

The Freethinker

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ON MAY 25TH LAST, the BBC broadcast on the Light Programme its usual Sunday afternoon feature, *Down Your Way*. In this programme, Mr. Franklin Engelmann visits weekly a different locality and interviews people living there. On this particular occasion, Mr. Engelmann was visiting the London borough of Wandsworth, and amongst the people whom he interviewed was the *Imam*—

or religious Head—of the Muslim Mosque at Putney.

This mosque, which actually represents, not orthodox Islam, but the heretical sect of the Ahmediya, founded in India in the present century, stands as a permanent centre of Muslim propaganda in this land

of the Kaffirs, that is to say, Infidels outside the pale of Islam.

What Islam Stands For

The BBC interviewer asked the Imam a number of questions regarding Islam which certainly do not indicate much knowledge at Broadcasting House of what is, in many respects, the world's most widely diffused and most aggressive Faith. The Imam's replies merely represented commonplaces to any even moderately informed student of Comparative Religion: "True Believers" are supposed to pray five times a day; there is no professional clerical caste in Islam. Muslims do not *worship* the Prophet Muhammed. The Imam is obviously a Muslim "fundamentalist," for in reply to a question from Mr. Engelmann he explicitly defended the traditional segregation of the sexes and denounced the Western conception of the free association of the sexes in social life; a traditional Islamic custom which has aroused strong opposition in modern Muslim states directly affected by Western contacts. In the contemporary Soviet Union, where the enforced segregation of women is illegal, a fierce conflict between Islam and the present Russian régime has been going on for some time. I noticed one notable omission in the Imam's replies: rather surprisingly he made no mention of the pilgrimage to Mecca, to the Kaaba, "The House of Allah," which is technically obligatory upon every Muslim. Possibly the reason for this is that the Putney Mosque, unlike the better-known Woking Mosque, does not represent Islamic orthodoxy, and its adherents would probably not be permitted to make the Holy Pilgrimage to Mecca. There have been cases in quite recent years of numbers of the Imam's own Ahmediya sect being stoned to death in fanatically orthodox Afghanistan, the traditional punishment for heretics in Islam.

Islam in Britain

One must not lose sight of the fact that Britain and the British Commonwealth constitute the largest Islamic State in the world. The Republic of Pakistan, the "Land of the Pure"—of the Muslim "True Believers"—contains some eighty millions of Muslims and itself has many of the characteristics of a Muslim Theocracy. India, too, still contains a considerable Muslim minority, whilst Nigeria, which is on the point of becoming a self-governing Domi-

nion of the British Commonwealth, is, again, a predominantly Muslim land. In this country one of the facts about post-war Britain which most strikes observers from the Continent is the increase in the coloured population now resident here, and which includes, apparently, many Muslims. We have Mosques at Woking and Putney, and when I was speaking recently in Cardiff, my ecumenical friend,

Mr. D. Shipper, pointed out a local Mosque in that maritime centre. Incidentally, I suggested that a debate between a local representative of Secularism and the Muslim Imam might furnish something new in the way of debates.

VIEWS and OPINIONS

The Menace of Islam

By F. A. RIDLEY

The Prophet's Birthday

Some time ago I was invited to attend a meeting at Caxton Hall to celebrate the birthday of the Holy Prophet Muhammed. At this gathering there were many Europeans, some of whom were probably Muslim converts, as well as Asiatics and Africans present — in fact the Chairman was a retired colonel whom one would normally expect to see at a religious gathering of some Christian sect or other. Amongst the speakers was a Director of the famous Muslim University of Al-Azhar in Cairo, the most authoritative centre of Muslim theology in the world. The proceedings opened with citations from the Holy Koran, *chanted* in Arabic, for it is forbidden to recite the eternal "Word" of Allah in any other language except that in which Allah dictated it to his Prophet. Nor is it permissible to a "True Believer" to recite God's Holy and Infallible Word in an ordinary conversational voice, its inspired verses (suras) must be *sung*, not just recited. As I recall that meeting, the eulogistic discourses delivered from the platform were not particularly distinguished by originality. Muhammed was the greatest man who ever lived — much like Jesus except that he was not a god, but only the messenger of God — apart from which he was a camel-driver, *not* a carpenter like his Galilean predecessor. As one would expect at a similar Christian assembly, not a trace of scholarship, still less of criticism could be discerned in the fervid discourses delivered from the platform.

Muhammed and "Tom" Paine

My chief recollection of the meeting is of a discussion I had before it started with my neighbour, a Pakistani general who seemed very interested in Thomas Paine whom he apparently thought was practically a Muslim because of his professed belief in Deism and his criticism of the rival Holy Book (to the Koran) the Bible. It would be interesting to know in this connection what "Tom" Paine would have thought, and written about the other Holy Book, the Koran had he known Arabic? Probably it would not have confirmed the supposition that the author of *The Age of Reason* was almost a "True Believer". I do not remember seeing the Putney Imam there, probably he would not have been admitted on account of his sect's heresy. For Islam has no more use for heretics than has the Catholic Church,

its traditional rival. Both religions, wherever possible, punish heresy by death; Rome by burning, Islam, like its Jewish predecessor by stoning to death. In the case of the Ahmediya sect represented at Putney, they have automatically put themselves outside the pale of Islam by declaring that their Founder, Ahmed, after whom their sect is named, was the *Mahdi* or *Promised One* and as such was greater than Muhammed whom and whose revelation he superseded.

The World's Fastest Growing Religion

At present and probably in the future also, there appears to be little likelihood of Islam acquiring any serious significance or mass-following in *this* country. Britain, from a Muslim point of view remains merely a missionary field and a very minor one at that. The age celebrated by Gibbon when Islam nearly conquered Europe, is also long past. But religion represents a world-wide factor and so does Freethought. In the British Commonwealth and in Africa in particular Islam is a tremendous and growing force. In Africa it is making rapid headway and is probably making

more converts there than Christianity; it would appear from the available statistics that Islam is the fastest expanding religion in the contemporary world. Moreover, it is a totalitarian religion for in a fully constituted Islamic society there is, and can be, no such thing as a *secular* culture or even a secular legal code: it is all written down in the Koran and the *Hadith* or *Traditions* of the authorized Muslim theologians and jurists. One very important fact stems from the absolutist character of Islamic dogma. *No Secular or Freethinking movement can exist in any orthodox Muslim community!* The two great rival totalitarian creeds—Rome and Mecca, which have waged so many bloody wars against each other in bygone centuries—remain the major antagonists to any dissemination of Secularist and Rationalist principles on a world scale. Rome is the Western "Mecca" and Mecca the Eastern "Rome." When the World Union of Freethinkers can successfully invade these forbidden territories, the age-long war against Religion may be said to be within sight of victory.

A Plea for a Rational Approach

By G. I. BENNETT
(Concluded from page 190)

If the long arm of the law prosecutes the homosexual, it also prosecutes any whom it finds guilty of what it calls "indecent exposure" — or nudity in any public place. Members of one sex or of the other differ in appearance from one another hardly at all below the waist; and yet so instilled in the mind is the idea that the genitals are in some way disgusting that "modesty", "decency", "propriety", "purity" are terms that all imply they must be forever concealed from general view. The only place where no taboo on nakedness exists is a nudist, or naturist, camp. And even there one must be careful one doesn't trespass beyond the bounds of the camp lest other eyes than those of fellow-nudists should fall upon one. This "decency law" has, like all Puritan queasiness in regard to sex, the opposite effect from that intended. It does not make people pure and chaste in mind and body; it tends to make them prurient in all that relates to sex. The appeal of sex become exaggerated is thus the greatest box-office draw, the best and surest means of selling books, newspapers, periodical literature of all kinds that pander to it. What wonder that so many of us, in such things, remain emotionally immature all our lives? And even though the actual figures of known sexual offences and crimes may be relatively small, there can be little doubt that they are considerably larger than they would be in a society that did not encourage sex complexes.

Suicide and euthanasia are two things that I should not pass without notice, because emotional thinking is clearly obstructive to the formation of a dispassionate and rational outlook concerning them. It is astonishing that suicide, or self-murder (*felo-de-se*) as it is commonly regarded, should in this second half of the twentieth century be treated as a serious offence punishable at law. And the act of deliberately taking one's own life is looked upon with such hushed abhorrence that it is felt kinder to conclude that a person guilty of it must have lost his reason. I have sometimes wondered whether this does not explain the almost invariable verdict of the coroner's court, "He took his life while the balance of his mind was disturbed." There have at times, in fact, been brought to light circumstances of such hardship or hopelessness, or both, that one must consider

that a perfectly sound, intelligent, though highly-strung man or woman might with some reason have come to the conclusion that life for him or her was not worth living. Here is a case (and not an isolated one) where the point of view of classical antiquity may be seen to be wiser than ours. The ancients of Greece and Rome did not cast reproaches on him who would remove himself from the world of the living. More sensibly, they argued that a man's life was his own to do with as he chose; and that if he finally deemed it unsupportable, then his decision to end it voluntarily was eminently understandable and consonant with good sense. Hoary old sentiments about the inevitable sanctity of life, "God's, not man's, to take away", did not trouble them.

It is the same with euthanasia. As the law stands, the medical profession cannot technically end the life of a patient who continues to live without hope of a cure or the restoration of such health as will allow a tolerably useful and happy existence. And even if medical practitioners could lawfully terminate the life of a patient upon his request, his kith and kin would in most cases exhort them to avert his death, if possible, and postpone it as long as could be. The combination of the religio-moral sentiment of "sacredness of life" with instinctive reaction against the passing of a loved one, obscures from many people the humane truth that it is sometimes better to let Nature take her course, and even help her to bring pain and weariness to an end, than to perpetuate a life for what are, after all, usually selfish personal reasons.

How to sum up this survey of the way in which matters of deep human concern are affected for the worse by emotional thinking? Prejudices in no way based upon truth or reason abound—prejudices that I have done no more than touch on here. False ideas and ideals persist and prevent the birth and cultivation of those other ideas and ideals which, if generally accepted, would transform the social scene and improve immeasurably man's earthly condition and prospects. But much demolition work needs to be undertaken, and the human mind must be set free from the emotionalism that precludes fair judgement and frustrates wise and far-sighted reforms. The foregoing is a plea for a rational approach to our human affairs, which I believe would achieve such a setting free of the mind — an approach alone worthy of twentieth-century man.

Christianity is of no practical value as a moral agent.—

JOHN PAYNE

Catholics and Protestants

By COLIN McCALL

IT MUST SURELY be a long time since readers of a popular British paper chewed their morning toast to such a headline as that on the front page of the *Daily Express* on Tuesday, May 28th. "Dr. Fisher accuses Catholics" it proclaimed across the full spread. "They wage open war on us" it quoted underneath as a sub-heading. And the Archbishop of Canterbury's words certainly seemed to justify such treatment. "There is a lot of direct hostility to the Church led, I am sorry to say, by the Roman Catholics in this country", he is reported as saying to the Lichfield diocesan conference at Wolverhampton, when he also expressed the wish that the Churches of England and Scotland, and the Churches in the United States and other countries, could be bound together in one body. If the Pope "would like to come in as chairman of a Joint Council of Churches we should all welcome him", said Dr. Fisher, but he regretted that "The Roman Catholic Church in Britain is waging an open war against the Church of England" The *Daily Express* obtained confirmation from one of Dr. Fisher's chaplains at Lambeth Palace that "The archbishop does not wish to qualify or amplify this remark (about the Roman Catholics) in any way. It was an official statement, not a casual remark or trivial comment. Dr. Fisher deliberately spoke in that form. You may have seen the speech by another Anglican bishop recently. This statement deals with the same subject in the same manner." The chaplain would seem to be referring to the Bishop of Chester's strong criticism of Catholic submission to Papal authority; and one Catholic commentary on the situation was that the "open war" was apparently coming "not from ourselves but from the Anglicans."

This was also the view of John Redfern, who condemned the Archbishop in the same paper the following day. All we were told about Mr. Redfern was that he "was baptised into the Church of England" — which fails to distinguish him from millions of other Englishmen. But whatever his present religious views, Mr. Redfern fears that "a squalid, sterile Church controversy faces us," and he holds Dr. Fisher responsible for it. That the latter suffers from gout affords no excuse for such an outburst, writes Mr. Redfern, though "Diagnosis must take into account that Dr. Fisher is a headmaster who was never a parish priest, never the rector or vicar of anywhere."

The suggested explanation is that "the archbishop is a great man for reunion" and "Rome is an obstruction in his way". An obstruction, furthermore, that is "growing larger all the time". This last statement of Mr. Redfern's refers to the number of Roman Catholics in this country, and it is extremely difficult to prove. Papist figures "prove" it all right, of course: they glibly talk of a gain of a hundred thousand in a year, and a total membership of over three million. And it is true that immigration from Ireland and the continent has swelled the Catholic population in England and Wales since the last war. But — as Dr. Fisher and Dr. G. A. Ellison (Bishop of Chester) have suggested, and as the late Joseph McCabe many times indicated — these figures do lie.

Dr. Ellison has said that "hardly a week goes by in which I am not asked by a parish priest if he may receive, sometimes an individual Roman Catholic, sometimes a family, into the Church of England." And we must all know some lapsed Catholics. Some, apparently, join the Church of England; some join the National Secular Society; but the greatest number swell the group of religious indifferentists in this country. The Roman Catholic

clergy are fully aware of this situation. They deplore it in diocesan letters and try to check it in every way they can; they urge wives to bring their erring husbands back to the Church; they try to keep track of immigrants—and particularly those who move about from place to place—they pester and pry, cajole and threaten. In spite of it all, the losses occur and—at a rough estimate—probably more than offset the gains.

Though the Church of Rome may not actually be gaining in numbers, however, there is reason to believe that it is gaining in power and influence. Joseph McCabe was mainly responsible for showing how it had riddled and ruined some parts of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; we all have some idea of its gains in the BBC; how it has infiltrated the Labour and Trade Union movement; how it operates in politics generally; how it interferes in business. How, in fact, it has exploited the generally liberal environment for its own ends.

And it is when we come to consider those ends that we appreciate the Archbishop of Canterbury's real concern. For the Church of Rome—and every Catholic in this country—is committed to work for the conversion of England: that and nothing less. And when you read an advertisement for, say, the Knights of St. Columba—"a fraternal order of Catholic men"—you are reading an advertisement of "an organisation of Catholic men with branches in every diocese of England, Scotland and Wales." "There is Apostolic Work in plenty for every Catholic layman in the Knights of St. Columba"—you may read. It is a pity that you cannot read the oath that the Knights take when receiving the Holy Sacrament. If my information is correct, the oath of the Fourth Degree commits one to "wage relentless war secretly or openly against all heretical Protestants. . . ." That is why I think the Archbishop of Canterbury's strong words are justified; why, though I hold no brief for the Church of England, I am pleased to note that Protestantism is not dead in this country—not even in the established Church.

The Rising Generation

XXIII—GENTLE JESUS

"TEACHER says we should be kind to animals because it is the Christian thing to do; but as we are not Christians, I don't suppose it really matters whether we are kind or not, does it, daddy?"

"That is not so, Ann. Your teacher is quite right. You should be kind to animals, whether you are a Christian or not, because it is the *human* thing to do. Jesus never preached kindness to animals; in fact, in the Bible he 'casts out devils' from two men he meets in a cemetery.

"The devils said to him, 'Now you've cast us out, where are we going to live? What about letting us go into that herd of pigs over there?' And he said unto them, 'Go.' The devils went into the pigs who ran down the hill into the sea and were all drowned."

"Is this a true story, daddy?"

"No, Ann; there are no such things as devils, and it is very doubtful if there was ever a Jesus, but this story was written by people who wanted to show how clever Jesus was, and they believed, as everyone did in those days, that certain illnesses were caused by devils. We know today that this is not so. If there had been devils, it would have been a good thing for Jesus to cast them out, but a bad thing to let them go into the pigs."

"That was cruelty to animals, wasn't it, daddy?"

C.H.H.

This Believing World

Whether England is right or wrong in thinking that H-bomb tests may act as deterrents of atom warfare is, of course, a matter of opinion but we are glad to see that the "spirit guide" of a medium, a Mr. Hambling, whose name is "Moon Trail" is definitely against them. Nobody would know better than a spook called Moon Trail what havoc an H-bomb can cause, and the only pity is that the British Government in full session in Parliament was not personally addressed by it. The tests obviously would have ceased immediately.

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With Mr. Christopher Mayhew carefully steering at the helm, TV staged an interesting discussion as to whether "religious genius" is "a form of insanity." By "religious genius" was meant the visions of saints, the hearing of the voice of God or Jesus, a sight of Heaven, or a glimpse of Hell. The kind of thing we got, for example, from Paul or St. Francis or Joan of Arc. Were they, in short, mad—for similar experiences are regularly felt by lunatics? Needless to say, of course, that the Franciscan friar, who was interviewed, was quite certain that there was a terrific difference between a saint and a lunatic. The saint certainly talked with God or saw Heaven.

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On the other hand a medical psychiatrist was just as positive that there was *no difference whatever* between them—both suffering from sheer hallucinations. In other words, the experiences of saints and those of lunatics could easily be explained as *madness*; and though Mr. Mayhew tried to soften the blow, he could only (and very weakly at that) maintain that there were some things we couldn't explain in this world of ours. So the answer to "Is religious genius a form of madness?" is — you bet it is. And now what have our bishops and priests to say to that?

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The Bishop of Leicester is very disturbed that the Hymns Ancient and Modern which used to be so lustily sung by our forebears do not now have a modern appeal. The swing is towards jazz and rock an' roll, but it is hard to envisage staid churchwardens and prim, but orthodox, spinsters in church leading the choir on these lines. "Jesu Lover of My Soul" or "Washed in the Blood of the Lamb" in rock an' roll time would hardly make converts.

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All the same, the Bishop is in a quandary for he says, "I wonder whether the Church's musical advisors are living in the real world, or in a world of fantasy." We can add to this our own wonder whether the Church's advisors know where they are at all. It is not so much that people do not always call themselves Christians as the fact that they no longer — in the bulk — go to church. They are indifferent. Oh yes, they believe in Christ Jesus and so on, but that appears the full extent of their religion. In anything else, they don't care two hoots.

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After five years as a nun a Miss Mageean decided to get out and come back into the real world — with men, if possible. The *Sunday Pictorial* made a big splash of the story, but nothing was said about religion, about the pain and shock the decision to leave the convent with all its beautiful duties to God, Jesus, and Mary, must have caused the church, to say nothing of her own immortal soul. One day she is on her knees as an unsaved sinner, and the next she is in an off-the-shoulder-dress drinking a gin and orange aided by a cigarette in a long holder, and sur-

rounded by "dinner-jacketed admirers". Fewer girls than ever feel the vocation appeal in a convent prison. The world, the flesh, and the devil, still conquer.

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We are afraid that the Churches have let "spirit" healers have too much of their own way. If they had only looked into the Bible, God's Own Word, they would have seen dozens of beautiful examples of what can be done so long as we trust in Jesus. Over and over again in the Precious Volume will be found the way devils and demons cause illness, and how gentle Jesus cured the unfortunate people. In Mark 9, for instance, is a touching story of the way a "dumb spirit" caused a boy to foam at the mouth and gnash his teeth and, "as all things," said Jesus, "are possible to him that believeth," the "foul spirit" was easily cast out and the boy cured.

How Life Began

THE PLAIN and sufficient answer to the question, "How did life begin?" is, of course, that God created it. He created man on the sixth day of the week he took in creating the Universe, though "life" began on an earlier day. All Christians and Jews and Muslims are satisfied with this, though naturally sometimes infidel doubts creep in and the horrid word Evolution, both biological and physical, appears to make mincemeat of the account of Creation in God's Divine Word.

Instead of being satisfied with this story, scientists have for centuries tried to find out a little more about the origin of life than that given them by the Almighty, and an account of some of the experiments made by Dr. Stanley Miller, an American scientist, recently appeared in *John Bull* (May 27th). He is described as having "with a handful of gases and an electric shock," found "a clue that may help to solve the world's greatest mystery"—a statement which almost savours of rank infidelity. There is *no* mystery if we accept the Bible.

But in the course of his article the author, Dr. P. E. Hodgson, actually admits that "the most plausible theories of the formation of the earth suggest that it began as a blob of molten rock hurled out of a youthful sun, or as an aggregate of cosmic dust. In either case, life as we know it, would have been impossible. Yet, in long æons of time, on that earth the wilderness burst into flower, and the seas gave birth to shoals of fish."

I shudder to think what our Intelligent Australian Aborigines would feel reading this statement of scientific fact, or what howls of derision must come from convinced Berkeleyan Idealists. Yet the fact remains that this is the conclusion of most, if not all, astro-physicists. In other words—Matter appeared before Mind.

Dr. Hodgson's article shows how far Dr. Miller has gone from the days Pasteur is supposed to have killed all ideas of spontaneous generation—"Of course Pasteur had not actually shown that spontaneous generation could not occur; he had only shown that it did not occur *in the cases he had studied.*" The truth is that life must have begun when the conditions were favourable and it *must* have been spontaneous generation.

It was only to be expected that Dr. Hodgson would drag in God somewhere, so we are told "the account of creation in Genesis does not exclude it [the scientific explanation of how life began] for the essential lesson it teaches is that God created all things." How difficult it is to get away from our crude Sunday school days!

H.C.

THE FREETHINKER

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All Articles and Correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are always welcome at the Office.

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.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON, and SHEPPARD.

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

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston, Surrey).—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, FINKEL, SMITH or CORSAIR.

Sunday, 3 p.m. (Platt Fields) Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, etc.

Sunday 8 p.m. (Deansgate Blitzed Site): Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH or WOOD.

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: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square) — Thursday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE. Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

INDOOR

Garret Club (60 Holland Park, W.11).—Thursday, June 27th, 7.30 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, "Atheism."

London Anarchist Group (Malatesta Club, 32 Percy Street, W.1).—Every Sunday at 7.30 p.m. June 23rd: DONALD ROOUM, "Anarchism and Religion."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 23rd, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Archæology and the Bible."

Wales and Western Branch (Bute Town Community Centre).—Tuesday, June 25th, 7.15 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Determinism or Free Will?"—preceded by the Conference Report.

Notes and News

In Srinagar, India, Mr. Aneurin Bevan recently make a speech on the Kashmir dispute, in the course of which he said: "I am speaking on my own responsibility alone, not for the U.K. and not even for the Labour Party." Nevertheless, he asserted: "In our party we have always believed that states should be *secular*. We have always believed that a nation should not try to interpose its authority between man and whatever god man wishes to worship; that there should be no interference with religions and that people should be allowed to find their own way to salvation in whatever manner they think proper. Troubles arise when priests establish toll gates on the way and levy duties and close all avenues to establish their monopoly. And so I rejoice over the fact that when I came to Kashmir I found the same ideas expressed in your Constitution and by your representatives as I find in Great Britain,

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £226 7s. 11d.; P. Trower, 10s.; H. Blewett, 2s.; A. Hancock, 2s.; S. C. Merrifield, 2s. 5d.; H. T. Derrett, 10s.; Anon, 2s. 4d.—Total to date, June 14th, 1957, £227 16s. 9d.

where we believe theocratic states in themselves are not valid in this modern world and that theocracy can lead to many kinds of evils."

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SPEAKING to the Council of Christians and Jews, Mr. Robert Presswood, Cardiff Director of Education, stated that *only* religious education in schools could help a child to differentiate between right and wrong. Further, "The Education Act of 1944 requires that local authorities should contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community... This aim could not be attempted or achieved without religious instruction in schools." An analysis of his speech must lead us to assume that Mr. Presswood fully expects the child of non-religious parents, withdrawn from religious education, to develop into a gangster, unable to differentiate between good and bad social conduct. He can have little confidence in the ability of the atheist, agnostic, or even deist teacher, to contribute anything of value to the education of a child, especially as he maintains that *everything* that happens in school should relate to the actions in religion. At first sight it might seem difficult (even to the most enthusiastic Christian) to impart a religious slant to a lesson on, say, P.T. or geometry, but perseverance will no doubt overcome an apparent, if trifling obstacle. A speech of this type might be expected from a professional clergyman or a Sunday school teacher. In a Director of Education such a fundamentalist attitude is surprising and may prove disquieting to non-religious parents.

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It is estimated that there will be approximately 100,000 visitors to Wales for the Empire Games in 1958 and many business men feel that they will take a poor view of the "Welsh Sunday" and, in particular, the outdated licensing laws. It is expected that there will be an appeal for a temporary relaxation of the farcical laws, though little support can be expected from Welsh M.P.s, most of whom support the Sabbatharians strongly.

★

INTRODUCED to the South African Parliament by the Minister of Justice was the Witchcraft Suppression Bill, which has the support of all parties. Under the Bill sentences of two to twenty years' imprisonment can be given, the maximum sentence applying when a person loses his life as a result of witchcraft. It would be interesting to know whether the Bill may be used against faith-healers, Christian Scientists, as well as native witch doctors. There is an essential similarity between ju-ju and transubstantiation, totem-pole and altar, Christian benedictions and pagan maledictions, but for the authorities *colour* decides whether a ceremony is superstitious or not.

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THE Hungarian Peace Council has now been fortified by a bench of Catholic bishops who constitute a special Catholic committee of the Peace Council. Their interest in peace is probably in getting as much Catholic control as possible in Hungary.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE MIRACLE IN THE MONASTERY

By N. F.

The National Secular Society Annual Conference

LEICESTER, JUNE 9TH, 1957

ALTHOUGH the weather was rather unsettled, nothing damped the enthusiasm of the delegates and members who gathered together on Saturday, June 8th, for the social evening provided by the Executive Committee and Leicester Secular Society, who were hosts for this year's Conference. To the accompaniment of refreshments, a happy evening was spent at the Secular Hall by members meeting new and old friends and indulging in many reminiscences.

The Conference proper began at 10.30 the next morning after a welcome by the President, Mr. F. A. Ridley. Last year's minutes were then taken as read, and the Secretary Mr. Colin McCall, read the Executive Committee's Annual Report, which was duly passed. (A copy will be received by all N.S.S. members either direct or through their branches.) Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, a member of the Executive Committee, who had also attended over 25 Conferences, asked leave to say a few words—and in the forthright manner for which he is so well known made some trenchant remarks on modes of procedure.

Some points on the Financial Report were then satisfactorily answered by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. W. Griffiths; and as the Conference then proceeded to the election of a President for the ensuing year, Mr. Kirk, of the Leicester Secular Society, took the Chair. Mr. Ebury proposed the re-election of Mr. Ridley, and made a strong speech in support. Mr. Hornibrook seconded, both pointing out the exceptional abilities of Mr. Ridley as a writer and thinker, also his international reputation.

For the Manchester Branch, Mr. Smith proposed and Mrs. Rogals seconded, the election of Mr. P. Victor Morris as President. Both acknowledged Mr. Ridley's qualities but they felt that a new President was necessary. Mrs. Rogals pointed out that Mr. Morris had been a very good Secretary. Mr. Turner followed, objecting to any President at all, but Conference voted for Mr. Ridley—52 for and five against.

As both Mr. Day and Mr. Parry withdrew from election as Vice-Presidents, Messrs. L. Ebury and T. M. Mosley were re-elected. Mr. N. Cassel, who had been nominated by the Manchester Branch for Hon. Treasurer, also withdrew. Mr. W. Griffiths was therefore again elected for the post.

On the Motion of the Executive Committee the present auditors, Messrs. Wright, Fairbrother, and Steel, were re-elected, and the nominees for election on the Executive Committee proposed by various Branches were re-elected *en bloc*.

Mr. Ridley then took the Chair again, thanking Mr. Kirk for conducting the Conference through these elections and thanking members for re-electing him. He pointed out how difficult was the task of the N.S.S. now that it was the only society in the country with a militant programme against Christianity.

On the Motion put by the North London Branch,

That this Conference expresses its appreciation of the satisfactory manner in which the General Secretary has carried out his duties since his appointment,

Mr. Ebury warmly praised the work of Mr. McCall, as did Mrs. Venton and the President. The few words in reply by Mr. McCall proved how much he appreciated what had been said. He emphasised the co-operation he had received from the Officers and others.

As the next Motions on the Agenda by the Executive Committee,

That the Constitution and Rules be revised as circulated; and
That the Standing Orders be adopted.

needed careful consideration, it was agreed that Mr. R. Johnson—with his knowledge of rules and procedure—should take the Chair for their discussion after lunch. And the Conference was temporarily constituted into a Special Committee.

On resumption after 2 o'clock, Mr. Johnson introduced the proposed new Constitution and Rules to an increased gathering, and called upon Mr. Kirk to move that the Rules be accepted as submitted subject to possible amending on seven counts. This was passed and the Amendments were then taken one by one. Speakers during the discussion included Messrs. Alexander, Baldie, Barker, Caines, Collins, Day, Ebury, Kirk, Proudlock, Shepherd, Simmons, Smith, Williams, and the Secretary. Then Mr. Johnson thanked the Committee, and declared it dissolved and Conference resumed. The Motion was then passed that "As from the termination of this Conference the old Constitution and Rules be annulled and the new Constitution and Rules, as agreed by the Special Committee (consisting of members present at the Conference) be accepted as the Constitution and Rules of the Society." This was passed, though Mr. Turner appealed for the abolition of all rules.

After the proposed Standing Orders had been accepted, Mr. Caines, of Cardiff, proposed that the word "colour" be added to No. 12 of our Immediate Practical Objects. Mr. Ebury seconded, and it was unanimously accepted. For the Manchester Branch, Mr. Smith proposed that as the State Church is no longer endowed, we should remove the demand for disendowment from our Objects. But it was generally thought that the matter was not so clear cut that the word "disendowment" could be dropped, and it was referred to the E.C. for consideration.

A Central London Branch Motion that the Society arrange meetings of members and friends to explain its attitude to current problems was rejected as impracticable.

Then, for the Manchester Branch, Mrs. Rogals proposed that the E.C. consider appointing an Organiser, and suggested there should be a panel of speakers for outdoor work in dormant Branches, while the active ones should be visited for four months of the year. Mr. Smith seconded, while Mr. Ebury gave reasons against the proposals—the high cost, and the almost impossible task of putting them into effect. Mr. Sheppard pointed out "old Father Time" was playing havoc with so many of our best trained and oldest supporters. However, Mr. Johnson said that the Executive Committee were not neglecting the problem and he proposed that the question of training young speakers might be discussed at the next Conference. Other suggestions were made by Mrs. Tacchi-Morris, Mr. Day, Mr. G. W. Warner, and others.

Mr. Day proposed that the motion of 1947 confirming the expulsion of Messrs. F. J. Corina and late R. B. Mitchell be rescinded. On the amendment that the word "rescinded" be changed to "expunged," the motion was carried in that form.

The Conference had overrun its time and a couple of Motions were therefore not discussed. But one felt that

some permanent headway had been made and the discussions ended with a happy note of confidence.

The Outdoor Demonstration was held in the Market Place under the Chairmanship of Mr. J. W. Barker, and attracted a large and interested audience—interested even when in opposition. Our two Vice-Presidents, Mr. L. Ebury and Mr. T. M. Mosley, distinguished themselves with vigorous speeches despite their recent illnesses; other speakers included Messrs. Ridley, Corina and Day.

On Whit Monday, Mr. Kirk took a number of members to parts of Leicester associated with the unfortunate Lady Jane Grey. Then, with the departure of so many who had attended, the 1957 Conference came to a pleasant end. The Leicester Secular Society deserves our grateful thanks for its generous hospitality. H.C.

The Magnificent Adventure

By GORDON CAULFEILD

A GAY BOOK, a laughing book, a happy book, and yet withal a deadly serious book. A book that surveys the fascinating, thrilling story of human beings on this earth of ours from the earliest times till now. A book by an author who sees things with the unusual objectivity of the unbiased observer, the scientist, the humanist. An objectivity so rare and precious today.

This book, *This Human Nature* by Charles Duff in the famous Thinker's Library, reaffirms one's faith in life. It gives us a great many very helpful facts concerning ourselves and our world. One fact is worth a thousand theories.

Fire, the wheel, roads, wheat, domestic animals, we take things like these so much for granted today. Yet each such discovery in the early dawn of our human story was momentous, staggering. These most ancient things have become a very part of our most modern civilization. Will that civilization itself survive? Four previous great civilizations have come and gone, as Charles Duff tells us.

The invention of the bludgeon, the origin of language, pottery as the first plastic art, selfishness and the sexual origin of society, all are dealt with interestingly. The origin of religion, the ancient Egyptian king Akhaton's discovery of our modern God, the ideas of Buddha of India and Confucius of China, Socrates and Plato and Aristotle of Greece, Jesus and Mahomet, religion and sex, all are here and of special interest to us humanists, as is also the author's observation: "Irreligion is the mark of highly civilized man in every phase of history."

The religionist growing up learning meaningless mind-beclouding myths, placing important emphasis on trifling ritual and dogma, and ignoring the supreme value of our truly wonderful human mind, can have no intelligent concept of the magnitude of the problems of today.

The social urgency of our age has no time for a weak and foolish God's-in-his-heaven-and-all's-right-with-the-world attitude. We require, we need, we should demand a philosophy of vibrant living, of the sheer strength and power and, yes, *glory* of scientific facts.

Human life is the most precious thing in the universe. Any book which shows us the whole vast panorama of human history — brilliant, ugly, cruel, gentle, beautiful, all together — and which seeks and strives and longs for betterment, must surely be priceless. Why should there be war, when there could be peace? Why should there be poverty, when there could be plenty? Why should there be ugliness, when there could be such beauty? Why, oh why?

But no book is a treasure lying dusty on the shelf. Its ideas derive value only as they give us daily help in our lives and in our view of life. To weave their value into

a humanist philosophy of living must be our purpose. We should seek sound, solid, scientific books, books worthy of being books to think with in our lives.

The fact of the as yet low development of the average mind seems to me to be of basic importance in any attempt at understanding human social life to-day. Julian Huxley has written that the average mind is very distorted and stunted. Charles Duff refers to the psychological surveys of two World Wars which amply prove this. With this fact in mind, we may better understand what he calls "the basic immorality of modern man" so that at times like social revolutions and wars "we are, to all intents and purposes, not far above the level of jungle beasts." Again, "The psychologist Freud has pointed out in his own quiet but logical manner that it is not that masses of people sink very low in time of war, but that they are never in times of peace so high as they believe."

Too often human nature is the result of poor emotions pushing and shoving human behaviour all around. What if the mind takes over the guidance and control of behaviour? Will this not give us a whole new concept of human nature? Would human nature not then become *humanist* nature?

The human mind is the most important thing in the world today. Modern science is the genius child of the mind. Whether humanity follows science or not will determine whether the long evolutionary development of our human mind is just a mere flash in the cosmos or will become the great swelling power of the universe.

Not a Cock Dove

By P. G. ROY

THE HAZIEST personage in a altogether nebulous partnership is *Spiritus Sanctus*, the Holy Spirit (generally, but inaccurately referred to as "Holy Ghost" too). This division of the Godhead is far too abstract to be of interest for the layman; if evoked, it is conceived in the shape of its symbol, the dove (Matth. xvi., 7) or in connection with the Annunciation that the child conceived in the Virgin "is of the Holy Ghost" (Matth. i., 20). From this instance people came to infer that the Spirit was a kind of illegitimate father. This, however, is a gross mistake.

The first victims of man's pathological reaction to social ills — religion — could not conceive abstract ideas either. The Spirit of God, though emanated from the Godhead (John, xv., 26), was thought of as a personality quite apart from god and yet intrinsically united with him; both co-exist and the creation was the result of their co-operation. (cf. Job XXVI, 13; Jes. xi., 1-2). God is the representative of everything supernatural, His Spirit, however, is his intelligence in particular. Here we have the same "split personality" as in the Creation story where first of all light is created, and last of all sun and moon (vers 14ff), because even without the sun being visible there can be daylight.

The Spirit of God (*rûakh*) we find at the very beginning (Gen. i., 2) moving upon the 'face of the waters', hovering above the world and sitting on the Universal Egg to hatch it (cf. Easter egg) in the way of a bird. This bird — as the divine intelligence — was considered the female component of the divinity, whose perfection is demonstrated through the assumed unity of the male and female principles.

Representing, as it does, the female principle, the Holy Spirit is identical with the Virgin-Mother (and its age-old symbol, the dove); the birth of the Saviour is but the mystical expression of the *Ver sacrum*, the rebirth, every Spring, of the rejuvenated godfather for the sake of mankind. This easily explains the 'mystery' of the hypostasis, the unity of three in one.

However, it has to be maintained as a mystery and since the 9th century there has existed a schism between the oriental churches and the others about the problem whether the Spirit emanates from the Father only or from both the Father and Son (filioque.).

Life begins when for the first time the new-born starts breathing; it is eventually exhaled in the last breath. The conclusion for the primitive mind was, that the breath itself is the divine something that makes life possible; it is the mysterious 'Soul' that god breathed into the nostrils of man (Gen., ii., 7.), and as this immortal breath or Spirit of life is part of God, he manifests himself as breath or wind or storm. The Old Testament has *rûakh* for 'Spirit', from the root *rûkh*—to breathe cognate with *rêakh*—smell; its primary meaning was "air in motion" that can be smelt, heard and, as wind, felt. Similarly the Germanic Odin or Woden, *Woutan* is derived from 'blowing' of the wind, German *wehen* and *Atem* (breath) — cf. Atmosphere, the sphere of air, and the Indian Atman.

If audible, the Spirit becomes Logos, the Divine Word of pre-existence, identical with God (John i, 1f.), and together they created everything. Generally it is too weak for everybody to detect, only the elect prophets are able to hear and understand it; however, in the Talmud the Spirit of JHWH has become "A Voice", or *Bath-qôl* (Daughter of a Voice) to pronounce divine decisions to the world at large ("A Voice fell from Heaven to announce that by decision of the Heavenly College Rab So-and-So was removed from the living as his counsel was necessary in Heaven"). When the Holy Spirit settled upon the saints, it endowed them with superhuman knowledge, hence Logos, the word, is tantamount to Wisdom. Tamar, Rebecca, Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Esther, Abigail and even Rahab, the harlot — all the "Mothers of Israel were prophetesses", since they all, like Mary, the Virgin, were nothing but various forms of the Mother Virgin, the female principle of the virgin soil that conceived through the divine spirit, when in spring the equinoctial storms blow. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." (Ps. 32/6).

Targum Jerushalami, the translation of the O.T. into Aramaic, takes the first word of the Canon ("Bere-shith"—at the Beginning) as another form of *rûakh* and renders it as "Cochmah"—Wisdom, this starting: Through (the female principle of) Wisdom (*Cochmah*, *Logos*) the *Elohim* (gods) were created by "It".

As a Dove the Holy Spirit became manifest on the occasion of the Baptism of Jesus (Matth. iii., 16) with the simultaneous sounding of a Voice from heaven; out of the water also comes Jonah, Hebrew for Dove. In the temple of Jerusalem doves were sold for sacrifice (Mark xi., 15); they were considered as endowed with the prophetic wisdom. Under the constellation of the Pleiades the Spring Sun reaches "firm soil" after having been submerged in the "watery" region of the Ecliptic; tradition has it that from this constellation the spring storms emanate. Pleiades is derived from Greek *peleis* — stock dove, wild pigeon. This is how this bird acquired aquatic connection with the real bird never possessed; *peleia* — the sailing one, and Latin: *columba*, from Greek *Kolumb*—to swim, *kolumbo* — to dive, hence the Dove (cf. to dip, immerse for baptism).

Probably it was thought that a bird diving down from the skies may have overheard what the gods are scheming. *Peleiei* were the priestesses of the prophetic Dove of the shrine at Dodona; in 'augury' and 'auspices'—the interpretation of the flight and behaviour of birds — "au" is contracted from Lt. *avis* — bird.

Bath-quôl is the equivalent in Judaism and the Holy Spirit equals them in Christianity; as, however, a female deity was inappropriate, the Virgin had eventually to be superseded in the Trinity by that abstract mist which the Spirit of God in its beginning never had been.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE BBC JESUS

It is growingly obvious that the more and more the BBC occupies itself with "presenting Christianity" to viewers and listeners, the more and more glib does the BBC become in presenting misleading statements, or in being jesuitically dissembling, about Christianity. In her article, "Jesus of Nazareth," for instance, Miss Bartlett writes (*Radio Times*, April 12th) that it was a "stroke of genius" that the first scenes on TV, February 12th, 1956, did not portray the birth of Our Lord and the infancy stories. As her reason for this genius-stroke she says that it eliminated "the sentimentality which has so often clouded the presentation of the message of the Incarnation."

Really! I suppose the thought of a child-viewer asking where Jesus' Daddy was in all this "cloudy sentimentality" never crossed her mind. The question is so easy to answer honestly and intelligently, even to a child.

There are millions of husbands living today who also would have been struck dumb had they been told to believe what poor old Joseph was told. That a body of people, claiming to be educated, should show on TV this "Cycle of Plays" to children, as portraying the historically true life of a being called Jesus, who actually was the Incarnate Son of the Christian God, this—in plain English—I regard as a crime which, in the light of present-day Biblical scholarship, is absolutely unforgivable.

ELIZABETH MILLARD.

NO MATTER?

I wonder why Mr. Cutner is so sure that matter was in existence before mind. The problem depends to a large extent on the definition of mind. The most elementary forms of matter exhibit properties of attraction and repulsion, and it is hardly straining language to say that this property is the basic factor of what we call mind. There would appear to be no separate problem of the creation of mind.

HENRY MEULEN.

[Mr. Cutner writes: No matter what any definition of mind discloses, the fact remains that this world of ours was once a "gaseous red-hot ball" and life—and later "mind" in some form—could only appear when the conditions on it allowed. But perhaps Mr. Meulen believes that when a magnet attracts or repels, that this shows definitively a mind before matter at work?]

SCOTS WHA HAE...

How dare Mr. Ridley say that Scotland was "the first colony of the English Empire"! Has he forgotten Bannockburn, when the English king failed ignominiously to bring Scotland under English rule? Scotland was never conquered, but inveigled into union by the ambitious and self-seeking Stuarts—and it took more than a hundred years after that to achieve the so-called union of the Parliaments!—this in 1707, by "manipulation" and forced "agreement."

(Mrs.) L. B. WELLS.

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