

The Freethinker

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WHAT MAY A CATHOLIC BELIEVE about evolution? Professor Louis Renouf, in Catholic Truth Society pamphlet, *Evolution*, sets out to provide an answer. As a professional biologist, I am interested in how the Catholic Church manages to retain the loyalty of biologists who happen to be Catholics, for there seems to be a great deal in the outlook of the trained biologist which should cause him to question certain Catholic beliefs that appear vital to that religion.

It is clear that any biologist who is not a mental pervert must see the fact of organic evolution. If the Church were to insist on fundamentalism in this respect it would cause an intolerable conflict in the minds of Catholic biologists, just as Stalin's support of Lysenkoism a few years ago embarrassed Communist biologists this side of the Iron Curtain. The Church has wisely decided to be flexible. Catholics may, up to a point, believe or not as they please. Thus in this pamphlet we are told that while certain Catholic writers are evolutionists, others, such as Dom G. B. O'Toole, O.S.B., disapprove of evolution "on scientific but not on religious grounds." It is not stated whether O'Toole is a biologist. We hope not.

God in Retirement

Catholics are thus allowed, if they wish, to believe that organisms, including man, have been subject to descent with modification. It would lead to simplicity if the Church simply said: "The primary particles of matter-energy (whatever they may be) were created by God. Thereafter chemical and biochemical evolution has occurred as foreseen by the Creator and as a result of the properties possessed by matter and energy." This would leave the Catholic scientist, including the biologist, free to follow his calling without ideological restraint. Unfortunately, from the point of view of the Church, it would not ensure his remaining a Catholic: he might become nothing more than a rather vague theist.

Catholics believe that God not merely set the universe in motion but that he has taken a permanent interest in it ever since, and that though things usually occur automatically, following the ordinary processes of causation, God sometimes actively intervenes and makes things behave differently. Some theologians may protest that this is a crude distortion of theistic belief, but if we examine the Catholic view of miracles (as exemplified in their statements about Lourdes) we cannot but conclude that it is what Catholic scientists in fact still believe.

The Catholic Role for God

The Church insists that though "God never acts directly when His object can be attained by means of Secondary Causes" (presumably the results of matter behaving in its customary way), he does act directly in certain instances, when presumably his object cannot be attained in this way. One particular way in which he invariably does act directly is in the creation of men's souls. "So far as a belief in evolution concerns Man's body, the Church

allows us exactly the same latitude as does science properly understood, but she strictly enjoins upon us a definite belief in the special creation of Man's soul."

Biologists can put forward a very reasonable hypothesis which suggests that the mental and spiritual activities of man (described by some philosophers as manifestations of "mind" and "soul") are the results of the workings of a nervous system more complicated than that found in the lower animals but not basically different. They can show, Darwin first suggested in *The Expression of the Emotions*, that we share with the "lower animals" a great number of neuro-physiological processes.

Since Darwin's time our knowledge in this field has been vastly extended, particularly by the work of Pavlov. Much that has been learnt from experiments with dogs and apes has been carried over into the field of psychological medicine. Granted that there have emerged in man forms of mental behaviour unknown or barely hinted at in the lower animals, there does not seem to be any insuperable difficulty in assuming that there has been no discontinuity in the evolution of man's higher faculties.

Man and Ape

Darwin compared and contrasted the behaviour of men and the higher apes. Palaeontological research into human origins has since unearthed a whole series of fossil forms linking *Homo sapiens* with his pre-human progenitors. It has become impossible (as Dr. John Robinson told us in a recent lecture on the Sterkfontein finds) to discover any milestone in the palaeontological record of which we can say, "After this was man and before this was no-man." Dr. Robinson said we are approaching a situation in human phylogeny already exemplified in the case of the horse. The number of discovered links between *Eohippus* and *Equus* is now so great that the assigning of generic or even specific rank to particular fossils in the series becomes arbitrary or even ridiculous. Similarly the gap between *Australopithecus* and *Homo* is being rapidly closed. The Biblical idea of a first man and woman is, biologically speaking, nonsense, not merely because of the facts mentioned above but because new species normally arise from the accumulation of mutations in diverging populations, and there is no reason for assuming it has been otherwise in the case of man.

Catholic scientists apparently no longer have any difficulty in assuming that life originated on earth by processes of chemical evolution not involving special intervention by God.*

They evidently hold that the evolution of the unicellular organism from a mixture of reducing gases and the evolution of a ground-ape from a flagellate or an amoeba may be legitimately investigated and possibly eventually explained without recourse to theology. But the evolution *"There is no reason at all why a Catholic should not believe, as I do, that living organisms could and did evolve from inanimate matter without specific divine intervention."—Dr. P. E. Hodgson, of the Newman Association, in a letter to the writer.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Catholics and Evolution

—By DR. EDWARD ROUX—

of a human from a humanoid is outside the scope of scientific inquiry alone. To the biologist this seems like straining at the gnat after swallowing the camel.

We may also approach the Catholic hypothesis concerning the immortal soul in another way, namely, in terms of Occam's razor. Our mental superiority to the chimpanzee is obviously correlated with differences in brain size and structure. Few would deny that a chimpanzee is more intelligent than, for example, a lemur, and again we can point to differences in the nervous systems of the two animals contrasted. Since Kohler's work on chimpanzees was published there has been growing evidence that these animals exhibit at least elementary forms of intelligent behaviour. See also A. S. Brink's description of the smoking habits of chimpanzees in the South American *Journal of Science* (Vol. 54, 1957, page 241).

A Lodgment for the "Soul"

It seems a legitimate conclusion from Catholic premises that the human soul requires a brain and body of special type for its domicile while on earth. That this anatomical and physiological structure, in which the "soul" is "housed," must fulfil certain very special requirements, is further illustrated by the fact that any derangement of the structure (by drugs, for example) interferes with the normal working of the "soul." It were better, following Occam, not to multiply entities unnecessarily in this way but rather to accept as a working hypothesis the view that thought (whatever its manifestations) is inseparably connected with the functioning of the organism. The theory that man differs from other animals in having an immortal soul, which enters his body after conception, should therefore be discarded as unnecessary and unhelpful.

If God, being omnipotent, had endowed matter with properties which caused it under certain circumstances to acquire a structural organisation and activity which we call "living," could he not at the same time have given it those further properties which might have caused it to acquire forms of activity which we call "spiritual"? Again invoking Occam's razor, it seems an unnecessary elaboration of a simple theory to say, as Prof. Renouf does, "God never acts directly when his object can be attained by means of Secondary Causes," and then to state that "man was produced as the result of some special fiat which was not necessary for the production of any of the other creatures." The process already started, by which Catholic theologians make concessions to Catholic scientists, cannot be halted, and further concession will inevitably have to be made, if the continued adherence of at least some scientists to the Church is considered desirable.

Galileo and Copernicus

Prof. Renouf tells us that "the condemnation of Galileo was the result not of dogmatic teaching, but of the weight of the accepted scientific view against the case he presented in support of his then revolutionary ideas." This statement can hardly be accepted in view of the historical evidence that Galileo, threatened with torture, was compelled to retract, on his knees before a crowd of prelates, and made to say "I abjure, curse and detest the said errors and heresies"—of the centrality of the sun and the movement of the earth.

Historians who are not Catholics have no difficulty in seeing that the Copernican theory was of interest to theologians since it conflicted with the very obvious geocentric view of the writers of Genesis who caused God to make the heavenly bodies as accessories after he had made the earth and man. . . . If this view has now been abandoned by sophisticated Catholics, it is still pure sophistry on their part to declare that Galileo's persecution was not inspired by religious dogmatism. In any case the Church no longer

sits in judgment over those who propound revolutionary scientific theories, provided they are "purely scientific."

The Church in Retreat

We have seen the Church concede, first, heliocentrism, then organic evolution, and now biogenesis. "But she strictly enjoins upon us a definite belief in the special creation of Man's soul." The problems of the "soul" are now being tackled by a host of scientists, using a variety of techniques, the latest of which include electroencephalography and biocybernetics. Are we not likely to be told in the not too distant future that the soul, too, can have evolved through the operation of "secondary causes" and that this particular type of "special creation" is no longer a dogma of the Church?

Baby Talk in Science

MANY SCIENTISTS seem to suffer from split personality: as scientists they have been brought up to accept nothing but what they can prove in reality. As Christians they have been brought up to believe primitive nursery tales, however contrary to commonsense they may be. In the Herakles saga they readily recognise the amazing feats of the Sun hero; but if nearly the same yarn is related to Samson, they take it for history. Centaurs and Cyclops—that is beings half man half horse, or giants with one solitary eye in the middle of their foreheads—are mere figments of fancy; yet if the Old Testament mentions talking animals and winged giants, there must be something in it. It has been part of their upbringing in an ideology they imbibed with their mother's milk.

Since our nursery days we have developed a blind spot in our mental eye, as it were. Even modern educationalists cannot see the dangers to the moral standards of society inherent in the teaching of primitive ideas of yore. They cannot discern the questionable ethics of religion that implores man to be good not for the sake of goodness, but in order to please some extra-human divinity, in order to earn eternal reward and evade dreadful punishment.

A boy of nine was taught Genesis; his comment was: "How do they know, there were no witnesses of creation." We have no evidence of people who ever returned from Paradise or Hell, yet we cannot get rid of these puerile conceptions. Conceptions which create a paranoid attitude to the world at large, cripple the growth of a sound consciousness and contribute greatly to the spread of amoral, inhuman and criminal propensities in man by putting the duties towards a mere figment of primitive fancy above the duties towards our fellow-men.

When the city of Ur was dug up, we were told of the "days of Abraham" as if he had been more than the autochthonous Moongod of the locality (in fact it was Sin under his appellative of Ab Ram = Father of High). Now, from time to time we get amazing reports from the site of Jericho, where excavations have been going on for years. Dr. K. M. Kenyon, Director of the British School of Archeology in Jerusalem, and her team have been greatly disappointed that no trace of Jehoshua (Joshua) could be found together with the impressive walls that, according to our fairy tale, were blown down by magic only. Never mind, a report in our only remaining Sunday paper of some standing, *The Observer*, cannot mention Jericho without adding: "Such was the course of development of the community of Jericho during the many centuries before the now-eroded town was attacked by Joshua." To drag in an old native god who never attacked a real town is just puerile prattle. Baby talk. It is high time to eliminate such nonsense from reports meant to be serious.

OTTO WOLFGANG.

Religious Education in the U.S.A.

By D. SHIPPER

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE U.S.A. states bluntly that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." There seems little doubt that this provision was intended to ensure the complete separation of Church and State and, if actual practice followed written principle, would preclude the introduction of religion into American public (state-controlled) schools.

In actual fact the history of education in U.S.A. contains many violations—and some gross violations—of this provision and, although an uneasy armistice prevails in certain states, the sectarianism v. secularism battle continues unabated.

The First Amendment being passed on the *federal* scale did not prevent some of the original thirteen states embracing Christianity as a *state* religion in their state constitutions (*i.e.* Maryland and Massachusetts) and guaranteeing civil rights to Protestants only (*i.e.* New Jersey, N. Carolina, S. Carolina). Although the passage of the years modified these constitutions, remnants of such bias can still be observed. For instance, the New Hampshire Constitution even now carries a 1784 provision authorising the public support of Protestant teachers of "piety, religion and morality." (Part I, Article 6.)

Although most of the original 13 states demanded religion as a qualification for holding public office, their Constitutions have since been revised to agree with the Federal Constitution, which permits no religious test. However, to the present day an atheist would be barred from public office under the following sections of state constitutions: Arkansas, XIX, 1; Maryland Declaration of Rights, 37; Mississippi, XIV, 265; North Carolina, VI, 8; Pennsylvania, I, 4; South Carolina, XVII, 4; Tennessee, IX, 2; Texas, I, 4. All these require a belief in a "Supreme Being" as a necessary qualification. In addition, Tennessee, IX, 2, and Pennsylvania I, 4, demand belief in a future state of rewards and punishments.

When legislation is passed by the state which seemingly violates federal provisions it is necessary for a taxpayer to challenge such law in the courts; therefore some laws definitely in conflict with the First Amendment have remained valid for years—all for want of a challenger.

A summary of typical cases may be of interest. In 1905 an Iowa school-board sold the public school building and voted to rent a second-floor room in the local parochial school. A nun was engaged as teacher. It was admitted that the nun in charge of the first floor gave parochial instruction. In actual fact the two floors were operated as a single unit under the same religious control, but it was not until 1918 that the Iowa Supreme Court declared the position unconstitutional. (Knowlton v. Baumhover.)

In 1932 a Nebraska court found that a local school-board were not operating a public school, but were sending all pupils to an R.C. school where they were taught by nuns and received religious instruction. The court upheld the refusal of the state superintendent to give a share of state-aid funds. (State v. Taylor.) In 1941 it was found that a Missouri R.C. parochial school had been absorbed into the public school system. Religion was taught and it was claimed that as Protestants attended a different school the equality of facilities meant no breach of the law. The court stated that segregating pupils according to religion and using school funds for sectarian instruction was unconstitutional. (Harfst v. Høgan.) In 1953 Missouri taxpayers

asked for a ruling that two ex-parochial schools now operated as public schools (since 1931) were illegally receiving public funds. The Archbishop had retained the title to one building and nuns who taught there had living quarters, receiving lower salaries than normal public school teachers. An R.C. church practically adjoined the school building and the school observed religious holy days as well as normal holidays. R.C. children attended Mass at 8 a.m. and religious instruction from 8.30 to 8.50 a.m. This was taken in the school building, the teacher-nuns (who wore robes and insignia of their religious orders) giving instruction. Altar-boy pupils were excused lessons if needed for religious ceremonies. Parish-owned school buses were used for weekday transportation and on Saturday to take children for religious training. The school district paid maintenance and repair bills.

It was claimed that as objecting Protestant children had their tuition paid in an adjoining district the situation was legal. Here the court found that the schools were not in fact public schools, but religious-controlled and the situation violated the constitutional provision for Church/State separation and statutory provisions forbidding the utilisation of tax funds for the support of sectarian education. (Berghorn v. Reorganised School District.)

In 1951 New Mexico schools held religious classes in normal schooltime. R.C. insignia and pictures were on classroom walls, prayers were said and R.C. literature distributed. The religious orders delegated their members to schools without objection by the school-boards. The State Board of Education issued a set of books containing R.C. religious instruction. When the state board received complaints they referred complainants to the archdeacon! The court found that New Mexico had an R.C. school system "supported by public funds within its public school system." They forbade religious uniform in schools and prohibited religious education at public expense. (Zellers v. Huff.)

In 1922 the New York court refused to sanction the giving of free text-books to parochial school pupils by public authorities. The religionists argued that this was aid to *pupils* and not to sectarian schools. (Smith v. Donahue.) On the other hand, the Louisiana court upheld the child-benefit view in 1929 and were agreed with by the Supreme Court after an appeal.

Several states now have legislation which permits distribution of text-books to parochial school pupils (*i.e.* New Mexico, Oregon), but the South Dakota court agreed with the New York decision of 1922 and the Attorney-General of Indiana placed a similar opinion on record.

The transportation of parochial school pupils by public authorities has been frequently discussed in the courts. The majority of state courts have not accepted the child-benefit claim and Delaware, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Washington and Wisconsin have declared such transportation unconstitutional. California, Maryland and New Jersey have taken the opposing view, while Kentucky, a model of consistency, has had decisions supporting both views.

New York declared such transportation unconstitutional in 1938, following this by amending its constitution to render it permissible! The New York court had found that such transportation was "A violation of the concept of complete separation of Church and State in civil affairs

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

We are glad to note that at least some of the readers of our contemporary, *The Humanist*, are by no means pleased with its assessment of Ingersoll and have vigorously protested. They are now given a chance to protest again. In an article on George Eliot, we find that George Henry Lewes is glibly described as "a rather battered man of letters." Not only is Lewes the author of a *History of Philosophy*, which is perhaps the best and most lucid in the language, but his four volumes of *Problems of Life and Mind* contain some of the finest thinking on these subjects ever written, as well as being a veritable treasure for philosophers and psychologists to quarry from ever since they were first published.

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In addition, Lewes wrote what is perhaps the standard *Life of Goethe* in English, he was the founder of the *Fortnightly Review*, and wrote extensively on literature and the drama all his life. Some "battered man of letters" indeed! The way a few quite undistinguished "Humanists" love to denigrate some of the finest Freethinkers of the past makes one wonder what they have read.

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To show its impartiality, the BBC staged a discussion for its school broadcast of religion between Dr. F. A. Cockin and Mr. J. P. Corbett, who is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, on Dr. Cockin's broadcasts. It really was not a discussion, for as far as it was possible to judge from Mr. Corbett's remarks he was as much a Christian as Dr. Cockin himself. What it all amounted to was just words and words, spiced a little with what "our Lord" said or meant, or what the two disputants said he meant, which is quite another thing. And what about the schoolchildren? Did they understand a word of it? Did the two gentlemen themselves understand what they were talking about?

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One of the secretaries of the Church Pastoral Aid Society, the Rev. J. W. Hurst, has just found out that Britain is a pagan country. In industrial areas, he declared, only one person in a hundred was in contact with God, and out of 11 million children under 15 only four million went to Sunday school. What an optimist Mr. Hurst is! We would dearly like to meet *anybody* who has been in contact with God. Of course, lots of people, including even our Popes, say that they are, but that is all there is in it. What exactly is the difference between saying one is in contact with God, and saying one is in contact with Aladdin's lamp?

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And after all, what is wrong in being a "pagan" country? After all, Germany, at the time of both World Wars, was a thoroughly Christian country, and bad as Paganism can be described (and this does not mean that there is necessarily evidence for it), Christian Germany can beat any Pagan country in history for bestiality and torture. Getting rid of the God idea, which has dominated Christianity for nearly 2,000 years, might well prove to be the "salvation" of Europe.

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As a change from dealing only with Christ Jesus, ITV's religious outburst the other Sunday made Job—perhaps the most dismal hero of any poem—its object of devotion. That is, up to a point. Passages were recited by Sir Ralph Richardson (unfortunately in a more or less parsonic voice) and the recital was accompanied by William Blake's splendid illustrations. Needless to add, however, the "compère," the Rev. G. F. Macleod, who did his utmost to be even more dismal than poor Job, just had to drag in "our Lord." Exactly why, God knows. We don't.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE U.S.A.

(Continued from previous page)

and of the spirit and mandate of our fundamental law." (Judd v. Board of Education.)

In 1942 the Kentucky court dismissed the child-benefit claim, stating it to be contrary to the great weight of authority," and, furthermore, "lacking in persuasive reasoning and logic." Therefore, use of school funds for transportation of parochial school pupils was unconstitutional. In 1945 a new state allowed the cost to be borne by county, not school funds, and this satisfied Kentucky's legalistic logicians!

Probably the best-known case in the transportation field is the *Everson v. Board of Education* in New Jersey. This was appealed to the Supreme Court (in 1947), who found—but only in a 5—4 decision—that transportation of parochial school students did not violate the *First Amendment to the Federal Constitution*. A 1956 Research Bulletin of the National Education Association pointed out that that was the *sole* issue before the Supreme Court and in effect they had merely ruled that this was not a *federal* question. The four dissenting judges each wrote an opinion, Mr. Justice Jackson underlining the importance of the parochial school to the R.C. Church and saying: "The State cannot maintain a Church and it can no more tax its citizens to furnish free carriage to those who attend a Church. The prohibition against establishment of religion cannot be circumvented by a subsidy, bonus or reimbursement of expense to individuals for receiving religious instruction and indoctrination."

In several states the issue has not been raised in the courts and in the meantime parochial school pupils may be transported at public expense.

(To be concluded)

Roman Menace & Protestant Fear

The Ulster Protestant for December contained a report of the National Secular Society's Pius XII meeting in London on October 30th. The reporter, Mr. Macdonald Morris, criticised the inactivity of British Protestants. "Where was the organised protest? Why was there no indication of any sort that there might be somewhere, in this country, some body of people which disapproved the eulogising of the dead Pope? The awful silence suggested a fear of protest. Far too many of our elected leaders can be described as being no more than in attendance." But—wrote Mr. Morris—"The National Secular Society filled the breach," and he concluded his report: "This then was the only attempt at public protest against the great tide of Pope-worship trash which hit this country. The sincere thanks of all Protestants should be accorded to Colin McCall, who organised the meeting, and to the four speakers, each an expert, who put forward the case for reason."

At this time it is useful to recall the words of Charles Bradlaugh when he retired from the Presidency of the National Secular Society in 1890. He said: "One element of danger in Europe is the approach of the Roman Catholic Church towards meddling in political life. . . . Beware when that great Church, whose power none can deny, the capacity of whose leading men is marked, tries to use democracy as its weapon. There is danger of freedom of thought, to freedom of speech, to freedom of action. The great struggle in this country will not be between Freethought and the Church of England, nor between Freethought and Dissent, but—as I have long taught, and now repeat—between Freethought and Rome."

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER and C. E. WOOD.

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, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, December 14th, 7 p.m.: CECIL KEENE, "The Wheel of Health."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, December 14th, 7.15 p.m.: J. L. SHEPHERD, "Liberty and the Individual."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, December 16th, 7.15 p.m.: F. H. A. MICKLEWRIGHT, M.A., "Jesus—the Viewpoint of Modern Scholarship."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, December 14th, 6.30 p.m.: Prof. A. J. ALLAWAY, M.A., "Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, December 14th, 2.30 p.m.: Dr. A. D. M. DOUGLAS, "Suicide."

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant).—Sunday, December 14th, 7 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, December 14th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Winter of our Discontent."

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bute Town Community Centre).—Tuesday, December 16th, 7.30 p.m.: Brains Trust. N.S.S. Rep.: D. SHIPPER. Humanist Rep.: H. DAY.

Notes and News

It's a good thing—writes Mr. Weston Taylor (*News of the World*, 30/11/58)—that someone else is thinking of Britain's seventy thousand commercial travellers, besides their faraway families. Mr. Taylor is thinking of the Gideons International, "whose aim is to leave a Bible in every hotel bedroom in the country," and who have just placed their 1,000,000th Bible in Britain in the Westbury Hotel, London. "We work as an arm of the Church, comforting the lonely and strengthening the dispirited," says Mr. Fred Bradbury, retired civil servant and now the Gideons' secretary. We have little doubt that most of the 70,000 travellers need a little comfort and strengthening of "spirit" from time to time. All the same, we feel that the landing of a good order would do the job more quickly and satisfactorily than the "appropriate text" for "every problem."

AT one time the Church may have been the hub of a town or village, but alas times change. "This is the church and this is the steeple, here are the pews . . . but where are the people?" ask the clergy of Crawley New Town, Sussex (*Evening News*, 28/11/58). Possibly at their television sets; perhaps at their locals; certainly not in church. Of a parish population of 20,000, only 500 worship regularly. Curiously enough, though, the wheels of Crawley keep turning.

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THE glamour boy of American Roman Catholics, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, himself not averse to glitter and pomp, urged that these aspects of the Papal Coronation should take a very secondary place to "the spiritual significance of the tiara" (*Irish Catholic*, 13/11/58). Metaphors flowed freely when the handsome, "golden-tongued" Bishop indulged in a typically "sparkling" display of oratory. He knew "the thoughts that surged through" John XXIII's "soul"; knew that "his heart wept invisible tears" because the tiara was "lined with thorns." "A crown of thorns it must be, that tiara," declared Bishop Sheen. Consider the Pope's responsibility for "keeping God in international life," "bringing truth to 1,500,000,000 pagans who know not redemption," and "shepherding 500,000,000 faithful who are bound to him by the unity of truth and the unity of the Bread of Life." On top of these "three crowns," the Pope "has to save his own soul," so he needs a "fourth crown—the crown of our prayers." It is, we realise, unfair to expect logic as well as sparkle from TV's own Bishop, but we should just like to ask if the prayers will add extra thorns and cause further "invisible tears" in the Pope's heart.

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Two Ghana papers for October 28th reported on a two-man delegation from the Ghana Christian Council to the Joint Provincial Council of Chiefs. The delegation consisted of the Reverends T. A. Osei and J. E. Allotey-Pappoe, and they were—said the *Ghana Times*—"appalled at the mounting rate of the Christian prison population." The *Ghana Daily Graphic* was a little more precise. "According to statistics"—it said—"there are about six Christians to one pagan or Moslem in the prisons." It might be thought that the two clergymen would humbly confess the inadequacy of the religion they preach, but such is not the way of clergymen. Instead, they called upon the Chiefs "to approach the educational authorities to make religious teaching in the schools compulsory." Christian "logic," it will be seen, knows no national boundaries.

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THE *News Chronicle* (24/11/58) mentioned some interesting findings in its review of *Religious Behaviour*, by Michael Argyle, lecturer in Social Psychology at Oxford (Routledge and Kegan, Paul; 25s.). Religious belief is strong in childhood but "children with high intelligence ratings soon begin to have doubts." "After 18, most people lose interest in religion, but from 30 onwards interest revives, until in very old age, when death is near, belief in immortality returns." Women, of course, are more religious than men, "religious people more prejudiced against Jews and Negroes; atheists and agnostics more tolerant." Understandably, "Most scientists come from liberal colleges, few from Catholic ones." And, among religious criminals, "Catholics have the highest rate for crimes of violence, Protestants the highest for sexual offences, and Jews the lowest in all categories except fraud."

Christianity and Ancient Materialism

By F. A. RIDLEY

IT IS NOWADAYS GENERALLY ACCEPTED that the ancient Greeks—or to speak with less convention and more accuracy—a small minority of the ancient Greeks, were the authentic and original founders both of experimental science and, since in that field the ancient Egyptians had already preceded them, to an even greater extent the originators of secular and autonomous philosophy when considered as the critical examination by human reason of objective reality. No doubt isolated heretics had existed in pre-Hellenic times, the famous Akhnahton (Amenophis Pharaoh of Egypt), and even in the Old Testament one gets occasional whiffs of unexpected rational thinking in the midst of turgid, religious texts. But at least as far as the Western world is concerned, consistent rational thinking, undeterred by the dictates of traditional authority, began with the Greeks, or again, with some Greeks. (Some scholars claim an equally spontaneous origin for ancient Indian philosophy, but if so, it never came to exercise a world-wide influence like Greek philosophy has done.) The Hellenes, to give them their own self-chosen designation—Greeks was a name given them later by their eventual Roman conquerors—represent the first rationalists, that is, the first real thinkers in human history.

During the evolution of classical Greek and Greek-inspired philosophy which lasted for about 800 years (c. 600 B.C.—200 A.D.), many schools of philosophy arose under the initial impulse, and were associated with the names, of many famous thinkers. But just as terrestrial astronomers only see the stars, not as they really are but through the distorting medium of our enveloping atmosphere, so we see Greek Philosophy, not primarily through our own eyes, but through the distorting mirror of a thousand years of medieval Christianity and of medieval literary censorship. That is, through an exacting institution which was motivated by theological motives having absolutely nothing to do with scientific criteria, but often in direct opposition to them. For as Newman once pointed out in a notable passage, as far as our knowledge of classical literature is concerned, we are entirely at the mercy of the medieval monks and theologians who preserved—or failed to preserve—and no doubt “edited” the literary philosophical and scientific masterpieces of antiquity. For we must never allow ourselves to forget that the classical literature that we enjoy today is nothing like the complete *corpus*, far more of which, we may judge from existing records, has perished. What we actually possess is a number of fragments of Græco-Roman literature, carefully selected by medieval censorship. What, in Greek philosophy in particular, was offensive to Catholic orthodoxy or clerical moral and social sentiment, completely disappeared; or, if it survived, did so by accident in a single copy.

It was due to an accident of this kind that the two best known heretical works in classical literature, the great poem of Lucretius and the spiritual biography of Marcus Aurelius, have survived. How many equally great masterpieces have perished we have no means of discovering. Cardinal Newman was correct when he stated that, as far as the preservation of the classics is concerned, we are absolutely at the mercy of the medieval monks. (A learned Jesuit, Fr. Hardouin, once even contended that monks actually wrote our surviving classics! Without going as far as that, they did interpolate passages, including perhaps Tacitus's famous account of Nero's persecution of the

Christians.) To take a similar hypothetical case. If the Nazis had won the last war and had succeeded in establishing their “New Order” in Europe, what would have been left, at the end, of our rationalist and radical literature would have resembled the classical literature that emerged from the monastic treadmill.

The Hellenes and, to a much lesser extent, their more imitative Roman disciples, produced rival schools of Idealism, Materialism, Scepticism, *et al.*, which contended vigorously by speech and pen. As the French historian of philosophy, M. Paul Nizan, has demonstrated, the ancient Greek materialism was embodied in a powerful and highly articulate school, which could boast of at least two thinkers of the very first rank—not to mention the greatest philosophic poets in perhaps any language—Democritus and Epicurus. Lucretius's poem—an inspired commentary on Epicurus, as it has been termed—has survived by accident; only a few fragments of Epicurus are extant; Democritus, the earlier and apparently more original thinker, has just undergone complete literary obliteration. Yet we know from the, also fortunately surviving historian of classical philosophy, Diogenes Laertius, that Democritus and Epicurus were, along with Plato, the most prolific writers of philosophy in Greek literature. Stoics like Zeno and Chrysippus, whom we may suppose from the known tenets of their school to have been at least as materialistic as their later successor, Marcus Aurelius, have similarly survived as mere names. The same fate has befallen the entire literature of Greek scepticism, while the *names* of certain Greek atheists have been preserved by Cicero.

There is no doubt why, and at whose hands, this selective elimination of Greek Materialist writings was conducted. Nizan quotes the early Christian Father, Clement of Alexandria, as saying: “When the apostle Paul condemned the philosophers, it was only the Epicureans [*viz.*, the Materialists] whom he had in mind!” His successors, the medieval clerical censors, took the hint.

Obviously the Idealistic or Realist writers whose teaching could be utilised for the later development of Christian theology, or could be held to have prepared the way for the Church, are the ones that have survived. Most notably, of course, Plato, whom Nietzsche called “a Christian before Christ,” to a lesser extent, Aristotle, and later, the anti-materialist, Cicero. Plato has been almost canonised by the Church (which may have borrowed the Inquisition from his “Nocturnal Council,” the business of which was to suppress heresy and, in particular, atheism—*viz.*, the teaching of Democritus). All Plato's work has been preserved—*religiously* preserved, one can accurately say. Epicurus refuted Plato in detail, but not a word has survived! Yet not Plato, but Democritus, was probably the greatest of Greek—perhaps of all human—thinkers. The destruction of Greek Materialism and Rationalism by the Christian Church constitutes perhaps the greatest cultural setback in recorded history, as well as an impressive warning for the future.

—NEXT WEEK—

HOW STRONG IS ROME?

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

Aspects of Overpopulation

I—OVERCROWDING

By R. READER

SO MUCH HAS BEEN SAID AND WRITTEN about Far Eastern famine and world food supplies that the other evil effects of overpopulation, equally serious and much nearer home, are apt to pass unnoticed. However, the British press was recently tactless enough to publish figures relating to the housing situation of a certain Western European "advanced" country. No reference, of course, was made to overpopulation; instead the term "overcrowding" was used, with its suggestion that a sharp reprimand to a lethargic Ministry is all that is necessary to put matters in order. But let the figures speak for themselves.

In this advanced country, then, "43,700 families of six persons are living in one-room conditions." Or, to put the thing bluntly, 262,200 persons are living six to a room. "Over one and one third million dwellings have three or more persons per room," that is, about seven million people, or a city the size of New York. And a further one and one quarter million are living two to a room.

These figures give a clear picture of the present situation. But further statistics are given which indicate that future conditions are certain to be *far worse*. 240,000 new dwellings per year are actually being built, and at this rate, it is said, "the housing shortage will last another century." But later in the report it is stated that the "average age of town houses is now 63 years, and country houses, 110 years." In "another century," therefore, their average ages will be 163 and 210 years respectively. That is, these houses, in 2058, will be in the same condition as are now houses which were built before the French Revolution. In other words, they will either be non-existent, or rare museum pieces. Finally, "30 out of every 100 houses are in acute need of repair."

No effort whatever is required to realise that the houses of this country are rotting away far faster than new ones are being built, and that, only ten years hence, the housing situation will be much worse than it is today. People will then be living seven or eight in one room—and some will have no room at all.

Yet—and this is the fundamental insanity of our time—the country in question has been making frantic efforts to increase its birth rate to "catch up" with the rest of Europe! In this, of course, it is no more demented than the rest. All countries—East and West alike—are still, socially, living in a dream world of caverns and mastodons, in an age when human life had to be forced into the world for mankind to survive. And everywhere this dream world is codified into delirium that is basically the same, although it goes under many names—"Christianity" here; the "State" there; and scores of political creeds terminating in "ism."

It is a shocking comment on human intelligence that the world should now be divided into two antagonistic blocks, each preparing to annihilate the other—and which are, basically, *one and the same thing*. For, in relation to biological imperatives, there is no difference whatever between the religious neurotic babbling of increasing and multiplying, and the communist fanatic vaunting yet more production statistics. Both ignore that quantitative human expansion has come to an end, now, and for all time. The contradictory policy pursued by man since his appearance on this planet, *viz.*, that of trying to give ever greater numbers of people an ever-higher standard of living on a surface of limited size and resources (and limited capacity

for supporting human life under psychologically sound conditions), has now worked itself out to its logical end: an overpopulated world where material and mental imperatives are pressing ruthlessly upon us until we either give in or are exterminated.

The guilt for this situation, however, rests largely with organised religion, with its sedulous lying concerning man's position in the universe. Even if it is now conceded that the earth goes round the sun, mankind is still vaunted as the centre of all. In truth, however, reality is no more interested in us than in any other creature.

The Nose of the Abbess

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

REVEREND MOTHER said it was a way to prove the earth isn't flat. "If it were," she said, "we'd all be pushed in the corners by the city jostlers." The trouble was, though, that the city people couldn't be entirely ignored. The children had to be given an education which in some way prepared them for the world. Well, there were the fretwork classes. Of course, they were an extra; but all the convent knew about the two ex-pupils who lost all their money, yet were able to keep on being gentlewomen because they'd been qualified to run a jig-saw club, thanks to their fretwork. They'd cut out puzzles and dispatched them in plain cardboard boxes to subscribers; and then they'd sat up all night, working on the returned puzzles, putting them together themselves to make certain that no pieces were missing before sending them out again.

"You see how useful a good education can be," said the waspish sister who conducted the fretwork classes.

"After all," Reverend Mother would say to the girls' parents, "many of our pupils have become quite distinguished in the big world outside." And at one time she was able to add, "This cake, for instance, was sent to us by one of our old girls who's now well known in esperanto circles. Her cake has been all round the world, forwarded from esperantist to esperantist. It shows that esperanto is universal, doesn't it?"

On this occasion she proffered slices of the much travelled cake.

Another ex-pupil had won a diploma in calligraphy, and she'd confessed it had changed her social status. All the same, sometimes Reverend Mother brooded on the temptations of secular society which would confront so many of the little ones when they'd passed beyond the nuns' care; and Reverend Mother was particularly worried on the night when she looked into one of the dormitories and found a freckled girl dancing in the moonlight between the cots. Then her expression changed in a flash from serene benevolence to extreme annoyance, as the girls had seen it change in the refectory when the holy lady had difficulty getting the lid off the marmalade.

"My child," she said in her sternest voice, "it's time all good little girls were in bed."

The girl stopped her pirouetting in the aisle, and gazed at the creased face of the adult with speckled impudence, and she made a gesture which swept over the occupied cots and said, "But, Reverend Mother, they are!"

Out of the mouths of babes . . . and for once Reverend Mother felt utterly defeated by such worldly sophistication, and she could find no suitable retort to give to the audacious dancer. She went sadly to chapel and prayed for strength, for she was afraid that the time had come when she'd have to do it again. Yes, she would have to gather the children together in the great hall and read them once more the story of the Yorkshire abbess, and

how the Danes had been about to capture the town close to the convent and the abbess' thoughts had turned to things that men of the world may wish to do. She'd called all her nuns into chapel and had cut off their noses.

Ah, if only the world, with its inspectors and education officers, had not gained so much power! How comforting it would be to be able to do as much today for the children—perhaps with the waspish sister's fretsaw?

CORRESPONDENCE

MARIE STOPES

I am writing a book about the character, life and struggles of the late Dr. Marie Stopes. Any help from your readers in the form of letters, reminiscences, press cuttings, or any other relevant information would be most gratefully received.

Any items lent will be treated most carefully and returned promptly and may be sent to me either at the address below, or care of my publisher, Barrie Books Ltd., 3-4 Clement's Inn, London, W.C.2.

9, Westbourne Terrace, London, W.2.

ELIZABETH SMART.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

I read recently in the *Daily Telegraph* (25/9/58): "Mr. Gomulka said that the 1956 Church-State agreement allowed the introduction of optional religious instruction classes in schools if a majority of parents expressed a desire in writing. This step met with bitter protests from a large part of the population."

To me it seems as though religious instruction classes in schools should only be to the children of parents who expressed a desire that such occurred.

C. J. LITTLE.

HERE OR THERE?

I have picked up a little item of information, which though vague, may be of use to you.

As the local road safety representative, I recently attended at Chelmsford a meeting of the Eastern Accident Prevention Federation. While discussing the problem of who should bear the financial burden of a possible free issue of Highway Codes to children, a delegate remarked that:

One education authority in Eastern England had already provided a free Holy Bible for each child at a cost to the authority of 14s. 6d. per child.

Needless to say, it was remarked that it was better to look after them here rather than there!

J. DOWDING.

A WORTHY REPRESENTATIVE!

Your reference to the *Catholic Herald's* suggestion that the B.B.C. should invite the Jesuit Fr. Martin D'Arcy to meet Mrs. Margaret Knight in public debate, the dictionary says a Jesuit is commonly "a crafty person," "an intriguer." In other words, he is a member of the Society of Jesus.

R. G. FORSTER.

THE MIRACULOUS WELL

There is a lot of talk about the miraculous well of Lourdes coming from the river, but what about the miraculous well at Fatima? The original well dried up about a month after it miraculously sprang up, so the Church authorities, working on the principle that water won't flow uphill, had great machinery constructed in the valley below, where there is an abundance of water, to pump water up to the miraculous well. Four men work on the job, eight hours every day. I have actually seen them at work.

NAN FLANAGAN.

THE NEW SEDATIVES

In the days of my youth the sedative for the discontented was the hope of "pie in the sky." Today, the new sedatives for the poor and unfortunate would appear to be gold dust on the moon and the pools—both seemingly very efficient in keeping quiet the discontented.

C. H. NORMAN.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE KORAN

Can your correspondent Leonard Martin quote Koranic suras to support his statements?

I venture to suspect that either he or his authorities are confusing sodomy with adultery. Four eye-witnesses are required to convict an adulterer. Adulteresses were, of course, dealt with by

their lords. Students should study *The Spirit of Islam* and other works by Sir Syed Amir Ali but general readers will find *Haji Baba of Ispahan* interesting.

W. E. HUXLEY.

SECULARISM AND SCHWEITZER

Apropos of Mr. Huxley's censorious comments on my article, may I point out that my reference to Albert Schweitzer as a missionary was prefixed by the word *medical*, and that other than Christians are interested in the sort of work Schweitzer has done in Africa over a long span of years?

Actually it is debatable whether this remarkable man may be considered a Christian in any meaningful sense of the world; and in fairness to people of his type (even if they be Christians) it is also debatable whether they all act out of expectation of reward in Heaven. (Parenthetically, does Schweitzer believe in Heaven? he seems to me to be too much of a sceptic for that.)

Mr. Huxley says in effect that I am a pseudo-secularist; but is he sure that the term secularist is descriptive of his own position? Ought he not rather to call himself a freethinker or an atheist, which is in fact just what he is? For my part, I do not happen to believe that attacking the Churches is the be-all and end-all of our work as secularists, and unless we have a clear conception of something beyond it I wonder whether the harvest of our efforts will really be worth the reaping.

To me, my critic writes like a man who has received from religion a painful wound. I think I am, in this respect at least, more fortunate. Becoming an atheist early in life, I have never felt any animosity towards religious people as such. I could, of course, be wrong; but I question—yes, seriously I do—whether clear thinking and good judgment are promoted by a sort of churlish scorn for the honest, even if mistaken, convictions of others.

G. I. BENNETT.

OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of another old member of the Leicester Secular Society, Mr. Frank Hancock, who died suddenly on Saturday, November 29th, aged 76 years.

Frank will be sadly missed by everyone in the society, particularly in the Tuesday discussion group. To his sorrowing relatives we tender our deepest sympathy.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H. Taylor. Price 3/6; postage 6d.

THE PAPACY IN POLITICS TODAY. By Joseph McCabe. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

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