Price, and believers like many contributors to *Psychic News*, and proved conclusively that there were no spooks at the Rectory, and that there never were. The spooks were conjured up for us by Harry Price, and he got crowds of Spiritualists, including the various Editors of *Psychic News* to believe him. Here, then, is a case of psychical research with which we are thoroughly in sympathy; and I am bound to add it was Mr. Archer and his fellow contributors in *Psychic News* who showed the most incredible "blind prejudice". They do so now, for in spite of the S.P.R.'s scathing exposure of the fraud, they still believe in the Borley spooks.

Then there were my own psychical research investiga-

tions in the case of the unfortunate commander of the airship R101 whose spirit was claimed by *Psychic News* and every Spiritualist in the world to have returned at a sitting commissioned by Harry Price with Mrs. Eileen Garrett as the medium. I had no difficulty in proving this to be one of the most blatant frauds in the history of Spiritualism — though it is still acclaimed by *Psychic News* as an authentic return from Summerland. Even Harry Price himself here agreed with me, but the “blind prejudice” shown by Spiritualists everywhere to any psychical research which results in the exposure of deliberate fraud, was never more in evidence than in this case of the R101. If Mr. Archer wants me to give him further proofs of “blind prejudice” in Spiritualists objecting to psychical research, I would gladly give him them.

But on the question of Spiritualism and its claim to produce spooks or apparitions or evidence of “survival”, we on this journal have done our best to show the lies and imposture inherent in every so-called medium. Even in this very number of *Psychic News* (June 16th) can be seen a heading right across the page, “Don’t trust Physical Phenomena” — a strongly-worded warning against the humbug and fraud which accompanies “physical” phenomena — that is, “materialisation phenomena”, to say nothing of “dabbling” into the “mysteries” always associated with “true” Spiritualism. Had we attacked this kind of humbug in such terms, Mr. Archer would have filled two columns of angry protest at our “bigotry and intolerance”. We shall continue to criticise Spiritualism so long as it produces “evidence” which is a gross affront to our intelligence. We treat all imposture in the same way, whether religious or secular.

And we challenge Mr. Archer or any other Spiritualist to show us why we should act otherwise.

New Zealand Calling

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN

M.R.A. INVADES NEW ZEALAND

Dr. Frank Buchman and 63 members of what they describe as a Task Force have arrived in New Zealand, where they plan to spend a month. Among the members are Bunny Austin, the former British tennis player, and his wife, whom Londoners may remember as an actress. The invitation to descend upon New Zealand came from the mayors of Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin, Christchurch (the four chief cities) and the smaller centres of Lower Hutt and Rotorua, the latter famous for its geysers and hot pools. Four knights also sponsored the invitation, including Sir Wm. Goodfellow, who has played a leading part in organising mergings of dairy companies and the sale overseas of N.Z. dairy products, and Sir Wm. Jordan, who a good many years ago was appointed High Commissioner by a Labour Government. The Operation Invasion seems to have plenty of publicity and ammunition in the way of films, money, plays, more money and . . . still more money, and, of course, mayoral receptions. Moral Re-armament they describe as “Living in honesty, unselfishness, purity and love”. The 77-year-old leader, Dr. Buchman, delivered himself at a mayoral reception thus: “People cannot join this organisation and they cannot resign. They just *live the life*.” A pretty good sort of life, too, as regards quality food, quality clothes, comfortable beds and de luxe touring! A similar “Force” has, we are assured, recently visited Asia at “the invitation of 16 governments” and “sacrificing person and fortune for the spread of M.R.A. ideology”. So they say!

CATHOLIC OFFENSIVE IN NEW ZEALAND

The R.C. Church can certainly give itself top marks for organisational activities of a propagandist nature. It recently held a much publicised Catholic Exhibition in Auckland Town Hall, to which the Catholic visitors came from far distant places. Among the entertainments were Mass, explanations about the Rosary, water from the tiny grotto of Lourdes, models, prayer leaflets, films and so on. And, of course, newspaper coverage, with little children making the sign of the Cross. Perhaps the most far-reaching action has been the dramatic move of the Holy Name Society in furtherance of State Aid. They have embarked heavily on newspaper advertising and on the proposal for a commission of inquiry. An interesting, and from the secularist standpoint, gratifying, reaction has been the spate of condemnation from Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians and others — official objections. There the matter stands at the moment.

PROTESTS AGAINST ATOM BOMB TESTS

The National Council of the N.Z. Federation of Labour recently passed the following motion: “That we are opposed to all nations continuing their experiments with atomic energy for war purposes and urge the N.Z. Government to call upon all governments to give effect to this opposition.” I notice that in Australia meat workers at Townsville (Queensland) are considering refusing cattle from northern and western Queensland. Their secretary said: “The H-bombs the Americans are exploding in the Pacific could cause radioactive fall-out here. This radioactive dust could settle on the grass, affect the cattle which eat the grass, the meat workers who slaughter the cattle and the people who eat the meat.”

While on the subject of nuclear pronouncements in this part of the world, Sir Charles Darwin, in a talk to the Rotorua Philosophical Society during his recent visit to New Zealand, said: “There is no possibility of emigration from this planet. Enthusiasts for it have not outlived their schooldays.” Though he would like to see the back of the moon and the moss that might grow on Mars, he did not see how interplanetary travel could make any difference to the earth’s population problems, “unless we can persuade 80,000 volunteers to go up in rockets every day, with the guarantee that they won’t come back”. He predicted “Standing room only” for the people of the world if the present rate of increase continued — 80,000 to 90,000 a day — and said birth control could succeed only if a simple universal system could be worked. He could not predict the effects of an H-bomb war, but wars to date had not been nearly murderous enough to arrest the population trend. (In any case who would want to live after an H-bomb war with its legacies of horror and disease?)

SILENT MONKS

Twenty monks of the only Cistercian monastery of New Zealand have commenced a “life of silence”. They rise at 2 a.m., long before the milkman, and retire at 7 p.m., and cannot speak except with special permission. It takes all sorts to make a world, even our part of it “down under”!

G. W. Foote on Science and Christianity

CHRISTIANITY has now lost its power of opposing science. But even in the present century it has barked where it could not bite. It was Christian bigotry which made the author of the *Vestiges of Creation* conceal his identity; it was orthodox prepossession which so long prevented Sir Charles Lyell from admitting the truth of evolution; it was

Biblical teaching which inspired all the pulpit diatribes against Charles Darwin. Evolution has practically triumphed but where its evidences are still imperfect the clergy continue to trade upon the conjectures of ancient ignorance.

The effect of Christian doctrine upon the lay mind, even in a high state of development, may be seen in Mr. Gladstone's defence of the Bible. His laboured absurdities, and unscrupulous special pleading, show a deep distrust, not only of the teachings, but of the very spirit of Science.

There is, indeed, an essential opposition between Science and Christianity. The whole atmosphere of the Bible is miraculous. Nor is the New Testament any improvement in this respect upon the Old Testament. It incorporates the savage theory of disease as the work of evil spirits. Its stories of demoniacal possession belong to the ages when madness was treated as a spiritual disorder. The narrative of Jesus casting devils out of men and sending them into pigs is an aspect of the same superstition which inspired the terrible text "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." And the healing of disease by Paul with magic handkerchiefs, or by Peter with his shadow, goes down to the lowest depths of credulity.

(Will Christ Save Us?)

CORRESPONDENCE

THE SALVATION ARMY

A correspondent recently held up the Salvation Army as an example of Christianity in practice. But what social work does the S.A., as such, do? They are the most insufferable prigs known to me. I understand their assets are about £30 millions, invested in building, insurance companies, tea shops and copper mines in Spain (copper for war!). In my district they open a soup kitchen from November to May, and get the Mayor, a public official, to open it, and also get one old man to sit for a photograph, with the place apparently spruced up and special soup put on. Next day the place is shut. When, shortly afterwards, the "season" begins, I can only describe the soup as unfit for human consumption. (It gave me enteritis when I tried it.)

Where there are doss houses, the inmates pay dearly (to them) with their N.A. money. A Home for Girls here is paid for out of the rates and called a Remand Home. Most of them, I should say, are not "remand" girls at all, but are without parents or homes, and thus exposed to the dangers of a Christian country. They are treated as beings of a low order by the "holier-than-thou" ladies. Sometimes they are marched two or three miles on Sundays to be indoctrinated in the "Citadel".

I have known indolent "sisters" from comfortable homes coming everlastingly with envelopes for "self-denial", etc., etc.

And why should old folk desperately ill in hospital have to endure forced religious services. I remember how your reader, Mr. W. Guelke, whose death you reported recently, was "questioned" on being admitted to hospital, and as I was not a relative I could do nothing about it.

IRENE BARNES.

THE SUPERSTITIONS OF SCIENTISTS

It is hardly conceivable, even to modern Christians outside the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, and the American fancy religions, that a mind like Sir Isaac Newton's believed in witchcraft, and that the dictates of the Lord in the Old Testament of "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" should be obeyed.

Dr. Halley, the great astronomer and Freethinker, was horrified at the burning alive of old women by the Christian Church. One day whilst expressing his horror in the company of Sir Isaac Newton the latter cut him short with the following observation:

"I always attend to you, Doctor Halley, with the greatest deference when you do us the honour to converse on astronomy or the mathematics, because these are subjects that you have industriously investigated, and which you have well understood, but your infidelity towards religion, and your disbelief in witchcraft on which you frequently deal with, fills me with pain, because this is a subject which you have not seriously examined, and do not comprehend. You seem to be horrified because you do not understand it, and you will not accept biblical proof on this question because you despise it."

It is hardly creditable that the great mind that discovered and explained the laws of gravitation should be so terrified, and so

ignorant and superstitious outside his particular sphere as to believe that innocent old women neurotics sallied forth over the tops of houses by night on broomsticks.

PAUL VARNEY.

JESUS AND ANTI-SEX

Which of the acts or sayings of Mary's first-born indicate his favouring a lifelong monogamous union? His own mother excepted, he does not appear to have been averse to the company of the fair sex. But there is no evidence that he either contracted or contemplated a union which Mr. Brooks says he favoured. Nor, do I think, he ever counselled others to do so.

The oft-quoted pontifical command, "Whom God hath joined together..." is highly suspect because it fits in so well with the views of the later priesthood. It is a sentiment well understood in the East, where women are given in marriage, and in the Christian marriage service the priest still asks "Who giveth this woman...?" Never "Who giveth this man?" In the East a man would not be very harshly criticised who failed to take action against a husband killing his wife (read Haji Baba Ispahani).

The Galilean asserted that in Heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage. If we assume that risen bodies are still to retain normal appetites, this would mean free love, not eternal celibacy. 600 years after Christ, Hazrat Muhammed, who copied him in so many ways, elaborated this idea, providing beautiful hours for the delight of the faithful.

Man makes God in his own image: that seems to be what your correspondent is doing.

W. E. HUXLEY.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11TH.—Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chairman), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Draper, Ebury, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Tiley, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. New members were admitted to the Central London and Parent Branches (26 in all). Reports were received from World Union of Freethinkers, Humanist Council, Trade Union Committee and Bristol. Grants and affiliation fees were authorised in these cases and in response to a request from Dagenham Branch. It was decided to get Solicitors' opinion regarding Constitution and Rules. Re-establishment of Edinburgh Branch was noted with pleasure. Mr. Ridley was recommended as speaker to Gravesend Technical College. Correspondence was dealt with. Motions deferred from Annual Conference were held over pending decision of Solicitors. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, August 15th, 1956.

C. McC.

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