

The Freethinker

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DURING THE COURSE of the evolution of religion, one observes two, what may perhaps be termed, major centres from which the historic religions that have played any part in the world's spiritual evolution appear to have initially originated—Palestine and India. For from Palestine, the Western "Holy Land", there have appeared successively, Judaism and its originally heretical offshoots, Christianity and Islam, whilst from India there have similarly emerged Hinduism and also its originally heretical offshoots, Buddhism and Jainism, not to mention more modern Hindu heresies less well-known in the Christian West. If one subtracts these above religious creeds of originally either Jewish or Hindu origin, it will be found that there is very little left! For though there was a third major religious breeding ground, ancient Persia, the original cradle of the two great dualistic religions of Mithraism and Manicheanism, due to historical circumstances; these Iranian-derived religions have not survived down to our modern times. Consequently, Palestine and India remain the primary breeding grounds of religion as we know it today.

Monotheism and Pantheism
If one applies the general yardstick of a critical analysis to the generic type of religions originating in ancient India, one finds that they were pantheistic in their essential nature. In the case of Hinduism, God moved (so to speak) downward into nature until the identification of the two had become complete. God, man and the inanimate universe had become inexplicably amalgamated into the *Brahma*, the "All" of Hindu mysticism. But whilst Hinduism has remained down to our own day locked in this mystical pantheistic embrace, Buddhism (which would appear to bear to its originating Hinduism a generic relationship somewhat similar to that later to be borne by Christianity and Islam to their originating cult of Judaism) evolved what seems to have been originally a purely humanistic cult (though much corrupted by later developments), that centred upon (in New Testament phraseology), "the just man made perfect", Buddha, the Enlightened One raised by his own spiritual perfection and ethical attributes to the divine level.

In which respect, Buddhism (which we may term generically "the Christianity of Hinduism") and Christianity (which may equally be termed "the Buddhism of Judaism") postulated precisely opposite conceptions of the mutual relationship between God and man. For, whilst Buddhism subsequently elevated the man, Gotama as *Sakyamuni* to the level of godhead, Christianity—at least as interpreted by its later theology of the Incarnation—brought God down to the level of manhood. It is an interesting point of similarity, that both the titular founders of these two historic creeds became traditionally known and are still remembered today, not by their own proper names, respectively Gotama and Jesus, but by their theological titles, Christ, the Anointed One, and Buddha,

the Enlightened One. Historically, it is a matter of little, if any, importance—at least when viewed from the generic standpoint of the science of comparative religion—whether there was ever an individual Buddha or an individual Jesus, though not all critics take this view. If one fact emerges quite clearly from the welter of controversy upon the historic Buddha and the historic Jesus, it is that in so far as they have influenced later history as the founders of religious cults, both Buddha and Christ were the collective creations of later ages.

IEWS and OPINIONS

Judaism and Its Offspring

By F. A. RIDLEY

Now or True?

It has been often stated since Ernest Renan initiated the expression, that the Semitic races, unlike presumably the Aryan-originated cults of India and Persia, are monotheistic by nature, though the term "nature" would appear to be rather ambiguous as regards its ultimate meaning. Actually, as is clear enough, both from the older narratives in the Old Testament, as well as from the prophetic reform initiated by Mohammed amongst the 7th century, also Semitic, Arabs, the Semitic races were originally just as polytheistic as any other primitive race even right down almost to the Babylonian exile (c 600 BC). The then emerging monotheistic cult of Jehovah (Yahveh) was still making heavy weather in its attempt to displace Baal, Ashtoreth and Co., the traditional Canaanitish deities. The Old Testament re-echoes this bitter religious conflict upon numerous pages; but long before the origins of the Christian era, Judaism had emerged as a definitely monotheistic religious cult, the rabbinical religion of Jehovah and of his book, the Bible (our Old Testament). It was from this cult that both the originally major Jewish cosmopolitan heresies, Christianity and Islam, emerged. A student of comparative religion may perhaps venture the speculation that neither Christianity nor Islam could have emerged from the Judaism depicted in the quasi-historical books of the Old Testament, any more than Buddhism could have originated earlier on from the primitive Hinduism recorded in the sacred scriptures of Hinduism, the Vedic Hymns.

Judaism and Christianity

The Jewish rabbis have always taken a very disparaging view of the Christian New Testament. "What's new in it isn't true and what's true in it, isn't new". However, rival religious cults, like rival political parties in the present struggle for existence and for power, are rarely the best judges of each other. In this case, whilst the rabbinical proverb quoted above represents a reasonably accurate as well as witty critique of the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John is a quite different kind of production. Its Gnostic Christianity originated probably from mixed Greek and Jewish sources during the 2nd century of our era, which found its effective theological expression in the Pauline Epistles. In particular in that monumental treatise of Catholic theology (as Albert Kalthoff aptly termed it) the Epistle to the Romans (probably composed towards the middle of the 2nd century) which is in no sense a con-

tinuation of Judaism but is frankly and radically anti-Jewish throughout. From the point of view of rabbinical Judaism it may not be true, but it most certainly is new.

For in Romans, all that is national and exclusive in Judaism, all that is, which has kept Judaism as a merely national cult of the chosen race goes by the board: circumcision, the Mosaic Law, and most important of all, the very idea of the chosen race. For "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, circumcised nor uncircumcised. For we are all one in Christ Jesus". With these words Christianity became a cosmopolitan, a world-religion. Whether true or the reverse, it was certainly "new" henceforth, as and when viewed from the still purely national standpoint of the Jewish rabbis themselves.

If Christianity represented the first great Jewish heresy which subsequently expanded upon a world-wide scale, Islam six centuries later represented the second. The Koran also represents a "New Testament". We can relevantly add that the Koran remains in both its literary expression and in its fundamental ideas, much nearer to the Jewish Old Testament than does the largely Pauline

New Testament. Like Judaism Islam remains the "religion of the Book", the cult of a monotheistic god and of his prophet Mohammed. It was, no doubt, not an accident that in his earliest revelations, Mohammed bade his disciples turn towards Jerusalem at the hour of prayer. Unlike Christianity, Islam has even retained the primitive Jewish rite of circumcision.

However, Mohammed, like Paul before him, also did away with the idea of the chosen race, and thereby he (or perhaps his followers) raised Islam from the level of a merely national, to that of a cosmopolitan cult—“Jewish Catholicism”, as I have elsewhere termed it. viz. the prophetic cult of Judaism, that earlier religion of the Book, raised from the national to the cosmopolitan level.

As and when viewed on, so to speak, a genealogical tree, it seems to be clear, then, that the three major world-religions, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam themselves emerged from the nationalist cults of India and Palestine. For religions also fall under the effective operation of the universal law of evolution.

Yevtushenko

By COLIN McCALL

SOME READERS may have seen Kenneth Haigh reciting poems by Yevtushenko in the BBC programme, *Monitor*, on January 20th. These were taken from the attractive little Penguin, *Selected Poems*, translated from the Russian by Robin Milner-Gulland and Peter Levi, SJ (2s. 6d.).

Yevgeny Alexandrovitch Yevtushenko was born in 1933, and seems to be the most popular young poet in the USSR today (his latest book came out in an edition of 100,000 and he is enormously in demand for recitations in clubs, factories, universities and theatres). Certainly he is the most popular young Russian poet outside the Soviet Union. Partly, no doubt, because of his reputation as a rebel, partly too because of his charm and good looks, but also, I believe, because he speaks (in his poems) with a directness that has been forsaken by many modern English poets.

Poetry, after all, whatever else it may be, is a means of communication; often, it is true, concerned with very personal experiences, but useless (except as a purgation) unless it succeeds in conveying those experiences to the reader. With Yevtushenko, even in translation, the reader is able to share the poet's feelings.

Take, for instance, this lovely little poem, "Waiting", with the exciting effect of the eight-line sentence:

My love will come
will fling open her arms and fold me in them,
will understand my fears, observe my changes.
In from the pouring dark, from the pitch night
without stopping to bang the taxi door
she'll run upstairs through the decaying porch
burning with love and love's happiness,
she'll run dripping upstairs, she won't knock,
will take my head in her hands,
and when she drops her overcoat on a chair,
it will slide to the floor in a blue heap.

Then, from that deceptively simple-sounding piece, turn to one with a "message"—a good message, incidentally:

Telling lies to the young is wrong.
Proving to them that lies are true is wrong.
Telling them that God's in his heaven
and all's well with the world is wrong.
The young know what you mean. The young are people.
Tell them the difficulties can't be counted,
and let them see not only what will be
but see with clarity these present times.
Say obstacles exist they must encounter

sorrow happens, hardship happens.
The hell with it. Who never knew
the price of happiness will not be happy.
Forgive no error you recognize,
it will repeat itself, increase,
and afterwards our pupils
will not forgive in us what we forgave.

"The imaginative core of Yevtushenko's work" editor-translators, "is an acceptance of life, a hopefulness and an honesty, which are directly related to the variety of his surface textures". He is also able "to move effortlessly from social to personal themes, from the public to the lyrical, to combine them in a single poem". Above all he is interested in people. For him,

No people are uninteresting.
Their fate is like the chronicle of planets.
Nothing in them is not particular,
and planet is dissimilar from planet . . .

"No people are uninteresting". "Nothing in them is not particular . . .". Not, perhaps, ideas that fit easily into the usual Western conception of Soviet theory. But, as Mr. Milner-Gulland and Father Levi point out, "The Soviet Union is a more complex place than the West seems prepared to believe, and particularly in the literary world (where ceaseless and often fruitless controversy is carried on between highly disparate factions): to speak of any monolithic 'party line' and to try to measure a writer against it is senseless".

Yevtushenko, during his travels to Britain, France, USA and elsewhere, helped to dispel quite a few senseless notions about the USSR and its people, and his poems, with their deep humanity, will do more to further mutual understanding. Whatever our race or nationality, most of us want to sing the "International" to one tune or another, and we can say with Yevtushenko.

When the last anti-semitic on the earth
is buried for ever
let the International ring out.

OBJECTION SUSTAINED

"Some of us objected to the illusion of nudeness in front of a picture on the stage of Jesus Christ."
—Comment on the Persian slave-girl dancing act by an eleven-year-old in a church hall, referred to in "This Believing World" (Daily Mirror, 17/1/63).

On Knowing God

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

NO ATHEIST worthy of his atheism would ever be so brash as to state categorically that he knows there is no God. He knows perfectly well that a headstrong assertion of that sort would immediately land him with the obligation of providing irrefutable and intelligible proof where no proof is possible. What he can and does assert is, that having looked long and thought carefully all round the matter, he finds that too many of the facts daily staring us in the face are utterly incompatible with any such God as the God postulated by the various theistic religions.

He sees that all the artfullest sophistries ever spun, even those spun by Lord Fisher of Lambeth, have abysmally failed to counteract the overwhelming evidence against this God's existence. The atheist therefore has no alternative but to deny God and remain entrenched in the sense and reason that have made him what he is. But this denial is not made with the censorious self-righteousness that so often characterises religious affirmations. It is simply that, according to the atheist's judgment, no such knowledge has ever been and probably never can be accessible to the human mind. Only upon inviolable proof can absolute knowledge rest. And no such proof has ever been forthcoming.

Yet, undaunted by even so inescapable a fact, there are still many spiritual adventurers who do not hesitate to rush in where atheists fear to tread. These are they that know. They proclaim that they not only know there is God, they know this and that about him. They know him, it seems, in precisely the same personal way that they know their next-door neighbour.

Now nothing on earth can be more intractable than the man who knows, above all in the field of religion. He knows what he knows and as Dr. Johnson remarked, there's an end on't. Nine times out of ten it would exhaust the patience of forty Jobs to try to argue the matter with a man of that calibre. Nine times out of ten however, these elect who know what less favoured mortals regard as unknown and unknowable, belong to the uncultivated and emotionally suggestible types who are dominated either by the evangelicalism of such impassioned reformers as General Booth, or the vulgar showmanship of such revivalists as Billy Graham. Or, like the illiterate Catholic peasantries they are enslaved to the dominion of their priests.

Although these satisfied people are often popularly referred to as fundamentalists, it is difficult to think of them ever getting to the bottom of anything, or to imagine anything less fundamental than the extremely vulnerable religious certitude in which they wallow. As long as it suits them they are always ready to think a thing, but they will not stop to think it out. They can therefore justly be disregarded in any serious discussion.

But there remains the other tenth, a better educated, more articulate, though probably dwindling minority who, presumably with full responsibility for what they say, also asseverate a direct and positive knowledge of God and his attributes. Unlike the atheist, they usually show no concern about any obligation to substantiate their claim. Yet it is abundantly clear that their claim involves considerations of such stupendous magnitude, that if it could be indisputably established as genuine, it would settle forthwith and for ever the question of God's existence, for God could hardly be known if he didn't exist. It might also give us some apprehension of his nature. We should then

all have to acknowledge at least his existence, whatever low opinion we might form of his nature.

If that claim really could be thus established, it is impossible not to suppose that the claimants would exultingly rush to inform the rest of the world. Yet they never do. They appear to take it for granted that we should accept their bare word and leave it at that.

So do many of the patients in our mental hospitals. Extremely astute in other matters, these unfortunates will with the same self-bestowed authority, urgently and confidently assure us that they know for certain the exact date of the Second Coming; that they know their detested keeper to be a reincarnation of Mr. Horatio Bottomley; that they know to a detail what Mr. Hannan Swaffer is now up to in Summerland.

There is no limit to the crazy delusions we could swallow, there is no limit to those who could swallow this craziest of all delusions, if such limited authority is to be taken as guarantee. We are therefore compelled to insist that unsupported bare, not to say threadbare, words are impossible of acceptance. They must be backed by further and unanswerable confirmation. And unanswerable confirmation is never supplied.

Answerable confirmation of course is. All the same, as soon as the confirmers begin to supply it, we had better look out or we shall presently find ourselves swamped in a bog of irrational verbiage without a single rational straw to clutch at. Given half a chance, nothing can so effectively suffocate intelligence and intelligibility as this familiar, untestable testimony to the superiority of faith over reason, of intuition over intellect, of divine revelation over human experience, etcetera and so forth words without end—and without amen. Nothing is here for verification. Everything is here for mystification, pretentiously glorified as mysticism. We are in short given anything and everything but a clear and comprehensible account of what they know and how they come to know it.

Herein may hide unanswerable confirmation say, for Mr. C. S. (crewtape) Lewis, as it obviously does for Mr. John Wren-Lewis, who actually does know and know about God. We have his bare word (though nothing else) for it. Nevertheless there are still a few rebels, not complete duffers, who shrewdly perceive that all this verbal vapouring could just as effectively be drawn upon to prove first-hand knowledge of the god Zeus, the Zodiac, Kismet, or the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve and Pinch-me. It could indeed be drawn upon to give us unscientific knowledge of anything whatsoever and it always ignominiously succeeds in giving us authentic knowledge of nothing whatsoever.

One thing we do know is, that motives are not only incalculably various but often unseizably obscure. It may be (or it may not) that a claim to esoteric knowledge is made out of the sincerest conviction. But conviction is not knowledge. Nothing can be so obtuse as what is called unshakable conviction, especially religious conviction. Yet nothing is more liable to be shaken and overthrown. Remember for example, the famous Christian who enunciated as though his conviction were insuperable knowledge: God's in his heaven, all's well with the world. Yet it is glaringly obvious to anybody not wilfully blind or deaf, or dumb in the most disparaging sense of that word, that the second part of this monstrous assertion is

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Thanks to ITV, Dr. John Heenan had a very happy field-day on January 13th. The Subject was, "We question the Roman Catholic Church"—"we" being a number of boy and girl teenagers whose naive knowledge of religion in general and Roman Catholicism in particular must have been gained either at their mothers' knees, or at a Sunday school class for five-year-olds. Dr. Heenan was in his element, and so had perhaps the easiest victory of his career. There are people who can stand up to him of course quite easily, but it would be very difficult to get any TV show to put them on. After all, this *is* a Christian country—or is it?

★

Those who have studied the evolution of religion are perfectly well aware of the significant role of the worship of sex, but it is extraordinary how many parsons and priests see it everywhere. A little girl of eleven was dancing before some old age pensioners in a church hall wearing transparent trousers over the usual panties, and the vicar was horrified at such "immodesty".

★

Naturally, to prevent the little girl from causing erotic sensations in the pensioners, he stopped the show—the poor dear man! He even quoted "Blessed are the pure in heart"—and there was no doubt to whom he was referring. That stout Christian, Miss Monica Furlong, writing about it in the *Daily Mail* (January 18th), tells us that she knows "very well the kind of criticism non-believers make of the Church", yet light-hearted jokes about religion on TV "could not do Christianity an iota as much harm as one incident such as this". But surely she ought to know that literally hundreds of similar incidents have cluttered Christianity and the Churches throughout the ages? The Church in short has "sex" on its brain.

★

Alas, there are still people actually "mocking" religion, and in the *Daily Express* (January 14th) a horrified Mr. David Lewin asked, "Do you believe a man's religion should be mocked?" Our own answer is quite clear—of course it should be if it is silly enough. And God knows, there are quite a few things in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, that are funny enough and stupid enough to be laughed at all the time.

★

Mr. Lewin was attacking "That Was The Week That Was", and he pointed out that it "radically departed from Reith's beliefs and philosophy"—for which we certainly ought to be extremely thankful. But not Mr. Lewin. This "satire on religion", he said, "gave a vast offence to a majority of viewers" including of course himself, and he condemns wholeheartedly making "fun of somebody else's religion".

★

We note that recently Dr. E. J. Dingwall contributed an article to *Weekend*—"Seen Any Good Ghosts Lately?", and as he has been spook-hunting, mostly on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research, for over fifty years, his conclusion is particularly interesting. It is, "I have never seen so much as the ghost of a ghost". But will such plain speaking have any effect whatever on believers? Not on your life.

★

Dr. Dingwall who, incidentally, helped to write a devastating exposure of the "haunted" Borley Rectory, should however compare his failure to locate any spooks with the "spirit forms" seen by the American lawyer Lawrence

Cahill of Los Angeles, California. He spent seven years in investigations, and is now satisfied that he saw 6,000 genuine materialisations. We are sure that most, if not all, Spiritualists will believe him—just as they would if the number had been 60,000 or 600,000 or even 6,000,000. It's the belief that matters, not the numbers.

★

In spite of the bitterly cold weather, some hundreds of Christians gathered in Trafalgar Square on January 20th to hear a Methodist, a Church of England parson and a Roman Catholic priest as well as a "layman", extol the virtues of "unity" within the Christian Church. Every thing was done in the most reverent manner, and the meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer—from the Authorised Version, of course. That this has now been given up by the Revised Version and the New English Bible for a much shorter version is never even these days hinted at. Still, the pious intention was there if nothing else.

ON KNOWING GOD

(Concluded from page 35)

manifest nonsense and the first part nonsense because it can in no sense be manifest.

Since no demonstrable proof of God's existence has ever come within the remotest range of human understanding, we cannot be otherwise than filled with suspicion that these avowed diviners either deliberately cook up bunkum to impress the credulous, or else they haven't the ghost, not even the holy ghost of a notion of what they are talking about.

And at this point a question obstinately obtrudes itself: Why the devil, if God be very God, does he not make himself and his requirements so unmistakably plain, neither the clever fools nor the silly fools can ever again say in their hearts there is no God? If God were but one half of what they say he is, he could and he would. But he doesn't. And this neglect surely constitutes one of the most powerful arguments against any knowledge of him that is not spurious.

In response to all this we shall most likely receive from our mystagogues a lugubrious shake of the head and the well-known, high-minded, pitying stare that would bring tears to a glass eye. We know before they tell us, as they always do tell us, how very sorry they are for us, the offensive implication being that as they are inevitably in the right, we are perversely in the wrong and shall richly deserve whatever punishment lies in store for us. But we are not to be put on, nor put off by that thinly disguised insolence. We must demand that, if they possess the knowledge they profess, they show it and share it beyond dispute. We have neither hope nor fear that they will.

Let us then, as lively old Ecclesiastes puts it, hear the conclusion of the whole matter: while the atheist frankly declares that he knows nothing whatever about any god, the theist, whether he be Christian, Jew or Mohammedan, lacks the candour to confess that he knows exactly ten times as much.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.
London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.
(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.
Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, February 5th, 7.30 p.m.: DR. D. STARK MURRAY. "Health and Social Problems in USA".
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, February 3rd, 6.30 p.m.: FILM, "Island Aflame"—the story of the Cuban revolt.
Marble Arch Branch (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), A MEETING. Speaker and subject to be announced.
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, February 3rd, 11 a.m.: DR. MAURICE BURTON, "How Much 'Reverence for Life'?"

Notes and News

CHRISTIAN TELEVISION viewers, so used to having their cherished beliefs protected by the BBC, are finding it hard to adapt themselves. 185 telephoned to complain about the religious satire in "That Was The Week That Was", which we referred to last week. Another hundred phoned their protests after seeing a satire on Christian unity in "Tonight" on January 21st, when three clerics sang about "Togetherness" and then walked off in different directions. The sketch was from the Canadian review, *Clap Hands*, at the new Prince Charles Theatre in London, and was acted by Eric Hands, Dave Broadfoot and Jack Creely. "The Vatican may be too dogmatican", sang a priest in a baretta, while the Anglican sang of "Keeping the Monarchy C of E", adding: "For God is a gentleman through and through. And in all probability an Anglican too".

THIS, SAID THE *Daily Telegraph* (22/1/63), "could be a year in which the practice of saying Grace is revived . . .". It could be, we suppose, though we doubt it. But some of the *Telegraph's* extracts from *The Harp Book of Graces* (issued by the lager firm) were interesting. This sardonic 18th-century Grace, for instance:
Heavenly Father, bless us,
And keep us all alive;
There's ten of us to dinner
And not enough for five.
Non-Etonians might also like to know that "May the King of eternal glory make us partakers of his heavenly table" is part of the Eton Ante Prandium Grace, said in

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged, £34 10s. A. E. Stringer, £3 2s. 6d.; J. T. Bolton, £1; S. Clowes, 10s.; M. Evans, 3s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. J. Collins, £2; J. D. Hockin, £1 12s.; H. Strange, 5s.; J. Gentry, 6s. 6d.; A. Faicrs, 10s.; F. M. Lord, £1; R.J.B., £5; H. Fiddian, 2s. 6d.; A. Allman, 1s. Total to date, January 25th, 1963, £50 3s.

Latin; though for everyday use the Captain of the School says "Surgite! Benedicat Deus"—"Rise! May the Lord Bless". Which is, at least, brief and to the point.

A FEW days earlier (17/1/63), the *Telegraph* printed a letter from an Oxford clergyman suggesting that "those responsible for the revision of our Book of Common Prayer" should amend prayers "for seasonable weather". to "reasonable weather".

DAVID LEWIN might deplore BBC satire at the expense of religion (see "This Believing World"), but Malcolm Muggeridge welcomed "a step in the right direction" (*Daily Herald*, 22/1/63). "Auntie," as the BBC was nicknamed, used to be a regular churchgoer and terribly respectable, but now "that flowered hat one knew so well is askew". It is, Mr. Muggeridge suggested, "as though Dimbleby should suddenly appear on the television screen doing a take-off of himself". The satirist, said Mr. Muggeridge, "looks into the roots of human behaviour"; "pricks the bubble of self-importance and self-esteem . . . He is the gargoyle set beside the steeple, leering and jeering down at the earth".

TWO CARTOONISTS celebrated the BBC's relaxation of rules governing light entertainment on television. In the *New Statesman*, Trog had workmen carrying a cross, crown, brassiere, lavatory cistern and basin into the props department, while in the *Daily Express*, Osbert Lancaster depicted a man "determined to be the first BBC script writer to get politics, God, sex and the Royal Family all into one spontaneous joke". Another recent Osbert Lancaster cartoon we particularly liked showed President de Gaulle with a telephone to his ear and his secretary calling for "Quiet, gentlemen, please!—we have Sinai on the line".

TOM HYSLOP's advocacy of atheism (referred to in this column last week) brought the expected flood of letters to the (Scottish) *Sunday Post*, as well as to the Provost's own home. He had also been "stopped in the street umpteen times by folk wanting to take him up on his beliefs". But, "Strange to say, only three clergymen took up the cudgels". Perhaps it isn't so strange, really. Perhaps they have a little more sense than, at any rate the majority of those whose views were printed in the *Post* on January 20th. "I was an atheist for 40 years. I was a heavy drinker". "During the war I met several professed atheists who admitted that, when in danger, they prayed". "Adolf Hitler was an atheist". "Anyone who's heard 'I Know That My Redeemer Liveth' must surely believe". "It'll take the Last Judgment to convince an atheist".

THERE WERE, too, of course, references to "the creation of this wonderful world" and "the wondrous workings of the human body"; even doggerel asking "Who planted in the midst of us a muscle we call heart? Who guides it by remote control and makes it stop and start?" There was also a letter from a 13-year-old girl who sometimes thinks she only believes in God because she has always been taught to do so, but who tries "to imagine what my life would be like without God" and gets her answer: "Life would not be worth living". At thirteen! Finally, we should mention two letters in support of Provost Hyslop's atheism.

"The Rationalist Annual" for 1963

By G. L. SIMONS

ALL CREEDS have two aspects—intellectual beliefs and moral principles. Any symposium which represents a creed at a popular level should balance the two. A morality needs intellectual justification; isolated intellectualism is ethically barren and unproductive. A symposium on Humanism has an additional responsibility. For Humanism, as icon and iconoclast, must construct new schemes as well as criticising old ones. This year's *Rationalist Annual* (Barrie and Rockliff: cloth 7s. 6d., paper 5s.) achieves the balance and fulfils the responsibility; in the latter respect, however, it is more successful, for reasons which I shall indicate.

There is no obvious pattern in the organisation of the book; for this reason it is convenient to consider the articles in the order in which they appear.

"Humanists and Teilhard de Chardin" by A. L. Stuart is essentially an attempt to throw some light on "the Huxley-de Chardin relationship"—the paradoxical situation in which an eminent Humanist sponsors the work of a French Jesuit. Huxley wrote an appreciative introduction to de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* and refers to him with (relatively innocuous) approval in *The Humanist Frame*, a symposium published in 1961 (not 1916 as we read in the first paragraph of Stuart's article).

For some time Huxley's attitude to the French priest has puzzled me. I welcome Stuart's attempt to clarify the situation and largely endorse his treatment of the theme. Teilhard *does* have an unfortunate style for what purports to be a scientific work; he *does* ignore facts about evolution when, for example, he equates evolution with rise of consciousness. But above all I dislike his metaphysical interpretation of evolution. Thus I agree with Stuart's healthy conclusion (on the doubtful wisdom of associating Humanism with thinkers like de Chardin)—"Sooner or later truth prevails. And it is not sooner when it is weakened". This conclusion would have had more weight if Stuart had quoted from later passages in *The Phenomenon of Man*, for example, de Chardin says "It [the Christian fact] has its place among the other realities of the world" and "... is not the Christian faith destined ... to take the place of evolution?" But Mr. Stuart's pointers to a solution of the paradox are not confident.

"Religious Stumbling-blocks to Living Standards" by P. Sargent Florence is concerned with the underdeveloped countries. To improve living standards, Professor Florence claims that three factors must be considered—the increase and equal distribution of real income, and the control of population growth—and maintains that religion is inimical to all three. He gives this thesis much factual support.

This is a useful article: many Humanists are disposed to consider religion solely in a developed society; to appreciate its impact in more primitive countries is important. Professor Sargent's article is also constructive, indicating an approach to foreign aid that will not merely exaggerate the problem.

"Some Lies about Science" by J. B. S. Haldane is a vindication of the versatility of the scientist and a refutation of the notion that science is necessarily expensive. Haldane's happy style makes this article readable enough, and there are some interesting facts about geologists who turn to embryology, and Fellows of the Royal Society who do modern art, but I feel that this essay contributes little to the scheme of the volume.

"On the Fringe of Christendom" by B. R. Wilson is about sects. It is partly historical, partly anthropological. It attempts to show how members of old, evolving societies ultimately tend to seek identification with more secular institutions, how religious sects may arise in underdeveloped countries effected by "the impact of conquest, colonialism, new techniques of economic and industrial activity, and new work relationships contingent upon them", and how curious sects can arise, generated by creed-interaction. This is an interesting account of how the origin and nature of sects largely depend upon social conditions, in either the primitive or developed society. The article concludes with the warning that even in modern society, when security and personal identity are threatened, sectarianism can occur, creating "cultural confusion".

"The Evolutionary Survival Value of Religion" by Rupert Crawshaw-Williams is an attempt to show how religious thought benefited early man by preventing the anxiety and terror which would have occurred had he freely and honestly admitted his terrible insecurity. The presentation of the theory starts with an attempt to prove, with two arguments, that Christians in particular and religious people in general, are irrational. It is unfortunate that the arguments, as presented, are both invalid. The first, based on the argument from pain, neglects the possibility that God may be benevolent and omnipotent, but may not know all that is going on. This objection is trivial and can easily be avoided by considering God to be benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient. The objection to the second argument is more serious. The argument states that since at most only one religion can be true, and since no religion has over fifty per cent of believers, then "religious people are irrational as a class". This is invalid since it is characteristic of classes that *all* members, not just a majority, have the defining attribute. The argument cannot be modified to give this result. Mr. Crawshaw-Williams also slightly misrepresents the James-Lange view of emotion.

However, these objections are secondary. The most important thing is the theory itself which is not only interesting but also highly plausible. The article concludes with the suggestion that although it may be necessary to tolerate irrational thought, it cannot claim a private domain and should not inhibit intellectual freedom.

"The Great Agnostics" by H. J. Blackham is a survey of nineteenth century freethought in various forms. Agnosticism in the nineteenth century was a positive force performing several important tasks simultaneously. It revered intellectual honesty (for me the quotation from T. H. Huxley is the finest sentence in the *Annual*—"The most sacred act of a man's life is to say and to organise, believe such and such to be true"), and tried to originate a new positive approach to human problems. Mr. Blackham suggests how the agnostic reformers were still influenced by the Church, although social tensions were becoming more secular. Most time is devoted to George Eliot who had a non-religious morality of courage and love, Matthew Arnold who tried to preserve human morality as religion decayed intellectually, and William Morris who looked upon human society with optimism and hope. This stimulating article has some rich quotations.

"Natural Goodness and Original Sin" by A. C. Grayling is more than anything else an investigation of the word "natural". This is an important article, since many

Anti-Semitism

By Dr. J. V. DUHIG

THERE IS NO DOUBT that Anti-Semitism is uniquely a Christian vice, though the disease seems to me illogical. In its popular version it rests on the rejection of the alleged Jesus by the Jews, though the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension were all in the divine plan: they had to happen anyhow and Jesus must have known what he was in for and went through with it according to schedule. That is, the whole thing was planned deliberately as part of the "Scheme of Salvation" and would have happened whether the Jews were there or not.

During the last war I was asked by my friend, the Hon. Dr. Evatt, Federal Attorney-General of Australia, to be Chairman of an official committee to help refugees from Hitlerism. In my work I found the most vicious anti-semitism everywhere, but particularly marked amongst Catholic women.

Now here is a priceless relic of this repulsive Christian vice. In a most engrossing book, *Studies in Diplomatic History*, in honour of G. P. Gooch (Longmans, London, 1961), there is an article by a French professor, M. Baumont, "L'Affaire Dreyfus dans la Diplomatic française", from which I make an extract (pp. 27, 28). "The day after the Zola trial in February, 1898, Count D'Aubigny, French Minister at Munich, received from the Papal Nuncio warm congratulations on the verdict which found Zola guilty . . . [The Minister goes on] He expressed to me in forcible terms that the Israelite danger is universal, that it threatens the whole of Christianity and that all means are valid for crushing it . . . He went on that the Catholic religion held in reserve special indulgences for those who, when the good cause required it, shed the blood of Jews and pagans".

Now maybe things will be different! I quote an item from the Paris weekly *France-Observateur*, November 1st, 1962, p.4, "The Catholic Church and Judaism":

Will the second Vatican Council concern itself with the relations between the Catholic Church and Judaism? If no observer, official or unofficial, for Judaism is present at the Council, it is none the less true that contacts have been made between Jews and Catholics and will be continued in Rome itself. One of the Israelites' essential worries is that the Church should renounce what M. Jules Isaac has called "The teaching of hatred" and agree to expunge from the Catechism, read by millions of children throughout the world, defamatory expressions which it contains, as, "Decide people, wicked and accursed Jews, Enemies of Jesus, Bloodthirsty men, lions and tigers". If there is a general expectation of a global condemnation of anti-semitism, racism, atheism, it is still not known whether the Fathers in Council will proceed any further along the road taken by John XXIII who, it will be remembered, took the initiative of proscribing from the Good Friday liturgy the well-known and age-old phrase, "*Pro perfidis Judaicis*".

It can be stated that the Pope and numerous cardinals seem disposed to facilitate a better understanding between the two faiths. Cardinal Bea took the initiative in a proposal for a decree, but the text was not accepted by the central preparatory commission and does not figure amongst the 70 proposals submitted to the Council. But the Cardinal will return to the attack in the course of the labours of the Ecumenical Assembly. In any case, the attitude taken by the conservative elements of the Council, notably Cardinal Ottaviani, is still full of uncertainties. The question is also asked whether certain bishops of the Middle East may not intervene to make a Judaeo-Christian relaxation of tension very difficult.

To me so closely familiar with the dangerous and deplorable results of this age-old Christian vice, the result of these plans is of vast importance. The world needs peace in many sectors of human life and this is one where amity and mutual respect are possible.

potential reformer must have met the hoary platitude "You can't change human nature". Graham indicates the difficulties in trying to show that any moral behaviour, good or bad, is natural in the sense required by the believer in either natural goodness or original sin. Neither can show that a particular moral disposition is natural in the sense of being independent of social influence. Mr. Graham leads from the possible exhortatory significance of "human nature is good" to the way in which our view of the statement effects our attitude to social freedom.

Although suggesting that "the doctrine of natural goodness has acted as a force on the side of political, social and intellectual liberty . . ." Mr. Graham warns us that after Freud and the Nazis we have good reason to take into account man's tendencies to destruction and cruelty. The only rational outcome is a sort of compromise, in which man's inhibitions are relaxed but his destructive inclinations are recognised. Graham's contribution is well-grounded; he does not allow idealism to vitiate honesty.

"Kant's Refutation of the Proofs of God's Existence" by H. J. McCloskey is an account of Kant's attitude to the classical arguments. Kant refuted the Ontological argument and showed how the Teleological and Cosmological presupposed it. McCloskey's account of this is wholly admirable; his explanation is clear; his prose is sympathetic and appropriate. I have not come across a more lucid refutation of the Ontological argument (Ayer's being too brief, MacIntyre's too simple, etc.). And yet I doubt the value of the article in the present context.

For this approach to the classical arguments seems limited in two ways. Firstly McCloskey observes (and is not the first to do so) that the "ontological proof is very much a philosopher's proof". Because of this it is not of general use to reduce two popular arguments to it. Secondly the reduction, even if valid (and some deny it, e.g. Father Coplestone, "it seems singularly unconvincing") leaves a loophole for a transcendent being who is not perfect. McCloskey virtually admits this (pages 85 and 88). True, Kant spent some time on specific refutations of the Cosmological and Teleological arguments, but this was of secondary importance. For these reasons I would have preferred to see a more general article dealing with the popular reasons why some people hold belief in God to be rational.

"The Humanist Spirit in Education" by Cyril Bibby is an excellent example of constructive Humanist thought. Whilst admitting that changes in the law relating to religious education are desirable, he considers what can be done in the present framework, and it appears that there is a great deal. Dr. Bibby's article is well-supported factually and written in a vital and positive manner. It exhibits an energetic and forthright idealism which is not afraid of reality. There is a statement of the Humanist attitude to morality, and details of anomalies in the modern GCE syllabuses for various subjects. Suggestions which Humanist teachers could implement abound. This is first-rate.

The Rationalist Annual, as a readable, sober and constructive symposium, is a worthy addition to Humanist literature. Minor points (for example, I dislike the use of the words "sensible", "belief" and "faith" on pages 9, 57 and 95) do not seriously detract from a useful and informative volume which I found reasonable and stimulating; it has none of the evasions that characterise less secular works. Bertrand Russell said, of the classical proofs for God's existence "The . . . arguments were . . . modest: if valid they proved their point; if invalid, it was open to any critic to prove them so". The same may be said of *The Rationalist Annual*. For this reason, as well as others, I hope that it will be widely read.

CORRESPONDENCE

BAYARD SIMMONS

I read, with desolation, of the passing of my old friend, Bayard Simmons.

My proudest possession of his: *Pagoda of Untroubled Ease*, inscribed by himself personally: "For my good friend, Arthur E. Carpenter, who uses his melodic gifts to spread the Light of Truth".

He was a true Freethinker, a true gentleman and a true poet. My own favourite is his *Silent Friends*, written in 1934, a sonnet of almost startling beauty.

That he used his own great gift in the service of Freethought, in which there is small pay and few laurels, is the measure of the man. It may yet be recognised more widely.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

It was with profound regret that I heard of the recent passing of Bayard Simmons, the more so in that his departure leaves a gap in the ranks of the radical movement which will, I feel, never be quite adequately filled again.

I myself always found that I had much in common with Mr. Simmons, whose past association with the Labour and Socialist movement in what may now be described (perhaps rather nostalgically) as its "heroic" pioneer phase, was somewhat similar to my own. Bayard Simmons was aptly named after Bayard, that model of antique chivalry, "the knight without fear and without reproach". For Bayard, *our* Bayard, represented a human type perhaps more common in a more leisurely age than is ours: a genuine rebel in every walk of life, and yet at one and the same time, a perfect example of that so often misrepresented type, an English gentleman, besides being, as we all know, a poet of considerable stature, and a scholar endowed with a wide literary culture such as one seldom nowadays encounters.

Whenever I had the good fortune to meet Bayard Simmons, this well-nigh unique combination of (what are sometimes termed) old world characteristics, as and when combined with a venerable crusading zeal for all that was new and true, never failed to make a deep impression upon me, as I am sure it must have done upon many others who met this outstanding personality.

Invariably courteous, modest and selfless in both his personal and public life, Bayard Simmons was assuredly one of those rare personalities who reveal to their contemporaries, the higher image of the man of the future, in that entirely secular co-operative commonwealth, to the ultimate attainment of which he devoted his long life and remarkable talents.

F. A. RIDLEY.

I was very sorry to hear of Bayard Simmons's death. He had been a more or less sick man for years, but his going leaves a gap.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

(President, World Union of Freethinkers).

I was really sorry not to be able to attend the funeral of Bayard Simmons at Croydon. I liked Bayard so much, as we all did.

STELLA NEWSOME

(Hon. Secretary, Suffragette Fellowship).

NAPOLEON AND RUSSIA

Your correspondent "J.B." (THE FREETHINKER, 11/1/63) is not the first to fall into the error of attributing the defeat of Napoleon in 1812 to relatively minor events. I do not wish to question the details concerning Josephine or her sister Aimée de Rivery (who appeared to be quite a power behind the Turkish throne), but surely this campaign deserves more serious consideration than the letter offers.

In the *History of the 19th Century* by the French historians, Lavisse and Rombaud, other "errors" or "mistakes" are listed: "The path of destruction began with the Tilsit meeting [1807]". "Perhaps it was at this moment [Aranjuez rising in Spain in 1808] that Napoleon's fate was sealed". "If he had had the prudence to stop at Smolensk, spend less time in Moscow, etc., etc."

It should be understood that Napoleon prepared this campaign with the greatest of care. On June 24th, 1812, the Emperor's "Grand Army" crossed the river Niemen and began his ill-fated invasion of Russia. The historians quoted above tell us that the army consisted of 678,000 men, with reserves a grand total of 1,178,000, of these 420,000 (later reinforced) crossed into Russia—led by his best Marshals.

The Russian army on the other hand, was stretched out from Riga to the Turkish front where Kutuzov's diplomatic skill had enabled him to conclude a peace treaty just before the invasion began. The Russian army had in the field 267,000 men, of which only 147,000 led jointly by Barclay de Tolly and Bagration were in a position to give battle. The battle of Smolensk led the Russian historian Eugene Torte to write in his biography of

Napoleon: "The French Emperor gave up all thought of an overwhelming victory in Russia". Smolensk was followed by defeats at Dorogoburg and Borodino. The Emperor's entry into the capital turned out to be a hollow triumph which was soon to be followed by a disastrous retreat. "The army of the Danube" quoted by your correspondent still left the Russians numerically inferior as my figures show.

Nor indeed can the Russian winter be made the scapegoat, for the "celebrated frosts" came when the French army was in full flight, beyond Vyazma. Thus Napoleon's "Grand Army" left Russia a pitiful band of not more than some 25,000 strong.

The words of a German writer Maximilian Harder are not inappropriate to conclude with: "Read up Russian history, you will find it very edifying".

R. SIDDALL.

OBITUARY

We regret to report the death, on January 12th, of John Percy Bayly, a life-member of the National Secular Society. Mr. Bayly, who was in his 81st year, was a planter and grazier at Suva in Fiji, and naturally welcomed literature and news from headquarters. He described Fiji as "dominated by Methodism, Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism and Seventh Day Adventism in that order", though "the Indians, who now form the majority of our population, though professing to be Hindus are probably negative as regards religion".

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