

The Freethinker

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WE PEOPLE of the West, we people of Europe, with our smug superiority complex, usually assume an air of condescension towards the peoples of the East. Yet we owe much of this vaunted civilisation of ours to the East, and especially to the Muslim East. Admitted that it is difficult for the man in the street to appreciate how it could be possible for us to owe anything to a race that spoke and wrote Arabic, because most of us visualise the Arab, as dirty, wandering bedouin of the desert. But all Arabs are not bedouin, as those of you who have visited Cairo, or Algiers, or Beirut will know. Further, the time when the Arabs or Saracens began to influence this civilisation of Western Europe was long ago; a thousand years or so, when they could claim to be the most powerful and most cultured nation in the world, with an empire stretching from the borders of China to the Pyrenees in the West. The glories of this old Muslim civilisation have often been penned. It was cynosure of every eye beyond its confines. The grandeur of the buildings in its great cities, much of which may still be seen in Spain, the splendour of its courts, the valour of its warriors, together with the commercial and industrial prosperity of its peoples became a byword in Europe. Because of its political and social well-being, its intellectual outlook was high. Indeed, politics and culture are much closer connected than most of us imagine.

Commercial Influence

With this great Muslim civilisation on the very threshold of Europe—since almost the whole of Spain and parts of Italy were in the hands of either the Arabs or Moors—it is evident that Europe was bound to be affected by its culture, and that we can trace in two directions: (1) by means of the political contact; and (2) by means of the intellectual contact. That of the political proximity was brought about by what we might call "word of mouth". Much of that came through the channels of commerce; and we must remember that the Saracens were sailing the Mediterranean long before the Italian merchants dominated its waters. As a result, the commodities introduced by those "infidels" still carry in their names the indelible evidence of their Arabian origin.

The ladies may be interested to know that the words *cotton, tabby, muslin, scarf, tafetta, cashmere, brocade, mohair, sash, mattress, sofa, soap, lufah, coffee, sugar, orange, lemon, lozenge, candy, jar, and marzipan*, are either pure Arabic or else derived through that language. The business man may be surprised to learn that the very word *industry* may be Arabic and certainly the words *traffic, cheque, tariff, bazaar, almanac and kiosk*, can claim that origin. The sportsman may not know that *polo, chess, baccarat*, are of Eastern origin.

The Arts

In the arts, the Arabic influence is a palpable as the noonday sun. The architect speaks of an *alcove* and *oriel*, or a *minaret*, without suspecting for a moment that

he is using Arabic words. The first literature of romance, or what we would call the novel, was prompted by Arabic literature. The first printed book by Caxton in England was the *Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, the original of which was an Arabic book written in the 11th century. Fables were popular in those days, especially the collection translated from the Arabic *Kalila wa Dimna*. In poetry, the Troubadours borrowed their stanza system from the Moors of Spain. Indeed, the very word *troubadour* may be derived from an Arabic root. The Morris Dancers, who were in the Middle Ages and Romance periods the sole entertainers of the people, were the Moorish

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Our Debt to the Arabs

By HENRY GEORGE FARMER

Dancers, and their "hobby-horse"—the *zamalzain*—was borrowed from the same source. The strolling players or minstrels, known as "maskers" because they wore masks when portraying various characters, were of an Eastern prompting, for the words *mask* and *masker* are Arabic. In music we owe the *lute, rebec, and canon* (a sort of psaltery), and many other instruments to the same source, whilst we borrowed the Saracen usage of the military band, together with the *naker* or kettledrum, from the East during the Crusades. The term *fanfare*, i.e. brilliant trumpet flourishes, and the word *tucket* for drum signals, as we find in Shakespeare, are both Arabic. Indeed the army and navy benefited generally from the Saracen's impact, as such words as *arsenal, magazine, rank, admiral and accoutrement* make palpably clear. The sailor took his compass from that same source, and it is quite certain that the swivel—called the *gimbal*—in the compass has the same pedigree. The *alidade* of the sextant is another borrowing.

Literature

What about the purely literary contact? When the Saracens overran the Byzantine and Persian empires they found vestiges of the ancient Greek culture. The result is well known. Monasteries and libraries were ransacked by the Saracens so as to secure copies of Greek works on science and philosophy, when a school of translators was set up in Baghdad to render them into Arabic. Indeed, if it had not been for the zeal of those infidels in this direction, many of the works of ancient Greece might have been lost to us. These latter—on philosophy, astronomy, medicine, engineering, music, and mathematics—were translated from Greek into Arabic. It was upon these acquisitions that the people of Arabic speech were able to make their valuable contributions to learning. Muslim Spain and Sicily, in their passion for literary, artistic, and scientific culture became the rivals of Baghdad at this period. When all Europe was plunged in barbaric ignorance and strife, Muslim Spain alone held "the torch of learning and civilisation bright and shining before the Western world". The colleges of Cordova, Toledo, Seville, and other towns, became world-renowned. The college at Cordova reckoned its students by the thousand, whilst the library of the sultan Al-Hakam II

contained 400,000 books. This monarch founded twenty-seven free schools in Cordova. On the other hand, Christian Spain had little interest in learning, whilst the ignorance of its clergy was deplorable. Bishop Alvarus of Cordova in the 9th century complained that his co-religionists spent more time in acquiring the culture and language of the Moors than in reading Christian books and Latin.

In most of the great cities of the Arabs and Moors there were schools, colleges and libraries, whereas the peoples of Christian Europe were but barbarians in comparison. Europe was deep in the slumber of the Middle Ages, but it was this new spirit of learning from the East that aroused the land from its lethargy. European scholars were compelled to visit infidel Spain to acquire this new learning from Muslim scholars, and to translate Arabic books on arithmetic, geometry, medicine, astronomy and philosophy into Latin, which became the textbooks used in Christian colleges and universities for centuries.

It was the arithmetic of the Arabs that took the place of the antiquated Boethian system in Europe. The numerals that we write today came from the Arabs. The line separating the numerator from the denominator in fractions was likewise taken from that source. In the same way we adopted the system of testing addition by what is called "casting out of the nines". Europe took algebra from the Arabs. In fact the very word is Arabic. In geometry the Arabs solved twenty problems with the

help of linear, pure and mixed, quadratic and biquadratic equations. In trigonometry, many of the expressions which we still use, such as *sine* and *cosine*, were derived from Arabic. In astronomy, the terms *zenith*, *nadir* and *azimuth*, reveal their parentage. Many of the stars still have Arabic names. In medicine, the very words *chemistry*, *alcohol*, *realgar*, *alembic*, and *antimony* came through the same language. Look where you will in our language and civilisation and you will find the hand of the Muslim. The achievements of the latter in art, science and literature dwarf into insignificance anything of a like nature in either the East or the West.

All this was of profound importance to the growing European civilisation, which not only owes it to the Muslims that they preserved for the pioneers of the Renaissance, all that was left of Greek science and philosophy, but that their own initiative and scrutinising spirit added to the sum total of learning which became a tremendous force in the intellectual awakening of Europe in the Middle Ages. There is that old Arabic proverb "Thy neighbour is thy teacher". In that saying there is much truth, although we people of the West rarely appreciate it. In the acknowledgment of our debts and due to our neighbours is actually the foundation of the social contract, and the sooner we throw off that racial superiority complex, and extend the hand of brotherhood to our neighbours, whatever their race may be, the better it will be for the peace of the world that we all desire so much but do so little to accomplish.

Holy Disorders

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

WE KNOW on scriptural authority that God is no respecter of persons. We know from experience, a surer guarantee than scriptural authority, that God is no respecter of persons. For although parsons, from the humblest Little Bethel minister to the haughtiest Roman prelate are—so they say—the dedicated servants of the postulate they preach as God, they are too wise or too wily or else too simple to expect any divine favours on that account. They know that no such favours are ever shown. It is an old axiom that the Devil looks after his own. God, it seems, is less magnanimous. We have it on the testimony of that celebrated first-century religious maniac known to us as Paul, that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son he receiveth. God or no God, Paul or no Paul, there is certainly no lack of immediate testimony for much chastening—the slings and arrows as a sounder Paganism called them—whatever there may be for any loving. And for all their dedication the parsons are not let off. Parsons have to take their chance with life as persons, however they may cope with it as parsons. When the time comes the parson with his magic can no more preserve what he calls his own soul than the physician with his medicine can preserve his own body. Life cheats them and death defeats them with ruthless impartiality.

We might suppose from St. Paul's pronouncement (and how his censorious mind relishes it) that the Lord chastens those he loves as a wry sign of his loving. Those who escape, Paul says, are bastards not sons. But the Lord is evidently not so particular. It is abundantly plain that he has no hesitation, when the fit takes him, about chastening just as severely the bastards he might be less expected to love. No dispensation was ever more haphazard. This God of love-cum-chastisement seems indeed

to have not even the inverted discrimination with which scripture credits him. On all and sundry he wreaks his wrathful will, when and how he will. If here and there the wicked flourish like the green bay-tree, so here and there do the righteous, though it is true that common opinion often greatly differs as to which is which. Only the saints are certain. The saints, like Paul, take themselves for granted. When adversity befalls them they take it equally for granted that whom the Lord loveth and so forth. As for the sinners they merely get what they deserve. They must be thankful for small mercies.

As a principle, this wanton mode of declaring oneself would never pass muster in any Humanist framework. The freethinking Humanist is not accustomed to chastise. He is accustomed to cherish those he loves. As far as he is able he will even cherish those he cannot love. Any man worthy of his manhood regards that as a fine principle by which to live. Any father worthy of his fatherhood would reject as insane, loving by scourging. Any servant worthy of his hire, no matter how dedicated, would rightly rebel, so that any parson worth calling a person would—one would think—abhor to preach such uncalled-for vindictiveness. But parsons do preach it even in these days, with an affected, whether or not genuine Pauline approbation. And since they can provide no reasonable explanation they are driven to propound an unreasonable exposition as to why their should choose to chastise rather than feed his sheep. It is at least understandable why he might chastise his goats. All this however creates no difficulties for the religious dialecticians. They are adepts at explaining away. Sometimes they are overbearingly autocratic about it. But more often they adopt a deceptive, almost con-

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The Children of the Sun

By F. A. RIDLEY

A FEW WEEKS AGO, *The Sunday Times* colour magazine contained a picture of the lost city of the Incas of Peru, Machu Picchu, situated high up in the Andes and only rediscovered about half a century ago by an American archaeologist, Hiram Bingham. Prior to the arrival of the Americans, Machu Picchu had remained undiscovered and uninhabited since not long after the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. (The last Inca, Tupac Amaru, was captured and executed by the Spaniards in 1572.)

Apparently the secret of its whereabouts had been successfully kept by the Peruvian Indians. The Spanish conquerers never appeared to have known the whereabouts of Machu Picchu, though it may be that rumours of the existence of the lost city of the Incas, concealed in the Andes, gave rise to the legend of El Dorado, the City of Gold, in search of which our own Sir Walter Raleigh, along with so many nameless explorers endured indescribable miseries and disappointments. For, long after its dramatic eclipse at the hands of Pizarro and his predatory band, the vanished empire of the Incas continued to haunt the imagination of Europe.

The empire of the Incas appears to have lasted about three centuries (c. 1200-1500) prior to its abrupt termination at the hands of the Spanish conquistadors. The origins of Inca rule are traditionally located in the highlands of what is now Bolivia, near the inland lake of Titicaca (lake of the wild cat). Establishing themselves at Cuzco, in what is now Peru, the Incas gradually built up a vast empire which, by the time the Spaniards arrived early in the 16th century, seems to have included the modern republics of Peru and Ecuador, the northern half of Chile, and even outlying districts in Bolivia, Colombia and perhaps the Argentine. It seems to have been not only the largest but also the best administered of the indigenous American states which existed at the time of the Spanish conquest, and which the European invaders described comprehensively as "Indian", in the mistaken belief held by Columbus, that what he had actually discovered in his western voyage, was not a new continent, but merely the eastern shores of Asia, or India.

Of those "Indian" empires, the Aztecs and Mayas of Mexico and Central America and the Incas of Peru had arrived at a state of social organisation at least semi-civilised. In some isolated respects indeed, it was actually superior to its contemporary European culture. For example, the Mayas of Yucatan, made astronomical observations more accurate than anything known in Europe prior to Galileo, whilst the far-flung system of highways constructed by the Incas has been described as the most efficient of its kind since the Romans constructed their vast network of roads over classical Europe. However, it seems unlikely that the uniformly Bronze Age aboriginal American culture could have progressed much further without the discovery of iron tools.

One has also to add that the often atrocious nature of the Spanish conquest has led on the part of some modern historians to an at times too indulgent appraisal of their victims. Aztec Mexico was every whit as superstitious and ferocious as the Spain of Cortes, Pizarro and Torquemada; the human sacrifices of Mexico probably surpassed in numbers, and certainly equalled in horror, those of the Spanish Inquisition itself. The contemporary South American regime of the Incas of Peru seems to have been free from this ubiquitous Central American

cult of blood-offerings, and the Inca primary cult of sun-worship was apparently more ethical as well as rational than those of the ferocious war-gods of Mexico with their often cannibalistic sacrificial rites.

Even the Incas, however, imposed a predatory regime of imperialistic conquest, primarily by force, over their vast empire, whilst if we are to judge from the docility with which it submitted to a mere handful of Spanish invaders, it would appear that there was no great desire on the part of the Inca's numerous subjects to restore his vanished glories. As a recent historian of the Iberian conquest of the Americas has aptly commented, the white conquerers were only the last of a series. Long before Columbus, successive waves of "Red Conquistadors" had overrun the Americas. (cf. Jean Descola—*The Conquistadors*).

There was one distinguishing and conspicuous feature that sharply differentiated the Peruvian empire of the Incas from its contemporaries. It was a solar empire, sacred to the sun in whose name his terrestrial offspring, the Incas, "The Children of the Sun", ruled over this world—or as much of it as their limited geography was cognisant of. In this respect there is a striking resemblance between the Peruvian empire and the Japanese empire.

For example, both the Peru of the Incas and the Japan of the Mikados had two capitals, a religious one and a secular administrative one. In Japan, the religious capital was Kyoto—until modern times the abode of the Emperor, whilst Yedo (the modern Tokio) represented the secular capital; whereas in Peru before the coming of the Spaniards, Cuzco represented the Incas' administrative capital. It would seem Machu Picchu, lost in the peaks of the Andes, was the religious capital, where the Incas were crowned. After the fall of the Incas, the sacred city was abandoned, but the secret of its site was so carefully preserved that no white man appears to have set foot there before Hiram Bingham arrived in 1912.

Unlike the Japanese Mikados, the Incas ruled a multi-geographical empire with great extremes of climate. This led to theological difficulties; for whilst in the cool Bolivian highlands where the Incas themselves traditionally originated, the sun was welcomed and worshipped as a beneficent deity, on the torrid equatorial coast line, the sun appeared primarily as a hateful destroyer, and the solar cult of the Incas met apparently with a cool reception. The geographical interpretation of religion! It would also appear that an at least incipient strain of rationalism was to be found in the make-up of this divine dynasty. For, before the arrival of the Spaniards, the then reigning Inca is said to have asked the priests of the sun, the surely pertinent (or impertinent?) question: "Doesn't the sun get tired of running round and round the universe like a tethered beast?" Unfortunately the answer of the Peruvian theologians to this poser has not been recorded.

Under the title, *The Socialist Empire of the Incas*, a modern French sociologist, M. Louis Bandin, has described this highly centralised and collectivist regime. But it had, he says, very little in common with modern socialist theories, and rather resembled an Oriental military monarchy on a permanent war footing. For there was no Marxist proletariat in Inca Peru and if there had been,

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This Believing World

Dr. R. H. Robbins of Columbia University, has declared that witches are "phoney", by which he means that there never were any genuine witches, a conclusion reached by many unbelievers centuries ago. However, when he lectured recently to the English Folk Lore Society, a number of witches, headed by Mrs. Sybil Leek who is the "high priestess" of the New Forest Witches, joined the audience to prove that they *do* exist.

Of course, Mrs. Leek can't do the things that old witches are said to have done—cross the heavens on a broomstick, cause tempests to come at will, cast spells for love-sick swains, or for ladies who wish their husbands to die, and so on. All she can do is insist that she is a witch, and leave it at that. Incidentally, Dr. Robbins said that Dr. Margaret Murray's book, *The God of the Witches*, had no historical basis. And Mrs. Leek went home by a very prosaic motor car.

Oh dear—here we have Dr. Beeching joining the millions who have written before him on the same subject, "Can Big Business be Christian?" (*Daily Mail*, February 20th). He evidently has never heard of the American writer, Bruce Barton, who thirty years or so ago, wrote *The Man Nobody Knows* in which he proved that Jesus was the Greatest Business Man the world has ever seen. Did not Jesus successfully start the Christian Church—still running—with its two phenomenally successful businesses, the Church of Rome and the Church of England, and many almost as successful subsidiary businesses like Mormonism and Christian Science?

Another heavenly Christian tract has reached us from the Radio Bible Class, Michigan, no doubt in a determined effort to bring us back to Jesus. It is entitled *Next Stop the Moon* by Dr. M. R. de Haan, and is full of texts from the Precious Word to prove that Almighty God never wanted us to go to the moon but to remain on Earth. We are not quite sure what this has to do with us. Perhaps the Lord hates the idea of a journey to the moon. We should also hate it!

In case some readers are not quite sure about the texts, here is one from the Psalms (115.16)—"The Heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth has he given to the children of men". And there are dozens more like it. Dr. de Haan, however, begs us never to forget the return of the Lord Jesus Christ which is so imminent. He pleads that everybody should get his "reservation in for that trip to Glory when Jesus comes". Which sounds too too delightful.

THE CHILDREN OF THE SUN

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the Incas were the last people to call upon it to "shake off its chains". However, there were perhaps some points of resemblance between Inca collectivism and more modern bureaucratic regimes, including the also South American Republic of Paraguay where the Jesuits may have consciously imitated the Inca institutions. Some perhaps fanciful sociologists have even cited the Inca regime amongst the predecessors of Castro's present communistic regime. But I do not know who would be the more surprised at this comparison, Castro or the Incas.

Teachers' Right to Contract Out

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

OUR FREQUENT discussions on religious education usually imply that the present compromise is working for what it is worth. I wish to point out that it is not unknown for religionists to seek to undermine even this elementary piece of toleration. Teachers would be well advised to seek out their exact rights of contracting out of assembly and religious instruction under the existing law. They are to be found in detail in the relevant "Education" volumes in Halsbury's *Laws of England and Statutes of England*.

A good example is provided by what happened recently in one school. A very few members of the staff had contracted out of the school assembly on grounds of religious unbelief. At a staff meeting, a plan was put into operation which had undoubtedly been thought out weeks before. A very noisy Papist member of the staff sought to propose a resolution demanding that all members of the staff should be compelled to attend assembly, and that refusal should bring about penalising duties. The existing law was of no account to him and should be set aside. Fortunately, the dissentients were ready and willing to appeal to the law and the intolerant effort collapsed.

I would remark over this incident that any such resolution was illegal, that any attempt to force into assembly people who have legally contracted out is illegal, that the substitution of any other duties of any kind is illegal, and that there is a ready appeal to the courts in such a matter. But it is significant that such an incident should arise and not seem to ruffle the merely indifferent at the meeting whilst at the same time giving an excellent opening to the religious and the spiteful.

For me, the incident underlines two important facts. The one is that Papists generally have no understanding of toleration in a democracy and will use any weapon at any level to seek to overthrow it. Such is after all the verdict of history. It accords with the notorious encyclical against liberty of Pope Pius IX and it was supported by no less a person than the late Mgr. R. A. Knox in his comments upon social tolerance.

Again, the incident illustrates the uselessness to any really Humanist movement of the "reverent agnostic", the "religious ethicist" and similar people who are quite ready in the interests of social peace to permit the intolerances of religion to undermine the democratic rights established by the laws of England. Humanism needs a Humanist teachers' group who shall be concerned with a militant defence of their rights under the 1944 Education Act. It also calls for militant activity generally against the Papists and other religionists who seek to undermine the democratic liberties of English citizens. Indeed, these people would have no claim to protest against the latter course, English citizens have a right to defend the democratic laws of their country. For those who wish to live under clericalist domination, it is not uncharitable to remark, in view of the origins of most of the Papist teachers, that there is always a boat back from Holyhead. Certainly, clericalist and religious bullying has its place under such regimes as those of Hitler, Franco or Salazar. Roman Catholics to a man. But it is something which the Humanist must resist to the full anywhere within a developed democracy which has learned over the centuries the need for religious toleration.

CORRECTION

We regret that, in Denis Cobell's article "MRA", last week the word "advantage" occurred in error in reference to the Oxford Group's role in the settlement of industrial disputes. This should have read, "to the disadvantage of the working classes".

THE FREETHINKER

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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

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, March 8th, 6.45 p.m.: BRAINS TRUST, "Secularism".

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, March 10th, 7.30 p.m.: MRS. M. MEPHAM, "Adoption by Agnostics".

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street), Sunday, March 8th, 3 p.m.: THOMAS SWEENEY, "Automation and Socialism".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, March 8th, 6.30 p.m.: KITTY LAMB, "Why Blame Youth?"

Manchester Branch NSS (Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, March 8th, 7.30 p.m.: ANNUAL CONFERENCE DISCUSSION.

Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, March 8th, 7.30 p.m.: Subject and speaker to be announced.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), March 8th, 11 a.m.: DR. JOHN LEWIS, "Is Nature Hostile to Man's Ideals?"

Wales and Western Branch NSS (Butte Town Community Centre, Cardiff), Tuesday, March 10th, 7.30 p.m.: BEN MORRIS, "Persecution in Spain".

Notes and News

ONLY AN EXPERT on Arabic culture could have written this week's Views and Opinions, conveying so much information in such a short space. Henry George Farmer, Ph.D., D.Litt., is such an expert, and we only regret that his many other activities necessarily limit his contributions to the paper founded by his friend G. W. Foote. However, it is with pleasure and pride that we print Dr. Farmer's erudite article and we are sure that it will be equally pleasurable read.

CANTERBURY—*The Times* (24/2/64) told us—had been spending the weekend celebrating the birth 400 years ago of Christopher Marlowe. The dramatist's exact birthdate is not known, but he was christened on February 26th, 1564, in St. Georges Church, Canterbury and, on Saturday February 22nd this year, a procession of admirers wound through the city's narrow streets to the tower—all that remains of the church—where a plaque was unveiled by

the Mayor, Councillor Ernest Kingsman. In the evening the toast was "the immortal bard of Kent". On Sunday evening, however, in Canterbury Cathedral, the preacher, Canon L. G. Appleton, recalled Marlowe's "excesses". His creative genius had accorded him a high place among the hierarchy of literature, but, said Canon Appleton, "he left an image of a street brawler and blasphemer, pederast and spy, violent and cruel".

A REMARKABLE POEM by J. B. S. Haldane appeared in the *New Statesman* for February 21st. Professor Haldane, who is 71, is at present convalescing after an operation for rectal carcinoma.

My rectum is a serious loss to me,
But I've a very neat colostomy,
And hope, as soon as I am able,
To make it keep a fixed time-table,

he declares, after describing the first symptoms, a visit to the doctor, tissue examination and operation. And surely only he could versify on "Cancer's a Funny Thing". It is, as the *New Statesman* remarked, a "buoyant performance", but it also provides "therapy for others", as the paper said—and as the ending shows.

A spot of laughter, I am sure,
Often accelerates one's cure;
So let us patients do our bit
To help the surgeons make us fit.

AND, while on the subject of medicine, we might mention the BBC TV series *Dr. Finlay's Casebook* (based on A. J. Cronin's creations and now screened on Sunday evenings) which manages to hold the balance between the young impetuous Dr. Finlay and the experienced Dr. Cameron. On February 23rd, they combined to save the life of a woman who was dangerously pregnant and whose religion forbade an operation. There was also a good study of a sexually-tormented librarian. Turning from fictional to factual medicine on TV, the series *Your Life in Their Hands* continues as good as ever. It is a splendid idea to show the achievements of surgery in this way.

"I AM not writing here about the agnostic. I have a great respect for him and go a long way with him", wrote the Rev. Leslie D. Weatherhead (*The Sunday Times*, 23/2/64). It was the atheist who "possessing much arrogance but no logic, declares, 'There is no God'", at whom Dr. Weatherhead's remarks were directed; the man with the "strange mentality who can look up to the night sky or down on the emerging daffodils; who can listen to the haunting music of a master-musician", and yet disbelieve in God, etc., etc. Though why Dr. Weatherhead should waste his time, we don't know, having "come to the conclusion that the true species [of atheist] does not exist". For the most part Dr. Weatherhead's article was poor stuff and scarcely worth bothering about. We confine ourselves to one question: can he explain why it is presumptuous and arrogant to say "There is no God", but not to say "There is a God"?

So *Fanny Hill* has been seized again, this time along with the *Kama Sutra*, Henry Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn* and others. Now that the authorities have found the loophole in the Obscene Publications Act, periodic raids on bookshops are only to be expected. The situation is ideal for snoopers, spoilsports and other unsavoury types. We use this last expression advisedly, since it is less harmful to read "obscene" literature than to snoop around looking for it in order to ban it. The most satisfactory solution to the "problem" of pornography is, we are convinced, to ignore it.

Holy Disorders

(Concluded from page 74)

tainly a self-deceptive pose of humility. They are always proud of their humility. Under this cloak they concoct plausible excuses for the half-witted delinquencies of their Old Man in the Sky. And one feels impelled to say of them as they would not hesitate to say of apologists in other spheres, that those who are good at excuses are good for nothing else.

As for the self-righteous old zealot of Tarsus, he has, of course, left us his own explanation of what he so blandly asserts. But his explanation is too pinched and vengeful ever to square with an enlightened psychology which draws nearer to the conviction that the highest form of revenge is forgiveness. It has none of the warm-hearted forbearance which, for all his occasional bad-tempered outbursts, is ascribed to Jesus. On the whole Jesus impresses us as being very human in a human sense. Paul, more often than not impresses us as being very in-human in a human sense. Jesus was not such a cad as to tell those who were lucky enough to escape the chastenings that they were therefore bastards and not sons of God. He was not so callous or so silly as to tell unfortunate sufferers that they suffered because God loved them. Instead, he is described as going about disapproving of these sufferings, since he healed the sick and comforted them that mourned, without reference to any whims of a captious God. And it is hardly conceivable that Jesus would have done this had he believed like Paul that such suffering was divinely ordained.

Humourless, didactic, fanatically opinionated, this tight-lipped, epistle-writing apostle was, though he manifestly didn't know it, merely giving vent to his own domineering disposition. He was really indicating the way he would have it if only he could have his way. He was thrusting forward his own personal point of view as the impersonal point of view of an instructed emissary. Without realising it he was sere with chagrin that he could discover no preferential recognition for those he chose to regard as the elect. And so he invented his famous and infamous dictum about whom the Lord loveth. If the existence of this Lord were beyond question we might perhaps find something to say on behalf of Paul's idea. But while a relentlessly advancing agnosticism is putting Paul's Lord altogether out of the question, it is more and more convincingly relegating Paul himself to legend rather than to history. Paul, in fact, now amounts to little more than a literary pseudonym for a collection of anonymous theologians who came after him. Even for those who profess belief in Paul and his God, Paul provides no warrant for his assertion. It is entirely arbitrary. It surges up from the neurotic ferments of his own bristling imagination, which is palmed off as revelation. It certainly has a great deal to answer for.

It might at first seem that Paul and his vagaries are no longer of any consequence. But the Pauline ideas and the theologies they generated have dominated and still dominate the miscalled Christian religion more than anything Jesus ever said or did. Paul was all the churchman and the churchman is by no means necessarily all the Christian, however Christian may be defined. Much of Paul's doctrine is essentially contrary to the teaching of Jesus. This is most glaringly exemplified in the distorted and manufactured form of Christianity known as Roman Catholicism. Here we have a sacerdotalism that bears no relationship to Jesusanity. And those smaller sects which have developed along harder Calvinistic lines are

equally alien. There is nothing Christlike about them. The most damnable defect of all of them is their Pauline attitude to human suffering and the way they associate it with what they call sinning. They not only look on and condone, they will deliberately advocate and inflict misery wherever their doctrinal or organisational purposes are thereby to be served. And this is invariably justified on the trumped-up promise of posthumous compensation in a visionary hereafter they call heaven. Nothing could be more blatantly obvious than the impossibility of any human mind possessing positive knowledge of any such hereafter. Nothing could be more plain than that it is a cultivated device of priestcraft at its craftiest, to cover up reverend ignorance and to throw dust in the eyes of those multitudes inclined to revolt. Nothing could be clearer than that it depends for its acceptance upon the gross credulity glamoured as faith. As if any cock-and-bull fabrication couldn't be fobbed off as truth on the authority of blind faith.

It is this slick dalliance with human distress on grounds that cannot be shown as anything but the veriest make-believe, that is the most unforgivable accusation to be levelled against religious practitioners, whether in or out of professional holy orders. These busy people may feel themselves to be quite sincere in their aims. But the virtue rather goes out of sincerity if its second name happens to be tyranny, or stupidity, or sentimentality or a dozen other dubious things one might mention. For reasons that are flatly contrary to reason, they want to make of secondary consequence, a life which, like it or lump it, we have no option but to accept, but which we can at least try to make the best of as far as human resources go. They would have it that this life is of no importance except as a preparation for the life to come. Unfortunately this life to come has never got beyond the realm of purest—or impurest—speculation. And on the strength of such empty assurance they constantly juggle with secularist common-sense and obstinately interfere with its attempts to approach that fine ideal: "The place to be happy is here, the time to be happy is now". This ideal is to be achieved through a human effort that will have no truck with supernatural intervention. Only so can life be at all worth living. For there is a deeper truth than was probably intended when, in answer to the age-old question "Is life worth living?" the answer was "It all depends upon the liver".

IS HIS JOURNAL REALLY NECESSARY?

MR. A. D. CORNELL, senior treasurer of the Cambridge University Society for Psychical Research has said that he will be going to Greece this month to arrange details for an experiment in long-distance telepathy with Admiral Tanagarus, head of the Greek Society for Psychical Research. The irony of the situation doesn't seem to have occurred to him, or to *The Guardian* reporter (28/2/64). If, as Mr. Cornell believes, telepathy is a fact, surely his journey wouldn't be necessary. Rather surprisingly, though, he is worried about the inverse square law problem and apparently not as ready as some to throw it overboard. Indeed, he candidly admitted that "The experiment may be a complete waste of time. An experiment between Cambridge and Chicago four years ago produced insignificant results, with nothing that was not due to chance". Strange we hadn't heard about that.

A Reply to Critics

By G. L. SIMONS

Mr. McCall states that there is a "false dichotomy" between my "purely intellectual" and "practical" levels. I maintain that this is a true dichotomy which is forced on us by two facts: (1) logic has certain limitations, and (2) we need a philosophy by which we live. We must act as if things were the case although we cannot prove that they are.

Mr. McCall also says that only a "purely intellectual" person could aspire to a "purely intellectual" level. This sounds good but is in fact nonsense. (One may just as well say that "only a purely mathematical person can solve a purely mathematical problem, e.g. two plus two equals?") Mr. McCall must know that this remark is nonsense since *he agreed with me at the purely intellectual level* in admitting that certain things cannot be disproved.

Mr. McCall further states that he never said there was a dichotomy between scientific method and interpretation. I suggest he re-read the second paragraph in my previous article with more care. I never accused him of *saying it*, but he *implied it* as my quotation clearly shows. There are other points that could be made of a similar kind, but doubtless perceptive readers will already have noticed them. I am sorry that when I indicate an error in Mr. McCall's writing he merely says I am twisting what he says.

Mr. McCall concludes by stating that my "position is not so sound" as I "would like to think". I wish that sometime he would try to tell me why; he obviously does not feel equipped to do so at present. *At no stage does he attempt a logical objection to my approach.* When in difficulties he merely talks about "verbal logic" or "word-play exercises". Come now, Mr. McCall, let's have some *logical* objections—your *rhetorical* ones are very reminiscent of the Jesuits. Surely a freethinker can do better than that!

Mr. Arran says that the dogmatic atheist is invincible because "God" remains undefined. If Mr. Arran reads THE FREETHINKER regularly he should remember that I have written articles (18/1/63, 2/8/63) in which I have suggested the way in which "God" can be satisfactorily defined. I should like to see Mr. Arran's garden—he obviously spends a lot of time in it.

Mr. Clifton is yet another person who only feels secure in the supposed possession of absolute knowledge which logic cannot justify. *He admits, as does Mr. McCall, that certain things cannot be disproved and yet he very much wants to deny them nevertheless.* For practical purposes such an inclination is expedient; but philosophically it can gain no support. Incidentally I am pleased to notice Mr. Clifton's obvious liking for Lewis Carroll who had great logical insight.

Freethinkers should be willing to admit that, although common-sense sometimes gives answers that are emotionally and psychologically more acceptable, a philosophy grounded in careful logical thought is superior, even when it indicates conclusions which (to common-sense) appear absurd. Common-sense is superficial and unreflective; philosophy tries to transcend it. Logic may indicate strange conclusions but I believe it should permeate our outlook. Were it so we would have no tendency to intolerance, persecution, superstition, dogma, racial discrimination or war.

The firm belief which serves to motivate behaviour need not be intellectually dogmatic—if it is so, it is too rigid

and reactionary, too little responsive to new ideas. I am sorry that freethinkers of Mr. McCall's quality do not readily accept this view. I had always thought it was in its adherence to logic that freethought differed from religion. (I must say that I respect Mr. McCall greatly for publishing my views even when he disagrees with them so much.)

Comments on the Above

By COLIN McCALL

I HAVE TRIED, from my first criticism of Mr. Simons's article on "Psychical Research and Secularism", to deal with the subject at issue: Mr. Simons has, I suggest, continuously avoided it, taking refuge in platitudes and—on his own admission—parodies of my position. Of course we agree that logic should permeate our outlook, but what do we mean by logic? Is it logical to treat all explanations of the same phenomenon as of equal merit? I would answer no. It is, indeed, highly unlikely that two differing explanations of one phenomenon are of equal merit and, in some cases I am prepared, on the basis of what I consider overwhelming evidence for one explanation, to dismiss the other. To take an example from my last article (14/2/64), I am prepared to dismiss demoniacal possession as a cause of disease.

Now I deny that this is dogmatic: it is, I maintain, the reasonable thing to do. And I can quote Mr. Simons in support. In his article, "Religion versus Secularism" (28/2/64) he wrote: "While a few noble men tried to understand disease and illness, the Church ranted about sin and 'possession by devils'". Why then does he perpetuate this fiction of the "open mind"? His mind, like mine, is closed to certain things which he regards as absurd or so improbable as to be virtually impossible.

Readers may have heard enough of dichotomies for a while (and I cannot altogether blame them) but the point I have tried to make is that it is not only impracticable but impossible to keep one's mind open to everything that isn't self-contradictory (this is the sense in which I say that Mr. Simons's "purely intellectual level" cannot exist). Fortunately, a completely open mind is neither necessary nor desirable. We have to close our minds to some things or we should make no progress.

[Please also see Correspondence.—Ed.]

CORRESPONDENCE

THE PROBLEM OF DEATH

Although I have urged myself to write expressing appreciation and delight as each one of Mr. David Tribe's writings has appeared in THE FREETHINKER, natural sloth has so far prevented this. However, Mr. R. Smith's letter (21/2/64) stirs even me.

"The Problem of Death" article seemed to me to be the very reverse of "superficial". We are given a sensitive and searching analysis of the facts and feelings involved in this grave subject and much helpful suggestion as to the positive action the freethinker may attempt, either to alleviate the fears of the normal Christian about to attend the judgment seat, with its doubtful prospects, or, for ourselves, how to approach this long sleep in as orderly and self-possessed a state as pain and the run-down of our bodily functions will permit.

As one just over the threshold of old age I will keep this number by me. Mr. Tribe has illuminated the dark and awesome subject and, with his usual insight and felicity of expression, helped one towards understanding.

JESSE COLLINS.

THE HOUSE OF ORANGE

With reference to the article by Elizabeth Collins, "The House of Orange and the Catholic Church", may I point out that Princess Irene was not the first to "betray" her staunch Protestant Heritage. William, Prince of Orange, who succeeded his father-in-law (James II) as King of England, formed an alliance with Pope Innocent XI to curb the power of Louis of France.

William's victory at the Boyne, generally accepted as a crushing defeat for the Papacy, was in actual fact a triumph for its cause. To celebrate the occasion, His Holiness ordered the Vatican to be illuminated, victory banquets were held and *Te Deum Laudamus* was sung throughout Europe. (See *Labour, Nationality and Religion in Ireland* by James Connolly.)

This of course only serves to show that religion, "the opium of the people", is a mere detail among capitalists squabbling over material wealth. Church unity, of which we hear so much today, could be enforced at a moment's notice, if the powers that be, considered it to their mutual gain. "MARXIST".

OPUS DEI

Once more Dutch public opinion has been stirred up, this time by Princess Irene's spectacular conversion to Catholicism and her no less sensational engagement to a Spanish Bourbon.

But it was not the change of religion, however painful it may be to the Protestants, that was the main cause of the general emotion; it was the political background of the two events. The public has been shocked by the revelation that a member of the royal family is moving in such reactionary and backward circles and that her family evidently whole-heartedly smiles upon this.

The young woman, who studied the Spanish language, very often sojourned in Spain. It is clear now that she fell there into the hands of Opus Dei people. The press has found out that her friends belong to that laic institution. Her fiancé, Carlos de Bourbon Parma, is the future head of an ultra-reactionary, highly Opus Dei-protected Carlist group. So the coming marriage seems to be rather the result of an Opus Dei intrigue than a matter of love.

If the Princess were to conserve her rights as second to the throne, Parliament must consent by law to her marriage. Owing to the alarmed public opinion the government in secret negotiations with her and her fiancé, dissuaded them from insisting on such a law. This final outcome is certainly not according to the plans and desire of the severely criticised court, which is strongly in favour of the Spanish marriage. Nor of the many Catholic politicians secretly sympathising with the Franco regime. In other words, it is a defeat for reaction, and a victory for Dutch public opinion which seems to be awakening from a long lethargy.

A. M. VAN DER GIEZEN (Middleburg-Holland).

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G. L. SIMONS

Personally I cannot see why G. L. Simons is philosophically certain that logic is infallible. By his own criteria it may be an aberration of the human brain. It may equally be a characteristic of God that He is self-contradictory and herein lies His transcendence. It may be that . . . It would appear that Mr. Simons has studied the "philosophy" of science without first studying science, as he seems quite unaware of the extent to which modern scientific "statements" are not self-evident truths but inferences.

D. H. TRIBE.

Logic is Mr. Simons's god, and although he is intelligent enough to perceive that the world is not governed by logic, he cannot dethrone his sacred idol, so that he exhibits what Mr. McCall so aptly termed a split mind. He writes like a medieval Schoolman in modern dress. We can all make mistakes, but I am happy to say that I was never taken in by telepathy. I regard it now as I regarded it as a boy science-fiction addict, and that was, as a good story gimmick, nothing more.

I'm going to stick my neck out and say that ESP (including telepathy) is impossible. Don't you think that a good test of a freethinker's orientation towards life is to see if he believes in ESP? At one stroke, it seems to me, it separates the Realist/Materialist from the logic-chopping and word-spinning Idealist.

J. GORDON.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society was held on February 19th, 1964, at 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Present: Mr. D. H. Tribe (President) in the Chair, Messrs. Barker, Ebury, McConalogue, Millar, Mills, Shannon, Sproule, Timmins and Warner, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. McIlroy, Mr. Griffiths (Treasurer) and the Secretary. Apologies were received from Messrs. Hornibrook and Leslie and Mrs. Venton.

In reply to a letter from the Secretary pointing out the inaccuracy in the form of affirmation used at London Sessions, it was reported that a letter had been received from the Clerk of the Peace, with the assurance that affirmation cards were being altered to comply with the official form immediately.

A meeting of members and friends in the teaching profession was to be arranged on the subject "Religion in Schools". Mr. D. Tribe and Mr. D. Wilkes were elected to represent the NSS at the Annual General Meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties. It was agreed that the Society should affiliate to the Freedom From Hunger campaign.

The dissolution of the Humanist Council was regretted but it was noted with approval that representatives of the various bodies would meet from time to time.

It was agreed that a coach trip should be organised to Theford on June 7th for the unveiling of the Thomas Paine statue.

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