

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXI—No. 23

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

THE RESIGNATION OF Dr. Fisher, and his succession by Dr. Ramsey, afford a good opportunity for reviewing both the present ecclesiastical situation of the still "by Law established" Anglican Church, as also the social and historical circumstances that led to its creation and its present role in English society. For it must be emphasised at the start of this investigation that the still primary purpose of the National Secular Society is (as its name implies), the creation of a secular social order, and not merely the elimination of the religious cults of the supernatural. It is precisely this definitive aim that sharply differentiates Secularism from the more general and comprehensive forms of Free Thought. Had our Founder, Charles Bradlaugh, who was of course an Atheist and a very eminent one at that, regarded his creation as primarily an atheistic body, this would presumably have been expressed in its title; as it is, the abolition of our still Medieval Church and State relationship, and the complete separation of Church and State represent both the primary objective of the National Secular Society and the *sine qua non* for the eventual establishment of a fully secular social order.

The Established Church and English Society

From the factual standpoint of secular history, England has been an officially Christian country since at least early Anglo-Saxon times. From 601 AD when the See of Canterbury was first established by a direct mission from Rome headed by St. Augustine, England ranked as part of Christendom, and the Church of England has been (as its name implies), the official representative of the Christian religion in England. It is, of course, also a matter of history that, twice during the course of the last thirteen and a half centuries, the relations of the See of Canterbury with Rome and with Continental Christianity have changed sharply. Once in 1066 and again more fundamentally at the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, that major landmark which effectively separates Medieval from Modern history. For in 1066, the Norman Conquest (which was officially blessed by the Pope), finally integrated the hitherto more or less autonomous Anglo-Saxon Church into Continental and Roman Christianity, whereas in the 16th century, under Henry VIII, the ecclesiastical pendulum swung sharply the other way. Henry, "the mighty Lord who broke the bonds of Rome"—and by the most ruthless methods—created a strictly official nationalist Church of which the English Monarchy and not any ecclesiastical dignitary, English or foreign, was and still is, the supreme head. After some violent fluctuations (including a brief restoration of Roman authority under Mary, 1553-8), the Tudor version of the Reformation became final under Elizabeth I. Since the Elizabethan Settlement it has always been open to doubt whether the Church of England was primarily Protestant or Catholic, but there has never been any doubt at all that it was primarily English.

VIEWS and OPINIONS

The Church of England

By F. A. RIDLEY

The English Reformation

The English Reformation was an Erastian Reformation, that is, a Reformation effected primarily by political action and not, as on the contemporary European Continent in the case of the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformation, due to a revolution in theological belief. Actually the theological system of the Anglican Church has always tended to ambiguity; a state of things vividly illustrated by what is still its official summary of doctrinal belief, that masterpiece of theological facing-both-ways simultaneously, the Thirty Nine Articles, which can be and in fact usually have been, interpreted in various and contradictory ways.

However, from the point of view of secularly inspired history there has never been any essential doubt about the status of the Anglican Church as a national Church and, at least as far as its independence from Rome was concerned, a Protestant Church; for one of the few Articles of Religion that is not at all ambiguous is that one which explicitly declares: "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England". Another, also explicit one, banned Communism emphatically; that is, of course, the "Utopian" religious Communism of such then contemporary sects as the Lollards and the Anabaptists. With only two brief interregnums—a Catholic one under Mary, and a Calvinist left-wing Protestant one a century later under the Commonwealth and Oliver Cromwell—the Church of England has preserved, with only professional fluctuations in doctrine and ritual, its essential character as an Erastian State-Church imparted to it by its despotic Tudor founders.

The English Church in 1961

The present century has, however, witnessed fundamental changes in both the English State and, more generally, in the English current social scene. England herself is now the centre, not of a despotically-ruled Colonial Empire, but of a democratic multi-racial, multi-religious Commonwealth in which, as I have ventured to suggest before, the position of any State Church and even the very recognition of any particular religion constitutes a glaring and growing anomaly. It was in the nature of things that Elizabeth I should be a professional Christian, in what was then undoubtedly an overwhelmingly Christian country in which the adherents of the Established Church may well have exceeded both the small Roman minority and the sharply divided ultra-Protestant sects. Elizabeth II, four centuries later, has got to be not only a Christian, but a Christian of the particular Anglican denomination. This, in a Commonwealth in which Christians are probably in a very decided minority as compared with other Oriental religions, such as Hinduism and Islam, and in which, even in England, not only are practising Christians a small minority, but even the new Archbishop of Canterbury has (to do him justice) had the honesty to admit that if and when once deprived of its status as an Established Church, Anglicanism would be

merely a not particularly large or important Christian sect. Simultaneously the social landscape has changed out of recognition within the present century. In particular, the landed squierarchy, the then socially dominant class of English gentlemen who have always been the social backbone of Anglicanism, are now either extinct or on the way out, thanks to modern taxation and death-duties. The social scene with which Dr. Ramsey will soon be confronted is a very different one from that which confronted his Tudor predecessors at the inception of the Church of England four centuries ago.

The Future of Anglicanism

England is certainly a very conservative land. Here they believe in that famous slogan about the inevitability of gradualness. However, it seems difficult to believe that the present Tudor set-up can continue in the modern scene; the disestablishment of the Church of England is now long overdue. One could perhaps add that once disestablished, the ensuing tug-of-war between Anglo-Catholics, Protestants and Modernists, could easily lead to the division and ultimate disappearance of the Anglican Church.

The Diagnosis

By "FRANCIS WALSINGHAM"

DR. LARILLE looked at the green case-file his secretary had brought. He knew its contents by heart. Why, then, had he asked for it? Obviously to put off the painful decision. But even as he realised this, his eye travelled once again down the densely typewritten pages . . .

"Born December 1935, in an isolated farmhouse in which his parents were taking refuge from political persecution. The family eventually managed to escape from the country, but both the father and mother had been emotionally disturbed from many months prior to his birth and for some time afterwards. The mother's heredity heavily charged: obsessive-compulsive neurotic with pathological sexuality. Suffered hallucinations of sight and hearing during pregnancy. Father hypersuggestible, but no pathological history. Child underweight and debile from birth. Character solitary and brooding, and was instinctively shunned by other children. Made contacts most easily with the impressionable elderly.

"In November, 1944, wandered 7 miles from home whilst on excursion with his parents. Complete indifference to their anxiety. Found in air-raid shelter, declaiming to a group of elderly people. The police psychiatrist found the child to have supra-normal auditive memory for long and difficult words, *but almost complete ignorance of, and power to define, their meanings.* General knowledge, power of reasoning, and power of association extremely poor for a child of 9. Test gave Intelligence Quotient as 50. (See report Addendum A and recommendations made to school authorities Addenda B and C.)

"1944-52: Showed alternate moods of mutism, sadness, and imperious domination to all, including his parents. Paroxysms of rage when contradicted or thwarted, frequently directed against inanimate objects such as trees, bushes, etc. On one occasion, cursed the wind, and on another, cursed an apple-tree because it bore no apples in February. In 1947, stampeded a group of children with a whip and was remanded for psychological examination (see report of Dr. Adamson and Addendum D). Marked obsessional neurosis concerning his "supernatural origin" and powers, forming marked contrast with extremely poor mental and physical capacities. Special school examination showed IQ to be 55. Was induced to learn manual trade, but showed poor application.

"August 1953. Abandoned parents, home and occupation, living as vagrant. Begged from door to door, and from town to town. Continued to profess supernatural origin and powers. Showed typical neurotic retreat from reality by avoiding prolonged stays in one place, by avoiding direct replies to questions, and by avoiding situations which would have put his neurotic edifice to a conclusive test.

"May, 1955. The 'X' affair. 'X', supposed to have

been a cripple from birth, was reputedly cured by him on 7/5/55. At police investigation of 10/6/55, 'X' admitted calculated fraud over more than 15 years. Stated that it would have been dangerous to refuse the order to get up and walk, since the crowd was excited, dangerous and obviously expectant of sensation. 'X' testified to the imperious, dominating and almost hypnotic attitude of the crowd's leader. Prosecution dropped on account of the utterly confusing and contradictory evidence of the witnesses (see Addenda E and F).

"November 1955—December 1957. Abandoned his calling to become chief of beggar gang and notorious frequenter of prostitutes. Was suspected homosexual (Attitude to women completely asexual, but was addicted to washing the feet, and lying on the breast, of males. This was also urged as the motive of the police informer, who acted through jealousy of homosexual favours conferred on another of the gang). Continued to profess supernatural abilities and origin. Was repeatedly cautioned by police, and formed object of special enquiry in May, 1956. (Report to Home Secretary 6/6/55.)

"March 1958. Informer warned police of intended coup. Arrest on 30/3/58.

"Trial 30/4/58. At first pretended to be dumb but when pressed by the judge made wild delirious statements confirming the prosecution's case. Remanded for medical examination 30/4/58.

"30/6/58. Found guilty but insane, and ordered to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure."

For some minutes, Dr. Larille remained lost in thought. Then he slowly took up his pen and wrote:—

"January, 1961. Delirium advanced to progressive dementia. His mother still has a sincere affection for him, but he repudiated her at the meeting this morning, pretending still that he was of supernatural origin. Both parents have been told that his immediate and permanent transfer to the - - - - Institution is now unavoidable, and that nothing can arrest the progression."

Dr. Larille was just putting down the pen when the telephone rang. He lifted the receiver and his face grew very grave.

"Yes, I understand. A tool left by the workman. You've made the usual checks? Very well. I'll come at once."

"April, 1961. Suicide by running on to the end of a screwdriver. Puncture of the thoracic cavity resulted in the escape of large quantities of blood and water, confirming the diagnosis of a pleuritic aneurism made on admission to the Institution."

With a heavy sigh, the doctor closed the file and touched the bell push. The secretary entered and Dr. Larille pointed to his desk.

"Take that away, please," he said.

The Religious Policy of The National Association of Boys' Clubs

By ROBERT W. MORRELL

IN A RECENT FREETHINKER ARTICLE the subject of religion in boys' clubs was covered. The article drew attention to the policy of the NABC, but did not go into detail regarding the Report of the 1944 Commission on which this policy is based.

During the war years much was discussed regarding policy in the post war era, and this discussion ranged over religious matters as much as secular. In 1943 the NABC annual conference gave in to pressure from a group representative of religious interests and agreed to set up a Commission to "advise" in the policy of the Association in matters religious. Prior to 1943 the policy had been somewhat ambiguous; the Association having been founded in 1925 did not face the religious issue at its conferences until 1930 when the suggestion was put forward that the official motto or slogan should be "Mental, Physical and Spiritual Fitness". The conference, meeting at Oxford rejected this, though the "motto" was later adopted, as part of the Association's Royal Charter.

That a religious pressure group was responsible for the suggestion that the advisory Commission be set up, is borne out by the memorandum submitted to the Commission by the NABC, in which it is stated that, "it is very evident that the presence at Conferences of Leaders and boys with deep religious belief has often a profound effect on those who have no religious allegiance". This illustrates clearly the method used by pressure groups. Far and away the majority of full and part time club leaders and helpers are apathetic towards religion; though they have some notion that it is of value, having never gone into the matter. Such apathy can be manipulated by pressure groups, and the religious organisers are quick to use it. But it is not always a success; not when there are present at conferences and courses those who reject religion and are willing openly to state why the results can be far different. I recently attended a course for leaders at Weston House in Derbyshire, and the programme included a talk on religion in youth clubs. Needless to say, I made my position clear, and this gave others heart. The discussion resulting from the talk—the party having split up into groups—showed a majority for leaving religion out of club work, unless it be a "religion" interpreted strictly as "service to others", an interpretation the NABC do not give.

Various Churches were represented on the Commission, there being no fewer than four clergymen and a representative of the Chief Rabbi. Apart from this person all were Christian, so the outcome could be forecast. Impartiality was one thing the Commission could not be charged with in its efforts to "advise the NABC on what their policy should be about religion in Boys' Clubs and to make general suggestions as to how that policy should be put into effect". Before getting on to the Report of the Commission it would perhaps be of use to define, or at least clarify, what the NABC appears to think "spiritual" means. The memorandum already referred to says: "It is probable that many Leaders regard the word 'spiritual' as synonymous with 'religious': it is certain that not all do so. It is probable that most of those who do (excepting the Jews) regard the word 'religious' as implying 'Christian'." On balance then, when the NABC talks about "spiritual" matters it really means Christian.

The Commission's Report is emphatic that religion has a place in boys' clubs, for morals are dependent on religion (this was before Mrs. Knight so convincingly demonstrated otherwise on the BBC of all places) and "the fallacy of the theory that man could abandon faith and belief and keep the moral standards and values has in fact been exposed by its results". As far as I can see this means that one cannot live a good life without religion, the Christian brand of course, which is sheer rubbish. There is absolutely no evidence to support the contention that children brought up in a home run by people of Secular disposition are in any way inferior to those given a religious upbringing, other things being equal. Indeed, a pamphlet published by the Protestant Truth Society and written by a clergyman demonstrates that a religious upbringing can be harmful (though I doubt whether this was the intention). The fact that many youths who get into trouble come from homes where active participation in church life is absent does not demonstrate that a secular philosophy is false. "Spiritual well-being involves a religious faith", remarks the Commission. This means that religion—Christianity—must be plugged in clubs. And "the purpose of life is the service of God". This is just question begging because the Report offers nothing to substantiate this assertion.

However, having decided that religion is essential to a boys' club the Commission then decided to be fair—but not completely. "It follows that the club has not done its duty to its boys unless it has given them, while members, the chance to understand and make a decision about religion which for practical purposes in England today means Christianity". Here we have a suggestion of choice; but the Commission has made it plain that the only choice is to be Christian. This of course need not surprise us. The last thing the Churches want to offer boys is the alternative of a philosophy that makes Christianity third rate. They want boys to be taught that the only philosophy in life is one based on Christianity, and in order that this be so, they demand the appointment of dedicated Christians as club leaders. What is more, they "trust that the same conviction will increasingly commend itself to those responsible for making appointments". No, the Christian authorities have no desire to offer boys the chance of Secularism, a philosophy that commends people to concentrate on the problems of this world rather than worry about sin or prayer; that likewise commends service to others without thought of reward rather than service performed in the hope of reward in another life. Boys have a nasty habit of picking out the best.

The policy of youth clubs should be to help their members to face the problems and challenges of the world, to stay on their own feet and face the world with head held high. By all means have discussion groups in clubs, but let all views have fair expression. Whether a boy adopts a religion or not is up to him, and it should be no part of a youth club programme to indoctrinate its members in any particular faith. If a boy wants religion let him join a church youth club or group. But if the policy of the NABC is to be changed, secularists must take an interest in youth work.

This Believing World

Any medium can get into touch with Uncle George or Aunt Martha—George being always recognised by his famous Albert sprawled across his vest and Martha by a Victorian brooch bought in Blackpool in 1900. But let anyone try and bring up the spirit of more or less famous people from the mighty deep, and they appear always resolutely to refuse. An example is given in the *TV Times* for May 14th where will be found a “horrific” portrait of Algernon Blackwood, one of the famous writers of “occult” stories and the supernatural. Some of them have been dramatised for TV.

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It was therefore a good idea for Mr. David Griffiths to consult a number of mediums in the hope that Algy would appear (he died a few years ago at the age of 82) now that he himself meets spooks and learns the way to contact humans. According to Mr. Hannen Swaffer and other determined believers in spooks, this should have been easy. Alas, non-success dogged Mr. Griffiths time after time. All the mediums he consulted managed to give lovely excuses for his (or her) complete failure. Even when one of the most famous of them saw “a quill pen” hovering above Mr. Griffiths’s head, the medium couldn’t cite the famous author. In other words, “. . . But I still have not made contact with Algernon Blackwood”, sadly admitted Mr. Griffiths. Did he really think he would?

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So at last the Archbishop of Canterbury has discovered two words which in history had been loaded with “theological and emotional dynamite”. They were “Catholic” and “Protestant”, and no two words could better prove how Christians love one another. In any case, he thinks that “if they are hurled about they explode”. And this after nearly 2,000 years of Christian teaching! Dr. Fisher can rest assured that there will be many explosions from the words before the world puts Christianity where it belongs—in Mythology.

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We have always protested against diluting the true teachings of Jesus Christ with Modernism or Humanism, and are therefore pleased we can—through the *Daily Express* (May 12th)—introduce a full-blooded Christian like Mr. Hutchings to our readers. He is “a Bible-thumping, sinner-chasing, hymn-roaring evangelist” and “he has the blessing of Mr. Billy Graham himself”, thank God. As so many similar evangelists relate, he was once *very* ill, he prayed to God, and was immediately cured, much to the astonishment of his doctors. (So far, we have read 1,183 cases of similar cures by God, but Spiritualists can wack this number into a frazzle. They claim millions of cures every year.)

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But Mr. Hutchings gives all his time to God’s work, and has been all over the world evangelising; while on the radio, he reaches ten millions every week. All the money he needs is “raised through prayer”. But he also uses modern methods—which is why he has a “publicity agent”. “If we have to combat the Devil and his works”, insists Mr. Hutchings, “then we’ve got to use up-to-date methods”. Even God approves of this—though Mr. Logan Gourlay, who tells us about Mr. Hutchings, hedges when asked by Mr. Hutchings whether God approves? “It would have been presumptuous for a sinner like myself to answer,” he said. We answer without hesitation that God Almighty *does* approve—so there!

“The Plain View”

THE SPRING 1961 issue of *The Plain View* (edited by H. J. Blackham, price 2s. 6d.) as usual contains much that is of interest. It also contains a little that is exasperating, mainly in an article on “Scientific Humanism” by B. K. Singh. I will deal with this first.

“Scientific humanism is not a bleak materialism”, says Mr. Singh, “and it is not a superstitious nor an intellectualised spiritualism. The scientific humanist does not pretend that every experience of life can be forced into a test tube or that every interest can be weighed on a scale”. Now I don’t expect this sort of writing in *The Plain View*. I am used to seeing “materialism” given silly adjectives in religious works, but I expect something different in Mr. Blackham’s magazine. Is it because Mr. Singh has to qualify his “humanism” that he feels the need to qualify “materialism”? Whatever the reason, he should resist it; it is quite *unscientific*.

I should have thought, too, that the “test tube” and “scale” style was defunct among scientific humanists. But Mr. Singh is a curious case. He states his aim as trying “to unite the religious and the scientific outlook in a particular way”, but then tells us that “Scientific humanism can touch religion as a line can touch a circle, but the two cannot interpenetrate to form a blended philosophy”. The “scientific and the religious spirit are united in a common enterprise”, however. “Matter and spirit may be enemies, but they may also be allies”. This is awfully muddled and most unfortunate, for Mr. Singh shows elsewhere (in a discussion of relative truth) that he is capable of clear thought and exposition.

Mr. Blackham himself thinks that materialism belongs to a past age, and he would substitute “behaviourism”. It is, he says, “more modest, subtle, adequate, sensible, and gives more scope to the role of ideas”. He should elaborate on this sometime. I am not bothered about retaining materialism for its name’s sake, but I believe it signifies something important to our whole attitude towards living, namely, the material basis of all phenomena, including mental phenomena. This, it seems to me, is crucial to our understanding of behaviour.

A special form of materialism (and one that I don’t share), dialectical materialism, is one of the eschatological beliefs dealt with in the main article in *The Plain View*, “Eschatology and Political Ideals”, by Mordecai Roschwald, and if I deal briefly with this longish article, it is because I have little criticism of it. Mr. Roschwald sets out to examine three examples of eschatological beliefs (the vision of Isaiah and the belief of St. Augustine, in addition to Marxism) and to find a common factor for them. It is, he says, “the yearning for an absolute good, as contrasting with the present evil, which seems absolutely bad”. They are “happy ending” conceptions relying on “religious or quasi-religious belief”; but he makes a legitimate distinction between Marxism and the other two. “Criticism may be levelled at the Marxist methodology in its attempt to *prove* the future”, he writes, “but at least its explicit intention is to regard that future as naturally linked with the past”.

Mr. Roschwald’s view is not a novel one but it is, I think, a valid one, and his restatement of it is therefore welcome. And his last words are worth quoting. As opposed to the eschatologists, the liberals, he says, “do not usually hope to arrive at a Millenium, at an *absolutely* good world, but merely at a *better* world. But striving for a better world, they take pains not to spoil the present one. They try to elaborate the better world from the existing one”.

C.McC.

THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

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THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 15s.; half-year, 17s. 6d.; three months, 8s. 9d. (In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.00; half-year, \$2.50; three months, \$1.25.)

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S.. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue. (Platt Fields), Sundays, 3 p.m.: Messrs. C. SMITH and G. A. WOODCOCK.

Marble Arch N.S.S. (Marble Arch), Sundays, 12 noon: MESSRS. F. A. RIDLEY, D. H. TRIBE, C. H. CLEAVER and G. F. BOND. Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. H. TRIBE.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Sunday, June 11th, 11 a.m.: DR. MAURICE BURTON, F.Z.S., "Modern Man and the Animal Kingdom".

Notes and News

NO MATTER what diplomatic jargon may be used to disguise the fact—or to soften it—the British Government is offering the hand of friendship to the two remaining Fascist dictators in Europe, Franco and Salazar. Mr. R. A. Butler, whose no doubt carefully considered "indiscretion" prepared the ground for Lord Home, thought the isolation of Spain was a "shame". This is terrible talk. The Government cites friendliness between Spaniards and English tourists as a precedent, but it is nothing of the sort. We have no quarrel with the Spanish people. We want to see them liberated from a foul Fascist dictatorship. Our Government is actually bolstering that dictatorship. That is the great shame.

THIS IS AN APPROPRIATE time to remind those who haven't read *Franco's Prisoners Speak* (published by the Spanish Ex-Servicemen's Association) to do so now. It is available from the Pioneer Press at 1s. 6d., plus 4d. postage.

ON MAY 28th, the *Sunday Pictorial* had an item headed "God—'And All that Jazz'." in which a number of teenagers talked about religion to Anne Allen. "I don't actually disbelieve in God", said one boy. "I'm just not sure either way". "Well, I just don't believe anything at all", said a second. Another didn't "feel much" when he went to church, but felt "funny all day" and couldn't concentrate if he didn't go. "You just have to have faith" was the response of one of the girls. "But how can you have faith in someone who allows so much sin?" she was asked by another. Few still believed in Christianity

Miss Allen reported, and one even pointed out that there was nothing remarkable in Christian ethics. Any great scholar, he said, "could reason out these things—that you shouldn't steal and murder and all that". It was a pity, then, that Miss Allen should have followed her opening sentence, "We are rapidly becoming a Christian country in name only", with the statement (still in bold type) that: "In fact, some experts suggest that there is a connection between this fact and the alarming rise in crime and delinquency". This is journalism at its worst. But how many readers of the *Sunday Pictorial* will ask, who are these "experts" and what evidence can they bring to support their "suggestion"?

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SIR HENRY d' AVIGDOR-GOLDSMID, MP, defended the Church Commissioners against Paddington, MP, Mr. Ben Parkin's description of them as "the worst blood-suckers in my constituency" (THE FREETHINKER, 2/6/61). They were "honourable and humane people carrying out a difficult task", he told the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Housing Bill on May 16th (*The Guardian*, 17/5/61), and they "have had to act towards their tenants in a way which, if they were living in decent houses, could perfectly well have been avoided. It is because the houses in question are due for demolition that the Church Commissioners have been forced to take action in the matter of rents which they would have preferred to avoid". All of which sounds rather vague. Mr. J. E. MacColl, MP, was with Mr. Parkin. "I have the misfortune to be the tenant of the Church Commissioners", he said. And "The one thing that brings all denominations and all political parties together in Paddington is fear and dislike of the Church Commissioners".

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THE TECHNIQUE OF BRAINWASHING, wrote Brian Inglis (*Daily Herald*, 29/5/61) in a review of the new book, *Thought Reform* by Robert J. Lifton (Gollancz, 30s.) "is very similar to that employed in certain types of religious conversion, with the importance of confession much stressed". The parallels between religious and political conversion, he went on, are in fact "often uncomfortably close; and it comes as no surprise to find that brainwashing is most effective on people who are already 'totalists', longing for a single, simple faith". The brainwashers "have much more difficulty with ordinary self-respecting liberals. On them, the process may leave emotional scars, but the effect is not lasting".

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F. A. RIDLEY (President of the National Secular Society) held a very successful meeting at the University of Hull on May 25th. Mr. Ridley's subject was "History and Religion", and a correspondent, Harry Newton, tells us that it evoked the interest of the University lecturing staff, especially from the philosophy department. "Everyone I have spoken to seemed impressed by our case", says Mr. Newton, "and the meeting has given a lot of encouragement to the Secular students here".

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HAROLD HAMMERSLEY, Secretary of Leicester Secular Society, recently spoke on "Secularism" to St. Stephen's (Anglican) Youth Club in Leicester and tells us that he believes "they enjoyed it as much as I did". They were, he says, "a very pleasant and intelligent group of youngsters aged 15-18 years". A small report of the meeting appeared in the *Illustrated Chronicle* and Mr. Hammersley has been asked to talk to a club called "The Coffee Pot" in November. The club comprises young professional men and women between the ages of 20 and 35, and meets at the YWCA.

Our Eminent Spiritualists

By H. CUTNER

THOSE OF US who were lucky to be at the famous Debate between Sir A. Conan Doyle and Joseph McCabe over forty years ago, will remember how Sir Arthur produced a book in which (we were told) were listed over 100 names of eminent men, many of them professors, as thoroughly convinced Spiritualists—and how McCabe contemptuously turned over the leaves, and pointed out that at least a dozen of them were not, and never were, Spiritualists. I thought of this the other day when *Psychic News* gave us another list, which included Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, and Victor Hugo. Of course, the other names—Lord Dowding, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, Sir A. Conan Doyle, and others—are certainly those of Spiritualists; but how, in heaven's name, does Charles Dickens come into the bunch?

Though I have read perhaps half a dozen biographies of the great Dumas, and at least two of his celebrated contemporary, Hugo, I cannot recall a line in any of them which deals with any Spiritualistic activity on their part. That they may have gone to a seance, or even walked arm-in-arm with a medium, proves nothing. I have attended many seances myself; and yes—I have even escorted a medium to the nearest station; but I still look upon Spiritualism as a huge delusion. Still, I would dearly like to have the evidence produced that Hugo and Dumas were Spiritualists.

But the case of Dickens is, as far as I am concerned, quite different. He left a notable review which I cannot remember any Dickensian—of course, only as far as my own reading is concerned—has ever referred to. If it has been noticed say, in that dear old magazine which all Dickens lovers must cherish, *The Dickensian*, I should like to see it. The only occasion I can remember that anyone claimed Dickens as a Spiritualist was at a Dickens Fellowship meeting (as far back as 1912) the claim being made by a then well-known journalist, Cumming Walters. But he gave no evidence whatever.

If Dickens had been a Spiritualist, it is quite inconceivable that he could have written such a devastating attack on the saintly D. D. Home. It will be found in *All the Year Round*—which was then edited by Dickens—for April 4th, 1863, entitled, "The Martyr Medium".

Home had just published his *Incidents in My Life* with a dazzling Introduction "by a friend". It is so packed with "incidents" that it would take a dozen similar books (in size) to analyse it from an unbelieving point of view, but Dickens went straight into the fray with,

... After the worshippers and puffers of Mr. Daniel Dunglass Home, the spirit medium, comes Mr. Daniel Dunglass Home himself, in one volume. And we must, for the honour of Literature, plainly express our great surprise and regret that he comes arm-in-arm with such good company as Messrs. Longman and Company.

This is clear enough. Dickens was not at all impressed by the "incidents", and he had, in a scathing attack on the famous literateur of the day, William Howitt, then an ardent Spiritualist, "summed up Mr. Home's demands on the public capacity of swallowing"; and he even points out that "Mr. Home . . . brays in an extremely general manner". (My italics.)

Dickens takes twelve "incidents" from the book, giving each a contemptuous title as, "Mr. Home is super-naturally nursed". "Modest success of Mr. Home's Mission", "What the first composers [of the day] say of the spirit music to Mr. Home", "Mr. Home's miraculous infant",

"Cagliostro's spirit calls on Mr. Home", "The testimony of Mr. Home's boots", and so on. And some of the titles gave Dickens an opportunity to criticise not only the particular ridiculous "incident", but to give reasons why they are so much Spiritualistic twaddle.

For example, Home says, "As to the music, it has been my good fortune to be on intimate terms with some of the first composers of the day, and more than one of them said of such as they have heard, that it is such music as only angels could make, and no man could write it". Dickens regretted that the "first composers" are not named as he would have liked to receive testimonials "in the foregoing terms" from Balfe, Sterndale Bennet, Macfarren, Wallace, Auber, Gounod, Rossini and Verdi. He even wanted a "single sheet of the music" if it could be put down from memory.

As for Home's "miraculous infant", Dickens quoted the whole "incident", and then added, "We should ask pardon of our readers for sullyng our paper with this nauseous matter, if without it they could adequately understand what Mr. Home's book is".

Home complained that "men of science" were hard on the "orphan Home", and alluded to his own "gentle and uncombative nature", a complaint which Dickens characterised as "maudlin"; and he used all his remarkable power of irony against Home when that "Immaculate Medium" bitterly complained of Sir D. Brewster being "unfair and untruthful". Brewster sat with Home, but found no evidence that anything happened through "spirits"; though he frankly admitted he was not able to say how the "phenomena" were done.

"Nothing" concluded Dickens, "is without its use, and even this odious book may do some service". He found these "moving incidents in the life of the Martyr Medium, and similar productions likely to prove useful, because of their uniform abuse of those who go to test the reality of these alleged phenomena, and who come away incredulous". The whole review, in short, is as much an attack on Spiritualism as it is on Home, and it ought to settle once for all the nonsense that Dickens was a Spiritualist. But will it, for it appears to be almost unknown?

And the moral? It is simply not to accept any statement whatever from any Spiritualist unless it is supported by real evidence, and this I have found is almost impossible to get from a believer.

The "Immaculate Medium", or the "Napoleon of the Mediums", as his followers love to call him, was the hero of Browning's famous poem, "Sludge the Medium", written (no doubt whatever) to make Home ridiculous in the eyes of Mrs. Browning who swallowed every one of Home's "phenomena" and was a convinced Spiritualist. Browning was not; and he did his best to show his wife the truth about Home—without success, I'm sorry to say. Women appear to be ready to swallow in greater numbers than men, the most incredible beliefs—Theosophy, Christian Science, Spiritualism, and of course Christianity.

But there certainly are a number of scientists, authors, professors, soldiers, and even hard-headed businessmen, who are convinced that spooks can be summoned from the spirit world. Whatever else, however, he may have believed, Charles Dickens was not one of them. He did not believe in Spiritualism.

Each Man His Own Existentialist

By D. R. DAVIES

THERE IS NO TRUTH, no reason, no authority; ambivalent irresolvability is the human condition, and belief, a groping gesture. This is my belief (in itself "a groping gesture") and I classify myself as an existentialist. This "ambivalent irresolvability" is the dynamic of all existentialists, whatever form their existentialism might take. To Kierkegaard, it is "angst"—dread, the "kick" that is lurking around and which might be landed any time. To Sartre it is *l'absurde*—the absurd. To Nietzsche it is, God is dead. Nijinsky it is staring at whitewashed walls for hours on end to retain one's sanity. To Unamuno it is—"Man is one of God's experimental failures".

Reason has failed—this is the assertion that has led to existentialism. To the Establishment 50 to 60 years ago this idea of the failure of reason could be attributed to men suffering from madness, VD, epilepsy and in later (sophisticated) days—schizophrenia. Nowadays as we stagger from one crisis to another in this Irrelevant Society, the failure of reason is no longer seriously questioned—leastways it is irrelevant. Existentialism is not the worked-over lifeless dust of pendant professional philosophers, but the life-blood of men caught in the personal crisis of the failure of reason. If not reason, then what else? Nothing.

The Sartrean concept of "engagé"—being committed to an opinion (it is a decision for oneself and for all men at the same time) and carrying it through practically despite the inherent contradictions of doing so, is to me moral evasion. (Am I committed when I call it moral evasion?) Moral evasion or not, there are two alternatives—to keep going or to commit suicide. Most existentialists keep going, taking a masochistic glory in beating themselves with their own chains.

What is the "good existentialist life"? The committed existentialist is active in the dedicated aim of getting some particular thing done, despite any consequent "double-think". I have "armchair-only" commitments to legalised abortion, legalised brothels, disestablishment of the Church of England, abolition of capital punishment. Myself—mostly uncommitted, I just drift along, watching "normalcy"—living by the "reason" of the particular environment I am in at the time; "playing it cool". The fun comes when "normalcy" breaks down, and a solution must be found to restore it. The solution is always "rational", and then we are back on the roundabout. You play ball with the Establishment and the Establishment will play ball with you; but remember it's the Establishment's ball! I am unable completely to "opt out" as I haven't got the money to do so—"Economics, thou most absurd of all sciences!"—but if I can get an occasional boot in, I shall do so.

Personally to commit suicide would not be absurd enough. On this particular problem I adhere to Sartre's dictum—"a decision for me is a decision for humanity". If I had my finger on the button and could be assured that I could wipe all humanity *without pain* off the face of the earth (instantaneous vaporisation?), and fragmentise it so that Man would never crawl up from its slimy shores again, then I would push it. There would be no Nuremberg or Jerusalem for me.

My friends, existentialism is absurd.

BIBLE QUOTING PATIENT KILLS TWO

A 36-year-old mental patient went berserk and killed two people and injured four at the Methodist Hospital in Houston, Texas, last night—while quoting biblical proverbs
Leicester Mercury (18/5/61).

The Smallest Haunted Room

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

"MY HOUSE," said the woman, "is haunted."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the priest, with a twinkle in his eye.

"It's awkward," said the woman.

"I can see that," the priest smiled.

"The ghost," said the woman, "is in the lavatory."

The priest was no longer smiling.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"The chain is pulled in the night when I'm all alone at home," the woman explained. "I can hear water gurgling in the pipes as the cistern refills."

The priest scowled.

"You wouldn't expect me to conduct a service—even a service of excommunication—in that place?" he protested. "It would not be dignified."

"But what can I do?" the woman nagged, "I'm so frightened, father."

"Are you sure it's not all a question of your nerves?" the priest demanded sternly. "Have you been along in the night to look?"

The woman shuddered.

"It might be . . . a man ghost," she stammered.

The priest was outraged; and he was positively sweating with discomfort before he could get rid of the pestilential woman.

But soon he began to be ashamed of having lost his temper. She was a poor old thing, half out of her wits. She didn't really understand. He should have tried to comfort her. He should have reminded her that she could always pray for strength to her guardian angel. One's guardian angel, holy doctrine promises, is ever at one's elbow; and the priest himself always liked to picture his own angel as a radiant lady blessed with all heaven's beauty.

Then he blushed scarlet at a dreadful thought which came unbidden. Did one's guardian angel really always remain at one's side, as the holy fathers maintained; or did she wait outside the door when . . . ?

"Oh damn the woman!" he cried furiously; for now he knew that she had left him with a haunt in the smallest room in the presbytery, a beastly haunting thought.

With a groan, the priest went to a cupboard and brought out his scourge. He had not attempted to use it since he was a young and ardent novice. But surely it was better to suffer than to be damned? On the other hand, he was now an old man and the whole affair was not his fault.

With another groan, he suddenly exerted all his strength and broke the handle of the instrument. Then he took the pieces and flushed them down the closet.

The water roared in the pipes like a pack of demons.

AMERICAN-EUROPEAN MARCH

We are pleased to say that Barnaby Martin, a member of the National Secular Society and secretary of the Humanist Group of South-West London, has been chosen as one of the five British members of the American-European March team. This march has come from San Francisco on its way to Moscow, and arrived in Britain on June 1st. An appeal will be made to all countries en route to reject nuclear arms unilaterally and to substitute non-violent resistance for conventional armed defence. Barnaby will be marshalling the March through Britain, and it leaves Southampton on June 12th for France. The route goes through Belgium, West Germany, East Germany, Poland and Russia. The organisers are expecting great difficulty in France due to the controls imposed during the Algerian troubles. The start was made at the big rally in Trafalgar Square last Sunday. Anyone wishing to make a donation towards the vast expense of the march, should do so to Miss A. Carter, American-European March, 87 Chancery Lane, London, W.C.2.

SUPPORT FADING

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH is losing public support [in the USA] in its bid for tax aid to finance parochial schools.

A Gallup poll shows that 57 per cent of the people believe tax funds should be confined to public schools, compared with 49 per cent in 1949 when a House Bill raised the issue. Similarly, only 36 per cent now think Catholic and other private schools should share in the funds compared to 41 per cent 11 years ago. The number without opinion dropped from 10 per cent to 7.

Catholic voters today favour government aid to sectarian schools in a ratio of 66 to 28, with 6 per cent having no opinion. Protestants favour public aid for public schools only, in a ratio of 63 to 29, with 8 per cent undecided.—*Church and State* (June 1961).

CORRESPONDENCE

CHARLES ATTFIELD

As secretary of the National Secular Society branch of which Charles Attfield was a member, I would like to add a few words to the obituary notice of that grand old fighter. As Mr. Ridley said when conducting the service, Mr. Attfield served as a "rank and filer" in every progressive movement that came his way. He fought officialdom and bumbledom wherever they raised their ugly heads.

He not only introduced secularism to his wife and son, but to his daughters also. This is the first break in the Attfield circle of NSS members, for they have all been for many years members of the North London Branch. One more word. Mr. Attfield requested that on his death, donations should be sent to the causes he loved, rather than be spent on flowers and funeral trappings, and the branch which had his services for so long, and will miss his humour and wit, has elected to send £1 to the NSS Building Fund.

ONLY ASKING

Mr. F. A. Ridley says some theologians have undeniably been men of marked ability. Marked ability for what as theologians? For making nonsense sound like sense? What earthly use is theology? Isn't life too short for such bletherskite? I'm only asking.

DAVID L. WEBSTER.

JOMO KENYATTA

I read with interest the letters in your May 25th issue on Jomo Kenyatta. Mr. D. N. Pritt, Q.C., who defended him at his trial and who claims to know him very well personally, says of him: "I found him gentle, serious in his manner, careful in forming his views, and firm in them when he had formed them". Mr. Pritt, an experienced and keen Queen's Counsel says also, "one is driven to the conclusion that he was not guilty". When Mr. Pritt arrived in Kenya in 1952 Mau Mau was not yet an organised movement, and Kenyatta was already in prison. He has denied being concerned in Mau Mau. The whole affair seems to be based in the desire of the Kenya Government to break the Kenya African Union which had a paying membership of 100,000. These questions are important to us as Freethinkers. These men are our brothers, struggling for political and economic freedom in their own country and Kenyatta is to them the symbol of that struggle and its wise leader, and a wise government would have found him a wise and more humane means of handling an admittedly difficult situation. The tide of the freedom struggle is rising all over Africa and King Canute, I remember, got his feet wet. It is also well to remember that while men are still slaves, no one is free. Humanity, is *one*.

(Mrs.) G. MATSON.

OLD NICK

Mr. Hoddes's example is defective. In many European countries St. Nicholas—Niccolo, Santa Claus, etc.—is accompanied by a black, shaggy figure with hoof and horn and tail, wearing a black or red devil's mask from which a long narrow tongue protrudes. In the Netherlands they call him "Piet", in Austria "Krampus", and whilst St. Nicholas gives presents of fruit(!) to the good children, the shaggy figure terrifies the bad ones and whips them with a bundle of twigs. It must be borne in mind that this visitation takes place on December 5th, the very day when in ancient Rome, "Faunus" (Pan), the goat-god, ran through the streets, lashing with a goatskin scourge the bared bellies of young women desirous of pregnancy. Even the terror of Pan survives, whilst the symbolism of fertility is now translated into thrashing the children his divine model was expected to "favour"

(this in fact is the meaning of "Faunus"). Our devil with all his trimmings is the successor of the fertility demon of Nature—which in itself underlines the negation of the pagan *joie de vivre* into Christian sterility and morosity. The following day, December 6th, is "St. Nicholas" in the Catholic calendar, and that is what in practical life has brought these two together.

P. G. ROY.

NAPOLEON WAS WRONG

According to your leading article of May 13th, it is only the hope and belief in a future life that restrain the poor from cutting the throats of the rich in this one.

If this is so it looks as though learned counsel at the Old Bailey, quoted by your correspondent "Northern Lawyer", was right when he stated religious belief to be a restraint on wickedness.

Both assertions are of course far-fetched since both history and the present day are teeming with examples where religious belief was no deterrent to either immorality or murder. In fact very often it was the reason for committing it.

The chief deterrent to throat cutting is simply the penal code. Napoleon ought to have known that. So should learned counsel at the Old Bailey.

E. V. BIRKBY.

A BRICK

I could find neither rhyme nor reason in Oswald Blakeston's "Under the Tree of Life a Stone . . ." (5/5/61).

C.D.

TWO BOUQUETS

I was most pleased with the article "Under the Tree of Life a Stone . . ." by Oswald Blakeston.

R.G.D.

I do want to compliment you for publishing Mr. Frank Maitland's very fair and interesting report of the House of Lords debate on Christian unity (26/5/61). It was well worth the space devoted to it.

J.G.G.

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