

The Freethinker

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DURING THE PAST WEEKS, several events have transpired in Asia and Africa which mark the formidable revival of the most cosmopolitan and dogmatic of the Oriental religions, Islam, the creed of Muhammed and the Koran. The current rising in Indonesia, the formation of the United Arab Republic, the cosmopolitan support given throughout the Muslim world to the present Colonial insurrection in North Africa; all these events are linked up with the present revival on the cosmopolitan scale of the religious cult of Islam which still presents an international barrier to the expansion both of the creed of Christianity and the alternative expansion of a modern scientific culture.

Rome and Mecca

In a popular book on religion published some time back, Miss Ethel Mannin pointed to the Roman Catholic Church in the West—in Europe and the Americas—and to Islam in the East, in Asia and Africa, as the two outstanding religious cults in the world which tower over their lesser religious competitors. One might add that these two creeds which centre respectively in Rome and Mecca, are both creeds of a fundamentally similar monolithic and dogmatic type. Both worship a "jealous God" who, like the traditional terrestrial despot, "will brook no rival near his throne." Both religions have a cast-iron system of dogmatic belief, originally revealed in a sacrosanct and infallible Book, and both claim to have been founded by an historical person, a prophet or messenger of God. One can even say that, like some famous rivers, both religions stem from the same spring. While the historical origins of both Christianity and Islam are still far from being completely clear, it appears highly probable—in fact, I would argue virtually certain—that both religions started in the same way as Jewish heresies. According to the oldest traditions, Jesus was originally regarded as the Jewish Messiah by his followers, whilst Muhammed at first commanded his followers to turn towards Jerusalem at the time of prayer. It was only later that Muhammed, or his successors, decided, so to speak, to set up in business under their own name, and finally substituted Mecca, the traditional birthplace of Muhammed, as the "Holy City" of the new faith. It is now known that Mecca was already a famous Pagan sanctuary long before Muhammed's day, and that the famous "Black Stone," now the supreme Muslim relic, was originally the object of an earlier Pagan cult. One can relevantly add that, while the theological and religious resemblances between Christianity and Islam are sufficiently numerous and striking, theologically the Muslim cult, with its insistence on monotheism and its austere worship, corresponds more with the iconoclastic Protestant cults. On the other hand, socially and politically Islam, as a creed of the type which it is now the fashion to term totalitarianism, has more affinities with its great historic rival, the Church of Rome, also a quasi-totalitarian cult by no means confined to purely religious matters. It is in this latter sense that I have

described Islam as a "Jewish Catholicism" and Islam itself as the "Eastern Rome."

The Evolution of Islam

Islam, again like Christianity, has undergone a lengthy and complex historical evolution. It is only in fairy tales—including religious fairy tales—that a religion comes into the world fully grown and mature, like the Greek Goddess of Wisdom. One could perhaps say that the alternate fortunes of the Christian and Muslim creeds have respectively waxed and waned in inverse proportion to each other. For example, Islam originated in, and enjoyed its golden age in, the European and Christian Dark Ages: the brilliant world and culture depicted in *The Arabian Nights* corresponded with the degrada-

tion of Europe in the 9th century into the lowest dregs of barbarism. Conversely, the Golden Age of modern Europe which began with the Italian Renaissance and with the Voyages of Discovery which put both America and the Far East on the European map in the 16th century and which reached its zenith in the world-expansion of the 19th century, has corresponded historically with the social and cultural degradation of the contemporary world of Muslim politics and Islamic culture. So far, at least, neither the Christian West nor the Muslim East have reached their zenith together. It is, of course, a moot point—upon which, incidentally, I would join issue even with some really eminent rationalistic authors—how far the brilliant Muslim culture depicted in *The Arabian Nights*, or the brilliant Christian culture of the Renaissance, really owed their initial inspiration to the religions that they nominally professed. Were the great Muslim Khalifs and Sultans, like Haroun-al-Raschid or Akbar, really Muslims any more than the cultured Borgia and Medici Popes of the Renaissance were really Christians? However this may have been, at least it seems to be a fact that when the Christian West has been in the ascendant, the Muslim East has undergone a simultaneous eclipse—and *vice versa*.

A New Age

Nowadays, we stand at the threshold of a new age. Since the first World War, the relative importance of the European culture in the contemporary world appears to have been steadily diminishing. Along with the spread of political independence in the former colonial countries of Asia and Africa, the traditional "pattern of culture" in these non-European countries also appears to have been reviving. Racist theories, whether of English or German origin, have proved totally unable to arrest this spreading revolt of "the lesser breeds" without the white man's law. This world-wide shift of emphasis has also reflected itself in the religious sphere. There is, today, a growing interest in the West in what are termed the great Oriental religions. But from the standpoint of aggressive religious expansion, this means principally Islam. For, while Hinduism is exclusively nationalistic, it is very difficult to become a Hindu. Buddhism is hardly a religion, certainly not a theological

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

ISLAM— The Eastern Rome

By F. A. RIDLEY

system. Islam, on the other hand, is the Oriental version of "The One True Church" out of which salvation is hardly to be attained. It is, as we have already noted, "the Eastern Rome," and, like its Western rival, is dogmatic, aggressive, cosmopolitan and still absolutely confident of ultimate victory on a world-wide scale.

The Last Religion?

At the present time, a vast circle of Islamic States, owing allegiance to a common Muslim culture, stretches from Indonesia, via Pakistan to Morocco and the Sudan. Soon, Islam may spread all over Negro Africa, where it is said to be gaining converts from the Pagan Negroes much faster than does any form of Christianity. So far, at least, the Muslim world appears impervious to the more subtle inroads of Freethought. As far as I know, the World Union of Free-

thinkers has no branches in Muslim lands. The current revival of Islam constitutes a major force in the contemporary religious world—perhaps, indeed, in ultimate significance, the major force. For what my opinion may be worth, the "Eastern Rome" will probably outlive the Western. I am definitely of the opinion that Islam will be the last contemporary religion to disappear. For the creed founded by the Arabian Prophet in the 7th century has, I think, at least been more successful in reducing religion to its irreducible essentials, and in purging it of non-essentials, and of complex superfluities, than has any other. For which reason, I think that the religion of the Koran will outlive its historic competitors and will be the last to go. If, and when, the World Union of Freethinkers can establish itself in Muslim lands, then the end, not only of Islam, but generally of religion itself can be said to be in sight.

The Darwin Conversion Myth

By G. H. TAYLOR

WITH CHARLES DARWIN and his famous book, *The Origin of Species*, very much in the news during the centenary commemorations, freethinkers should be especially vigilant in taking up the usual Christian lies about Darwin. We referred in our issue of April 18th to the current publication of the unexpurgated *Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (Collins, 16s.), in which the editor, Lady Nora Barlow (the granddaughter of Darwin) has reinserted certain passages which had been suppressed at the wish of Darwin's wife. These passages, it goes without saying, offend the Christian. One of these passages (quoted in *The Observer* of April 6th) reads: "I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true, for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that those men who do not believe—and this would include my father, brother and almost all my best friends—will be everlastingly punished. And this is a demnable doctrine."

In April a letter appeared in *The Scotsman* from the Rev. Alastair Johnston, a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, in which he claimed that Darwin had been converted to orthodox Christianity shortly before his death by a Lady Hope. He said Lady Hope visited him several times in his latter days, causing Darwin to confess Christ as his Saviour and to recant his book on the origin of species.

Mrs. Margaret Knight and the Rev. John L. Broom, M.A., independently forwarded this extraordinary letter to Lady Nora Barlow. A letter from Mr. Broom appeared in *The Scotsman* asking Mr. Johnston for the source of his information, and saying that he (Mr. Broom) had searched through every biography of Darwin, including the one by his son Francis, without finding the slightest reference to the alleged visits of Lady Hope.

Mr. Johnston's reply was:

I regret that Mr. Broom has been put to the unrewarding task of perusing the biographies of Darwin for an account of his conversion. Here is the source of the information concerning Darwin's saving change.

Lady Hope gave this wonderful story when she addressed a large gathering of young men and women at the great educational establishment founded by the late D. L. Moody at Northfield, near Boston. Dr. Cameron asked her to write it out for a wider audience in his periodical, *The Boston Watchman Examiner*. Other magazines in this country have also published the whole of Lady Hope's testimony, including *The Reformation Review* ("A Message from God," October 1955) and the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland (February 1957). The joke of the situation is that the same issue of *The Scotsman* published a letter from Lady Nora Barlow herself. In it she said:

The correspondence that has arisen in *The Scotsman* over Charles Darwin's alleged visit from Lady Hope is perpetuating

a myth that was authoritatively denied in 1922 by those in the best position to judge of its truth or falsity.

Charles Darwin's daughter, Mrs. Latchfield, wrote to *The Christian* (February 23rd, 1922): "I was present at his deathbed. Lady Hope was not present during his last illness or any illness. I believe he never even saw her, but in any case she had no influence over him in any department of thought or belief. He never recanted any of his scientific views either then or earlier. We think the story of his conversion was fabricated in U.S.A. In most of the versions symn-singing comes in, and a summer house where the servants or villagers sang hymns to him. The whole story has no foundation whatever."

Mrs. Latchfield also wrote in a letter to a correspondent on the same subject (March 23rd, 1922) that she believed that Lady Hope never had any interview with her father. She says that her brother, Sir Francis Darwin, who was living in Down House [Charles Darwin's home—G.H.T.] at that time, was certain that Lady Hope never came to the house.

Charles Darwin was no controversialist but I think he would approve of this refutation of a false myth. . . .

So much for another Christian lie. So much for the Boston "Watchman" with his blind eye. So much for the other periodicals all tumbling over one another to copy the palatable untruth!

In our congratulations let us not forget the editor of *The Scotsman*, who, by chance or design, could hardly have timed the publication of the two letters to better advantage!

"The juxtaposition of these two letters," writes Mr. Broom to me, "the one a devastating exposure of a myth, the other a feeble defence of the same, was excellent propaganda for the cause of freethought and truth."

It would be unduly optimistic to say the lies about Darwin have been finally nailed. We know our Christians! It was our Founder, G. W. Foote, who said a Christian lie would, in a race with truth, run half way round the world while truth was getting his shoes on.

A Double Devotion

THE Bulletin of the *Centre of International Friendship* has just published some extracts from a book published in the 17th century by a traveller who had just then visited Spain. The book contains some amusing and curious episodes. For example, the traveller describes how, though his visit was made during a period of war between France and Spain, when he arrived at no one asked him for his passport, nor inquired what his business was. Only the Customs Officer came to demand his two reals as normal Customs duty.

At Burgos he visited a monastery where the monks show a silver crucifix to visitors. They give it to the visitors to kiss, while at the same time holding out the plate for the collection. He tells us that as he was not used to kissing the crucifix while simultaneously extracting his purse, it took him a long time to perform this devotion.

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

The Great Way

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

IN LITERATURE, both religious and secular, there are few masterpieces. The work of genius is distinguished by its rarity. In the writings of the world's religions, the jewels are buried beneath a mound of theistic junk and are in fact mostly humanistic precepts. Judaism has given us the books of Job, Ecclesiastes and parts of Isaiah and Jeremiah; Christianity the Sermon on the Mount, some of the parables and the chapter on love in the first book of Corinthians; Hinduism the Bhagavadgita and the Ranyana; Buddhism the "Noble Eightfold Path," the Dhammapadam and the Zen scriptures; Confucianism the Analects; and Taoism the *Tao-te-Ching*, the book of Lao Tzu.

Taoism originated in China during the sixth century B.C. Its founder is said to be one Lao Tzu, who is supposed to have lived from about 604 to 517. Practically nothing is known of his life, though there is a tradition that he was for some years keeper of the archives in the province of Honan but gave up his post in disgust over the bureaucratic behaviour of the local officials, spending the rest of his life as a wandering preacher. His chief disciple, Chuang Tzu, tells in his works of many entertaining verbal battles between his master and the great Confucius, which always ended, of course, in a resounding victory for Lao Tzu. It is further reported that when Lao Tzu was about to die the customs house officer who it appears guards the frontier between this world and the next, reminded him that he had left none of his teachings for posterity, whereupon Lao Tzu wrote down there and then the 5,000 words of the *Tao-te-Ching*. His authorship of the book has been disputed, notably by the great Chinese scholar Arthur Waley, who dates it at least 200 years later, and who indeed doubts whether such a person as Lao Tzu ever lived. Certainly his personality, like that of Jesus, is shrouded in a fog of myth and legend. But whether he existed or not, we have the *Tao-te-Ching* and in this case that is all that is of real concern.

The word 'Tao' literally means way or path. William Congreve, the Restoration dramatist, wrote a play called *The Way of the World* and in that title he unintentionally expressed the basic metaphysic of Taoism. There is a natural rhythm and order of life, say the Taoist sages, and man's "salvation" lies in his recognition of, and adaptation to, the flow of existence. If you struggle against the stream, you drown, but if you drift in harmony with it you will reach the shore in safety. From one point of view Taoism is essentially a mystical philosophy of life. Its cosmology presupposes that the universe is ruled by a supreme force within and about and beyond every particular event. As the *Tao-te-Ching* puts it, "There is a Thing inherent and natural which existed before heaven and earth, motionless and fathomless. It stands alone and never changes. It pervades everywhere and never becomes exhausted. I do not know its name, but if I am forced to name it, I call it Tao, and I name it as supreme."

It is clear that this "Deity" of Taoism has no resemblance whatever to the personal Creator of the western religions. It may be regarded as in a sense akin to Locke's Substance, "something we know not what" which lies behind the sense data of experience guaranteeing the reality of the external world. This is the beginning and end of its utility, for in spite of being called vaguely "supreme," it has no human qualities either good or evil. The opening lines of the *Tao-te-Ching* run: "The Tao that can be told is not the absolute Tao; the names that can be given are not absolute names." In other words, to try to define and

describe ultimate reality is fruitless, since definition implies limitation and "the Tao" is limitless.

Nevertheless, in spite of its mystical elements, Taoism is chiefly a way of life. The main lesson to be learned is probably that of non-attachment. We must not allow ourselves to become so devoted to the achievement of an aim or object that our happiness is destroyed if we are unsuccessful. There are many people who spend their entire lives in trying to attain more wealth, a better job, a position of power and influence in the community and so on. They are never satisfied with what they are or what they have; hence, because they are always trying to beat the other man down to "better" themselves, they never inherit contentment of mind. The truly wise man cherishes desires, but he does not care if they are satisfied or not. He does not set his heart on achieving some goal and so is not disappointed if good fortune fails to come his way. This applies to all aspects of life, whether trivial or serious. We may, for example, be looking forward to having a quiet evening at home and hearing a good play on the radio. But just as we are settled in our favourite armchair, the fire blazing merrily and our pipe going well, a knock comes to the door, and a tiresome visitor arrives to monopolise our evening. If we are truly unattached we shall be able immediately to adjust ourselves to the new set of circumstances, to forget all about the play, and to spend a genuinely happy evening with our unexpected guest. But many of us would in reality be so annoyed by the interruption that we would scarcely be able to receive our caller civilly, and would be irritable until he departed.

The training of ourselves in non-attachment with regard to lesser things stands us in good stead when we encounter ill-fortune affecting our whole lives such as the sudden loss of money and position, the death of loved ones and so on. If we set little store on material possessions, if we live in the world but are not of it, if we preserve such an independence of mind that nothing is of lasting value to us, then, in the words of the *Tao-te-Ching*: "Love and hatred cannot touch us, profit and loss cannot reach us, honour and disgrace cannot affect us." Ambition, which leads to cut-throat competition with our fellows, is a sure disturber of our peace. There is, of course, nothing wrong in having desires, provided we do not set our hearts on achieving the objects of them. "When gold and jade fill your hall," says Lao Tzu, "you will not be able to keep them safe." To be proud with wealth and honour is to sow the seeds of our own downfall. There is no harm in having riches or fame so long as we do not cleave to them, or allow ourselves to be disturbed if they are taken from us. The man who pursues wealth and honour finds that they slip through his fingers. But he who does not care whether he makes money or becomes a person of account or not, often finds these very things within his reach.

Non-attachment, then, is the first great Taoist principle. But to be truly non-attached the cultivation of humility, quietude and contentment is necessary. "Attain the utmost in humility," says the *Tao-te-Ching*. "Hold fast to the basis of quietude." Self-assertion is to be condemned, because it is based on the belief that one is superior to one's neighbours. All around we see hurrying, striving, ambitious people, puffed up with pride and the certainty of their own success. But Lao Tzu points out that those are the very people who ultimately fail in the business of

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

Lourdes has received so much publicity during the past 100 years that it is not surprising so many of similar shrines are hardly known these days. For example, there is the village of Knock in Ireland which, in all fairness, should have been three times more famous than Lourdes; yet it is hardly known anywhere. Only the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette, but 79 years ago, not only the Virgin, but also St. Joseph, her legal husband, and St. John, appeared to no fewer than fifteen people in Knock's little church. And, just as in the case of Lourdes, "miracles" of healing came through thick and fast.

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Our contemporary "The People" reports some of these amazing cures which have left doctors gasping with wonder. The cures occurred when the sick person or child was taken to the shrine for blessing and, with the help also of a few prayers, all were completely cured of quite incurable diseases. We are told by *The People* that the Roman Church is quite satisfied about the "visions" and perhaps even of the cures—but has made no official pronouncement as yet. It would never do for Knock to outshine Lourdes; this kind of competition is most unhealthy for the Church. What a pity that the fifteen people could not have photographed St. Joseph at least. He is always depicted in paintings as a very decrepit old gent, and the photo might have proved this to be true. Or perhaps *not!*

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Although the Lord's Day Observance Society deserves all the attacks made upon it by Christians and Freethinkers alike, it cannot be too strongly pointed out that it has our antiquated Sunday laws solidly behind it, and that in these days it is not the L.D.O.S. which should be altogether blamed, but our wonderful Members of Parliament on both sides of the House. Every reader of this journal should write to his M.P. and ask the plain question—is he for all the old Sunday laws to be retained, or for sweeping them away? All these extremely well-paid people should be asked why we can see on the TV on a Sunday a comedian wearing a wig or a dickie, and are not allowed to see one on a stage—and similar religious imbecilities. A selection of their replies should make most intriguing reading.

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Not for the first time by a long way are worshippers warned in churches not to leave handbags or other belongings about during the service. The *Sunday Pictorial* printed one of these notices the other week, and the correspondent who sent it in pathetically asks, "Have people really sunk so low that we cannot attend Holy Communion without keeping part of our thoughts on our belongings?" But if he had read something of Christian history he would have known that "pinching" other people's property was one of the least crimes of true Christians. What about burning, torturing, and imprisoning "heretics" and "witches"? Belief in Jesus never prevented some pious people from sinking "so low" as to butcher, torture, and steal in the name of Christianity. What a commentary such a notice really is on this outdated religion!

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Every Protestant, we think, knows that, while the Roman Church expects—and gets—religious tolerance from the Church of England and other Protestant Churches on the ground that they preach it, as it (the Roman Church) does not believe in religious tolerance, it has no need to practise it. And a case in point is in Roman Catholic Malta, where the Church is in full power, and takes good care to see, as the Archbishop of Canterbury pointed out the other week.

"Anglicans and others in Malta have suffered denials of their proper liberties often and grievously." But what did the Archbishop expect? Wherever the Roman Church is in full power, there religious liberty and tolerance are utterly denied. The Roman Church has always said so, and has always practised what it preaches.

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To prove how God enters a man's life TV staged Mr. Hugh Redwood, very well known as a religious journalist, and Mr. A. Calder Marshall, a well-known writer, to give us their experiences in finding the Lord. Mr. Redwood discovered the Almighty when he found he had cancer but recovered—a genuine miracle he declared—and Mr. Marshall when he wrote the biography of a naval officer who became a priest. It was obvious that for believers there was no need for their stories, and for unbelievers they seemed puerile and absurd. Can the BBC claim that they converted a single Freethinker?

Fairy Tales

BECAUSE 20 Irishmen of Belmullet, Co. Mayo, have refused to build a fence through a piece of land known locally as a one time palace of fairies, the whole question of belief in fairies has become far more than a nation-wide topic in Ireland. That this is no silly superstitious belief is proved by the support that they are receiving from the local people and their 30,000 strong trade union. In song and legend the Irish nation has told the story of the fairies—the Little People—and few national songs are more popular today than "The Fairy Tales of Ireland."

The men of Belmullet are making a stand in defence of folklore and tradition, something that has far more purpose to it than the practices of carrying lumps of coal, throwing spilt salt over the left shoulder, avoiding to walk under a ladder, or by the cult of mascots.—Commentary from *The Universe* (25/4/58).

THE GREAT WAY

(Continued from page 171)

being happy—because they are universally disliked and despised. No one likes the boaster—and so the boaster finds himself friendless and alone, even though he may have attained temporary material success.

Similarly, Lao Tzu constantly praises the quality of softness or pliability, and recommends that each man should cultivate a gentle and yielding nature, for in that way he will eventually conquer. "To yield is to be preserved whole, to be bent is to become straight." A favourite Taoist metaphor is that of the willow tree which, when the snow falls upon it, bends under the weight, and allows the burden to slip off. If it resisted, the branch would break. Similarly when troubles and worries come upon us which we cannot control, we must not fight against them or rail against "Fate," but should rather, like the willow tree, bend before them, cultivate an attitude of acceptance and allow our adversaries to collapse under their own weight. This, of course, is a fundamental principle of the Chinese form of wrestling known as jiu jitsu, a sport permeated by Taoist ideas. Water is another familiar Taoist symbol—there is nothing that is softer and weaker, and yet in time it will wear away the hardest rock. Thus, says the *Tao-te-Ching*, "Weakness overcomes strength and gentleness overcomes rigidity." In Shaw's *Major Barbara*, it will be recalled, the ruffian Bill Walker is nonplussed by the forgiveness of Todger Fairmile—blow for blow the bully can understand, but passive resistance defeats him. "Give way," says Lao Tzu, "and you will conquer."

(To be concluded.)

THE FREETHINKER

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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.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, June 1st, 2.30 p.m.: O. C. DREWITT (ex-Father Norbert, O.P.), "Why I Left the Church."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 1st, 11 a.m.: Miss J. G. HALL, "Adult Behaviour and Juvenile Delinquency."

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 and J. W. BARKER.

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.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.

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

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (The Oowns, Bristol).—Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: D. SHIPPER.

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

Notes and News

THE 1958 Conference of the National Secular Society took place on Whit Sunday, May 25th, in the Co-operative Hall, Nottingham, at the invitation of the local branch. Mr. F. A. Ridley was re-elected President of the Society, Messrs. L. Ebury and T. M. Mosley were re-elected Vice-Presidents, and Mr. W. Griffiths, Treasurer. Further details will be printed in a subsequent issue. Suffice it to say that a convivial reception preceded the conference, and a most successful open-air demonstration followed. Unlike some other places, Nottingham enjoyed fine weather over the week-end and Monday morning was spent in a most interesting tour of the Castles and the caves underneath it. Thanks are due to the Nottingham Branch N.S.S. for their friendly hospitality and excellent arrangements.

WALES and Western Branch of the National Secular Society will hold their second annual outing, jointly with the Cardiff Humanist Group, on Sunday, June 8th. The trip will be to Swansea and the Gower Coast, and the party will meet at the Central Bus Station, Wood Street, Cardiff (Astey's Corner) at 10.45 a.m. Further details may be obtained from Mr. D. Shipper, 5 Kyveilog Street, Cardiff.

OUR ATTENTION has been drawn, by Mr. David Carver, General Secretary of the world association of writers known as International P.E.N. (and in some parts of the world as the International P.E.N. Club), to the announcement which appeared on page 156 of the May 16th issue of THE FREETHINKER of a "club" inaugurated by the *American Rationalist*. 'the purpose' of which 'is to develop and further friendly relations between freethinkers in various countries.'

International P.E.N. was founded in England in 1921, and now has some sixty Centres throughout the world.

In drawing our readers' attention to this, we wish to state that we much regret publishing the paragraph referred to, which we acknowledge was an inadvertently misleading use of the name of International P.E.N., to whom we would like to apologise for use of their long-established name.

The correct name of the new club organised by the *American Rationalist* is the International Rationalist Pen-Pals Club.

A CORRESPONDENT in Taiwan (Formosa), China, tells us that he hopes to translate some items of literature that we have sent to him, and to publish them in Taiwan. We wish our fellow Freethinker every success in this venture and, in response to his request, are sending further items of literature. It is interesting to note that he heard of the National Secular Society through the brief published comment of the N.S.S. Secretary on the Archbishop of Canterbury's A.I.D. speech (which appeared in the *News Chronicle* in Britain and also in the Formosan press).

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A PUZZLING (and unidentified) cutting from an Ulster paper bears the headlines "Atheism 'surprising feature' of student life." The one thing that emerges clearly is that a survey published in the Queen's University (Belfast) student newspaper, *The Gown*, reveals a "large following for atheism and agnosticism" at the University. It is when the various denominational Deans of Residence offer their comments that things become difficult to follow. They take the view, apparently, that many of the professed atheists are merely "lazy Christians," though they give no reason why a lazy Christian should say he was an atheist. Their Presbyterian Dean, the Rev. Ray Davey, said that his greatest problem was not agnosticism, but nominal Presbyterians—another remark that could do with elaboration. Then we read that "Despite the references to atheism the survey notes that 'over 75 per cent.' of the students would appear to have 'an active religious background.'" But surely this makes the "large following for atheism and agnosticism" more significant?

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THE "cruellist swindle of modern times" was how Dr. J. V. Duhig described Lourdes in THE FREETHINKER (9/5/58). We were reminded of this on reading that a special pilgrimage of blind people had been arranged to leave London on June 24th. If enough applications were received, a special train would be booked. We have little doubt that the required numbers will be forthcoming: we have seen too many pictures of grown men and women prostrating themselves at Lourdes in this centenary year to reach any other conclusion. And they are not to blame. But it is different with the Church that perpetuates this gigantic swindle and then, when challenged, protests that "Lourdes is not a dogma: a Catholic isn't compelled to believe."

My Years as a Monk

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

(Concluded from page 167)

The need for an uncompromising attitude to the Church in education follows from these considerations. Politically it is impossible to recommend freedom for schools and parents in the matter of religious instruction. Such "freedom" is no freedom for the young, but entails interference with their normal growth. Many secularists find this conclusion disagreeable, but there is no alternative. A prevalent form of dilettantism in philosophy and sociology regards open conflict with religion as vulgar. The reason is ignorance of the Church's character. Owing to her direct influence, and also to the refuse of medievalism left over in society at large, the young are taught a moral code which perpetuates psychological processes making freedom and equilibrium impossible. The unconscious conscience, or super-ego, of children and adolescents is rendered archaic and cruel. The super-ego of man is one of the miscarriages of evolutionary "design," but can be modified and mitigated through a rational approach to the instincts, particularly in the sphere of sex education. The delinquency problem has largely arisen from failure to understand this, and the brutal punishments in religious schools have aggravated it—hence the juvenile delinquency figures in Catholic areas.

Aichhorn's work, like Homer Lane's, demonstrated what could be done by a different approach, and the same is true of Neill's methods at Summerhill.

Wider than delinquency proper are the many forms of "condoned delinquency" found in war, race-hatred, political propaganda and the sadistic enjoyment of crime news. They are made possible by conventional upbringing, which activates processes like idealisation-denigration—the maintenance of ideals which depend on rejecting alien groups and other lives. It is the correct way to guarantee the continuation of hostility between parent and child, child and society, and between nations. The Church, whose moral theology upholds conventional upbringing, can do nothing to rid society of such behaviour-patterns. She can only talk impotently of the consequences of Original Sin, a doctrine derived from the Adam and Eve myth in the book of Genesis. This doctrine, and its by-products in secular education, have damaged character more than any other aspect of religion.

That man is capable of a high degree of self-regulation and another, spontaneous type of morality, has been made clear by the convergent evidence of psychology, of progressive education and Malinowski's investigations in the anthropological field. Malinowski's findings remain seriously unchallenged, and among them was the discovery that children and adolescents educated in "matriarchal" communities developed a more satisfactory type of character. Their self-regulatory love-life was accompanied by the non-existence of the savagery, violence, perversion and neurotic symptoms associated with other forms of education. In Trobriand society Malinowski found a minimum of crime, no trace of mental illness, peaceful inter-group relations, intelligence, and practically no perversions—till they were introduced with the white missions. Child-murders were unknown. The young were kind, responsible, co-operative, friendly and natural, without compulsion. Corporal punishment was rejected as disgusting. Malinowski could find no evidence of anal-sadistic behaviour, of

the preoccupation with excrement and cruelty, characteristic of "patriarchal" children. Catholic children are at the other extreme. Without handling by special methods, they are the least capable of self-regulation. They are taught from babyhood that a natural love-life is wicked.

In the light of the foregoing analysis we have to conclude that the Churches, and particularly the Catholic Church, are incapable of siding with progress or of recognising scientific facts which help progress. Can they, by virtue of their position, welcome the biological truth that sex hunger and capacity in the normal boy or girl reaches a peak in the middle and late 'teens? That the learning or epistemophilic instinct can be affected by disturbed sexuality even in young children? Will the Pope encourage new investigation of the psycho-galvanic response, of axial gradients or the catch-mechanism in plain muscle, in relation to the orgasm, which will one day confirm the findings of this article in the controlled conditions of the laboratory? The survival of religion depends on ignorance of these facts.

Of course, some Churches are talking of "sex education," but lessons about mice will not take the young far. Reich wrote a book called *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, suggesting how the mental structure of the bourgeois family gave Hitler power over millions. Peoples in whom a normal love-life is broken in youth are ready to cringe and obey, to be led by the nose by propaganda, to pour out their neurotic hate on other peoples and races. There is a world tendency in the same direction today. It won't be arrested by teaching the young about pollen and buttercups.

Yet all the indications are that human beings are capable of self-regulation, love, freedom, happiness and peace, and only go seriously wrong if they are perverted and taught about God. If they are biologically normal, God and religious ideals disintegrate. A natural morality replaces the compulsive morality of religion.

The Catholic Church, on the other hand, talks of Original Sin. It says that human goodness is mingled with corruption at the base. It teaches that love is dangerous. The children in Catholic schools are taught that one sin can send them to hell for ever. They are instructed in doctrines that conflict with science. They are warned, nevertheless, that doubt is sin, and unrepented sin means hell. If they touch their bodies they go to hell. Young mothers are told they must die if saving their lives means "directly" killing a foetus, but the foetus can be "indirectly" killed in certain cases. If they do the wrong thing they are in danger of hell. This intellectual game with happiness is called moral theology.

The obsessional behaviour goes further than dropping crumbs on the floor at Communion or biting the wafer and becoming a cannibal. It affects lives and the balance of human minds. Such a philosophy cannot withstand the impact of modern science or side with freedom.

—NEXT WEEK—

SCIENCE, RELIGION AND MIRACLE

By DR. EDWARD ROUX

Gods and Men

By H. CUTNER

IT IS NOT A LITTLE GRATIFYING to find that some of the things I write in these columns are scrutinised with such eagle eyes as those of Mr. S. W. Brooks, who obviously cannot stand the "various inaccuracies" he finds that I am guilty of. Now, I do not make any claim to Papal Infallibility, and no doubt I make mistakes, and in truth I am always glad to be put right. But critics should be very sure of their ground, and I cannot find any hint in the two letters Mr. Brooks recently wrote about me that he has an even elementary knowledge of what he criticises in trying to correct me.

Let me begin by pointing out that I give most readers credit for a little sense of proportion. When I referred to "Pagan Gods" in my recent article on the Resurrection, I am sure the majority knew perfectly well that I at least did not believe there were any, or that there had ever been any. There are literally *no* Gods—Pagan or otherwise. A God is a myth—any God is a myth. I bunched together a few names which had been handed down through the centuries as those of "Leaders" or "Saviours" who had been given by their followers "Divine" honours—that is, who had been made into "Gods." That Mr. Brooks himself does not believe they were "Gods" is a matter of small moment and quite irrelevant. I do not believe that they were Gods either. But their followers certainly did, and they were also quite certain that their particular divinity rose from the dead just like Jesus who, though we call him a "Christian" God, is just as Pagan as any other. If we called Adonis an "Adonisian" God, this doesn't make him less "Pagan," does it?

Mr. Brooks says "Zoroaster was not a god and is not regarded as such by his followers, the Parsis. He was an historical personage, the founder of Persian monotheism. . . ." It is a pity that Mr. Brooks did not give chapter and verse for his statements. *Nobody* knows whether Zoroaster was "an historical personage" (except, of course, Mr. Brooks), and, whether he likes it or not, Zoroaster was certainly accorded "Divine honours" by his followers. They called him "The Immortal Zoroaster," "The Blessed Zoroaster," "The First-born of the Eternal One"; and Mancom's *History of Persia* (Vol. 1. Ap. p. 494) says he was born "of an immaculate conception, of a ray of the Divine Reason." But perhaps Mr. Brooks prefers John M. Robertson rather than Mancom? Well, Robertson says in his *Pagan Christs*, "If Zarathustra (Zoroaster) was a historical character the proposition is not to be proved by the documents. . . ." And he "respectfully but firmly dis-sents" from the position of L. H. Mills, the "learned translator of the Gathas," who thinks he was. Reinach, the famous author of *Orpheus*, says, "We know nothing positive about his life. We can even doubt his existence as we do that of Moses and Buddha." Both Reinach and Robertson go into details as to the religion of Zarathustra, but I have said enough in answer to Mr. Brooks's "He was an historical personage." It is as well not to be so cocksure.

Mr. Brooks then comes to Buddha, who "despite the marvels and legends about him," was also "an historical personage." There is simply *no* evidence that Buddha ever existed. As Reinach points out in his *Orpheus*, "his existence has been even doubted by Indian authorities." Robertson devotes many pages of learned analyses to the question, and he comes to the conclusion that "it is here submitted [that is, in *Pagan Christs*, page 262] that the

traditional figure of the Buddha, in its most plausibly rationalised form, is as unhistoric as the figure of the Gospel Jesus. . . ."

Now it can be fairly said that at least 90% of the readers of this journal would claim for Jesus exactly what Mr. Brooks claims for Buddha—to use his own words—Jesus the Christ, "despite the marvels and legends about him, was also an historical personage who never claimed divine honours." Good—where are we then on the question of the Resurrection? If Zoroaster, Buddha, and Jesus were all just mere men, the Resurrection never took place; and I invite Mr. Brooks to tell us why Buddhists, Christians, and Zoroastrians all believed in the "Resurrection" of their particular Gods? Where did the "marvels and legends" all come from? And why are they all the same?

Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus are all Pagan Gods, and Gods do not exist.

As for the "conjuring up" of Samuel not being a "resurrection," that is a matter of opinion in spite of the "divine words" of Jesus telling us that "A spirit hath not flesh and bones." Samuel was "materialised" as "an old man" covered "with a mantle." According to Mr. Brooks and Jesus, the mantle was also "a spirit." And according to Mr. Brooks and Jesus, as "a spirit hath not flesh and bones," I am at a loss how Samuel spoke to Saul—as the Sacred Word says he did. Perhaps he spoke in a "spirit" voice—and no doubt Mr. Brooks will tell us how that was done?

Mr. Brooks also has "a go" at the "compiler" of "This Believing World"—who happens in this case to be me—because I pointed out that if the Bible was put into a modern idiom it would lose its "reverent atmosphere." And he "respectfully" suggests that I was talking through my hat. His arguments in support of this seem to me to be childish. Of course, Christian believers will look upon the Bible as God's Word no matter whether it comes in the form of Greek, Latin, Old Saxon, medieval English, French, Dutch, or even in a literal modern English setting. But I defy any clergyman to read the Sermon on the Mount, for example, or the "Passion" of "our Lord" in, let us say, the modern American language and keep his "reverent" attitude.

Our Authorised Version is written in a special kind of language which nobody ever spoke; and, for me at least, I find some of its poetry and cadences very beautiful. I am not surprised that the A.V. still takes pride of place in this country over the many other versions with which we have been "blessed," versions like those of Weymouth or Moffatt or Knox. These all fail because they simply cannot be read in a "reverent" tone. The question is certainly "aesthetic and literary," as Mr. Brooks says, and is not "doctrinal." I never said it was.

It is a pity that people like Mr. Brooks, who has every right to criticise me or anybody else, and, if he can, expose our "inaccuracies," should be so quick to cap his arguments with personalities. I have never been "a crude Bible smasher," and I have never imagined that my criticisms of Christianity will make "the ancient walls of the Church" ignominiously collapse. It is he whose childish "toy trumpet" only exposes his own hopeless ignorance.

And what I said about the Resurrection and the "reverent" Authorised Version still stands.

Science Front

IN HIS BRIEF SURVEY, "Exit Adam," Dr. Roux mentions that "for some reason" some primeval tree-dwellers took to the ground, where "they developed a more erect posture and other humanoid characters." This, of course, was no accident; climatic catastrophes and resulting adaptations acted as a stimulus in human progress.

During the era which in geology is termed the Tertiary, a climatic catastrophe coupled with terrestrial cataclysms had far-reaching effects: land masses rose, mountain ranges were thrown up, Australia was separated from the Eurasian continent and glacial icesheets were creeping southwards. Icy winds made the forests and fruit trees disappear, which gave way to vast steppes and tundras. Such simians as succeeded in remaining within the receding tree belts not only continued their arboreal existence but also their specialisation. They became apes, via *Palaeosimia*.

Others found themselves trapped in the steppes through new obstacles which they were unable to manage; their initial adaptation to arboreal life made it impossible for them to specialise their bodies for prairie life (which created hoofed animals such as Eohippos, the early horse). Unless they found an answer to the new challenge, they were faced with extinction, as befell thousands of living species before.

Their erect position which proved more advantageous in their new surroundings resulted in revolutionary changes in their bone structure, facial shape and brain development; this again enabled their forefeet to develop into delicate instruments capable of an amazing variety of subtle and accurate movements.

Where Java Man (*Pithecanthropus erectus*) of the Pliocene era already separates from the animal kingdom is in primitive toolmaking; the first Ice Age (Günz) therefore acts as an increased stimulus.

Animals specialise their bodies to their surroundings, and when this surrounding abruptly changes, they are unable to adapt their bodies quickly enough; our anthropoid forebears gave up adapting themselves to their changing surroundings, but began adapting their environment to their needs. By producing artifacts, they acquired an all-out specialisation and were able to weather all subsequent catastrophes. The higher specialised the less a living being was able to survive fundamental changes in living conditions. Man shed quite a few abilities (particularly in the sensory range) and through the production of tools and weapons not only outdid all other animals but left the "feeding chain": this is the cycle of plants and animals where always one specimen feeds on another. Pre-man too was within this chain, but *Homo Sapiens* became its master.

P. G. ROY.

CORRESPONDENCE

NON-PARTY OR NON-POLITICAL?

I wish to support Elizabeth Millard in her contention that our movement should be not merely non-party, but non-political. That is, we should renounce not only political parties but also political ideologies.

Under the present vague understanding that we are non-party, any official spokesman may bring his own politics on the platform, and when challenged that we are non-party he can reply "That's all right. Neither am I." He may then continue to propagate the general party line without ever wearing the actual party label. To say that our Practical Objects need political action in Parliament if they are to be carried into effect, and that therefore we are political, is a quite unreal objection. All progressive movements depend ultimately on legislation if the changes they propose are to materialise. Are we therefore to call them political? Is the

League Against Cruel Sports political? Or the Abortion Law Reform League or the societies for spelling reform?

Let us have a straight official declaration that we are non-political.

N. FIELD.

SECULARISM TODAY

It was with great interest that I read G. I. Bennett's article, in which he points to certain spheres of work suitable for Secularists, who will do well to guard against mere negative work in their fight against superstition.

Mr. Bennett refers to the many cruelties committed against our fellow men and our near relations of the animal world. There must be many who, like myself, can have no doubt of the urgent work to be done in order to make this world a better place for all living creatures.

W. G. SCHOLES.

SELF-SALVATION

I am in complete agreement with Mr. Du Cann in "Self-Salvation," and Mr. Bennett in "Secularism Today." Thank you for giving us these very constructive articles. Two points, especially, tempt me to go a little further.

The cult of "unselfishness" is so strong in Christian culture and so destructive to individual maturity, that to take a stand against it and be true to oneself needs great strength and courage.

The Secularist is more adult than the "believer" because for him there is no outside salvation or absolution. For this reason his conscience is more wakeful, as shown in his concern for animals and oppressed human beings.

RUTH POULTER.

Rats

"I WOULD like to add to the number (Green-fingered Saints) Blessed Martin de Porres, a Mulatto lay-brother of the Dominican Order who died in 1639. His love of God's creation extended to the dumb animals and he helped even the rats and mice of Lima! If you are troubled by rodents, place a picture of Brother Martin there—he will find them a new home—a more satisfactory method than mousetraps."—Sister M. Denis, I.B.V.M., Hampstead. Letter in *Popular Gardening* (22/2/58).

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