

# The Freethinker

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IN THE MASTERLY PREFACE which he contributed to the last (1929) English edition of his great history of Comparative Religion, *Orpheus*, Salaman Reinach made a disparaging reference to the theory of religious origins which was generally held by the French Freethinkers of the 18th century, and in particular by Voltaire and Rousseau. According to this theory, religions were invented by priests with the deliberate object of acquiring thereby a dominant position in society. In which connection it must, I think, be conceded that most anthropologists and modern experts on Comparative Religion would agree with Reinach rather than with his 18th century predecessors. In the normal course of human evolution, religions appear to have originated usually as the product of primitive social and mental conditions, as the perhaps inevitable result of a social environment dominated by fear, ignorance and servitude. However, there are exceptions to every rule, and such exceptions exist in religion also. There have undoubtedly existed in both ancient and modern times, religions which were invented by designing priests and clerically inspired politicians, or even by secular lawgivers anxious to ensure obedience in the credulous masses. In the words of an old Greek, "by sly and crafty men" who realised long before Karl Marx that religion is the supreme "opium of the people."

## The Invention of a Modern Religion

In ancient history, many such examples exist. Perhaps Hindu India with its ruling Brahmin Aryan caste and its priestly code "The Laws of Manu," provides the most outstanding example, and in the West, we recall how the great Greek historian Polybius, singled out the Romans for special praise because they used an ancient religious cult in which they did not themselves believe, to further their own political ends by playing on the superstitions of the illiterate and credulous multitude. (Even Reinach admitted that the later Roman Emperor, Augustus, used religion in this way as a regular part of his policy.) But the phenomenon is not confined to the ancient world. Modern examples of the same kind also exist and one such, a very recent one, has been subjected to a masterly and detailed examination by a modern English Freethinker. In his illuminating pamphlet *The Invention of a New Religion*, an English scholar long resident in Japan, has analysed the artificially revived Japanese cult of Shintoism which represented the official religion patronised by the Japanese Imperial Court and ruling militarist caste between 1867 (the date of the National Revolution which created modern Japan) and the final downfall of atomically blasted Japanese Imperialism in 1945. Throughout this period of nearly eighty years, an artificially revived medieval cult *Shinto*, "The Way of the Gods," dominated Japanese political, religious and cultural life alike, thanks to intensive and uninterrupted propaganda by an astute and cynical ruling class. This class appears to have been animated by Machiavellian political realism rather than

by any genuine religious conviction of the spiritual value of the archaic theology and feudal militarist ethics of Shintoism. As our author aptly remarks: "People can always believe that which it is greatly to their interest to believe." And he relevantly adds: "Thousands of excellent people in our own society cling to the doctrine of a future life on no better evidence."

[cf. *The Invention of a New Religion* by Basil H. Chamberlain. Published by Watts, 1912. This pamphlet was reissued as anti-Japanese propaganda during the last war.]

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## Priestcraft and Religion

By F. A. RIDLEY

foreign conquest) by its feudal rulers. This immemorial isolation was rudely broken down by the arrival of armed foreign naval squadrons with their visible threat of annexation by European or American Imperialism. In such an emergency, the Japanese rulers resolved upon drastic action. After a successful rising against the old feudal lords, Japan was radically reorganised on modern lines with the avowed objective of transforming her into a strong modern military state. But so sweeping a social revolution could not be accomplished by purely political methods; "Moral Rearmament," too, was urgently required. The restored Imperial regime set to work energetically to meet this need, for which purpose they revived the old Imperial cult of Shinto or "Emperor Worship" which had fallen into disuse during the long feudal era, in which the former Divine Emperors had been kept shut up in their palaces by their nominal feudal vassals. The Revolution of 1867 had restored the Emperor, and Shintoism thereupon set to work to turn him into a visible god and the symbol of renescent Japanese Imperialism. So strongly marked, in fact, was the patriotic and — as "appetite came with eating" in the new Japan — the Imperialistic character of the revived religious cult that, in a conversation with the author, a high Japanese official defined it as "the religion of Imperialism." It was in the name, and by the Divine Right of, the Imperial descendant of the Sun Goddess (for like the Incas of Peru, the Japanese Emperors were also "Children of the Sun") that Imperial Japan dreamed up those vast plans of world conquest outlined in the famous "Memorandum" of Prime Minister Baron Tanaka (1928), later to end in atomic checkmate in 1945.

### Moral Rearmament

In the light of the rejuvenated patriotic religious cult, the whole cultural life of Japan was revised in a manner perhaps later copied by the Nazis in their regime. Text books were rewritten; a national mythology was created, and Shintoism was equated with national glory. And the, at first, spectacular successes gained by Japan in her successive wars with China and Russia, were ascribed to the spiritual dynamic inspired by the new creed with its markedly militaristic ethic of austerity and self-sacrifice on the altar of the Fatherland. As Professor Chamberlain

### The Religion of Imperialism

Prior to 1867, Japan represented a medieval island in a modern world, jealously isolated (largely for fear of



himself tells us: "Under a regime of ostensible religious tolerance the attendance of officials at certain Shinto shrines was required and in the schools the practice was established of bowing down several times yearly before the Emperor's picture. [This was later to be escorted safely through the scorched ruins of Hiroshima on August 6th, 1945. — F.A.R.] Meanwhile Japanese politics had prospered; her warriors had gained great victories, enormous was the prestige thus accruing to Imperialism and to the rejuvenated Shinto cult. All military successes were ascribed to the miraculous influence of the Emperor's virtue and to the virtues of his Imperial and divine ancestors — this is, of former Emperors and of Shinto deities. Imperial envoys were regularly sent after each great victory to carry the good tidings to the Sun Goddess at her shrine in Ise not there alone, but at the other Shinto shrines throughout the land, the cannon captured from Chinese and Russian foes were officially installed with a view to identifying Imperialism, Shintoism and the national glory in the popular mind. The new legend is enforced wherever feasible —

for instance, by means of a new set of festivals celebrating Imperial official events." (Chamberlain, p.9.)

The Professor then goes on to describe how the schools, which he calls "the headquarters of the new propaganda," had their whole curriculum officially revised in the interests of the new cult. In brief, a complete system of "moral rearmament" the invention of a new religion for ultimately political ends was deliberately foisted on the Japanese nation between 1867 and 1945. But Japanese Imperialism after a run of spectacular successes, ended (also spectacularly) not in Valhalla, but in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Modern science applied with Machiavellian ruthlessness was too strong for the Sun Goddess and for her priests! However, the episode is an instructive one, if only because it demonstrates that it is not only among the white races that men, including politicians, make the gods in their own image, and from time to time originate religious cults for reasons that have little to do with religion. Voltaire had got something after all!

## A Catholic President

By COLIN McCALL

WRITING in *The Manchester Guardian* (17/8/59), Professor D. W. Brogan made a number of important points regarding Senator Kennedy's chances of being the Democratic nomination for Presidency of the United States. And, "after some four months of indefatigable listening in most parts of the Union," Professor Brogan considers the odds are heavily against the nomination. The main obstacle, of course, is Kennedy's Catholicism and, says the Professor, "his Church is basically more powerful, richer, more respectable, and much more feared than it was in 1928," when Al Smith was defeated in the Presidential election.

The Roman Catholic Church, as Professor Brogan says, is the one "that most conspicuously interferes with the private habits of American citizens." "It may be a matter of excessive zeal for Franco Spain, now an increasingly poor investment. It may be the legal outlawing of contraception, almost as irritating and even less effective in the States where it is the law, than prohibition was. It may be a priest putting on the economic heat to prevent the showing of a Bardot movie. It may be the censorial zeal of a Catholic chief of police in Chicago, or the untimely zeal of a Catholic nurse in a public hospital." "All these things mount up," as the Professor says. And to the list we can add the recent threat by Archbishop E. A. Byrne to withhold the Sacraments from the family of Sue Ingersoll ("Miss New Mexico") if she paraded in a bathing suit in the Miss Universe beauty contest.

Miss Ingersoll, in fact, was not talking wildly when she said she hoped her defiance of the Archbishop might help Senator Kennedy. Letters to *Time* magazine (August 10th and 17th) showed that the significance of the affair was not lost upon American Protestants. A Mr. Walter Sibley said it was "reassuring to have such a staunch protector of morals as Archbishop Byrne," and ironically suggested that the U.S. should now elect a Roman Catholic President and "a majority of Hail Mary Senators and Congressmen" so that this "protection" might be extended to Protestants! It would seem, wrote Louis J. Hebel (inverting his history but making his point) that the Roman Church "has taken a leaf from Communism's book. It has learned how to punish an offender through the offender's loved ones." "Can anything be more apparent," asked Kathryn N. Rhodes, "than that the Roman Catholic hierarchy is using any and every means to control our public life?" While

John A. Banch said: "Each time I read an article similar to yours concerning Sue Ingersoll and Archbishop Byrne, I am less disturbed over the fact that I and thousands of others are 'falling away' from the Catholic Church each year."

It must have been little consolation for Archbishop Byrne, Senator Kennedy, and his supporters, that the only letter of support for the prelate (in the two weeks of *Time* referred to) came from a Sioux Indian, Silas Left Hand Bull, of Pine Ridge, South Dakota, whose womenfolk "do not make public display of their bare hide or their bathing habits." And even he only supported the Archbishop's motives: he didn't mention his methods.

But now, back to Professor Brogan. There are, of course, more serious issues than those referred to above. And chief of these is the public schools (in the American and literal sense, that is, not in the British sense). Further expenditure on the public schools is, as the Professor says, "one of the most burning issues in local American politics" and it is suspected that, "since the Catholics pay for their own schools" they may be "lacking in zeal for further expenditure on the public schools."

So, concludes Professor Brogan, "I am prepared to assert that Senator Kennedy may suffer more from his religion than Al Smith did . . ." And, while we wish Mr. Kennedy no personal harm, we must add that we think it will be better for America if Professor Brogan proves to be right.

### SOAKED WITH RELIGION

FOLLOWING MR. MARK LILLINGTON'S REPORT (*THE FREETHINKER*, 14/8/59) that Jehovah's Witnesses are a nuisance in Basildon New Town, Essex, and that "far too many people go around knocking on doors" comes a letter from Mr. J. Radford of Crawley New Town, Sussex. Mr. Radford has lived here for four years and he says the place is being "absolutely soaked with religion." There are a lot of new churches, he continues, and "we are pestered in the factories by visiting priests and at our front doors by other religious fanatics."

—NEXT WEEK—

REPORT FROM BRUSSELS

By COLIN McCALL



# Progress in Animal Welfare

By FLORENCE BARKER

DESPITE THE appalling cruelties to animals which are still tolerated by professedly civilised peoples, the fact that a World Day for Animals (October 4th) exists is an encouraging sign. It shows the progress which has been made in man's attitude to his non-human brethren, for not so long ago in history a man named Martin, when he proposed a Bill to protect cattle was greeted with derision by his fellow Members of Parliament. "Soon," they guffawed, "we shall have laws to protect cats and dogs!"

The public is awaking from its torpor. Probably the unashamed triumphant blazoning forth by press and radio of experiments with living animals in space, has shocked folk into realising to what lengths scientists will go and what horrors are perpetrated in Vivisection laboratories. A recently issued report states that last year nearly three million experiments on live animals were carried out—over a hundred thousand more than the previous year, and that "87 per cent were performed without anaesthetic." The barefaced boasts of the experimenters themselves prevent the public from continuing to bury its head in comfortable sand! There have been questions in Parliament concerning the alarming increase in Vivisection and Lord Dowding is conducting a "Votes for Animals" campaign aimed at using the next General Election as a lever to obtain a long overdue enquiry into the matter.

Evidence points to the fact that a non-flesh diet is gaining ground, but pending its eventual and (in view of increasing world population) inevitable adoption generally, perhaps the most outstanding event in animal welfare this year is the coming into operation on January 1st of the Slaughter of Animals (Prevention of Cruelty) Regulations. While human beings murder animals for food, cruelty will persist, but these Regulations do something to alleviate suffering—the best probably being insistence upon the "stunning pen". Unhappily, exemption from the Regulations may be obtained in special cases until the beginning of next year. They do not affect Jewish methods of slaughter.

Humane traps approved by the Ministry of Agriculture are now in circulation—due to the Gin Trap being rendered illegal last year in England and Wales—and this year in Scotland also. The Gin Trap is still used in Australia and Canada, but efforts are afoot to banish the abomination. Trapping for fur would speedily cease if women would refrain from demanding the real article. Fur fabric—light, elegant and *moth-proof*—is now available and is free from the taint of blood.

The cruelties of the Grand National have this year at last been discussed in Parliament and are to be investigated.

The chaining of dogs—especially prevalent in rural areas—is causing search for a satisfactory formula for a Bill to end this widespread cruelty.

Great concern has been felt and ventilated in some Police areas and by humane workers in relation to the possession and use of air guns by youths who can secure and use such weapons under a gun licence at any age. Without a licence, however, it is illegal for a person—or child—to possess any air gun—even though it looks like a toy.

In Kansas, U.S.A., strenuous attempts have been made to prevent appalling cruelty to horses and cattle in transport and slaughter. The fight continues.

India is agitating for legislation to improve the lot of

its animals, and last Spring a private Resolution was discussed in the Lok Sabha to ban completely the export of monkeys.

There is interest in Poland in the International Cultural Forum's Animals' Charter which has been received and acknowledged by UNO and UNESCO. (Copies may be obtained from: Miss F. A. Barker, B.A., Hon. Sec., U.K. Branch, 127 Neville Avenue, Hove, 4, England.)

Recently the World Federation for the Protection of Animals obtained Consultative Status from UNESCO, which surely means that animals all over the world will be raised in status.

Illustrated lectures given by Michael Fryer of the Crusade Against All Cruelty, are bringing to the public unquestionable evidence of appalling injustices to animals. They are available to anyone who can organise a showing of the films.

Dr. Beddow Bayly has spoken of the "futility of experiments on animals" and shocked his audience by his lantern slides. He has referred to the "day-to-day and year-by-year use of millions of animals in research laboratories where they were often subjected to unspeakable suffering." In common with numerous medical men, he holds that "the abolition of Vivisection would not only have the effect of enabling research workers to avoid the pitfalls and fallacies associated with animal exploitation, but would, in fact, promote in the highest degree the true progress of medical science."

Freethinkers will agree with the Doctor that only a humanity which is compassionate "is worth preserving. Only such will achieve health and serenity and ensure world-peace."

Undoubtedly we have advanced a long way since a bill to protect animals was the signal for scoffing in our British Parliament, but there is no justification for resting on our oars. Much remains to be done, and we must be like Miles Standish—"not leave it to others."

## SECULAR EDUCATION IN FRANCE

ON JANUARY 23RD THIS YEAR, we printed M. André Lorulot's assessment of the De Gaulle regime on our front page. To our surprise, our action was rather strongly criticised from an unexpected quarter. We were told that "The Fruits of May 13th" was "out of place" in our paper, though how an article by the Vice-President of the World Union of Freethinkers, President of the French National Federation of Freethinkers and editor of three leading French Freethought papers can be out of place in THE FREETHINKER is hard to see. Particularly when Mr. Lorulot dealt specifically with the danger to the Secular State in France. "We are no longer in the presence of merely vague threats," he wrote. "The secular educational system is about to suffer the most furious attack that has ever been made on it . . . We must concentrate on defending the secular schools and the separation of Church and State. It is freedom of thought that is in danger, and the neutrality of the State in Religious questions." M. Lorulot has been proved right. Dr. Brian Chapman of the University of Manchester recently called the Church and State educational struggle "the only live issue in French politics." Freethinkers, as usual, are in the forefront of the fight and conspicuous among them is André Lorulot, who we shall have the pleasure of meeting again in Brussels when this paper appears.



## This Believing World

It appears from a report in the London "Star" that the clergy "are becoming increasingly concerned at acts of hooliganism and vandalism" by youths, in various churches in and around King's Cross. Organ pipes are stolen, attempts have been made to steal Reformation plate, offertory boxes have been raided and gravestones have been badly damaged. But surely the point to note in all this is that it is the work of young people who have had a thoroughly *religious* education forced on them by law. This religious teaching according to *every* authority should have made it impossible for them to perform any outrage in church or out. Why has it not done so? Will believers tell us?

★

Once again the Bible has come out triumphantly in being literally modern in its outlook. The blatant infidels who look upon it as a mere Oriental book, quite out of date, must now hang their heads in shame. BBC Television has now successfully wedded religion with rock 'n roll in some of its religious programmes, and can justify itself, thank God, from his Holy Word. Here it is — from Psalm 150: "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp; praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs; praise him upon the loud cymbals. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord . . ."

★

Viewers will, of course, have recognised all this also on ITV's "Sunday Break," specially designed to bring the youth of our age and times to God not only with the clashing of cymbals and drums and the excessive blaring of trumpets, but also with the heart-to-heart talks the youngsters have with the wise and all-knowing parsons who smile on their young friends so piously when answering their — in most cases — naïve questions. The young people are introduced by a charming hostess, Julie Stevens, and so it is most intriguing to find that this young lady has publicly avowed her disbelief in God Almighty. It seems incredible, but there it is, in the pages of the *TV Times* itself for August 23.

★

One would have thought that after 18 months of the clashing of cymbals and the very religious rock 'n roll atmosphere generally in the "Sunday Break," Miss Stevens would have been *plus royaliste que le roi* — but no. She hasn't found God yet though she — perhaps sadly — admits that "she has learned a lot" and "ought to believe." She has even had a "lot of correspondence with the Rev. D. Sheppard"; and it must be a big shock to that famous cricketer that he has not so far succeeded in proving that the Universe could not have created itself, but *must* have had a Creator. How can any infidel, even a mild one, get over that crushing argument?

★

That very religious writer in the London "Evening News" (who every Saturday devotes half a column to the service of God) while admitting that the Parable of the Good Samaritan "appeals to a vast number of people," finds fault with it because it only illustrates half of the spirit of Christianity; it leaves out the other half — "our duty to God." But some of us find it increasingly difficult to learn exactly what this "duty" really is. It is easy to say that you must "believe" in God, but what then? In what way is anybody who believes in God superior to one who doesn't? That great leader of a race, Hitler, was an out-and-out believer in God — he was always appealing to

the Almighty — and is he now considered a conspicuous example of a believer?

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A "strip-tease" club has opened in a most genteel part of Belgravia, much to the horror and disgust of the Rev. D. Harris, the vicar of St. Paul's Knightsbridge. Some of his parishioners, like Lord and Lady Mountbatten, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, and many other members of the aristocracy, will no doubt share his disgust — but after all, there is no need for any of them, not even the vicar, to join the club. Besides, there are licensing laws which look after a club's "morals" quite as effectively as a parson; and in any case, the manager of the club says, "We get lots of titled people here" — which just shows that even titled people like a spot of "strip-tease" now and then, in spite of Christianity.

★

Not all parsons agree that our hymns "ancient and modern" are mostly puerile rubbish. For example, we have the Rev. D. Brenner, the minister of the Congregational Church at Sydenham, protesting that he would be only too willing to "translate" any phrases in hymns not understood by Christians, or even to play only those hymns selected by his congregation. Once, *Hymns Ancient and Modern* was considered by all true believers as second only to the Bible in "sacredness" — and now? The times have changed to such a degree that most people are bored stiff with "Greenland's Icy Mountains" or "Abide With Me." They prefer rock 'n roll.

## All out for Jesus

THE CHURCH ARMY is to launch an all-out offensive on a wide front in the Kingstanding district of Birmingham on September 20th. This modern "Army of Christ" will be equipped in the light of up-to-the-minute experience of the advertising experts. Propagandists will exploit crowd psychology with startling slogans and catchy tunes; there will be pram services, film shows, visits to the local pubs, as well as personal calls at doors, etc.

And the reason for this large-scale manoeuvre? The shocking indifference of the 40,000 population of the parish to the spiritual bounties offered "free to all" by the one Anglican church in the district. For, as the vicar, the Rev. H. F. S. Loyson tells us, only 100 worshippers attend his Sunday services; infidelity is obviously rife; the people of Kingstanding apparently do not realise the peril in which they stand. And the vicar's burden is increased because he cannot enlist the help of even one curate when, he says, he could find work for six. You might wonder what use the vicar could make of six curates when he only has a congregation of 100, but vicars can be very optimistic. This one, no doubt, believes that a well-rehearsed sextet could multiply his flock "an hundred fold."

Anyway, now he is to have a crusade under the leadership of Captain John Smith, aged 26, who tells us that his objective is to bridge the gap between the Church and the people. To this end, his officers will receive their commissions on Sunday, September 20th, at the hands of the Right Rev. Dr. J. L. Wilson, the Lord Bishop of Birmingham, who will doubtless remind the recipients that the highest dignitaries will be following the campaign with the deepest interest.

T. H. R. J.

For the belief that God will endow, not merely men, but inanimate matter, with special ministerial grace, which thereafter inheres in it, nothing can be said. It is a superstition, a relic of religious barbarism.  
*Bishop Barnes.*



# THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.

TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (rear of Morley Street Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. CORINA and DAY.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: L. Ebury.

London (Finsbury Square, E.C.2).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. L. Ebury and C. MCCALL.

London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Saturday from 6 p.m. and every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. Ebury, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

London (Tower Hill).—Every 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).—Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 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.: Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street.) Sunday, September 13th, 6.45 p.m., G. BRIDGER, "Anti-Militarism in the Working Class Movement."

## Notes and News

THE PRONOUNCEMENTS of the Primate of All England have not always struck us as particularly apt, and his latest speech at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of St. Christopher's Theological College, Blackheath, certainly didn't. Speaking to 200 women — students, old students and friends — Dr. Fisher said (*Kentish Mercury*, 24/7/59): "At one time it was extremely difficult for women, even as highly trained as those of St. Christopher's, to do the work suited to them for the church. But their undaunted spirit and private enterprise has won through and I'm convinced the Church now realises their great worth." It depends, of course, on the interpretation of "the work suited to them," but to say that women have "won through" and that their "great worth" is now recognised hardly seems appropriate for the head of a Church that resolutely refuses to admit women to the ministry.

THIRTY-FIVE FROGS — *The New Yorker* reports (25/7/59) — were recently taken from a drainage ditch near Gainesville, Florida, by a biology student, and "about 90 per cent. of them showed mutations — extra legs, extra eyes." The cause, we are told, is not known, but F. W. Gilchreas of Florida University, said "rain containing fallout could affect frogs' eggs" and, during the last two years "rain with unusually large amounts of radioactivity has been recorded in the Gainesville area." We learn also that of 43 specimens of plants growing in the Marshall Islands, "16

developed some kind of abnormality following the 1954 Bikini hydrogen bomb tests."

★

DESPERATELY DOES CHRISTIANITY TRY to retain—or regain—its hold on the population. On B.B.C. television on Sunday, August 16th, in "Six-Five Special," "every piece of music, every song," had a "pop" beat, and two singers, Denis Lotis and Maxine Daniels sang, among other numbers, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," "Big Story Breaking" and "A Closer Walk With Thee." And the Assistant Head of Religious Broadcasting (Television), the Rev. Oliver Humkin, prepared for protests by looking up the 150th Psalm, which exhorts one to "praise the Lord with trumpet, flute, harp, cymbals, strings and pipe."

★

MEANWHILE, *The Cape Argus* (25/7/59) reports another method of trying to hold attention — this time of children in Sunday schools. Ordinary teaching methods having failed, Mr. and Mrs. Gene Lombard of Vredehoek decided to present Bible stories in the form of puppet shows. Now, we are informed, "There's no fidgeting or lack of interest as scores of bright young eyes watch Jonah being swallowed by the whale or an angel on an errand of mercy." A Punch and Judy show, in fact, and just as fabulous.

★

IT IS NO DOUBT a beautiful sight to "watch the sun go down on Galway Bay" but, if the Bishop, the Most Rev. Dr. Michael Browne, has his way, unmarried men and women will have to watch it from different parts of the beach. Not to be outdone by the Primate of Spain; and no doubt to reassert Ireland's leadership in the preservation of Christian morality, Dr. Browne called for segregation of the sexes so that Galway "should maintain its reputation as a holiday place where decent people can bring their children." Some stretches of the beach, therefore, should be for "women only" and the women should not "invade" the parts used by men. "It is very wrong for unmarried couples to go bathing together," he said (*Evening Standard*, 24/8/59). "It is the cause of grave sins which bring shame and dishonour."

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THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN (19/8/59) reported an exciting acquisition by the John Rylands Library of Manchester when it recently bought a miscellaneous "lot" of manuscripts at a London saleroom. It was a lost manuscript of John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* "mostly in the hand of Helen Taylor, with the suppressed passages," from which the 1873 edition was printed. The manuscript, bought with other items at a modest price, is a Press copy, and has the names of composers pencilled in above the sections each one was to set. The incident affords — as Professor Edward Robertson said — "an example of the strokes of fortune by which a great library is built up."

★

A MAN WHO DESCRIBED HIMSELF as a Zoroastrian caused some difficulty when he appeared in a West London court on August 15th. There being no Zoroastrian religious book in the courthouse, two summonses against the man were adjourned while he produced the required volume (*The People* 16/8/59) and the magistrate said: "In the case of obscure religions it is about time the prosecution approached the proper authorities to get the necessary book for witnesses to swear on." How much simpler it would be if the "Simple Affirmation" were used by all. Witnesses then need only repeat: "I solemnly, sincerely and truly affirm and declare that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." A religious book — Christian, Zoroastrian, or what you will — is certainly no guarantee against perjury.



## Back to the Bible

By H. CUTNER

IT IS A PITY that I have to waste any more time on Irenaeus. When I first referred to him, it was to point out that here, about the year 180 A.D., was a much respected early writer on Jesus, who was the *first* to mention the four Gospels by name, and who had before him all the particulars of the life and death of Jesus, and yet actually insisted that Jesus was an *old man* when he *died*—thus saying as clearly as can be said that Jesus was not about 30 when he died, and that he was *not* crucified under Pontius Pilate. Mr. Howell Smith has been quite unable to shake this statement in the least.

But he does add, when I pointed out that all we know about Irenaeus is what he says himself, "If we should not credit what Irenaeus wrote about himself, why should we believe him when he professed to report an apostolic tradition about the age of Jesus when he died?" I do not believe either what he reports about himself, or what he "professed" to report about Jesus. Why is the word "professed" used? Irenaeus bluntly says that Jesus died an old man, there was no "profession" about it. And he wrote unbelievable nonsense.

It may be very wrong of me, but I cannot accept any statement about early Church history unless it can be corroborated by evidence. I have been unable to find from contemporary sources that there ever was a Bishop of Lyons about the year 180 A.D., and I cannot understand how it can be claimed that a gentleman living in France at that date knew the Gospels by name yet at the same time not a single Church writer or apologist—like, let us say, Justin—ever mentions them though they (the writers) were living somewhere around, or near to, Palestine.

All the accounts of Irenaeus we are given are purely speculative. His very name in Greek, "Eirenaios," simply means "peace" or "peaceful," and whoever wrote the treatise ascribed to him wanted perhaps to bring some peace into the perpetual rows we know did take place constantly in the early Church whatever date we ascribe to its beginnings.

I do not for a moment believe that Irenaeus ever saw Polycarp or John or ever was in touch with anybody who saw disciples who saw Jesus. I look upon the whole story of Jesus as literally mythical, quite as mythical as that of Mithra or Krishna. An American writer called George Reber wrote in 1876, *The Christ of Paul*, and in it he declares, "The studied dishonesty of Irenaeus in attempting to palm off the Presbyter John for the Apostle, is as dark a piece of knavery as is to be found in the history of a Church which has encouraged such practices from the time it claimed to be the depositary of all the divine wealth left by the apostles."

Irenaeus is supposed to have been martyred about the year 202 A.D. but there is not a scrap of evidence for this. Not a single early Church writer refers to it. Nobody really knows who wrote the book *Against Heresy* and written in Greek ascribed to him. We are supposed to have a poor Latin translation of it, but I have found no evidence that there ever was an original Greek work—though it is claimed that fragments in Greek are still extant. I find it always difficult to believe that late in the second century the great men of the Church were writing in Greek for a Church stationed in Rome—more or less—with a number of Popes all, as far as I can make out, speaking in Latin. In fact, one of the earliest Church translations was the early Latin text of the Gospels which was so bad that it had to be revised later

by Jerome. It is not the Greek text which is now God's Precious Word in the Roman Church, but the Latin Vulgate.

Reber has some pretty nasty things to say about Irenaeus as, for example, "As we read whole pages in Irenaeus, charging his adversaries with forgeries and false interpolations, we smile at the impudence of the man who has done more to pollute the pages of history than any other, and whose footprints we can follow through the whole century, like the slime of a serpent." And in his *Canon of the Bible*, Dr. S. Davidson charges Irenaeus with being "credulous and blundering." I could go on at length in this way—but enough has been said to show the extreme simplicity of Mr. Howell Smith innocently asking why I believe one thing Irenaeus says and not another?

And he is just as naive in referring to Godfrey Higgins's famous work in two huge volumes, *Anacalypsis*, one of the greatest books ever written on religion, superstition and credulity. So devastating was its impact that Higgins's son, who was an earnest Christian, bought up all the copies he could find and destroyed them. That in this enormous work some things can be found which later scholarship—it was published in 1836 and took twenty years to write—has tried to show may be wrong is only what one could expect. But he was not wrong on Irenaeus and I am not sure that Mr. Howell Smith ever read the book. I have "consulted" many books in the British Museum, but this does not mean that I have read them.

As for what Mr. Howell Smith says about "Records in Clay" I can only find a hotch-potch of incoherent "criticism." That he "thinks" Abraham is "an historical figure" is back to the Bible with a vengeance; but it is only what one could expect from him. I am sure he believes all the Bible heroes are "historical characters" "fusions of two historical figures." The word Abraham, like Saturn, probably means "Father of a People." Abraham, like Saturn, was the son of "Terra," the earth, for Abraham's father in our Bible is called "Terah." Saturn married his sister Rhea, and of course Abraham married his sister Sarah. Both the words Rhea and Sarah mean "a star"—probably Sirius. Saturn, like Abraham, had many sons but both loved one son more than the others. But the cream of the joke is that whoever wrote the Epistle to the Galatians knew perfectly well the story of Abraham was *not* historical for it says (4, 22-25):

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondswoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondswoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

Which things are an allegory . . .

and Paul (or the writer) proceeds to say why. This is the only place in which the word allegory is used in the Bible. But for Howell Smith Abraham and Sarah and Hagar are no doubt whatever quite historical.

I am much indebted to Mr. P. G. Roy for his very interesting letter and quotations from the Talmud to show that the celebrated chapter of the blessings of the sons of Jacob prove them to be merely the signs of the Zodiac. Not only is this confirmed in Robert Taylor's *Devil's Pulpit* but also in Sir W. Drummond *Oedipus Judaicus*; and I must confess that I did not know the Talmudic proofs.

As for the "Semitic scholars" (unnamed) who do not accept my "pet fancy" that Hebrew is an artificial



language—what about it? I suspect that they would not accept Paul who insists the story of Abraham and his wives is an "allegory." I wrote a series of articles on Hebrew some years before the war, and everything I have read since confirms my belief. The latest and best book on the Hebrew language, written by an all-believing Jew, Dr. William Schomsky, is *Hebrew, the Eternal Language* (Philadelphia, 1957), and I found nothing in it whatever that changed my views.

Hebrew is what Mr. Howell Smith would call "a fusion" of several languages based largely on Arabic (as Professor M. Canney, Professor of Hebrew in Sheffield University personally admitted to me), but incorporating other Semitic dialects. Hence it is not surprising that a learned Jew can read the inscription on the Moabite Stone which is Moabitish or Phenician.

But nobody knows when it became the "sacred" language of the Jews, or how it was made up, or who "invented" the so-called modern script in which it is written. It is extremely doubtful whether there ever was an "old Hebrew" script. Nobody knows when the present Hebrew Bible was written or became what it is now. Nobody knows who settled its "canon." Nobody in fact

can apply any date to anything about these things for as in the case of the early Christians, chronology as we understand it was something almost unknown to early Jewish writers.

Mr. Howell Smith loves to drag in the Moabite Stone almost as much as he loves to drag in Abraham or Solomon as "historical" characters. It is of course true that the majority of critics claim that the Moabite Stone is quite "genuine," and the further we recede from the date of its discovery the more genuine it becomes. It was not always so. Quite a number of people have questioned its authenticity, one of them being Samuel Sharpe, the great Egyptologist, who claimed it as a forgery of the second century B.C. I gave an epitome of his views in an article before the war, but for those interested I shall return to it again.

Let me conclude that I am not surprised that Mr. Howell Smith is so vigorously fighting a "Back to the Bible" campaign. I have followed him for over forty years, and he has always been on "the side of the Angels" as far as possible.

But far and away too near for me.

## The Texas Oaths Bill

By ROBERT H. SCOTT (U.S.A.)

THE FREETHINKER printed *An Open Letter* ON JULY 31ST, 1959, that I had written earlier in the year to a number of Texas Legislators regarding a Bill, sponsored by them, that would require teachers in Texas' tax-supported colleges and universities to take an oath annually "that they believe in the existence of a Supreme Being."

My information on this Bill (House of Representatives, Texas Legislature 495) dates back to April 17th, this year, when, in a letter from the President of a State Teachers' College in South-west Texas, I was told that the measure was in the hands of the Texas Attorney General for an opinion as to its constitutionality; that the Attorney-General would "probably declare it unconstitutional"; but that, if he should fail to do so, public educators of Texas, and others in that State who are opposed to the Bill "are confident that it would not get out of the sub-committee into which it was cast."

The aforesaid College President, a native Texan who is also a part-time minister of the Gospel, said further:—

"If the Bill should look as if it had a chance of passage, we would move fast to prevent it. I would put my name at the top of a list which would be headed by the statement that 'we would not sign such an oath,' and I believe that 50 per cent. of our teachers would affix their names. A real fight would be made."

I am afraid I cannot share the view that 50 per cent. of Texas teachers would affix their names to a statement that they would not sign an anti-atheist oath in order to hold their positions. The plea for freedom which I made in my open letter "is most persuasive," the College President told me, but he is the only teacher — in fact, the only person—in Texas who wrote me in response to my mimeographed open letter of March 3rd. This being so, it is hardly likely that 50 per cent. or even 10 per cent. of the teachers in Texas' tax-supported colleges and universities would be willing and ready to put themselves publicly on record as being opposed to the anti-atheist oath measure. Apparently they prefer to be silent, to be noncommittal. But silence, even when disapproving, is tantamount to consent and is generally so construed.

However, on August 12th, I received another letter from the College President containing this short, but interesting paragraph:—

"Our Texas Legislature finally adjourned last week. The (anti-atheist oath) Bill was declared constitutional by the Attorney-General (in what was probably a politically inspired decision!), but it was very quietly ignored by the legislature for the remainder of the session. I do not assume, however, that it is forever dead. 'Eternal vigilance . . .' is still a good motto."

This statement speaks for itself. It probably is true that the Attorney-General ruled as he did for political considerations. After all, politicians are elected to office by the votes of *all* classes of people; and in Texas, even more than in California, religious bigots and ignoramuses far outnumber intelligent and well-informed men and women. But the treatment that will be given the Bill by the Texas lawmakers would seem to be indicated by the statement that the Bill, even after the ruling that it is constitutional, was "very quietly ignored by the legislature for the remainder of the session." Of course, this may be because the legislators were in a hurry to pack up and go home for the summer holidays, but it would seem that the Bill will die of neglect.

I shall keep up my correspondence with the aforesaid college president, who has expressed a desire to carry on by mail a discussion, pro and con, of religious doctrines and religious practices.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

I have just returned from a holiday and seen Mr. C. H. Hammersley's letter on page 256 and I am not at all impressed with his arguments for the parent (who is a genuine atheist) not demanding that his children should be exempted from religious instruction. If he would like to see whether withdrawal "only makes indifferentists" he should have a talk with my sons who are now old enough to be able to discuss such matters under their own steam.

Actually it is those who adopt Mr. Hammersley's line of thought who can be accused of "indifferentism" in practice. If a parent (and it is we parents who are the responsible parties in this matter) does not exercise his right to demand that his child should be withdrawn from religious instruction then the parent in question stands guilty of having an "indifferent" attitude to state-sponsorship of the religious attitude to life.

Mr. Hammersley actually leaves the child to do all the dirty and difficult work of opposing religious ideas and I cannot conceive how he thinks this will result in having religion "stopped in schools." Ideas of this kind are just feeble escapism from our proper responsibilities as citizens and effective adults. I submit that it is just nonsense to suggest that school children can be expected to so ridicule their teachers that the rest of the children will rise up and force the government to rescind the present educational law which lays it down that religious observances are obligatory in all state schools. Even a most intelligent and courageous child has little chance in opposing what is being said by a teacher. Everything is against the child making any impression under such circumstances and the teacher would only have to say "But surely your father cannot be against religion when he agrees that you should be taught it" to make the child look foolish in front of the rest of the class.

The only rational attitude for the atheist is the attitude of *no compromise* and it is on these lines that I would urge all adult freethinkers to grasp the chance they are offered of withdrawing themselves and their children from all religious observance in schools and elsewhere. After all, it is adult electors who have determined the law as it stands and those who object to the law must stand together as adults to change it.

E. G. MACFARLANE.

[We think this subject has been well discussed, and it is now closed.—Ed.]

## WAGNER

I was surprised to read in THE FREETHINKER (4/9/59) that Richard Wagner lacked "descriptive and technical insight." As the late Ernest Newman pointed out in the *Free Review* half a century ago, Nietzsche's dislike of Wagner sprang from his own illness and decline, and not from any calm second thoughts.

Wagner's greatest works are full of subtle symbolism. His music can be appreciated only at the deepest level, and its full meaning is not apparent without long acquaintance, but this, of course, applies to all great music. Surely the technical resources needed to achieve the unity and cohesion of *The Ring* dwarf all other musical achievement?

It is easy to see that Mr. Peter F. Moore's dislike of Wagner is based either on ignorance or complete lack of sympathy with the music drama.

GEOFFREY FORD.

## ST. JANUARIUS

The interesting article by Colin McCall in your issue of June 26th on the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius might have mentioned a significant fact. When in the 16th century Pope Gregory XIII, on the advice of eminent mathematicians such as Clavio, introduced the reformed calendar which still bears his name, involving a drastic alteration in dating, the perturbed citizens of Naples wondered when exactly to expect the great event. This was not only a concern of the pious but, as a large influx of visitors and pilgrims was expected, an economic problem was created. However, in the most obliging manner the miracle followed the new calendar and all was well.

(PROF.) W. A. OSBORNE.

P.S.—Actually I am writing this in a remote part of tropical Australia.

## REMEMBERING ZION

From the Zionist standpoint, says Mr. F. A. Ridley, the only real motive and "historical justification" for the Jewish state of Israel is that "Jahveh, the supreme Deity and Creator of the Universe," had elected Israel as his "chosen race" and selected Palestine as his "Holy Land." Has Mr. Ridley never heard of

the great Balfour Declaration, whose tocsin was rung throughout most of Europe, and which culminated in what appeared at the time as the best settlement, i.e., a permanent home for the Jews in Palestine, where they now are? This was not ruthlessly imposed; it was a legal settlement, agreed to by the Arabs in the localities concerned.

Did Britain not get a mandate from the League of Nations to administer this mandate after the Allied victory in the First World War? The abandonment of that mandate does not neutralise or refute the original terms agreed to. To say that Israel has only one valid reason for the retention of Palestine is, therefore, invalid and unconvincing.

THOMAS SHORROCK.

[Mr. Ridley is away on holiday and will reply to his various critics on his return.—Ed.]

## OBITUARY

THOMAS HENRY BURGESS, of Bournemouth, who died at the age of 72, after a painful illness, was a man of strong and forthright opinions. Formerly resident in Birmingham, he was a member of the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society until his death. His early years were spent in political activity, but the latter part of his life was devoted mainly to Secularism, which he advocated on every possible occasion. And it often took courage to express Freethought ideas in an environment where High Church Anglicanism was dominant. A Secular Service was conducted by the President of the National Secular Society, Mr. F. A. Ridley, at Bournemouth Crematorium on August 28th. We extend our sympathy to his widow, Mrs. Margaret Burgess.

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