

The Freethinker

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RELIGIOUS ORTHODOXY (Christian variety) has at least partly recovered from the nasty knocks it received in the late nineteenth century, when biologists accepted the concept of evolution as basic to their science. The development of man from a single-celled organism (for some reason the amœba was singled out for this honour) is usually accepted by non-fundamentalists as having proceeded without special divine intervention except during the last stage when an ape-man suddenly and mysteriously acquired a "soul." Though evolution has been accepted by all but the most prejudiced or ignorant, many religious people still find comfort in the thought that scientists have so far been unable to explain in purely physico-chemical terms how life originated in the first place. The inability of biologists to put forward specific and plausible theories, and their reluctance in many cases to discuss the matter, have encouraged the religious to think that here at any rate we have to fall back on some sort of "divine spark" which started things going. The argument is usually clinched by the statement that scientists have been unable to produce life in a test tube.

Two recent developments, both encouraged by experimental research, have combined to make speculation on the origin of life a little less vague than it has been in the past. One of these relates to the nature of the earth's primitive atmosphere and the chemical changes which occurred in it. The other is concerned with biochemical studies on the composition and replication of viruses.

Astrochemists (who deal with the gross chemistry of suns and solar systems) are fairly well convinced that the atmosphere of the earth in its early stages, some 3,000 million years ago, consisted mainly of methane, ammonia and water vapour. These are the three major components (though existing as liquids and solids rather than as gases) of the outer layers of the large planets, Jupiter and Saturn. Low temperatures, weak solar radiation and powerful gravitational forces have slowed down chemical change on these major planets. But it was otherwise in the case of our earth. Here solar radiation decomposed some of the water vapour into hydrogen and oxygen. The lighter hydrogen went off into space leaving the oxygen to react with the methane (CH_4) to give carbon dioxide (CO_2) and more water. When plants developed very much later, they assimilated the carbon and set free the oxygen, thus producing our modern atmosphere and making animal life possible.

Views current when I was a student in the 1920's assumed that the first forms of life were autotrophic. This word means "self-feeding" or plant-like. Plants are able to make organic foods from water, CO_2 and minerals in the presence of sunlight and through the action of the green pigment, chlorophyll. This process is known as photosynthesis, and recent research has shown it to be extremely complicated. It now seems unlikely that the first forms of life were capable of photosynthesis.

The view now put forward is that the first organisms were heterotrophic, or "other-feeding" (like modern bacteria, fungi and animals), and arose in an environment in which organic matter was already present. This seems to involve a logical impossibility, for how could organic matter be formed before there was life to produce it?

The answer has come from the American chemist, S. L. Miller. In 1953 he investigated the effects of passing electric sparks through a mixture of methane, ammonia, CO_2 and water vapour, the assumed constituents of our early atmosphere. He obtained quantities of amino acids and other organic compounds. J. B. S. Haldane had already suggested (in 1929) that such organic

compounds could have been formed under primitive conditions by ultra-violet radiation, and some of Miller's experiments have tended to confirm this. Thus from two sources, solar radiation and lightning flashes, organic matter was probably formed and would have accumulated in the primitive oceans, turning them into a sort of soup. The conditions would thus have been prepared for the development of heterotrophic organisms, or what Bernal calls "dark catabolic life." How this dark catabolic life could in fact have arisen is still the subject of considerable speculation, but some interesting pointers arise from recent work on viruses, which I shall now briefly describe.

The viruses are extremely small particles which multiply in living cells and cause well-known diseases in animals and plants. They cannot be seen with ordinary microscopes, but have recently been photographed by the electron microscope. The plant viruses are very small indeed. They are comparable in size to large organic molecules and consist entirely of nucleoprotein. They can be crystallised like other chemical compounds and have been described as standing on the borderline between the living and the non-living.

In 1955 Fränkel-Conrat and Williams separated the tobacco mosaic virus (TMV) into its two constituents, nucleic acid and protein. They then put these two chemicals together and reconstituted the virus. They proved that the synthetic virus was identical with the original one by injecting it into healthy tobacco plants, which then contracted the disease. It has also been shown that living cells can make virus if the specific nucleic acid alone is injected.

The TMV experiment is the nearest biologists have come to making life in a test tube. No one, however, has succeeded in growing a virus outside a living cell. If a virus could be found or made which would multiply in a non-living organic medium, we should be well on our way to discovering the secret of the origin of life.

Nucleic acids have already been synthesised in the laboratory. That they could have been formed in the primitive ocean seems highly probable. Proteins are known to consist of large numbers of amino acids linked together. Amino acids have been made from certain gases by artificial lightning flashes. It is clear that the search for the origin of life has reached the experimental stage.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Speculations on the Origin of Life

—By DR. EDWARD ROUX—

Ten Years of Freedom

By DAVE SHIPPER

I HAVE AT LAST been able to contact the Secretary of the League to Prevent Religious Coercion in Israel—Mr. Uzzi Ornan, of Jerusalem. Mr. Ornan was interested to learn that there was "One World" concerning religious compulsion (in my letter I had included the aims and objects of the National Secular Society and the American Rationalist Federation), although he expressed a belief that in Britain the interference with religious and secular beliefs and customs was much less than in Israel.

Incidentally, Mr. Ornan's notepaper was headed with the League's title in Hebrew and three slogans across the bottom of the page (translated from the Hebrew) were: "Freedom of Menu," "Sabbath Without Chains," and "Civil Marriage." He says that the League has scarcely functioned during the last two years, but it is hoped to inaugurate new activity in the future. He included an 18-page pamphlet (in Hebrew), which was issued by the League some time ago, attacking the lack of civil marriage facilities in Israel.

Two letters which appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* during 1955 are reproduced. The first asks: "If in the United States, or any other country, a law were proposed to bar marriages between Christians and Jews, would not all Jews protest vigorously?" The second states bluntly: "In this century there have been only two countries in which a Jew was not allowed to marry a Christian: Nazi Germany and Israel."

An attached letter to Knesset (Israeli Parliament) points out that the Marriage and Divorce Law of August 1953 and the general laws covering personal status in Israel are obviously contradictory to the principles of the Declaration of Independence, the Law of Equal Rights for Women and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. The laws are defective from both legal and civil viewpoints. The personal status laws discriminate against women. For instance, a Jewish man has the right to divorce and remarry if a wife is certified insane. A wife does not possess this right if the husband is certified, but must remain legally shackled for life.

The personal status laws discriminate against Israeli citizens in *religious matters*. For instance, a non-Jewish citizen is debarred from testifying before a rabbinical court—even when such testimony is necessary to the carrying out of justice. The personal status laws discriminate against citizens with *certain surnames*. For instance, a citizen named Cohen, Katz, Kaplan or Rappaport is not permitted to marry a divorced woman—even if the woman was divorced by himself.

These laws also discriminate against the *origin* of citizens. A non-Jewish woman—even if she accepts Judaism—is forbidden to marry a man whose ancestors were called Cohen, Katz, Kaplan or Rappaport. They discriminate, too, concerning *affiliation to a religious community*. Citizens not belonging to a "recognised" religious community are unable *under any circumstances* to marry. Citizens belonging to separate communities are unable to marry each other. Marriages between Orthodox and Karaite Jews are not possible. Marriages between Israeli Catholic Christians and Israeli Orthodox Christians are impossible. Marriages performed in Israel and joining Israeli Protestants of all kinds are illegal.

The personal status laws *force* citizens to *change* their religion. For instance, the Jew wishing to marry a non-Jew, the Moslem wishing to marry a non-Moslem, and the

Christian wishing to marry a non-Christian are unable to unless they (or their partners) agree to a "conversion." Naturally, such a "conversion" is purely a formality, bringing little credit to the "old" religion, the "new" one (accepted under legal duress), or the State which compels such absurdities. The League underlines the fact that the law of personal status and the regulations which grow out of them, make Israel a theocratic state, contradicting the very freedom of conscience and religion which the state has claimed to protect.

Therefore, the League desires the Knesset to pass legislation providing every Israeli citizen with an alternative to religious marriage and divorce and asks for legislation to protect citizens from discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, religion, or community affiliation.

Pink Spots at the Vatican

IN A POLEMIC ARTICLE published in the Hamburg *Die Andere Zeitung*, the well-known educationalist, Dr. G. Wyneken, thus accused the S.P.D. (Social Democratic Party of Germany) of being squarely responsible for the fact that in the Federal Republic the Church has acquired an unchallengeable position of increasing power: "The Christian 'Community' School—now introduced in several Länders—is a recent S.P.D. invention; and I doubt whether this creation be compatible with article 7 of the Constitution (Grundgesetz). Sometimes even a priest may join the S.P.D., yet one white raven makes no difference to the colour of raven."

In Bavaria the S.P.D. Chairman, W. von Knöringen, harangued 200 top officials to make them familiar with the new era of official flirtation between S.P.D. and Vatican. In either camp this new approach has already been sanctioned by their highest authorities. "It would mark our finest progress if the Roman Catholic Church could be persuaded to discard her political monopoly (with Adenauer's party) and instead saw fit to be represented through the S.P.D. too. Where that world begins that is beyond proof, Socialism has to come to a halt, for that higher plane cannot be regulated through any party programme."

For the discussions on this matter, in which Herr Knöringen, together with three other Labour leaders and Dr. Drimmel, the Austrian Minister for Religious Affairs, will represent the secular side, the Pope has nominated two Jesuits of his closest entourage. If a compromise can be concluded with Rome, similar deliberations are to follow with the Protestant Church.

To create the appropriate climate within the party, the S.P.D. women's paper, *Gleichheit* (Equality) has regularly published biographies of female "Saints," such as St. Catherina of Siena, St. Theresa of Avila, Mathilda of Essen, Hildegard of Bingen, etc.

All this has been capped by *Solidarität*, the Central Organ of the Austrian T.U.C. (1.4 million membership). For the first time since the existence of organised labour all the Christian bishops published their Christmas message in the Christmas issue of that organ, stressing the excellent behaviour of the Austrian leaders of Social Democracy. König, Archbishop of Vienna, expressed his particular pleasure at this occasion.

P. G. ROY.

An Anglican Modernist

By F. A. RIDLEY

AMONG THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES in the world, the Anglican Communion, "the Church of England by law established," to give it its proper name, holds an exceptional place. Inside the bounds of this typically English product of Reformation theology and of political compromise, there are to be found theological views of the most widely divergent character. In the same Church, often actually in the same diocese, one notes Anglo-Catholics who are often more papal than the Pope and who sometimes regard the Roman Church as a low Church, and some Protestant institution; Evangelical Protestants who still regard Rome as anti-Christ and believe every word recorded in the Bible—from Genesis to Revelation—and "Broad" Churchmen—nowadays usually described as modernists, who often occupy a semi-rationalistic position and indeed, are at times definitely more radical in their attitude to Biblical criticism than are most of our current very reverend "rationalists." All these diverse groupings, who tail off into innumerable shades, are still united within the Anglican fold, and a Marxist could make out a very plausible case here for the theory of economic determinism. Without impugning the individual sincerity of the people concerned, it is none the less an interesting point how long this theological Tower of Babel would continue to exist were it not for the still fairly abundant "loaves and fishes" provided for by the Establishment. However, to a connoisseur in theological matters, the Church of England represents a rather diverting spectacle; its now perhaps inevitable disestablishment and subsequent disintegration, while no doubt in line with current progress, will certainly diminish the gaiety of nations.

In a recently issued book, *The New Church in the New Age*, an Anglican clergyman, the Rev. C. O. Rhodes, gives us a good deal of information about the Church which, chronologically, can hardly be termed "new," since it celebrates its fourth centenary this year, that is, if one chooses the first Queen Elizabeth from several claimants for the title of its effective founder, as perhaps we should be justified in doing. (Henry VIII, Edward VI and even Wycliffe may perhaps be regarded as alternative candidates). During this fairly long period the essential characteristics of the English Church have become historic property. On the whole, it seems reasonable to define this now historic institution as a "mixed grill." At its worst, the Anglican Church was a *class* institution if ever there was one—"God bless the squire and his relations"; "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate"; "The Tory Party at prayer." All such descriptions find ample justification in the Anglican Church of earlier centuries. On the bonus side, this Church produced some fine scholars and did a lot of quiet, but currently effective social work, in particular in the country parishes of the pre-Welfare State era. One might also add that it proved an effective barrier to both Catholic and Protestant fanaticism, for "Christianity, no Enthusiasm," the title of a 17th century Anglican theological work, was for long its effective motto. However, our present Anglican author is a modernist—in fact, secretary of the Modern Churchman's Union, as well as Editor of *The Church of England Newspaper*.

Mr. Rhodes's book is not easy to review; it is scrappy, discursive and, like the "solitary elephant" of Stephen Leacock, "dashes off in all directions." Unlike his Anglo-Catholic Thomist colleague, Dr. Mascall (whose book I reviewed recently), Mr. Rhodes does not give the impression of being an intellectual or a trained theologian who

sticks consistently to a single theme. Mr. Rhodes writes more like a journalist (which he is) and manages to skim over a vast amount of ground in his 250 odd pages. One will find his facts and views on a multitude of subjects, from the personal character of Dr. Fisher to the author's views on birth control and divorce, and from the workings of the Lambeth Conference to the best way to "sell" religion on TV—on which, I understand, Mr. Rhodes is a seasoned performer. What eventually emerges from this multitudinous mishmash is evidently a Church with a "New Look," which may not astonish the second Elizabeth but would certainly have astonished the first, had, for example, that staunch believer in the Divine Right of Kings—and Queens—foreseen what havoc universal suffrage would play with her aristocratic foundation. However, if no theologian, Mr. Rhodes is evidently an experienced man of affairs and the reader who wants facts and figures about the current organisation of "our" National Church, will find quite a lot of them in this discursive but often informative book, including, incidentally, quite a plausible defence of that much-criticised body, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who administer the revenues of the Church.

Mr. Rhodes, who appears from his book to be a reasonable and modest man with a generally liberal and tolerant outlook in both social and religious matters, will not, I think, object if we say that while he is the organiser of current Anglican Modernism, he is not one of its intellectuals. While he talks a good deal about a "New Church" in a "New Age," he gives us very little definite information as to what exactly that Church will really look like and, in particular, whether its modernist theology will be viable in a world which appears to have increasingly little use for any theological view of the universe, and to which organised religion appears to be increasingly irrelevant. In the course of the present century, Anglican Modernists, clergymen of far more impressive intellectual attainments than most today, men like Barnes, Inge and Hardwicke, have attempted this task, to all present appearances, unsuccessfully. But there lies the real problem for Christian Modernism as for all other forms of Christianity. Is Christianity—any sort of Christianity—true? Can its now largely obsolete theology—as all the above Modernists, as well as Mr. Rhodes, agree that it is—be actually reconstructed so as to reply to the profound criticisms now directed against its historic foundation and claims? Do the Thirty-Nine Articles, or even the Creeds, really mean anything in the context of the universe depicted by Einstein, Darwin and Freud? Does God—a *moral* god—exist? Are human beings immortal? Was Christ God, or at the very least, was he unique in any recognisable historical sense? It is in its potential ability to answer such fundamental questions as these, rather than in giving a "New Look" to an obviously disintegrating theological system, that the real test of Modernism lies. We must say that while a lot of useful facts are to be found in Mr. Rhodes' new book, we do not find any serious attempt to answer such questions nor even any serious recognition of their absolutely fundamental significance. Modernism, like more traditional forms of Christianity, must first *prove* that Christianity itself is true. Otherwise the numerous facts and figures so industriously assembled by our author, are mere bricks without straw, and so much wasted time.

This Believing World

The Bishop of Leicester has, we are pleased to say, told his followers that they have a "unique chance to put Christianity on the map" between May 30 and June 8 when the Anglican and Free Churches are combining "in an impressive programme." They are getting "the best possible team of speakers," and are expending large sums of money—we hope without a wrench—and a number of interesting events and "rallies" have been planned. But surely attempts have been made to put Christianity on the map thousands of times with very little result during the past 2,000 years? And it does strike blatant infidels like ourselves extraordinary that they have so often signally failed. Were they not on the right lines? Was not "our Lord" implored in all of them to bring his erring sheep back into the fold? But why were they erring?

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In any case, we cannot help wondering whether the well-paid teams of speakers will visit that haven of unbelief known to all the people of Leicester in Humberstone Gate where, perhaps, they could meet another team of speakers who would be glad to see how much of Christianity could be put on a map after the encounter. Perhaps Humberstone Gate will be given a very wide berth by all enthusiastic Christian speakers. We could not in our heart of hearts blame them.

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The "Daily Mirror" the other day published some photographs showing numbers of ferocious dogs tearing a stag to pieces before a gallant huntsman was able to put a bullet into the unfortunate animal. It would not be unfair to say that the "humans" involved in this bestial cruelty are all believing Christians, and would be terribly shocked if suspected of any sympathy with infidelity. Perhaps the Bishop of Leicester or any other Christian champion will tell us why "our Lord" never uttered a word in defence of helpless animals? Was it possible that the Jews in Palestine during the time of Jesus never savagely hunted one to its death?

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According to the Rev. D. Rhymes, of All Saints Church, New Eltham, although "God is in control of history," the young (as he calls them) "are losing hope." But we are not at all clear what he means by "hope," any more than when he talks of their "frustration." Fifty years ago, boys left school, many before they were fourteen, and were glad to get jobs as "errand boys" at a few—a very few—shillings a week. And they worked long hours. So did the girls. Mr. Rhymes should find out what girls were paid in the "box of matches" profession. It would be safe to say that never in history, whether God had anything to do with it or not, have the "young" been so well paid for so little work—in this country at least. But in any case, what has God to do with it?

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Although many Christians, particularly the devout members of Mothers' Unions, violently oppose Birth Control, the fact remains that the more intelligent ones recognise that there is a Population Problem in the world; and even the Roman Church welcomed what is called the "safe period." Now, at the coming Lambeth Conference of the Church of England, one of the points to be discussed will be whether the Church is going wholeheartedly to recommend (even Mothers' Union members) the use of a newly found contraceptive. Instead of the usual methods, this new discovery means simply the swallowing of a few pills. But whether the Conference approves or not, the fact remains Christians have always been wrong in the past about Birth Control, and Freethinkers always right.

The TV's religious "meeting point" the other Sunday took the form of the Rev. M. L. Edwards answering questions by coloured students in this country who were Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus as well as Christians—some on social subjects, others on religious ones, but all from devout believers. There was hardly a breath of any kind of heresy; and Dr. Edwards beamed happily as he disposed of everything in the name of Jesus. Of course, there were other religions and other beliefs, but it was obvious there was only one, true one; and the students had about as much chance with him as the average Australian aborigine would have had. We wonder what Dr. Edwards would have done with fully instructed unbelief? Perhaps even "our Lord" would have failed him then!

Chosen Question

By G. H. TAYLOR

HERE ARE TWO QUESTIONS about evolution:

(1) *As believers in evolution we often use the argument from embryological recapitulation, in which the developing embryo goes roughly through the stages of evolution from the remotest fish-like ancestry. However, some stages are nearly always missing and, according to Catholics, they are filled by nothing more substantial than the scientists' imagination. What are your comments?*

(2) *Though the evidence for evolutionary development within established species is incontrovertible, scientists cannot convert one species into another, cannot get one species out of another. Does not this suggest that the species themselves are specially created and fixed, thus to give the Catholic the chance to point to God as the original Creator?*

The answer to the first is, briefly, that recapitulation serves no biological service and this is why it tends to disappear. In some cases it is as complete as one would wish for purposes of demonstration. Nevertheless, those organisms in which some of the characters of recapitulation are dropped suffer no corresponding loss of vitality in comparison with their fellows. At the stage represented by *homo sapiens* the characters have had time to begin to wear off.

In the second question, there is a false assumption that science cannot produce new species, but, even if it could not, it would by no means prove that "God" was the right answer. It would merely prove that biologists had so far been thwarted in their attempts to imitate nature in this connection.

In point of fact they have not been thwarted. The first experimenter to produce a new species was, I think, Muntzing. Taking *galeopsis specioza* and *galeopsis pubescens* of the same species, he obtained an entirely new species in *g. tetrahit*. The case is noted by J. B. S. Haldane in *Science and the Supernatural*. Elsewhere he remarks that "The gap between species is bridged not only by evolution in the past but in some cases at any rate by hybridisation in the present." (*The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences*.)

And while the scientist cannot change marsupials into monkeys, geology shows that evolution has had countless ages at its disposal. Those who contend that science cannot do this, that and the other, must show that it cannot do these things in equal time. That is the factor they always conveniently ignore.

If the anti-evolutionists really want to prove their case, let them find an anachronism such as the skull of a lion or a horse in the early coal measures, or a human tooth in a coal seam. To use the expression of Wells and Huxley (*The Science of Life*), "Evolution is proven up to the hilt."

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TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

Hon. Managing Editor: W. GRIFFITHS.

Hon. Editorial Committee:

F. A. HORNIBROOK, COLIN MCCALL and G. H. TAYLOR.

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 welcome during normal office hours.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

NEIL MCEWAN.—The terms idiot and imbecile have definable referents. Idiots cannot avoid such dangers as hot stoves, fire or deep water, and cannot dress or care for their persons. Imbeciles can avoid common dangers and the high-grade ones can perform simple tasks under supervision.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff).—Tuesday, May 27th, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Freewills, Freethought and Determinism."

OUTDOOR

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

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. F. HAMILTON, E. MILLS.

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday: N.S.S. Conference Demonstration, 6.15 p.m. Speakers will include Messrs. J. W. BARKER, F. J. CORINA, H. DAY, L. EBURY, T. M. MOSLEY and D. SHIPPER.

Notes and News

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held this Sunday from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 and 2.30 p.m. to 4.30, in the Co-operative Hall, Nottingham, at the invitation of Nottingham Branch N.S.S. It will be preceded by a reception in the same hall on Saturday, May 24th, at 7 p.m., and will be followed by an open air demonstration at the Old Market Place, Nottingham, on Sunday evening at 6.15 p.m. Speakers will include two Vice-Presidents, Mr. L. Ebury and Mr. T. M. Mosley. Those who wish to attend but have not booked their rooms should write to the General Secretary without delay.

On Whit Monday morning a visit will be made to Nottingham Castle.

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ON Saturday, June 21st, it is hoped to hold a Bradlaugh meeting in Northampton in front of the newly renovated statue. Arrangements have been made for a coach to leave Red Lion Square, London, at 1 p.m., and the cost, including tea, will be approximately £1. Seats are bookable at this office.

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THE recently formed Humanist Group at University College, London, held its biggest meeting to date, on Tuesday, May 20th, when Professor A. J. Ayer was the speaker. Now the Group is hoping to spread into other London Colleges and, if possible, become a London University Group. The major difficulty to overcome in the case of

London—as distinct from Oxford and Cambridge—is its diffusion.

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MRS. MARGARET KNIGHT followed her splendid letter in *The Observer* (11/5/58) with an equally valuable article in the *New Statesman* (17/5/58). This article presented the case for more BBC broadcasting time, both clearly and succinctly. Mrs. Knight mentioned that a current series of 32 talks to sixth forms on religion included three talks on Humanism given by "a philosopher with theistic leanings" and two "active Christian apologists." The Religious Broadcasting Department was "something of an anomaly," she said; there were no special departments for broadcasting on politics, science or literature. Only a high-level change of policy can remove this anomaly, she added. "Is it too much to hope that such a change may be considered—if not immediately, then, at any rate before the BBC's charter comes up for renewal in 1962?"

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THE Archbishop of Milan recently remarked that the scientific marvels of our time could well lead to the discovery of God. The Wise Men, he said, had been led by a star—"a scientific, physical and experimental fact"—to find Christ. Their point of departure, he added, was a scientific study that didn't remain an end in itself, but became the sign of a more important reality." The author of this, it should be remembered, is tipped by many as the likely successor to his close friend, Pius XII.

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OTHER news on the Roman Catholic front is that the Catholic Cinema Centre in Rome has announced its intention of building a further 1,500 cinemas in Italy. The Church already owns 5,930 cinemas in Italy. We hear, too, that 30,000 American pilgrims are expected to visit Lourdes in this, the centenary year of what Dr. J. V. Duhig called "the cruellest swindle of modern times." For both these news items we are indebted to *The Faith of Malta* (May 1958).

The English Mecca

PEOPLE who set themselves to cultivate superstition do not always limit their activity to the repetition of conventional religious fables, but they joyfully welcome anything to do with the supernatural, the fantastic, clairvoyance or mystical phenomena; anything, in short, which can strengthen the appeal of traditional cults. This passion for mystical cults is aptly illustrated by an account we have just received about Coombs Springs, the English mecca. Coombs Springs is a mansion in the suburbs of London, a former extravagance of Edward VII when Prince of Wales—now transformed into a monastery for the use of the faithful adherents of Pak Subuh, the Indonesian *Mahatma*. This Pak Subuh is invisible and silent; no one has ever met him except his first disciple, John Bennett, who has proclaimed himself to be the mouthpiece of the Indonesian sage and who works miracles in his name.

John Bennett is a former colonel in the English Army who, as the result of a war wound received in his head, has become a clairvoyant and a prophet, and has devoted himself to the study of Oriental occultists. He has passed on the results of his researches for the advantage of the numerous devotees of Coombs Springs, and he is able to express clearly for their benefit the hidden thoughts of the wise man of Java who transported himself to Coombs Springs, attracted by a telepathic communication from Bennett.

John Bennett, spokesman of Pak Subuh, says what was said 4,000 years ago by the unknown authors of the Vedas, the same that was later taught by the masters of Yogi, the inspired teachers of Humanity, Buddha, Lao-Tse, Laotse, Confucius, Mahomet, the hermits of the desert, the Muslim Sufis, the Tibetan monks and, quite recently, by the enigmatic Georges Gurdjieff, who founded the most important esoteric sect in the modern world.

If such a galaxy of genius can't "teach" us something, who the devil can?

[*Defense de l'Homme*, January. Translated by F.A.R.]

My Years as a Monk

By O. C. DREWITT (EX-FATHER NORBERT, O.P.)

(Continued from page 159)

THE mechanisms of defence will, among other phenomena, manifest themselves in unnatural forms of hatred, in obsessional rituals, in fear of the body and human love, and in denial of reality. The Russian girl, Zarial Haliliva, after spending a happy day on the beach at Baku, was killed by her family because the morality of the Orthodox Church had taught them that wearing a bathing costume was obscene. In Latin Europe the heretic, like the witch, was similarly thought unclean and the *auto-da-fé* was an obsessional rite of purification involving projected guilt and vicarious punishment. Pathological mechanisms of the same kind are at work in recent pronouncements of the Vatican and the Spanish hierarchy on the "provocative fashions" of women.

On the other hand, the products of idealisation can be seductively rich and colourful. Their unworthiness will in such cases be more fully disguised by secondary tingeing with sexual feelings and unconscious phantasies that have been denied. This was alluded to in connection with current form of religious art and "devotion." The principle is equally applicable to the symbolism of the feudal Church and the clue to all sentimentality lies in this game of pretence played by the ideals, which, moreover, never give peace owing to the ambivalent attitude of religion to anything sexually coloured. Unconsciously the inchoate breakthrough of libidinal impulses is both loved and feared. There is continued oscillation between pleasure and feelings of guilt.

The character of the ideals can, however, be ascertained by robbing them of the love-energy they have themselves stolen from the natural drives, for when that is done the mystical feelings associated with them disappear. The associated anxiety and guilt, and the sense that one is bound to propitiate these ideal fictions, disappear simultaneously.

The projection of rejected impulses and unconscious phantasies associated with idealisation-denigration gives rise to the compulsive hold of the idea of God, and to mystical feelings of a deity immanent in nature and in the symbols of the Catholic religion. In a deeper sense the "compulsive hold" is an illusion resulting from an attitude of resistance to the biological core, which also gives rise to feelings about the Devil and evil, and about the "unclean" character of irreligious or heretical bodies and normal patterns of living. The environment, organic and inorganic, becomes invested with projected forces which crawl over it. In extreme, psychotic cases they appear to do so literally. The world of nature is obscured by "devotional" feelings from heaven and tempting shadows from hell. A hundred-page report of a case of this type is given by Reich in his *Character Analysis*, which, although its author abandoned psychoanalysis, remains an important contribution to the subject. The patient was a schizophrenic Irish girl who felt dark forces crawling around her. That they were protoplasmic, biophysical currents due to libidinal excitation, and projected, is made abundantly plain by Reich's report. Similarly, in the religious life of the Middle Ages the superficial glamour falsifies reality.

It introduces between man and nature both a sentimental haze and an accompanying fear. The island universes have been pushed away and a small terrifying world substituted. You find it reflected in the poetry of Dante or the paintings of Fra Angelico. Not until the rise of science, with Copernicus and Galileo, do the natural colour and struc-

ture of reality begin to appear.

Another feature of the religious character is the infantile nature of the libidinal and aggressive impulses at work in it. This is brought out in the obsessional practices of monastic life, such as the innumerable prayers and acts of reparation. The scrupulous washings of fingers and vessels at Communion, the kissing of the scapular, the fear of contact with "the world," the accumulation of pious antics and the collecting of indulgences that go with them—all these, together with the meticulously ordered time-table, are paralleled by the clinical picture of the obsessional neurosis.

A description was given earlier of the practices connected with the wafer at Communion. They arose from the prohibition to take anything through the mouth before Mass, and the obligation to swallow the wafer whole, without biting it, and to see that no crumbs fell. We said that these rules, with the cleaning, scraping and washing that concluded the rite, pointed to neurotic anxiety and guilt. Attention has again been drawn to parallels in neurotic patients. The wafer in Holy Communion largely represents what is called an "idealised object," which has to be incorporated through the mouth, but uninjured. If you bite it, you become a cannibal. The unconscious meaning of the process is another example of regression to infantile sexuality. A mature psychosexual organisation would never require it. Further, in the mental disease called manic-depressive insanity, just as parallels to mania can be traced in mystical exaltation, so, in depression, parallels can be found to these religious practices. Melanie Klein, the child analyst and leader of the controversial "English" school, has made an interesting contribution to the problem of how such mechanisms arise in the infant.

That all monks are manic-depressives or obsessional neurotics does not, of course, follow from the foregoing analysis, any more than it follows that all Catholics are schizophrenics. What does follow is that the Church, in governing its members, makes use of unconscious processes familiar to psychopathology. Among the laity the activity of these processes is maintained through suppression in childhood and through a form of marriage where the permitted love-life is negligible. The same behaviour-patterns are therefore found not only in the religious Orders, but wherever the moral theology of the Church is obeyed. The parallels are too close to be shrugged off, and the way in which the effects of religion can be manipulated and reversed by redirecting the unconscious drives points to a physiological source of religious experience and behaviour. Only through special pleading does any other inference become plausible.

The further implication is that all forms of the Christian religion are to be attributed to a like source, for they are equally founded on the same principle of instinctual repression. Ideal gods are fictions deriving their compulsive hold from instinctual energy diverted from natural fulfilment. To love a job is to rob humanity of life.

By virtue of the accompanying denigration, it also means resistance to and contempt for reality.

Conversely, the restoration of man to biological normality means the automatic withdrawal of energy from the ideals and the end of religion. With the dispelling of the illusion, the material objective world also automatically returns, which in turn brings in its train the capacity for

work and scientific thinking unimpeded by phantoms.

The application of these findings, however, on a mass scale, will depend upon radical reforms in the spheres of marriage and the love-life of children and adolescents. Reich, before he introduced speculations that make present editions of his books unquotable in scientific circles, suggested the right approach. The same is true of A. S. Neill's work in education.³ Whenever such reforms are carried out religion will disappear, but implementation beyond the experimental stage will involve conflict, socially and politically, with the educational interests of the Catholic Church and other sectarian bodies. Their survival depends on preventing fundamental change in sex morality.

The Church is incapable of being progressive in other fields. Her interpretations of the universe, including those interpretations of man and history, of economic and social development, which concern freedom and welfare, will always burke fundamental issues in order to protect rigid metaphysical doctrines. The unconscious mechanisms responsible for religious ideals, and the accompanying feeble sense of reality, make this inevitable. Catholic social doctrine cannot, owing to its origin, begin to illuminate the sources of human slavery in the character-structure of the masses, who are inhibited by the process of instinctual suppression. Had the masses of people not had their capacity for freedom curtailed by religious morality, which interferes with both love and aggression, the feudal and bourgeois forms of society could never have arisen. The derivation of the fabric of civilisation from a deeper economic base should not, incidentally, encourage a minimising of the derived instruments of enslavement. Among them is the continuing power of religious morality. The survival of the Church depends on upholding it.

Therefore it is impossible for the Church to liberate anyone. Nor can any post-Christian freedom-movement, however large, be more than a freedom-movement in name so long as it continues to uphold the morality of the Church.

³Also Vera Schmidt's kindergarten in Moscow, closed after reactionary interference by the Psychoneurological Institute.

(To be continued)

Who Was Shakespeare?

By FELIX F. CORBIE (West Indies)

THE MOST TEDIOUS OF READING is any Shakespeare biography. Some lengthy, others short, they are filled with supposition. On almost every page can be found something like this: "We may suppose therefore that . . . it is natural that as a consequence . . . there can be little doubt that . . ."

Shakespeare lovers become conditioned to this sort of thing and read it without doubting it. But the fact remains that to newcomers like myself very little appears to be known of this the greatest of England's poets. We seem to know far more of Xerxes and Akhnaton than of this Elizabethan. Almost two hundred years ago Herbert Lawrence rejected the Stratford actor as the author of the plays ascribed to him, insisting instead that they were written by Francis Bacon. And then, in 1848, Bacon was again put forward as the real author by J. C. Hart, an American. Since that date at one time or another dozens have suggested that the plays were not written by Shakespeare, insisting that the plays show a deep and wide range of knowledge and an experience of professions, countries and social circles, not available to one who was a commoner, and with little education.

Will Shakespeare, the son of a struggling Stratford tradesman, was baptised on April 26th, 1564. He was

married at 18, became a father in 1583 and again, this time to twins, in 1585. In 1593 his name appeared under a dedication to a poem entitled "Venus and Adonis." He died on April 26th, 1616. Between those dates there is a handful of notes on his purchase of a house, on his becoming an actor and part-owner of the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres, and on his appearance in court. Finally, there is his will, and that is all.

"How," demanded the critics, "could the son of a small town business man acquire the military, legal, medical and clerical knowledge of the author of the plays? How could he acquire a vocabulary unparalleled in the language? How could he demonstrate such familiarity with the aristocracy? How could he gain the knowledge of foreign languages necessary to conduct whole scenes in French, to translate Ovid and Plautus? And how and when did he acquire the almost uncannily accurate knowledge of the geography and topography of, for instance, Italy and France?"

Those are a few of the questions asked. But it would appear odd that in a setting which included such contentious characters as Nashe, Chapman, Marlowe, Greene, Peele, and Jonson, there should be no mention at all of Shakespeare prior to the publication of "Venus and Adonis." Most Shakespearean scholars concede that other hands than Will's are discernible in some of the plays. Marlowe, they say, seems to be a more powerful candidate than Bacon. They also note that in the early plays textual similarities are common, Shakespeare almost makes a habit of "quoting" Marlowe. Now Marlowe, son of a cobbler, was born in Canterbury two months before Shakespeare in Stratford. A good student, he won a scholarship to King's College and in 1581 another to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Suspected of being a Roman Catholic, he was refused an award of his degree. He was a good friend of Sir Francis Walsingham, head of the Elizabethan gestapo. Before entering London society he was involved in an affair at Rheims with Catholics, plotting to give the throne to Mary, Queen of Scots. His patron and great friend was Thomas Walsingham, and he published "Tamburlaine," the first step on the road to Shakespearean tragedy, "Faustus," "Dido," "The Jew of Malta," "Edward the Second," and others.

Then catastrophe. Thomas Kyd was arrested for atheism, and implicated Marlowe on the rack. It was a crime of unimaginable gravity in the 16th century. Among Marlowe's misdeeds was that of contradicting Holy Writ by writing of "Indians and others" who had lived 16,000 years ago, 10,000 years before Creation. He also said "Alle protestantes are hypocritical asses." He was arrested, and released on bail, and twelve days after was murdered in a Deptford Tavern. Some scholars claim that it was not Marlowe who was murdered but someone else, hence the reason why the murderer was pardoned by Queen Elizabeth. Marlowe, however, was smuggled overseas, and the most notorious imposture, if such it was, began.

There must exist somewhere conclusive proof as to who was Shakespeare. It is said by some that since Walsingham was financially involved in the transactions, the original copies of the plays were turned over to him and finally buried somewhere in the family tomb on his estates near Chislehurst. [This was, of course, disproved a few years ago when the tomb was opened and examined.—Ed.]

—NEXT WEEK—

THE GREAT WAY

By REV. JOHN L. BROOM, M.A.

The Rising Generation

XXX—SOME EXTINCT ANIMALS

ALTHOUGH most Bibles, particularly those used for *teaching purposes*, give the date of "creation" as 4004 B.C., it can be said with absolute certainty that there is not a single scientist in the world who agrees with this. They know that the science of geology has erased that date for ever.

Nothing is more certain than that about 150 million years ago, some enormous animals were roaming about on this earth of ours—animals which have been given extraordinary names. They are now quite extinct, but they inhabited various countries, including Europe, for quite probably 100 million years.

For example, we have the Brontosaurus, remains of which have been found in America. We know that it must have been at least 60 feet in length, that it weighed about 38 tons, and that it laid eggs. One of these eggs was so large that it could contain at least the contents of 160 hens' eggs. It would walk equally on land or sea, showing that it had what is called a semi-aquatic life. And it eventually became extinct—why is by no means certain. Perhaps because it had a small head and a tiny brain—though if this were the case it does not explain why it survived for millions of years.

Then there is the Megalosaurus, one of the "dinosaurs," a word which means "terrible reptiles." It was quite as big, if not bigger than the Brontosaurus.

Resembling somewhat a modern rhinoceros was a three-horned dinosaurian reptile named Triceratops, remains of which have been found in North America. Its huge size—about 25 feet in length—and its "armour plating," its huge head with its three horns, and its fearful beaked, sharp-cutting mouth made it a formidable beast though, strangely enough, it was not a mammal but a reptile. And in those far-off days, there were even some reptiles which could fly, like the Dimorphodon, a "pterodactyl," a word which means "wing fingered," and the Phyllurus which had a very long tail. These flying reptiles varied in size, some reaching a wing-span of 26 feet.

The most terrible of all these monsters was, however, the Tyrannosaurus, a horrible animal described by Prof. J. H. Bradley as "death in a living body." He towered 20 feet above the ground, measured 47 feet in length, while his head was four feet long, three feet wide, and nearly three feet deep. His claws were as long as a man's hand. He lived on for *100 million years*. It is a pity that our priests and parsons never refer to these animals when they talk about the "Design Argument." They should explain to all school children why God Almighty made them, and why they were allowed to perish, once for always, from the face of the earth.

H.C.

CORRESPONDENCE

HOW I BECAME A FREETHINKER

I've been wondering if readers could be persuaded (anonymously if need be) to contribute shortpieces on "How I became a Freethinker" (or why).

My own case was easy, as I started young. At 13 years I was message boy to a chemist, under a boss and one assistant. The latter was a Freethinker and got the paper regularly. It was an easygoing shop and THE FREETHINKER was read by all, the old Acid Drops being devoured by me first of all. The only qualm I had was about my father, who was no fool, yet trailed us all to church every Sunday morning. At that time I had an illustrated Bible, and one of the pictures showed Samson pulling the temple down about his ears. Ha!—my father was a stone-mason, and I decided to ask his opinion about *that*. He gave the picture a glance and said, "Ye needna believe everything ye read there."

To confirm me in my heresy I had tried prayer with all the gravity of which I was capable. I then suffered from an infirmity (juvenile) which was no great trouble to me but a grievous affliction to my mother. These prayers, about such a small matter, would have melted the heart of a stone—they had no effect on God!

G. S. BROWN.

EQUESTRIAN ACROBATICS?

Mr. H. Cutner makes merry over what he conceives to be ludicrous phraseology in Matthew 21.

The late Monsignor Ronald Knox, in a footnote to the relevant passage in his translation of the Bible, gives references to the accounts of this incident given by the other three gospel writers, and concludes: "It appears from these other accounts that our Lord rode on the colt, the dam being brought so as to make the colt follow more easily." This seems to me quite a plausible explanation.

S. W. BROOKS.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14TH.—Present: Messrs. Ridley (Chairman), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Corstorphine, Ebury, Hornibrook, Johnson, Taylor, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Gordon, Shepherd, Mrs. Trask and Mrs. Venton. New members were admitted to Birmingham, North London, Wales and Western and Worthing Branches, which, with individual members, totalled 10. A further donation to Christian Action South African Treason Trial Defence was voted. Possible visit to Northampton to the Bradlaugh statue on Saturday, June 21st, was considered. Matters concerning the Humanist Council and Humanist Association were reviewed, with the proposal of a new co-operative body to take the place of both. The N.S.S. was prepared to participate if such a body materialised. Possible circular letter to M.P.s was read and approved. Annual Conference arrangements were given, financial statement and E.C. annual report approved. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, June 18th, 1958.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

RECEPTION AND SOCIAL

The N.S.S. Executive Committee cordially invites delegates and friends to the above at the
CO-OPERATIVE HALL, NOTTINGHAM,
at 7 p.m., SATURDAY, MAY 24th.

THE CONFERENCE

will be held at the
CO-OPERATIVE HALL on SUNDAY, MAY 25th
at 10.30—12.30; 2.30—4.30. Lunch at 1 p.m.

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