

The Freethinker

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AT THE END OF THIS MONTH, the pilgrims will cease flocking to Trier (Treves) in the Rhineland-Palatinate for their veneration of a piece of old cloth believed to be the coat of Jesus, "without seam, woven from the top throughout" (John, xix, 23) for which the Roman soldiers cast lots at the Crucifixion.

Most probably Treves sprang from the Roman *Colonia Auguste Treverorum*, founded under Emperor Claudius about A.D. 50 in the territory of the Celtic tribe of the *Treveri*; Diocletian made the town, because of its strategic position, the capital of the "diocese of Gaul," and Constantine the Great resided there between A.D. 306 and 331. About the same time, his wife, Empress Helena, went to the Holy Land and brought back a bag full of souvenirs which she had bought as Christian relics. The narrative has it that amongst them was the "Holy Coat" which is exhibited if and when the Archbishop of Trier thinks fit; unfortunately there are more places and nations claiming the genuine "Holy Coat." The Pope himself has never pronounced on which of the many Holy Coats he thinks to be genuine (one of them is in Rome!); he probably knows quite well that they all are fakes. Yet, however counterfeit, such holy rubbish was profitable, and Pope Zachary presented King Pippin, in 752, with Christ's sandals (which can be seen at Prüm-Eifel, not far from Trier).

The Trier coat is a muddy-coloured tunic with rather short sleeves. It is suspended between two glass panes and protected by a double cover: i.e., fancy silk in front (dating from the 8-9th century A.D.), whilst a gauze-like tissue covers the back, and in addition the main fabric is clotted and caked together with plain twill. The challenge to have these rags radio-carbon tested and dated is being countered with the remark that no wee-bit could be wasted for this purpose, considering that the whole fabric hardly holds together. However, even many intelligent Roman Catholics are agreed that the Holy Coat is a fraud and, shortly before this year's exhibition, Professor Iserloh, a theological expert, published his findings that the relic was not authentic. Yet nobody has been so outspoken about it as was Martin Luther. In 1512, when a Holy Coat circus was performed for the first time, he made the rude but poignant remark "*Bescheisserei!*" And in 1542, when the Bishop-Elector of Mainz opened a similar relic exhibition, he published a derisive handbill saying that His Eminence might add such things as a big piece of Moses's horn (left side); three tongues of fire from the flaming thornbush; one egg and 2 feathers taken from the Holy Spirit, etc.

Hitler & Adenauer

In recent times such expositions of the Holy Coat took place in 1844 and 1891 with the last one in 1933 when Hitler ordered his S.A. and S.S. to attend together with the local gauleiter. How many of these erstwhile guardians may have later turned into sadistic warders of former pil-

grims and priests?

Dr. Adenauer's government did not want to seem less devout and obedient to Rome so the Federal Post issued a stamp showing the Holy Coat. By this act, they have scandalised not only the many other contenders to possessing a Holy Coat, but Protestants and even intelligent Catholics (they do exist, oddly enough!). The population in Trier itself, does not appear to take much interest in the entire show, and Mother Church herself maintains great reserve: the devout are not required to believe in the authenticity of the relic. In the days of Luniks they think it safer to prate of how the Coat reminds us of the Lord and His sufferings: the hymns and

prayers offered in this connection only stress that the seamless garment is a timely symbol of the unity of the Church — the slogan of the new Pope.

However, there is more to it than meets the eye.

About the close of the 12th century, a mediocre poem, *Orendel*, was composed in Middle High German, according to which Orendel, son of King Eivel of Treves, with 22 knights, undertook a sea voyage to woo Brida (bright) the lovely Mistress of the Sepulchre. Their ships, however, were wrecked, and Orendel found himself in the grounds of Eise, the fisherman, in whose service he caught a whale and recovered from it the Holy Coat that previously had been swallowed by the creature. When this relic was safely brought to Treves (Trier), the angels prophesied that God had decided to hold the Day of the Last Judgment there.

Pagan Myths

This whole ballad is merely a Christianised version of pagan myths. Orendel, Orendil or Aurentil is the Hjarrandi of the *Gudrunlied*, and the King Horvandill of Saxo Grammaticus, resurrected in Switzerland as William Tell. The name is derived from *ör* (var)=arrow, and akin to ear=a spike, as of corn, symbol both of *Spica*, the main star in the constellation of *Virgo*, and of the sun's rays (hence: most sundogs are sharpshooters). In the Icelandic Edda (Grögaldr) Oervandill, son of Gröa (the growing, verdant), represents the young spring god who, like Jesus by Christopher and Wieland by Wate, is carried across Winter's ice stream. Hence Eise, the fisherman of the ballad, and Horvandill's struggle with King Krollr (Cold). The hero's father is Oygel — the Eigel of the Tell story (where the apple, too, is a symbol of the Spring Virgin) — whose Nordic name in full was Geirvandill=javelin (Lat. *pilumnus*), symbol of Mars and recognisable in the Karwendel mountain range (separating Austria from Jugoslavia). In another Edda song, the Gröttasöngr, Horvendil — like Balder and Jesus — dies and his adversary marries the widow, Geruthe or Gerda (*Erda*=earth); however, there is a son, Amleth — Hamleth—the little earstalk (Nordic *halmr*) to take vengeance on the Winter King for the death of his father. This opponent, in Shakespeare's version, is called Claudius, from Latin *claudere*, to close, akin to the Nordic *Loki*, the Locker (of the sun); Queen Getrud is

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Holy Coat

By P. G. ROY

derived from *ger*=spear or javelin. She, in turn, is connected with Odin or Woden, who in his great coat is both a weathergod and the protector of travellers. The Catholic Saint Gertrud — whose day is in Spring (March 17th) — is the travellers' patron saint.

Hamleth or Amlethus is a version of various heroes of popular romances, such as Anlaph, Hanlocke and Have-lock-Curan. Odin, because of his distinctive grey coat, had the appellative "Graurock" (Greycoat), and King

Orendil, son of Oygel or Eivel, also wore this coat. That exactly is why the Church, as in so many other instances, found it convenient to adopt the pagan coat of Orendil of Treves and give it a Christian coat (if this pun is permitted).

N.B.—The principal work against the authenticity of the robe is by Gildemeister and Von Sybel (1844) enumerating 20 other seamless coats. However, in 1891, Leo XIII advocated another exposition — an indulgence to the pilgrims.

The Voice of Spain

By A SPANISH TEACHER

(Translated by Raymond Douglas)

THE CATHOLICS OF THE WORLD in their flocks went mad last year pointing out the extraordinary virtues which graced Pope Pius XII. Blind faith is necessary to swallow the sugared pills that were issued on that occasion. The most Machiavellian statesman of contemporary history, they presented him as superhuman, and as an example of insuperable virtue. That is how history is falsified. There is being written still another chapter of errors and lies in this long series of falsehoods which is history *ad usum*. Our duty is to present the truth. We wish to do this now in the name of Spain, the captive and prisoner of the Vatican. Defend the truth! No more, no less, although this truth is painful. For Spain also must have its say about the last Pope, "defender of the Peace and Friend of Justice" — the loudspeaker of *Just Peace*, which is equivalent to *Pax Romana*; similar to that imposed after the Battle of White Mountain,* when the world suffered its hardest passion on the edge of the bottomless abyss of Vatican tyranny.

Spain is not exceptional so far as the Vatican is concerned. It is only one case more. Dramatical, tyrannical, but . . . one case more! One link in the endless chain of slavery and tyranny in which the history of the Vatican is written. In the world history of the Vatican, Spain is one charge in the long list which progressive and free humanity has to expose. The date should not be far distant when the Vatican will have to answer to such charges before the incorruptible Tribunal of the peoples liberated from the insatiable eagerness for power and domination of this rare octopus with long, steel tentacles.

The barbarians found, through Franco, open doors to tread on the honour of a country; to machine-gun my people; the new vandals of the 20th century; gluttons with immense stomachs that can never be filled; annihilators of culture; incendiaries of books and men. There are villages in Spain where they did not leave even half a dozen beings alive. The Portuguese of Salazar, the black shirts of Mussolini, the arrogant Nazis . . . and all the scum of Spanish Catholicism sang under the filthy flags of the Franco regime the most savage songs of death and assassination. Cain imposed on my Spain of sufferings and Calvaries, his inhuman code, fratricide . . . and the blood ran, drenching all the combatants. Those men and those flags relied on the blessing of the Vatican. This cannot be barred from history, unless the whole of the human race turns mad and loses its *sense* of history.

Pius XII started his reign at a crucial moment in the world. Spain cannot forget it. The first historical document of his reign contained the blessing for all and sundry who contributed to the victory of barbarism in Spain. To the victory of the international crime which Pius XII called the *Crusade*.

Pius XII blessed Franco profusely. But Pius XII always charged a high price for his blessings! The dictators of

* The first battle of the 30 years' war, when the Catholics reconquered Bohemia.

the world — natural allies of the Papacy — well know this subtle merchant-like artfulness of the late Pope. Pius XII, more than anything, was a perfect "negotiator." He knew how to use this quality of the Phoenician with Franco. It took Pius XII 14 years to perfect his legal instrument, his masterpiece, the *Concordat* of 1953. Through it, Spain came to occupy a privileged position in the very moving heart of the Father of all beings.

Youth! Here we have the clue to Vatican politics. The future of a community depends on the treatment of its youth, and to obtain control of youth there is only one way — education. Pius XII, by virtue of the said *Concordat*, came out top in the field of Spanish education.

Articles 26 and 27 of the prescribed *Concordat* are the most complete example of dictatorship of an expert and cunning tyrant, quite without scruples. Spain will never forget this subtlety of Pius XII; this despotism over the infancy and the youth, the future of Spain, its dearest reserve. We shall not forget his eagerness to break the heart of Spain, to wreck its destiny effacing all impetus for liberation, killing its soul, destroying its spirit . . . to make it an instrument for worldly dominance.

The chains are well fixed and well held. Each article is a meticulously chiselled and polished link, in which the aristocracy live in mad and unconscious luxury, forgotten by the world; blind to everyday history, blind because they refuse to see. No similar fact has ever been recorded in the history of the Vatican. True, there are more turbulent and disturbing pages, but none equals the Spanish one in subtlety, astuteness, hypocrisy. In the most brilliant centuries in the history of the Roman Catholic Church we cannot find such absolute domination; nothing so comprehensive as that used in the plan for the education of Spain by Pius XII. The Spanish children, the youth of Spain, were enfeebled with cold calculation, in accordance with the most subtle methods of Jesuitism. Religious orders consecrated to teaching are today legion. Yes, there is a host of them in my country. Spain knows that there is something more serious than the A- and H-bombs! Spain knows that there exists something graver and more dangerous than ballistic projectiles with nuclear heads! Spain knows that man has created something more subtle, mortal and asphyxiating than death: living in slavery, when it happens to be supervised by Jesuitism. All this is what my martyred people owe to the great kindness and illimitable generosity of heart of Pius XII, master juggler, skilful player at the immense gaming table in the slavery of man of our time! Fortunately, the course of history indicates that the days of the Papacy are numbered.

Russia's moon rocket is shown in a striking new stained glass window to be dedicated in a London church tomorrow.

The design also includes Freddie, the vicar's marmalade cat . . . Subject of the window is the Benedicite, the hymn sung at Matins — "O all ye Works of the Lord bless ye the Lord; praise Him and magnify Him for ever."

Evening News (26/9/59)

Mithra: A Reply to Critics

By F. A. RIDLEY

THIS ARTICLE, as also the specific controversies which prompted it, constitute something of a landmark in the annals of THE FREETHINKER. For since 1881, when the late G. W. Foote founded this paper, its controversial articles (of which there have been many) have been devoted mainly, if not exclusively, to Christianity, still the official religion of this country. Whereas other gods have only been dealt with in passing, as it were, now two gods of oriental origin similar to the Christian but of much greater antiquity, have also reappeared. None other than Mithra, formerly of Persia, and now of Hampstead Heath, and Jehovah, or Jahveh, the national deity of both the ancient Jews and modern Zionists. There appears to be a conspiracy of the gods against THE FREETHINKER. Speaking personally, I regard it as both a celestial compliment and as a terrestrial testimonial to my freethinking propaganda that I should be singled out for this supernatural "combined operation."

With all due respect to my neo-Mithraist critic, Mr. J. M. Larkman (Convenor of the Society of Mithra), I am afraid that I have to begin by damping his ardour by reminding him of what appears to be a universal truth, that dethroned gods, like dethroned heavyweight boxing champions, never come back. Once dead, they stay dead; once put down for the count, they stay down. No one, it was truly said by Charles Bradlaugh, ever saw a religion die. But everyone, at least knows when a religion is dead. For which reason, if for no other, I do not think Mr. Larkman and his co-religionists are likely to meet with much success in reviving the cult of this ancient Iranian solar deity. As with dead gods, so also with dead religions — they, too, never return. Will my learned Mithraist critics please give me a single example of any once-widely diffused religion which, having once enjoyed general acceptance in a particular area and then died a natural (not supernatural) death, has later been artificially revived? There is none. Please, Mr. Larkman, do not quote the case of modern eccentrics dressed up as Druids and haunting the antique pillars of Stonehenge (which, it so happens, I know very well, having once lived in that part). Local clergymen used to dress up as Druids for the occasion, but that can hardly be quoted as a revival of Druidism. Esoteric cults are "founded" every day in Bloomsbury and Los Angeles. No, by the revival of a dead religion, I mean the successful resumption by a dead religion of the position that it formerly held in human affairs. To take a hypothetical example; when, as must inevitably happen in the course of time, the Roman Catholic Church dies out; by its revival I would mean the resumption by a resurrected Vatican at some date after its extinction, of the international power and prestige that it at present enjoys. I do not mean that in the year 5000 A.D. a few eccentrics in the Bloomsbury of that day will dress up as Catholic monks and celebrate a mass on Hampstead Heath. Similarly, by a Mithraic revival, I imply the resurrection of Mithra after some 15 centuries' sleep, and the acceptance of Mithraism by large areas of the earth's surface as their official and commonly accepted cult. No doubt the Society of Mithra and its convenor hope for such an eventful result. But I fear that they are likely to be disappointed. For, I repeat, human records show no examples — or if they do, I would like to hear of them — of a long dead religion ever coming to life again on any conspicuous scale. Where are the gods of Egypt, Greece, Rome, Peru and a hundred other defunct pantheons? Under Hitler it is true that — as my friend

Arthur Wilde demonstrated a few years ago in these columns — the Nazis did try to revive the old German pagan cults: also, incidentally, an Aryan cult like that of Mithra. But they failed, as they were bound to fail. (The oldest Persian records refer to Mithra as an Aryan Deity. My learned colleague, Mr. W. E. Huxley, of the Iran Society will, I think, confirm that Iran means "Aryanland.")

Man made God — all the gods — in his own image. This is an elementary truism in the critical literature that takes its starting point from the science of comparative religion. All religions without exception, owe their existence to an initial set of intellectual, social, political and material conditions. When these conditions change, they change. When the given conditions finally cease to operate, the religions which originated from them will follow them into oblivion. Historically, all known religions originated either in a nomadic age — as Mithraism apparently did — or in an agrarian era. (Mr. Larkman's god is dressed up in shepherd's garb on the monuments — we suggest that as part of the modernising process, he might now exchange his tunic for a bowler hat and rolled umbrella.) There is no example of any religion originating in an industrial age based initially on scientific determinism. Such a state of society is, by its very nature inimical to religion as such. The shepherd Mithra, killing the bull, is as grotesquely incongruous in a modern industrial civilisation like ours, founded on science and mass production, as is his old rival Jesus, in his stall at Bethlehem. If Mr. Larkman asks why, in that case Christianity still exists while Mithraism has long since perished, we must refer him to the still imperfectly known, but very important era when Christianity came to power in the Roman Empire. It is a tangled tale, and persecution by the Christian Roman state probably played the decisive part. (Christianity also "borrowed" several items from the Mithraic cult, viz: December 25th, "the (original) birthday of the unconquered sun.") But, perhaps before very long, modern industrial civilisation will kill Christianity as it would kill Mithraism, had — as once appeared to be possible — that religion defeated Christianity in the 3rd century.

For sun-gods just don't move in industrial society. The sun, after all, isn't the abode of Mithra. And in any case, there are many bigger suns to be found scattered throughout the Universe. The Aryan gods were the primitive gods of a primitive age. This goes for Mithra as well as for his German colleagues, Odin and Thor. Both their table-manners and, in the case of Mithra, his method of slaughtering bulls (as I remarked in my previous article) won't do in modern society.

Mr. Larkman takes me to task for alleged inaccuracies in my reference to the ancient Mithraic cult. Of course, if he has a special revelation from Mithra, I am out; I don't move in this exalted sphere. But according to the leading terrestrial authorities — Franz Cumont, F. W. Legge, etc. — all really important Mithraic ceremonies were accompanied by cutting a bull's throat; and surely the resurrection of this extinct religion on Hampstead Heath was an important occasion.

But I merely pointed out that on humanitarian grounds, cutting the throats of bulls on Hampstead Heath was probably illegal — an opinion in which I have since been supported by a friend who is a member of the London County Council. Mr. Larkman had better beware, or else,

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Two items appeared in the news recently — a husband was divorced by his wife because he was not religious enough; and a young airman gave up a pools win of £6,000 because his father is a Methodist parson who looks upon gambling as a sin. Both these incidents prove, that notwithstanding most people in the country are almost completely apathetic to religion, there is still a hard core of believers ready to make life for others religiously miserable.

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The gentleman who was divorced bitterly complained that his wife wanted to force religion down his throat all day and every day. Going to church one day a week was not enough for her. And the judge as near as possible agreed with the wife. At all events, he refused to agree that forcing religion on anybody all day was "cruel." As for the young airman, it appeared that it was no sin to put down a half-crown every week for pools — it was only a sin if you won! And yet there are people who, without any religion themselves, look upon "aggressive" Free-thought against this kind of religious imbecility as something to be condemned. It really is unbelievable.

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At last life is being brought back to the Church — according to Mr. Geoffrey Murray in *News Chronicle*. This is the supreme achievement of a lady parson, the Rev. Florence Frost-Mee of the Charlton Congregational Church, who is attracting crowds with her stirring sermons on "love" and "caring" — though in true traditional style. For her, as for so many Congregationalists, every word in the Bible is "inspired," but they (the words) have to be "expounded" by a fully qualified parson or priest. And who can prove the truth of the Bible in this way better than a lady — as some of her parishioners claim? When are we going to have a lady Archbishop of Canterbury?

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An ITV item, "Wisdom of the West," was put on at 11.35 p.m. on a recent Friday — and no wonder. The idea was to keep away as many viewers as possible from hearing what Bertrand Russell had to say on — or rather against — religion in a discussion with a number of eminent believers and unbelievers, like Lord Boyd-Orr, Kingsley Martin, Lancelot Hogben and others. It was interesting to learn that the discussion actually lasted one and a half hours, but was "edited" to last only half an hour. Bertrand Russell, we were glad to note, did not mince his words. He was "aggressively" anti-Christian. He spoke for science and philosophy, and insisted that there could be very few scientists who had any belief whatsoever in dogmatic religion.

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Speaking as both a philosopher and a scientist, Bertrand Russell insisted that they wanted *evidence* for any religion or religious belief, and none was available. More than that, he claimed that there was now no evidence for the famous Design Argument, as the theory of Evolution had completely destroyed it. And it was interesting to note that Russell also dismissed most of the theories of Freud and his Psycho-analysis as being unproved and unprovable. None of the other speakers made any real contribution to the discussion — though Kingsley Martin admitted that religious people no longer believed in Heaven as they did in a railway station.

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As for Christianity being a "civilising influence" throughout the ages, put forward by one of the speakers, Russell denied it as strongly as Foote or Bradlaugh used to 70 years ago. So crushing was his retort, that the Christian

speaker who put it forward was quite unable to reply. It is a pity that this strongly anti-Christian discussion will not be repeated at the peak hours of viewing time. Far too many Christians would hear it.

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On the other hand, in an interview on ITV by Ludovic Kennedy, the Archbishop of York emphatically declared that Bertrand Russell was "misleading" the people with his anti-Christian views. The Archbishop was doing his best to tell us all about the "need for faith and belief," and like all priests, he was full of such words as adoration, love and fellowship and the need for spreading the Gospel, to say nothing of devoting some time every day in "contemplation." It never occurred to Dr. Ramsay that if "contemplation" was carried to its logical conclusion, most thinking people would contemplate themselves out of Christianity!

Many are Called . . .

IT WAS FRIDAY NIGHT, September 11th, and the vicar of Yardley, Birmingham, Canon Charles Crowson, was comfortably seated in the private room of that well-known and well-stocked house of refreshment, the Ring o' Bells Inn. The Canon's church is quite close to this locally-historic hostelry, where the choicest wines and the "good honest" are (at legal times) always available to saints and sinners alike. The Canon had, for company, eight members of his regular congregation, not to mention the barman and waitress, and he was awaiting further arrivals, for whom he would provide drinks, sandwiches and good cheer.

The fact is, he was perturbed at the paucity of his audiences at the Sunday and week-day church services. So, pondering on this perplexing problem, he had decided to do something about it. The party at the pub was the result.

One hundred and eighty invitations had been sent to the non-church-going Yardelians, to join the fun, and — as the Reverend hoped! — to listen to the sermon and sing hymns in his church on the Sundays to come.

The Canon *knew* that the absenteeism had nothing to do with God's message, as such. He was, however, distressed at the thought that the fault might be in the messenger. He hoped to find out. But alas, for the fickleness of human nature . . . of the one hundred and eighty called, only two chose to come!

T.H.R.J.

MITHRA

(Concluded from page 339)

as I suggested before, his intriguing adventure may end in the drab environment of a police court before a magistrate whose strong point probably isn't the history of ancient Oriental cults. And even if the newly founded Society of Mithra manages to escape the attention of the police, I am afraid they will find it very cold on Hampstead Heath when — as they presumably will — they celebrate the birthday of the unconquered sun on December 25th. That is, unless Mithra graciously prolongs our present heat-wave until Mithra's Day — or Christmas as it used to be called, after another Oriental God not yet unfortunately as dead as Mithra.

(According to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol 8, p. 757, article "Mithraism": "The central act of worship in Mithraism, however, appears to have been the sacrifice of the bull, the prototype of which was the slaying of the bull by Mithra himself, represented in relief in every Mithraic sanctuary.")

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

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.

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.

West London Branch N.S.S. (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.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute, Paradise Street.) Sunday, October 25th, 6.45 p.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A. "Man's Struggle for Life".

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute) Lectures every Sunday, 7 p.m.

Central London Branch N.S.S. ("The City of Hereford" Blandford Place, Blandford Street, W.1.) Sunday, October 25th, 7.15 p.m. W. H. CARLTON, "What is Democracy?"

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, October 27th, 7.15 p.m.: F. H. A. MICKLEWRIGHT, "Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) Pioneer in Sex Education."

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, Bath Street.) Sunday, October 25th, 7 p.m.: GUY A. ALDRED, "Atheism, God and War."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, October 25th, 6.30 p.m.: C. BRAMLEY, "William Morris and his Homes."

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street.) Sunday, October 25th, 7 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, "The Future of Freethought."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street) Sunday, October 25th, 2.30 p.m.: C. WYE, F.Ph.S., "New Approach to Health."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, October 25th, 11 a.m.: PROF. T. H. PEAR, "The Gap Between Scientists and Intellectuals."

Notes and News

AN OVERSEAS READER sends us two translations from the official Vatican newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, viz:—

"Teddyboyism, which is the outcome of secularism and liberal philosophy, is the most painful disease from which mankind suffers today. After a century and a half of liberal thought and Rationalism this is what the world has arrived at. There is no logic, no fact, of more value than this, that religion must be the fundamental base of all human existence. If not, life will become a veritable hell on earth."

And: "Latin America, with one-third of the world's 172 million Catholics, has the smallest number of priests per capita, that is, one priest to every 4,810 Catholics. In South America, the Church is threatened with a major development of Protestant missions, which have increased

since 1916 from 1,689 to 6,303. And the number of Protestants has gone up from 169,000 to over 4 millions."

Apart from their intrinsic interest, we cannot forbear to report an incidental circumstance. "I am sorry I cannot give you the date of the paper," the translator says, "but it came wrapping up the fish, and the top was torn off."

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THE COMPLETE AND UTTER USELESSNESS of theological speculation was admirably illustrated the other week. Writing in a Vatican newspaper, *Osservatore della Domenica*, a "prominent" Dominican priest, Father Raimondo Spiazzi listed "the possible conditions in which the first space men might find beings like themselves on the moon" (*The Guardian*, 24/9/59). "They might," he suggested, "be descendants of Adam and Eve who reached the moon in some unknown way, in prehistoric times stained with our first parents' original sin." On the other hand, "they might be beings like ourselves but descended from other first parents created separately by God." In this latter case, "they might be either (1) in a state of pure nature, not elevated to grace as Adam and Eve were before their fall; (2) perfect human beings in a state of grace; (3) fallen men like Adam's descendants before Christ; or (4) re-deemed men." A simple test of the futility of Father Spiazzi's declaration is the number of times the word "might" occurs in the above. Just count and then judge for yourselves.

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THE BELLS OF ST. EDWARD'S, 500-year-old church of Egg Buckland, have been silenced for the first time since 1904, apart from a break during the war (*Western Evening Herald*, 26/9/59). The reason? Dry and wet rot and the ravages of the death-watch beetle have made it unsafe to ring them. At St. Andrew's church, Romford, it was woodworm, necessitating the laying of a new floor at a cost of £2,000 (*The Star*, 2/10/59). Here the damage was discovered when a bride's stiletto heel broke through the floor, and the vicar is grateful for small mercies. Had it not happened, the damage would have been much more extensive, and expensive, before it had been found.

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THE ABORTION LAW REFORM ASSOCIATION, of which Dr. Glanville Williams is the President, will hold a public meeting in The Caxton Hall, London, S.W.1, on Wednesday, October 28th at 7.15 p.m. Mr. Graham Hutton, O.B.E., B.Sc., will take the chair, and the speakers will be Professor W. C. W. Nixon of University College Hospital and Miss D. M. Kerslake, M.R.C.O.G., on "Safety Aspects of Medical Termination." The meeting will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting for members only.

★

A HEALTHY TREND in recent years has been the increase in cartoons at the expense of religion in English language papers. Perhaps *The New Yorker* began it, but *Punch* has printed many that it daren't have done in Victorian times. A recent one (30/9/59) showed two anteaters among other animals in the ark. The absurdity of the Bible story was delightfully exposed in the caption, "We'd better lie low — those ants are bound to be missed sooner or later." Lately, too, the *New Statesman* has printed a series of monastic jokes. Election week, October 10th issue, showed a beaming friar with an "I like God" badge in his button-hole. Of course, its a long time since G. W. Foote served his gaol sentence, but he would have welcomed the new trend.

★

THE LATEST ISSUE OF *Buddhist Opinion* (Ceylon) contains a reprint of Colin McCall's article "Catholic Action in Ceylon" (*THE FREETHINKER*, 10/7/59).

Darwin's Year

By H. CUTNER

IF YOU ASKED THE MAJORITY of fairly well-read people about Evolution, they would almost immediately equate Darwin with the theory. The idea that Evolution was in the air, so to speak, for centuries before Darwin was born, is something that few laymen appear to know; and this confusion has, of course, been cleverly exploited by the Churches as well as by a number of pious scientists who ought to have known better.

It was quite early in my "quest" for Freethought that I discovered Edward Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution* — from "Thales to Huxley." It was originally published in 1896, but my copy — which I still have — dates back early this century, and was one of the famous RPA "reprints" to which I owe so much. Clodd is, as one expects, a little out-of-date, but at least he showed how much Darwin really owed to his predecessors. Evolution did not begin with Darwin.

Those early Greek philosophers and thinkers who lived centuries before the Christian era, were always speculating on the mystery of the Universe and of Man; and their thinking was not, as it has been for two thousand years or more in Europe, inhibited by the fairy tales of Genesis so long looked upon as "God's Precious Word," and the final answer to all Man's questioning. Thales, who "flourished" about 500 B.C., insisted that the "primary substance was water," and that everything in the world had to submit to "change" — that is, to what we now call Evolution. He could not, of course, go into details, but some of his followers, particularly Anaximander, came to the conclusion that "the material cause and first element of things was the Infinite," and "is neither water nor any other of what we now call the elements," but "one eternal indestructible substance out of which everything arises, and into which everything once more returns." In other words, says Clodd, "the exhaustless stock of matter from which the waste of existence is being continually made good." If I understand anything of modern physics, this description is almost exactly what modern physicists say about "matter" and the "universe."

Clodd also points out that it was Anaximander who "was the first to assert the origin of life from the non-living," and to speak of man as "like another animal — namely a fish in the beginning." Anaximander "speculated" on other things relating to Man, anticipating many modern conclusions reached at by modern science, which has had not only the vast experience of the work of all previous thinkers to draw upon, but also the adequate scientific instrument to help its conclusions.

In the great poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, will be found many other speculations so near to the discoveries of modern science; but to deal with all the precursors of Darwin and other Evolutionists through the ages would require a book, and a fairly hefty book at that. The latest I have come across — it was published less than a year ago — is *Darwin's Century* by Dr. Loren Eiseley (published by Gollancz) in which is detailed the part played by the naturalists and scientists and geologists of the 18th and early 19th centuries, and a surprisingly big part it was to discover what we might call "origins." Linnaeus, Buffon, Cuvier, Hutton, Ray, and many others are reviewed and what they did in the discovery of what we now call Evolution carefully detailed, and a fascinating story it is. So also we are told of Erasmus Darwin (the grandfather of Charles) certainly an evolutionist, and of Lamarck who almost but not quite reached the position for which Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace later became famous — that is,

the method of Evolution called by Darwin "natural selection." Whether the Darwinian position can be maintained — it has been severely criticised, and just as strongly defended — time will tell, helped perhaps by further discoveries.

Darwin himself, before the publication of his *Origin of Species* in 1859, was greatly influenced by Sir Charles Lyell and by Malthus; and Dr. Eiseley appears to find the influence of Lyell, whose works on geology have so profoundly influenced all subsequent geologists, of the greatest importance to the position Darwin took.

As perhaps is well known, Darwin was not too keen on controversy though he was always ready to consider any adverse criticism when it seemed to him relevant. It was Huxley who took up any challenge either to the theory of evolution, or to Darwin's theory of Natural Selection. He was Darwin's "watch-dog," and his devastating reply to Archbishop Wilberforce — known in some quarters as "Soapy Sam" — who tried to cross swords with him, can never be forgotten. But though Huxley made mincemeat (metaphorically speaking) of many opponents of both Darwin and the general theory of Evolution, very few believers in Christianity at first came over. The mid-Victorians were mostly Bible idolators, and Darwin and his theory that "man came from monkeys" — a theory of course he never held — was scornfully rejected, as indeed it is now by almost the same kind of religious ignoramuses.

I have before me a six-page pamphlet sent by a reader in Scotland, with the title "Evolution Debunked," and it begins by quoting what somebody wrote in 1899! The writer of "Evolution Debunked" actually believes he has completely answered a theory which has occupied some of the greatest writers and scientists for centuries, and has produced literally thousands of books, and possibly hundreds of thousands of articles and lectures. There is not an "argument" in the pamphlet or a statement against Evolution which has not been successfully dealt with in scores and scores of books. In this year of grace 1959, we are asked, "On whom shall we rely? Shall we rely on the fallible and debunked methods of man in the evolutionary 'scientific' field? or shall we rely on the tried and tested Word of God, the Bible? Surely our choice should be the latter." And this sheer drivel can be read 100 years after the *Origin of Species* was published!

Dr. Eiseley says very little about the fight provoked by organised religion against Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel, and other prominent Evolutionists; and it might take many years before Christian opposition is finally silenced. But it may as well be stressed that even the Catholic Church has had to admit the truth of Evolution. In his *Last Words on Evolution*, Haeckel quotes a Jesuit, Fr. M. Gander, writing in his book *The Theory of Descent* (1904), "Thus the modern forms of matter were not immediately created by God; they are effects of formulative forces, which were put by the creator in the primitive matter, and gradually came into view in the course of the earth's history, when the external conditions were given in the proper combination." This is, comments Haeckel drily, "A remarkable change of front on the part of the clergy," and the change of front is even more in the Catholic Church as a whole.

On the other hand, the narrowest of our Protestant sects are still on the side of the Angels, and prefer Genesis to truth. And they will quote "professors" long since dead, or members of theological colleges, as if their pious and mostly ignorant criticisms of Evolution have the weight of solid authority. In general, their names are unknown to

modern science.

What Darwin did was to provide Evolution with a theory — Natural Selection — and show how and why it worked. Before him, not even Lamarck, who came so very near the truth, was able to convince many people. Darwin's epoch-making experiments and observations combined with his *genius* made ordinary people grasp what is meant by Evolution. Modest and careful, Darwin avoided making dogmatic claims; but in the opinion of some of the greatest men of science of today, men who are quite capable of judging, his theory of Natural Selection still holds the field.

But it is necessary to say something of the work of Mendel which, since its rediscovery about the beginning of this century, has so profoundly effected evolutionary thought. (To be concluded.)

A Pair of Hearts

HONDURAS, with a population of 1,800,000, recently enjoyed a signal honour. It became the first nation in the world to be dedicated simultaneously to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Ecuador was, we understand, the first country to be dedicated to the former, in 1873. Since then, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Brazil, Peru, Spain, Portugal, Ireland (God bless her!), Malta, and the Philippines have followed suit, if you will forgive the expression. And Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Ireland (what would the Holy See do without her?), Belgium and Spain are dedicated to the Immaculate Heart. But only Honduras played both hearts together.

Whether the cardiac dedication will do the little country any good is debatable. We are told (*Time*, 5/10/59) that "a task force of more than 100 priests" has already set out on a Holy Mission into the jungles of the south, "bringing the sacraments to a neglected people." With a special dispensation from the Government, waiving the licence fee, a priest married 240 couples within three hours at Tesciguot; another visited 17 towns and joined 1,139 couples in holy matrimony, though two-thirds of them had never been to confession or communion. In the capital, Tegucigalpa, communion was given to 67,000 people and 1,500 couples were married.

Time rightly calls this a "blitz" effort. Forty-five priests from other Latin American countries and Spain reinforced the local clergy, and they intend to move on to Nicaragua next. But are blitzes enough? With H-bombs maybe, but without them, we doubt it. The priests "admit frankly" that "formal religion" in Honduras is "in deplorable disrepair." Some 85 per cent. of all the children are illegitimate; three illegitimate children per father is "the rule," but ten is "not unusual." One group of children was asked "How many gods are there?" and the local schoolteacher prompted in a stage whisper: "Five." Naturally, the priest was horrified. "Three" might have been acceptable, but five!

However, "Liberal" President Villeda Morales reiterates his "determination to put into divine hands the destiny of Honduras," and Pope John XXIII responds with "the graces of heaven have been falling on your souls." A. S. Neill, we recall, once wrote a book calling for "Hearts not heads in the schools," but where Honduras is concerned, we think the order should be reversed. Illegitimacy is a problem, but illiteracy is a worse one.

—NEXT WEEK—

WHAT IS THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN CASE?

By GEOFFREY ASHE

Theatre

Soho's "Guys and Dolls"

IT IS SURPRISING no one tried to do it before. Soho is as full of "characters" as Broadway, waiting only for a Damon Runyan to assemble them for our delight. Peter Wildeblood has certainly made a start in *The Crooked Mile* (Cambridge Theatre, London); whether he, or anybody, will be able to do it again may depend as much on the law as on the writer's talent. For — to a male at any rate — the "dolls" pretty well make the show and, if they quit the streets to sit by a telephone, Soho, and successors to *The Crooked Mile* will be a good deal less colourful, though superficially cleaner.

Perhaps the bubble car of Millicent Martin offers a way out! It would be hard to imagine a better leading lady (to use a euphemism) than Miss Martin. She is perhaps just a shade too lovely to look at, but otherwise perfect as the quite unashamed Cora. The other "girls" (if that is the Soho term) are just right, and who can help sympathising with their strike for "a five-night week" and "double time for overtime"? Their "peculiarity is just a form of charity"; people are too concerned with "other people's sins." "Live and let love" is all they ask.

Mr. Wildeblood's "guys" (or whatever is the Soho equivalent) are less well defined than the girls; inevitably, perhaps, because their dress is more uniform. But Jack Mac-Gowran strikes the right balance between humour and sentiment as their leader.

Elisabeth Welch helps to preserve this vital balance which makes the show a success; and she sings splendidly as, indeed, do nearly all the cast.

The Crooked Mile is lively, amusing, and fine entertainment. It has humanity, too. I don't know if Mr. Wildeblood lives in Soho, but he loves it with all its faults. And it has no colour bar. "You can say what you like about Soho, but that's one thing in its favour."

C. McC.

CORRESPONDENCE

WORKER-PRIESTS

Colin McCall's article on the "Worker-Priests" gives us an illustration of what happens when "the Faith" is tried out in the humdrum context of day-to-day living instead of the cloistered atmosphere of ecclesiastical routine. The much-vaunted "saving doctrines," backed up by "the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," as well as the "ceaseless intercession of angels, saints and martyrs," are of no avail against the materialistic inducements of the sinful world!

Instead of the priests bringing the worldlings into the Church, we find the worldlings luring the priests out of the Church! What a performance!

S. W. BROOKS.

THOMAS PAINE AND MONARCHY

By implication Paul Varney seems to me to give rather a shallow interpretation of events in France, when Thomas Paine pleaded for the life of Louis Capet, while arguing for the removal of the monarchy. Paine wrote to *Le Patriote Francais*: "It is little to overthrow the idol; it is the pedestal which must especially be beaten down." But the fact that public opinion was clamouring for the execution of Louis, should not be taken as support for the pedestal of monarchy.

It was a complex situation, and one that historians will probably long argue about; Paine's attitude was quite naturally coloured by personal experience. Though not himself a Quaker, his father's early influences may have contributed the element of humanitarianism and dislike of taking Louis's life. Paine also argued that it was the wrong tactics to risk making the King a martyr, but he seems quite to have underestimated the power of reaction and how the King could become the rallying point for reaction. (Paine had recently underestimated reaction in England, refusing for a long time to flee the country after the cheap edition of *The Rights of Man* was published.)

Another factor that may have been in his mind was that Louis XVI had been the person who in the name of France had given the American Colonists 2½ million livres, military stores and clothing, which were badly needed by the American opponents of

British rule in 1781. The fact that the money was sent must have meant a lot to Paine, who conceived the plan for aid from France, even though Louis may have had mixed motives for doing so, including a purely "anti-English" one.

Today the personal rôle of the monarch is far less than in Paine's era, the real rulers being those who use monarchy to maintain their power. It is no use Paul Verney advising monarchy to retire from the scene, telling "the Establishment" to go to hell. Any ruler who did this would soon find that the rulers behind the ruler would find another figurehead to put on the pedestal in his place.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

REPUBLICANISM

I note with alarm and despondency that Mr. Bennett disagrees with me; since I cannot claim to be one of his Christian friends. To them he has commended his pseudo-secularist followers to be very gentle and kind.

Nevertheless, if Mr. Bennett could be induced to raise his head from the sand under which, ostrich-like, it is buried, he would see; and perhaps even comprehend.

Republicans can, of course, attack the monarchy if they wish. My only plea is that they use their own platform, since real secularists have bigger fish to fry.

British monarchs no longer rule. They are not allowed to utter a word when they appear before the public on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. Their civil list (stipend) is voted annually by Parliament. They have become civil servants, a fact pointed out by a Tehran journal about 40 years ago. Like other civil servants, they are liable to dismissal for unsatisfactory conduct.

Their duties consist in performing the social functions of government, at home and abroad; entertaining foreign notabilities, presenting medals, opening new buildings, launching ships, ceremoniously opening Parliament and outlining the government's policy, etc., etc. This relieves the Premier and his colleagues, enabling them to devote more time to important affairs.

It is true that monarchs are crowned in Church by an archbishop, but that only confirms a *fait accompli*. Monarchs accede on the death of their predecessors. The coronation ceremony could be dispensed with, but the populace loves pageantry. Perhaps it could be modified when archbishops are no more.

It is natural and right to extend sympathy to ladies in the Queen's present condition. To attack them is ungallant. Let us not sink so low.

For signs of unpopularity Mr. Bennett should note the poor circulation and consequent high price of THE FREETHINKER.

Also the small membership of the National Secular Society. Is Mr. Bennett aware that lawyers warn naturalised Britishers that membership is incompatible with their oath of allegiance? My correspondence reveals that there are more ardent atheists outside than inside the N.S.S. We are kept outside by politicians like Mr. Bennett. If the N.S.S. were to disavow all politics, whatever the hue, making way for the entry of us others, it would gain in strength and popularity. We should not be ashamed of seeking popularity for our cause, for without it we are powerless.

Nowadays, despite TV, radio and some sections of the Press, regular Church-goers are few. Apathy to religion is general and by wise strategy could be turned into strong antipathy. Will the N.S.S. rise to the occasion, or sink into oblivion?

W. E. HUXLEY.

[Without prejudising this controversy, we think it important to query Mr. Huxley's statement that "lawyers warn naturalised Britishers that membership is incompatible with their oath of allegiance." Does he know of other cases than the one when the person concerned specifically sought a legal opinion? If not, his statement should read: "a lawyer expressed the opinion that a naturalised Britisher," etc.—Ed.]

Wanted *Philosophy of Physical Realism* by Prof. R. W. Sellars, (Macmillan, New York.) : K. Wooton, c/o FREETHINKER.

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VIVISECTION

Readers will, I trust, note the letter of N. McIver in your issue of October 2 denouncing Miss Barker and anti-vivisectionists in general who, he infers, allow sentiment to obscure reason. Such an idea is, of course, a gross travesty of the anti-vivisection position. We hold that sentiment, to be worthy of the name, must be based on reason; but also that reason must be based on knowledge, and we are anxious to spread this knowledge not only of what vivisection is but of its result. No wonder that your correspondent notwithstanding his attack is so conscious of the weakness of his own case that he can only excuse the failure of vivisection by pleading for more experiments. He speaks of those who "make capital out of fear" advocating a system whose only chance of getting its inoculations accepted is through fear. We have no cause to be ashamed of the sentiment that is shocked at hearing a call for more experiments when yearly well over 3,000,000 sentient creatures are subjected to torture both physical and mental. It is commonsense to object to the training of those who are entrusted with the health treatment of ourselves and our loved ones by callously watching and inflicting pain on creatures in their power. Freethinkers have a special reason for looking with meticulous care into the claims of these advocates of vivisection for the difficulties in the way of publicity for the one cause apply equally to both. Few see the answers given in Parliament to such questions as the effects of injections, etc. Health knowledge is hard to spread and is not made easier by the fact that combines producing vaccines are multi-millionaire concerns. Those interested should write to the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, 47 Whitehall, London, S.W.1.

JAMES H. MATSON.

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