

# The Freethinker

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WHATEVER PRECISE DEFINITION of religion may be suggested, a belief in some kind of supernatural being or beings, would seem to be a necessary ingredient, for the popular use of the term in a non-supernatural context does not seem to be really apposite: e.g. to say that Socialism (or Cricket!) is my religion, is surely to twist the term out of its proper significance. For religion when considered as a historical phenomenon, is inseparable from the belief in a god or gods.

## A God Without Attributes

I for one, have never been able to see why the belief in the modern monotheistic Deity, officially defined in ecclesiastical formulae (such as the Thirty Nine Articles) as being "without body, parts or passions", should be held to be superior to the more robust gods of an earlier epoch whose "parts" were frequently only less conspicuous than were their "passions". In point of fact, what Grant Allen called in his book of the same name "the evolution of the idea of God", has always appeared to me to be an evolution backwards; for the gods of the antique world, whether Pagan or Jewish, were infinitely more vivid and concrete personalities than the vague metaphysically-conceived Deity of modern theistic apologetics. Jehovah, Apollo, Bacchus, these gods were definite personalities, as *real* as most characters in classical fiction. The corporeal deities who are depicted by Homer as fighting in person in the Trojan War, or as immersed in drunken bouts in the Valhalla of the Norse Sagas, were much more life-like beings, much more real to their worshippers here below than are, say, the "Pure Act" of German Catholic philosophy or the "Absolute Being" of German metaphysical theology. For what, after all, are gods without attributes? As Chapman Cohen has so aptly indicated, the definition of a god as being "without body, parts, or passions", might just as well be a definition of nothing.

## Beyond Criticism

Modern theism has, however, one great advantage over the older theology: God is today, if not beyond good and evil, at least beyond intelligent criticism. For one cannot intelligently criticise a being who is without any recognisable attributes; one cannot criticise such a god, since in concrete terms, there is really nothing tangible to criticise! This was certainly not the case with the older and more robust type of deity; the vindictiveness of Jehovah, the promiscuous amours of Jupiter, the drunken orgies of Bacchus, all such attributes were open to ethical criticism. It was, no doubt, largely because rising ethical standards in the ancient world eventually provoked such criticism that the cult of these ancient deities either sank into oblivion, as in the case of the Greek and Roman gods (and goddesses), or suffered a sea-change under the influence of an ethical theology, as in the case of the monotheistic Jehovah of modern Judaism. This latter change would have been quite unintelligible to, say that blood-thirsty Old Testament ruffian, David, who nevertheless,

was "a man after God's own heart" and the national hero of his "chosen race". As the level of human civilisation has slowly risen, so has the ethical level of its gods, but only at the cost of losing the personal characteristics which once rendered them real and adorable to their worshippers here below. I must repeat that if there has been any evolution of the idea of God, it appears to have been throughout, an evolution from the definable to the

indefinable, from the definite to the indefinite. In short, an evolution backwards! For can anyone really uphold the proposition that the metaphysical Catholic Trinity of the Athanasian Creed is as real or concrete to its worshippers as was

Apollo to the classical Hellenes, or Thor to the ancient Vikings? The one was (and is) a mere metaphysical abstraction, whereas the others had the same vitality, even the same kind of reality, as the heroes of ancient drama and of modern fiction.

## Critique of Theism

Modern metaphysical theology has, one must reiterate, one great advantage over its more concrete precursors; it is practically impossible to criticise it effectively. Not only cannot one criticise a being without parts or passions, the "Absolute Idea" of modern idealist metaphysics, but one cannot even disprove its existence in any concrete manner. To ask whether such a being exists is surely to ask a meaningless question, since no one could, or would recognise such an entity. How can one recognise a being who, by definition, has nothing visible or concrete to recognise? It is surely a self-evident statement that one cannot criticise the existence of gods; one can only criticise their attributes; e.g. if we are told that an ethical Deity has made a Universe so obviously unethical, so completely amoral as is ours, it appears to be self-evident that such a glaring contrast between the alleged Creator and the actual Creation involves impossible contradictions. It is, in fact, the basic dilemma of modern theistic apologetics to reconcile the supposed "co-existence" of a God of Love with the amoral ferocity that appears to predominate in the natural order, for which this God of Love is allegedly responsible; e.g. the butcher-bird with a beak too blunt to kill his victims, whom he impales alive on thorns, may make sense as an example of "natural selection" in an amoral Universe, but hardly as the deliberate creation of any ethical Author of Nature, still less of one whose primary characteristic is alleged to be love.

## Theism Retreats

It is no doubt on account of the ever-mounting array of evidence that demonstrates the utter incompatibility between the supposed Creator and the Creation that theistic apologetics are now in full retreat from attributes (which can be criticised), to existence (which cannot). Theistic apologetics are, nowadays (if we can mix our military metaphors) engaged in a "retreat from Moscow" upon their "Maginot Line", their *non plus ultra*, the Existence of God beyond the existence of a natural order

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## A Critique of Theism

By F. A. RIDLEY

for which his responsibility becomes ever less and less. Banished from the obviously amoral natural order to a supposedly spiritual order beyond the categories of space and time, God, the First Cause of metaphysics, simultaneously withdraws beyond the reach of criticism. Present-day theistic apologetics have been driven from domain after domain by the steady demolition of the supposed Creator's attributes by scientific discovery and criticism. Theism at present bids fair to end with a return to the god, or rather gods of Epicurus, which existed indeed, but

in a kind of spiritually "weightless" state as befits such dwellers in the empyrean where Epicurus located them. When theism has finally reached this state of pure Being without attributes, we hope that its critics will be finally content to leave it there and then proceed to take possession of the Universe vacated by God, instead of wasting their time seeking to prove his non-existence, which can only lead to what is perhaps the cardinal weakness of philosophy: its recurring habit of asking questions to which no answer is possible.

## A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land (1961)

By C. H. HAMMERSLEY

IN HIS REPORT, "Unity Of The Christian Spirit" (THE FREETHINKER, 26/5/61) Mr. Frank Maitland refers to the visit to the "Holy Land" of the Bishop of Leicester's party earlier this year, and some of the comments of a member of this party will I feel sure be of interest to readers. He is the editor of the *Leicester Mercury*, Mr. John Fortune, a Christian, though certainly not one of the credulous variety, who has recently published a series of six articles in his paper, covering the visit.

"As soon as my friends knew that I was going to the Holy Land", he writes, "they were eager to warn me that I should not come out of it unscathed . . . It will shake your faith to its foundations they said. You go a Christian and come back a Doubting Thomas". Thus, his journey commenced with a sense of foreboding. He continues: "My own questionings were not those of an eminent ecclesiastic but I found faith suffered a stiff testing in the holiest of all holy places, the Church of The Holy Sepulchre. My own questionings were profound but personal and involved doubts about the virgin birth, the events at Bethlehem, the resurrection". "The pilgrim to Jerusalem is disappointed at finding the tomb and Calvary built over by a succession of Churches of no architectural beauty and where the various Christian sects squabble over its repair. It takes an effort of will to remind oneself that this is the site of the rock of Calvary hallowed by centuries of prayer". The Christian sects distrust each other so much that an Arab (Muslim) policeman is needed to keep order, and the custody of the keys of the "Holiest shrine in Christendom" has now become the hereditary task of a Muslim family. To stand with a lighted taper looking down at what is traditionally the tomb of Christ should be a moment to treasure, "yet somehow it is not. At such a time a critical analytical mind is a handicap", says Mr. Fortune.

After visiting tombs and shrines and being shocked by the commercialism and tawdriness, the party motored past Mount Carmel, ablaze with flowers, to "beautiful Galilee" which does not disappoint its pilgrims, and on to Capernaum a thriving city. "Nazareth in comparison was a small place in the hills where the people lived in hill caves. The phrase 'could anything good come out of Nazareth' was not coined for nothing". "And so we came to Bethlehem" which is 5 miles from Jerusalem as the crow flies; the border of Israel and Jordan cutting the main road in two. "Bethlehem thy name is commercialism", declares Mr. Fortune, and the party here was warned by their guide to beware of young touts who lured tourists into the bazaar.

"In the grotto of the Nativity here a star set in the floor marks the traditional spot where Jesus was born. Alongside we were shown the marble manger—the original has been removed to Rome, we were told." And Mr. Fortune found that "Emotion, legend and sometimes unadulterated

humbug have created a formidable obstacle to those who seek diligently after religious truth". "The Virgin Birth is a fulfilment of a prophecy in Isaiah", he says, "and all such prophetic justifications are naturally suspect. In the first century they were important; in the twentieth they are an anachronism".

He then quotes the birth story in Luke, the "fairy charm" of which "at one time exasperated me for I felt it gained adherents to the theory of the Virgin Birth unfairly". "Going to the Holy Land and seeing Bethlehem" enabled him to see it "in another perspective", however. "The story contributes nothing to the Sonship of God", he says, "and inevitably more and more people must come to look upon it as a beautiful fable doing no more harm to the spread of Christianity than the variety of pictures of Jesus, all so beautiful, all so different, yet none of them authentic".

"Those who go to the Holy Land to be assured like so many Doubting Thomases that Christ bodily rose from the dead had better stay away", warns Mr. Fortune. The crucifixion cannot be proved by a visit to Jerusalem. "Much that was in and around Jerusalem before the birth of Christ remains", but "very little that was peculiar to Jesus's time is still there". So, "Faith remains the only open sesame to Christianity".

The last of the six articles is an account of a visit to Israel, which the party was compelled to admit had made amazing progress in its thirteen years, and Mr. Fortune concludes: "We think of the Holy Land as the seat of so many religions, and with gratitude of the Jews going back to the land of their forefathers with Jehovah in their hearts and the Menorah as their symbol. It was exhilarating to find a new nation so virile, competent, adventurous but disappointing to find at the heart of its virility, it was threatened with Godlessness . . . I was oppressed with the idea that Godlessness might be the one thing that could prevent Israel becoming a great nation". Personally I think Mr. Fortune has nothing to worry about upon that score. The Soviet Union has managed very well without God, and "Red" China seems to be doing likewise. If Israel does not achieve greatness it will doubtless be due to other causes.

### WITHOUT COMMENT

People in Judea, I'm told, are paying 4s. a time to ride "on the camel that the English Archbishop of Canterbury spoke to". Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, on his tour of the Holy Land, said a few soothing words to the camel when being photographed beside it.—*Daily Express* (27/5/61).

### NEXT WEEK

### ROME AND AUSTRALIA

By F. A. RIDLEY

## The Fuhrer's Prelates

The following is a translation of an article which appeared in the German magazine, *Der Spiegel* (Issue No. 22, dated May 24th, 1961).

GERMAN CLERICS and lay-functionaries of the Catholic faith are consternated. The orthodox paper *Hochland* ("Highland"), of all papers, opened its pious pages to an author who mercilessly scratched a still sore Catholic wound; the lawyer Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde dissected the—partly enthusiastic—co-operation which prominent German Catholics gave to the Führer Adolf Hitler in 1933. Cardinals, bishops and abbots, professors of theology, delegates of the Centre Party, union functionaries and publicists, some of them already passed on, some still alive, found themselves without distinction dragged before Böckenförde's *Hochland* tribunal, to be disrespectfully examined and condemned. A Nuremberg trial for the hitherto spared servants of the Church.

The fact that the Catholic Church of 1933 came to an agreement with the new régime in a surprisingly short time, has been well known, and critics of this remarkable conciliation have mainly opposed it on three points:

The Centre Party and its Munich scion, the Bavarian People's Party voted unanimously for the *Ermächtigungsgesetz*. (An act which empowered the Government to pass laws without the approval of Parliament.) Without the Catholic vote this act would have fallen through because the Social Democrats opposed it. Centre Party, Bavarian People's Party and the Social Democrats together had sufficient seats in the House to prevent any alteration of the constitution.

The Curia agreed with Hitler on a Concordat, which secured important cultural rights for the Church on the one hand, but also made Hitler internationally acceptable on the other.

The Centre Party, promoted by its president, the Prelate Ludwig Kaas, had disbanded shortly before.

In the post-war era these political errors have been explained as being the understandable result of human insufficiency, all the more so, since it was easy to prove by what perfidious means even steadfast Catholics were lured into the Nazi trap. On top of this, the Church could prove by her casualty list, that many of her followers refused any collaboration with the régime, some even denounced it publicly and by doing so, suffered for it.

There is no doubt that the Catholic Church can be regarded as a victim of Nazi persecution—at least since 1935—but there is even less doubt that her representatives fraternised intimately with the brownshirts during those decisive months of 1933, not as an act of self-defence but out of conviction. The historian Böckenförde came to this conclusion after rummaging through the Catholic publications of 1933. He found pastoral letters, messages and printed speeches showing an almost scurrilous Nazi servitude.

After Prelate Ludwig Kaas presented the Third Reich with the Centre Party's consent to the *Ermächtigungsgesetz*, he additionally sent his "sincere blessings" and his "unflinching co-operation on the great task" by telegram to the Führer on the occasion of Hitler's birthday on 20th April, 1933. This dispatch was the commencement of collaboration. While Ludwig Kaas retreated to Rome—presumably because he was involved in bankruptcy proceedings—the German bishops paid homage to Hitler's new Reich. On 3rd June, the Lord Bishops vowed:—"At no price will we withhold the power of the Church from the State, indeed we cannot do so, because only the power of the people and the power of God can save us and extol us".

Medieval as this alliance between the power of the people and the power of God may seem, the clerical enthusiasm rose even higher when the Concordat was signed.

What the Weimar Republic could not bring about (an agreement with Rome) since 1918, Hitler had achieved within a few weeks. To him therefore went the unlimited gratitude of the bishops:

The Archbishop of Breslau, Cardinal Bertram exclaimed at the Bishops' Conference in Fulda:—"The Church will willingly co-operate with a Government that has made the fight against Godlessness and immorality the guiding star of its programme".

The Archbishop of Freiburg, Gröber:—"He puts "unshaking trust in the Führer"; he stands "one hundred per cent" behind him.

Bishop Berning of Osnabrück:—"The German bishops have given their consent to the new State long ago".

Bishop Bornwasser of Trier:—"With our heads held high and with firm steps, we have marched into the new Reich and we are prepared to serve it with body and soul".

The Suffragan Bishop of Freiburg:—"The aims of the Government have long been the aims of the Catholic Church".

Bishop Kaller of Ermland:—"We shall play an active part".

Capitular Vicar Steinmann of Berlin:—"We have longed and strived for what has now become a reality. We have a Reich and a Führer and we shall follow that Führer".

Even high dignitaries, who have hitherto only been known as uncompromising enemies of the régime and who soon actively opposed the tyranny, participated in the universal homage in 1933. The Bishop of Münster, Clemens Count von Galen, for his courage later on acclaimed as the "Lion of Münster", persuaded his flock to vote for the National Socialists during the parliamentary elections in November 1933. The equally renowned Metropolitan of Munich, Cardinal Faulhaber, deemed Hitler worthy of a handwritten letter in which he expressed the fatal wish:—"I say with all my heart; God preserve the chancellor".

This 1933 treasure box of quotations all the more alarmed the Catholic leaders of 1961 since the thorough-going Böckenförde, not satisfied just to excavate these testimonials of spiritual exhibitionism by Nazi-infected Catholics, proceeded to ask the inquisitorial question: How could it happen that prominent clerical and spiritual leaders of German Catholicism could so emphatically identify themselves with the Nazi State and could induce their followers to positive collaboration? Unrelenting as he had been in the gathering of these compromising quotations, Böckenförde served up his answer:—"Catholicism did not give way to the Nazis for tactical reasons or out of opportunism; its acknowledgment of the Third Reich is rather the result of a consequent evolution of the Catholic conception of State and Social Science.

Throughout the age of rationalism, Böckenförde indicated, the Catholic Church has been in constant opposition to all of the modern spiritual movements, especially to Liberalism and Socialism; Catholic political thought finally lived by the negation of at least 200 years of history. For this reason, Catholics have robbed themselves of any flexibility in political thought. They were content to ask the State for ecclesiastical liberty and demanded a pious education for their children. A government willing to make concessions in these matters—as Hitler did in the Concordat—was not regarded as anti-clerical, but recognised as the legitimate authority which could be certain of the grateful assistance of the Centre Party.

This self-inflicted limitation in the political and cultural field was still more aided by the urge of Catholics to entrust even the leadership of their political movements to the priests. The parliamentary fraction of the Bavarian

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

Whatever one may think of the "Daily Express", it often gets in a little body-blow at some of the unbelievably silly Christians who, somehow or other, survive and flourish in the United States. In the number dated May 27th, we are told of a "Bishop" Johnson who had been giving his flock *divine* racing tips, and he is now in prison. But the interesting thing about this is that the Bishop is not there because the tips were bad—that is, because God Almighty let the punters down badly—but because Johnson tried to bribe the policeman who went to his church to investigate one of the services. And now, who is to blame—the Lord, the Bishop, or the policeman?

★

The same number of the paper has an article by Mr. Peter Chambers on his adventures in consulting a lady who can "tell your fortune" with Tarot cards, and an astrologer, and a colleague's experience with a palmist. We are pleased to record that Mr. Chambers appears to be a die-hard unbeliever in these occult sciences—unlike the people who devour every word in *Prediction, Fate and Psychic News*. These are ready to believe everything including their fortune from tea leaves! And all this, not in the native woodlands of Africa, presided over by witch-doctors, but in dear old prosaic England.

★

Making a film in which a cowboy is to portray Jesus must have given the producer a distinct headache. In general, it has always been tacitly assumed that nobody must ever be allowed to play "our Lord"—no one could possibly be holy or reverent enough. It appears, however, that the cowboy has both the presence and the voice for the "King of Kings", though a hitch may have occurred when it was discovered that the actor had been twice married. But there may be one thing which the producer will never have the courage to show on the screen—Jesus "telling off" his Virgin Mother—"Woman what have I to do with thee?"

★

We note that when Dr. Fisher retires he will get a pension of £2,000 a year which, the London *Evening Standard* considers is not a penny too much. But it goes on to tell us that the average parson at 70 cannot get a pension higher than £400 a year, and a parson's widow can only aspire to a maximum of £133 a year except under certain conditions, when it may rise to £300. And these pensions do not come from the Church Commissioners' £14 million a year from investments, but from public funds. In fact, there has to be a Poor Clergy Relief Corporation which helps the widows of clergymen in difficult times. What has the retiring Archbishop of Canterbury got to say on the fate of many old ladies, relics of a Christian Church that has so little charity and so little mercy to its loyal servants?

★

A lady J.P., Mrs. Allen, a Quaker headmaster, Mr. K. Barnes, and a parson, the Rev. R. Lee, discussed on BBC the other day why six out of every ten Sunday School children "have been lost to the Church", with the inevitable result—they didn't know. Mr. Lee, however, was frank enough to admit that it was the fault of the Church. None of the three showed the slightest indication that they had heard of Biblical criticism, or that modern science had made mincemeat of Miracles, Devils, Angels, Creation, Virgin Births, and Resurrections. They talked on and on as if the Church had come through all

criticism scatheless, that its history was *literally* true, and that Christianity stood firm as a rock against apathy, hostility, and downright unbelief.

★

This seems the general attitude of the BBC and ITV—not a whisper of heresy allowed except on rare occasions. One of these was a discussion (on June 2nd) between the Rev. Donald Soper, Mr. Tom Driberg, and Mr. H. Legerton, the Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society, entitled "What's the Idea?" We congratulate Mr. Legerton on his full-blooded Fundamentalism; it's a rare treat to hear a defender of Bible Christianity stick up for every word and comma in the Precious Word. Alas, we cannot say the same for Dr. Soper and Mr. Driberg.

### THE FUHRER'S PRELATES

(Concluded from page 187)

People's Party was led during 1932-33 by Prelate Leicht. Leaders of the Centre Party were:— In the Reichstag—Prelate Kaas. In the Prussian Diet—Prelate Lauscher. In the Baden Diet—Prelate Föhr.

As a result, Catholicism by and by, lost all impartiality and candour to face historical realities. Blindfolded as they were, the new régime appeared to them as a better order, which had to be supported all the more fervently because the Church regarded an authoritarian and declared anti-liberal régime as the most suitable to fight the alleged subversive activities of Liberals and Marxists. Without resistance the Weimar Republic was handed over to the brown battalions by the Centre Party. Out of conviction and with pastoral authority the bishops issued directives which their flock had better not have followed, according to Böckenförde.

Böckenförde finally dared to break a Catholic taboo. He demanded self-reflection and reform. "All this" he said "should give sufficient cause to meditate on the competence of pastoral dignitaries in political matters. Or can one seriously claim that the situations and political principles which led to the errors of 1933 have been overcome by German Catholicism today?"

Hardly had the *Hochland* heresy been made public, when Schleswig's Minister of Justice Everen tried to make political capital out of it. Leverenz (Free Democratic Party) remarked:— "It is not uninteresting to learn that the continually anti-liberal attitude of the Catholic Church has been such a help to the Nazis".

In the Catholic camp on the other hand, Böckenförde's essay created a sensation. In the *Rheinischer Merkur* (whose founder Franz Albert Kramer had also been attacked by Böckenförde) a Dr. Paulus thundered against the allegedly "unfounded, generalised and simplified" *Hochland* article, only to be corrected by a retired headmaster who said in a letter that an attempt has been made to "talk around the problem".

While a commentator of the strictly Catholic *Echo der Zeit* disqualified Böckenförde's diatribe as "a moral hit below the belt", Professor Hans Peters of Cologne, a particularly militant Catholic, filled a whole page of the clerical *Deutsches Volksblatt* in an attempt to dismember the *Hochland* contribution. The Professor however, endeavoured to discredit the author, who in his opinion is not only "unqualified", but whose arguments are "naive", "pseudo-scientific" and "pharisaical", the quotations are torn out of context and he has not himself lived through the times anyway.

# THE FREETHINKER

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TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

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

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street), Sunday, June 18th, 6.45 p.m.: MAX BOWEN, "Prison Reform".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, June 18th, 11 a.m.: H. L. BEALES, M.A., "President Kennedy's First Half-Year".

## Notes and News

IN A LETTER TO *The Guardian* (6/6/61) taking Wayland Young "to task on one or two points in his article on abortion (June 2nd)", Mr. M. Callan, whom we take to be a Roman Catholic, wrote: "I know the Catholic Church objected to an advertisement by a group supporting anti-conception practices during marriage". This is a reference to the Family Planning Association poster banned on the London Underground, which had been mentioned by Mr. Young. The point we select for notice here is that Mr. Callan knows that the objection was Roman Catholic, the British Transport Commission doesn't—or says it doesn't.

★

"I FELT nothing at all—nothing but a completely blank sense of void." Once again we have testimony from a person who has "died" and been revived, that death is nothingness. Mrs. Anne-Mai Olavsson of Stockholm "died" five times last month after giving birth to her first child. She was "revived repeatedly by heart massage". (*News of the World*, 4/6/61.)

★

WHILE MPs argue whether Mr. Ben Parkin of Paddington is justified in calling the Church Commissioners "the worst blood-suckers in my constituency" (THE FREETHINKER, 2/6/61), the Commissioners themselves report that their investment income has doubled in thirteen years. "The total market value of Stock Exchange securities held by the Commissioners at the end of March, 1961, was £186,100,000" (*The Guardian*, 5/6/61).

THE BILLY GRAHAM CRUSADE at Manchester City football ground had to open without its star. Dr. Graham's absence through illness and the steady drizzle badly affected the attendances, and a special students' service on May 30th attracted only four hundred. By the Saturday night, however, the captain was back. The night was fine, and Dr. Graham was—in the words of *The Guardian* (5/6/61)—"obviously taking on the Devil at his busiest time". Dr. Graham had his usual simple solution to the world's problems. "If Kennedy and Khrushchev would fall on their knees before God—and if the people here tonight would do the same", everything would be all right.

★

"WHEN WE REMEMBER that so many have become Secularists as a direct consequence of becoming familiar with previous versions . . . one wonders at the temerity and ingenuousness of the projectors of this new experiment," said *The Westralian Secularist* (May, 1961) about the New English Bible. "To encourage the individual to take it direct, especially if the text is clearer, is a sure way of debunking a lot of it."

★

THE HON. SECRETARY of Southend Humanist Group, Mr. H. L. Feuchtwanger, 12 Cedar Road, Thundersley, Essex, extends a cordial invitation to readers in South East Essex to attend any of the meetings of his Group. These are held on the last Saturday evening of each month at 7.30 p.m. in Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road, Leigh-on-Sea.

### BIRMINGHAM N.S.S. DINNER

SIXTY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS sat down to a Dinner organised by Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society in the Stork Hotel, Birmingham, on Saturday, June 10th, at which the Guests of Honour were Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Smith.

Mr. Smith is one of the oldest and ablest members of the Branch of which he is President, and was—as the Chairman recalled—speaking on the public platform 48 years ago. By his side, Mrs. Smith, attired in a lovely floral silk gown, made a charming picture of married serenity extending now over 63 years.

After dinner the company mixed freely and listened to a variety of music, trumpet solos being provided by Mr. Lamoon, an ex-guardsman and ardent Secularist at 84 years of age.

Mr. W. Miller proposed a toast to all present in a sparkling impromptu speech and undoubtedly the night was a great success, it being generally hoped that the dinner will become an annual event. Thanks are particularly due to the *ad hoc* Committee consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Miller and Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Vernon, who planned and organised the Dinner so well.

### THEATRE

#### BRECHT AGAIN

*The Visions of Simone Machard* (Unity Theatre) is set in a small French town in June 1940, the time of the betrayal of France. It is the latest of Bertolt Brecht's plays to be performed in London (in a virile translation by Arnold Hinchliffe) and takes the form of a historical analogy with the time of Joan of Arc, whose vow, "I have come to comfort the common people", is the keynote of the play. One character remarks, "You've got to get rid of the people or the war. You can't have both".

Simone, most innocently played by Anna Kashden, is thrilled by the story of Joan; she duly has angelic visions of her own, and believes she can thwart the Germans, much to the disgust of the collaborators. "Don't you know that we the Cardinals of France know better what God wills than any upstart angel?" she is asked in one of the mock-Joan of Arc scenes, and she is condemned to life in a convent. The Mayor, like the Dauphin with Joan, makes no effort to save her. Germans and collaborators are apparently sitting pretty, but—visit Unity and you will see

C.McC.

## From Canada

### MISJUDGMENT BY LESAGE

SELDOM HAS A PREMIER of the Province of Quebec so poorly misinterpreted the trend of rising public opinion among his people as Premier Lesage did when he dismissed off-handedly the request for French secular schools in the course of his address before Cardinal Leger at the University of Montreal spring convocation on May 31st.

Indeed, Premier Lesage kowtowed so shamelessly low before the Cardinal that he almost quoted Papal teachings word for word as being his own policy in educational matters. "In French Canada, both the Church and the State are sovereign in their respective domains, but in things which affect the inner man, *the State must seek the light of the Church. Quebec seeks this light from the Catholic hierarchy . . .*"

The spectacle (it was a spectacle indeed!) of a Premier elected only a year ago by an electorate that thought it was sweeping the Church-ridden Union Nationale politicians out of power for a truly democratic government was such a revolting one that even the Catholic Daily *La Presse* called the day "historique" in inverted commas.

The National President of the Young Liberals gave a statement to the press on the very next day which said in part:

"The Premier seems to have the intention of treating the greatest problems that the French-Canadian people have to face in the same off-handed manner as the National Union.

Mr. Lesage does not enhance his reputation when he turns to demagoguery. Just because the Talbots and the Johnsons and others of this type wave the scarecrow of lay education and non-confessional schools, the Liberal Leader can't start discussion on the same footing.

Those who elected Mr. Lesage and the Liberal Party do not look forward to the construction of new myths."

No stronger condemnation could come from the mouth of the National President of the Younger Section of the very party to which Mr. Lesage owes his election!

A lawyer himself, Premier Lesage, stepped on doubtful ground when he stated that Quebec is "officially" a Christian State. He deliberately ignored the law voted by Upper and Lower Canada on August 30th, 1851, and officially proclaimed after being sanctioned by the Queen of England on June 9th, 1852. (See Chapter 30, Quebec Revised Statutes, 1951.) He deliberately ignored also the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *Chaput vs. Romain* (Canada Law Reports SC (1) 1955) where Judges Kerwin, Taschereau and Estey said, "In this country, there is no state religion and all denominations enjoy the same degree of freedom of speech and thought".

If the Liberal Party is to seek its lights from the Catholic Hierarchy, the least one can say is that it has come a long way since the days when priests condemned the Liberal Party from the Pulpit as "the party of atheists for which no Catholic could vote, that it was the party that led to Hell, that it was condemned by the Church, etc.". (See the case of *Masse & al vs. Robillard*, Court of Review, 1880, *The Lower Canada Jurist*, volume XXVI.) The Court, in that case, held that there had been undue influence and intimidation on the part of the Catholic clergy and annulled the election of the Conservative candidate!

Of course, the Mouvement Laique is disappointed and its leaders issued a strongly-worded statement to that effect, for many are the members of that movement who thought they could "bargain" amicably with the Church in this Province and obtain justice for non-Catholic

French-speaking Canadians. At least, now, the lines are drawn more clearly, and if leaders and members of the Mouvement Laique will learn a lesson from history, they will realise it's no use dealing with the Church as if it were—pardon my French—"un gentleman". More recently, even "strong men" like Peron, Trujillo . . . learned their lessons.

LANJE GARDYEN.

### EDUCATIONAL NOTES

By OUR CANADIAN CORRESPONDENT

THE JESUITS are the ones who are pushing so hard to get *two* new Canadian Universities, one English (Loyola) and one French (Sainte Marie). Right now, these two institutions are roughly the equivalent of "Colleges" in the USA. However, they have teachers who are not qualified, as in France, where Catholic schools have many teachers who could not teach in the public schools because they simply don't have the qualifications. A recent report by the University of Montreal said that only one of seven professors in Loyola's English course held a doctor's degree; one out of five in honours history and one out of five in honours economics. The University had therefore declined to grant honours arts degrees to seven Loyola College students.

★

The College St. Denis is the only "classical" college in the Province of Quebec that is not directed by priests. It is indeed a Catholic institution, and priests are among the teachers. It is duly affiliated with the University of Montreal, also a Catholic institution. But it is directed by laymen . . . and it is a sort of special school for "*les surdoués*" (the exceptionally bright). Well, in order to maintain that private lay school, parents pay as much as ten times the fees they would pay for their children in a religious-led classical school. Naturally, this cannot last for ever, and it's been going on for 11 years now. Finally, closure faced the College unless the government came to the rescue. \$60,000 was asked for; it didn't come, the college closed its doors for two weeks while the government investigated and then promised \$36,000. After a long period of waiting, only \$11,000 has been advanced, and the only lay classical school in Quebec is on the verge of closing for good. How can they renew contracts with teachers for next year when they can't rely on any help from the government—the same government that feeds millions to religious schools? The government that is headed by Jean Lesage, who said "the same justice for all" in his convocation address!

★

A young Frenchman by the name of André Labarrère-Paule, presented a thesis at the Laval University (Quebec City) on May 13th, which concluded that before passing into the hands of the clergy and its domination, primary education in Quebec in the 19th century was almost wholly in the hands of laymen! His thesis shows that the Church gradually pushed the lay *men* out by small salaries and the use of young girls (easier to manage), etc., etc.

★

Lawyer Guy Pager, QC, is a young chap (40?) who was a candidate for the Union Nationale Party at the last Provincial elections, and who was defeated. The Union Nationale was Duplessis's party and was as corrupt as could be, as is being proven now by an investigation presided over by Judge Salvas (hundreds of thousands of dollars paid in kickbacks to the party machine for government contracts—not *denied!*). Anyway, being a member

of that party, he cannot be accused of being anti-religious or anything like that. In fact, it's members of that party who are chasing the "laics" around, trying to intimidate them in all kinds of ways, such as asking questions in Parliament about the salary of this one and that one (who are leaders of the Laic Movement) who are on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's payroll. However, being a young and very successful lawyer, it was natural for Pager to think of something "modern" and "progressive", in his role as Chairman of the Dorval School-board. Dorval is the small town where the Dorval (Montreal) airport is located. Naturally, with the growth of international traffic Dorval has become just about 50% English, 50% French and a fairly even proportion of Catholics and Protestants. Now, our smart business lawyer thinks up on something so normal, so rational that it's unbelievable anybody should oppose it. He suggests one building where all the children should go to school, although he concedes that girls should have classes on one

side, boys on the other, Protestants on one side, Catholics on the other, etc. But—that's where the rub comes in—only one school yard, only one library, only one laboratory (this is a High School project) *thereby saving money to the community and providing the very best for everybody*, instead of having two or four such sets of facilities.

Well, you can imagine that the *curés* didn't want their good little Catholic children to rub shoulders with English Protestant heretics, even at play. So, underhanded manoeuvres tried to kill the project. Pager, so disgusted at his own people resigned at a mass meeting where he got an ovation. "I had a dream of a fine school", he said (*Montreal Star*, 30/5/61), "equal to the best, but it has become a nightmare . . .". The attack on the conception had begun with an advertisement in a Verdun newspaper, signed "Dorval Parochial Associations Alliance". It had, said Pager, been impossible to learn the identity of the advertisers!

## Ernest Newman

By H. GEORGE FARMER

Personally, I am an Atheist, thank God.

—Ernest Newman, *The Free Review* (1896).

VERY FEW PEOPLE are aware that the famous music critic Ernest Newman not only acknowledged himself an Atheist, but, in his earlier years was a militant Secularist in company with his friend and companion Francis Woollett, known to readers of THE FREETHINKER as "George Underwood". Both of these young men joined the Liverpool Branch of the National Secular Society in 1888, soon after they had heard G. W. Foote at Liverpool in February that year, and on subsequent visits of that great orator, these two young neophytes would spend the Saturday evening in his company. They heard Charles Bradlaugh for the first time in August 1889, and I possess Woollett's account of their impression on that occasion. In September of that year, Newman made his initial appearance as a writer in Bradlaugh's *National Reformer*, and continued to write occasionally for that journal until its demise in 1893. John M. Robertson then started *The Free Review*, to whose pages Newman became a regular contributor. Meanwhile Newman and Woollett were elected to the Committee of the Liverpool Branch of the NSS, and from January, 1894, Newman was a regular lecturer on Sundays. He journeyed to Manchester, Leicester and Chester branches in that capacity. In November that year, he was elected President of the Liverpool Branch, whilst his lecturing activities continued up to May, 1896.

In 1895, Newman's now famous book *Gluck and the Opera* was published, and it created a tremendous impression on the musical and literary world. It has just been reissued by John Calder. Four years later his *Study of Wagner* (1899) swept the musical world off its feet. Newman's pen was now being sought by more "respectable" editors—such as *The Fortnightly Review* and *Contemporary Review*—and as these demands increased Newman found that his leisure evenings as a bank clerk did not allow him to continue his Secularist activities. As a result, Newman resigned the Liverpool presidency in December 1896, although he continued to contribute iconoclastic articles to *The Free Review* (1893-97), *The University Magazine*, which succeeded it (1897-1900), *The Truthseeker* (1896-97), and *The Reformer* (1897-99). That practically closed Newman's career as a militant Secularist.

I knew Newman for over fifty years, having been

introduced to him by Chapman Cohen—who was then Foote's sub-editor of THE FREETHINKER. He had known Newman since the Liverpool days in the NSS and had thrown open the pages of *The Truthseeker* to his pen when Cohen was editor. It was also through Cohen that I met the Woollett family, and on my first visit to Newman at Birmingham in 1907, I was introduced to his wife, *née* Kate Woollett, the brother of Francis Woollett. From that day until 1958 we were in close touch with each other, and I rarely missed visiting him either in Birmingham or at Tadworth or London, whenever vacation or business took me that way. From 1907 to 1924, when I was contributing occasional articles for THE FREETHINKER or other advanced journals, I always sent him a copy, which invariably brought encouraging comments. Those who know his brilliant castigation of A. J. Balfour and others in his *Pseudo-Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (1897)—published under the guise of "Hugh Mortimer Cecil"—will appreciate how belligerent Newman could be. He was irony incarnate as an anti-religionist. Even in his luxurious days on *The Sunday Times*, readers were not slow to observe his "profane wit". His friendship with John M. Robertson—both members of the Liberal Club—lasted until the death of the latter, and so he was *au fait* with what was happening in the Rationalist movement. The Rationalist Press Association nominated him an "Honorary Associate" in 1925, a few years before Earl Russell. Whilst on his last bed of illness he was still taking a provocative interest in the World's Congress of Free-thinkers, and in September 1958 he agreed to serve—if only nominally—on the Ferrer Committee, saying, "You may rest assured that I am still, and will always be with you and my old associates in the field of Freethought".

In spite of his "profane wit", which sometimes pierced the thin-skinned religionists, nobody dared challenge him in print. When his ashes had been scattered one writer objected to his impiety, and donned surplice and stole to dispense a homily on Newman's impiety in *Music and Letters*, October, 1959. This "Holy Willie" urged that if Newman had only made "a little effort to enter imaginatively into a universe of thought and feeling in which religion matters", it "would have made more accurate the scales of a critic". Such pleadings belonged to that type of specious argument which Carlyle called the "pathetic fallacy" because it is always the "touching", the

"pitiable", that appeals to the unthinking and unwary. I made a brief rejoinder to the above in *Music and Letters* at the time but—it being a journal devoted to music—I knew full well that a lengthy letter from the Freethought angle would be refused. However, knowing Newman—not only from his writings but from his innermost thoughts—as a keen debater, I have no doubt that he would have answered that precious "soul-saver" after this fashion, almost *ipsissima verba*, if such *a priori* utterances had ever reached the level of his notice.

Firstly; he would have asked—Are the "scales of a critic" of the Old Testament such as Colenso; those of a critic of philosophy like a Spinoza; those of a literary critic as a Littré; those of a mathematician of the rank of Clifford, any less "accurate" because, being Rationalists, they had not entered that "universe of thought and feeling in which religion matters"? Secondly; Were the "scales" of justice *more* "accurate" in the hands of Pope Innocent VIII, whose infamous Bull of 1484 led to the slaughter of thousands of witches, than they would have been in the hands of the Rationalist Reginald Scot, who was the first to disabuse our minds of that cruel delusion about witchcraft? Was Pope Clement VIII *more* "accurate as a critic of astronomy than Giordano Bruno, who accepted and taught the Copernican system, although the latter was burned at the stake in consequence? I wonder how such questions would be answered? Perhaps I should cry with King Lear—"Give me an ounce of civet good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination".

## CORRESPONDENCE

### G. W. FOOTE

The publication of the two articles by G. W. Foote in the two recent issues of THE FREETHINKER certainly went down well with me.

As you have rightly remarked, only political references enable one to date Foote's writings. There is a vitality and freshness about Foote which I find most appealing. In this age of mass production and standardisation, one looks particularly for the individual, for the man who has something relevant to say and whose mind is not cluttered with the clichés of the standardised cleverness to be found in so many contemporary writers. Perhaps Foote's lucid and incisive style was the product of his age: of a more leisurely and less hurriedly educated age than ours. And we need the likes of Foote today.

I am reminded of an old knife owned by a relative. Shaped long before I was born, this knife was a carving knife made of the finest steel. Made by a craftsman it had served its owner faithfully for many many years and had outlasted many other more polished specimens which had broken or become blunted in the course of time. But the cutting edge of "old faithful" remained as true after half a century of use as on the day it was made.

The founder of THE FREETHINKER, G. W. Foote, was of that calibre. Can we look forward to seeing more of this fine man in the pages of today's FREETHINKERS? J. GORDON.

### PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

The idea of telepathy and thought reading, craftily called "extra-sensory perception" arises from wishful thinking.

Put into a logical way the idea collapses. If "A" can be aware of "B's" thoughts, then A and B would be as one, and life would become hectic for them both.

If millions knew one another's thoughts then life would be a colossal mix up. The ancients thought telepathy possible and the modern ancients think the same.

Thought reading and telepathy are purely speculation, and no satisfactory evidence has been produced to show that they exist. A few coincidences prove nothing, especially among people closely allied, while hole in the corner experiments are useless.

P. TURNER.

### CATHOLIC IMMIGRATION

Might I draw the attention of your readers to an article in a recent *Catholic Times* in which the notorious Roman Catholic convert Douglas Hyde boasts of a report of Sydney University that by 1985 Australia may well have a Roman Catholic majority? This, Mr. Hyde says, is due not only to the high birth-rate but

also to the heavy influx of Catholic immigrants from foreign lands. People here seem reluctant to speak of the danger from uncontrolled immigration of Eireans and other RCs to Britain and the Commonwealth, yet it is one of the principal ways by which Rome seeks to expand. The Australian situation shows that this is by no means fanciful, and I think it is time something was done about it by non-Catholics. Lest anyone should hesitate to urge immigration control on religious grounds; surely the lack of skill, education and social consciousness displayed by Roman Catholic immigrant groups would be ample justification.

FRANCIS SOATER.

## OBITUARY

Clelia Arnold, who has died at the age of 82, was born in Northern Italy, and claimed descent on her mother's side from a patriot who led her native city of Alessandria in the Middle Ages when it repelled the German invader, Frederick Barbarossa. Her father was a friend and supporter of Garibaldi, and she was named after Garibaldi's daughter. She early abandoned the Roman Catholic Church in which she had been brought up by her mother, and was particularly attracted by the French philosophers. She came to England in the days of hansom cabs and horse buses, and was London correspondent of an Italian paper, reporting especially on the English suffragette movement and sporting the suffragette colours. Her brother was persecuted and for a time imprisoned by the Fascists, and her brother-in-law, MP for Como, was interned by them. His wife, Clelia Arnold's sister, played her part in the Italian resistance movement.

A Secular Service and personal tribute to Clelia Arnold was spoken by the General Secretary of the National Secular Society in the presence of her son and daughter, to whom we send our deepest sympathy.

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