

The Freethinker

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THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY as is clearly implied by its title, stands primarily for a secular social order; that is, for the complete separation of Church and State, for the classic formula "a free Church in a free State" and a social order in which all religions are equal in the sight of the law. One may add that, during the near century since Bradlaugh founded the National Secular Society, the secular principle has spread from country to country.

We are all secularists nowadays—with a few exceptions of which this country (or rather these countries, for Scotland also has its State Church guaranteed by the Act of Union 1707) happens to be one. As I have noted before in these

columns, in a multi-racial, multi-religious Commonwealth the metropolis, Great Britain, still retains the medieval principle of a State Church, or again rather of two State Churches to both of which the reigning dynasty belongs by a curious anachronism, simultaneously.

The Critics of the Establishment

However, today the basic principle of the Establishment is coming under hostile fire, and not only from the National Secular Society and other non-Christian critics of the Church of England (and Scotland) by law established. Here indeed, though for widely divergent reasons, both Christian extremes, the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and the Nonconformist Churches on the other, are currently opposed to the Establishment. For, whereas the Nonconformist Churches are, historically if not always factually, opposed to the basic principles of the Establishment, the Roman Catholic Church entirely endorses them, and in a form much more extreme than Anglicanism has ever dared to do since the now remote day of that potential founder of an Anglican "Papacy" in Stuart times, Archbishop Laud of Canterbury. Both Rome and Canterbury know what an Established Church is; they only disagree which it is. For, whatever may be Roman tactics at any given time, every Roman Catholic is bound in conscience to work for the disestablishment of "the sacriligious Communion founded by Elizabeth I" and for its eventual replacement by the One True Church of Rome. (It must be remembered that Rome does not recognise the validity of Anglican orders; in the eyes of Rome, Anglican bishops and priests are merely laymen.)

In practice, the Vatican appears at present rather reluctant to force this issue, no doubt out of fear of opening the floodgates for more extreme forms of unbelief. Over and above these non-Anglican critics, there now appears to be a growing movement inside the Church of England which desires the abolition, or at least, the modification of the present terms of Establishment. From this critical, but Anglican point of view, the whole question of the present and the future relations of Church and State, was reviewed in an article in *The Times* on June 21st, and I am obliged to my esteemed friend, Major Draper for

bringing it to my notice. Though *The Times* may not now be quite the all-powerful arbiter of respectable opinion that it once was in Victorian days, it no doubt still reflects a sufficiently influential body of opinion.

The Establishment Past and Present

The Times article was entitled simply "The Anglican Church". It began (as one would expect) with a brief review of the historical circumstances under which the

Church of England first saw the light in the era of the Reformation. Here, the conclusions expressed can hardly claim much originality, for it has long been common knowledge among students of all shades of opinion that "the Anglican

Church was an essay in reconciliation", as also that "the motive for it was as much political as religious; it was largely the product of statesmen [i.e. of the Tudor monarchy F.A.R.] operating on the assumption that religious homogeneity, or at any rate, the public appearance of it, was a condition of civil peace". Or, put briefly, the Establishment in England was originally the creation of politicians, at least as much as of theologians, and its official formulae (the Elizabethan Thirty-Nine Articles) are politically lucid but theologically ambiguous documents—no doubt often deliberately so. In a sentence, the Anglican Church was intended by its founders to be a middle of the road Church which repudiated both extremes alike, Catholic and Protestant. Such a politically created Church could not, as *The Times* then adds, avoid a close and lasting intimacy with the contemporary English State.

Archbishop Ramsey and the Establishment

In felicitating the new Archbishop, St. Augustine's one hundredth successor, *The Times* appears to regard Dr. Ramsey, as at least up to a point, a critic of the traditional relationship between Church and State and as an advocate of some changes in this respect. Precisely what kind of changes are not indicated too lucidly, but we are explicitly told that "many forces of which laymen are largely unconscious, are at work drawing together hitherto opposed ecclesiastical traditions". The inference from this appears perhaps to be that change in the Establishment is overdue, and that Dr. Ramsey is in favour of it. Indeed since this *Times* article saw the light, Dr. Ramsey has already made what is perhaps the first step (proverbially the hardest) in this direction by appointing a committee with terms of reference which seem designed to raise, sooner or later, the whole question of future Church-State relationship in England. Where do we—and the Church of England—go from there?

Has Anglicanism Any Future?

Writing in a non-Christian paper such as this, one must end on a more critical note than the traditionalist *Times* permits itself to express. Could a partially or completely disestablished Anglican Church hope to survive at all without the hitherto potent support given by its official connections? In a world of free and fierce religious

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Church and State in 1961

By F. A. RIDLEY

competition, what reason can *The Times* (or the Archbishop) give for believing that Anglicanism, deprived of its still considerable prestige as a State Church and deeply divided as it is between High and Low Church factions (not to mention its considerable Modernist element) is capable of standing up successfully to the now fast-mounting tide of the Roman Catholic "Counter Reformation", on the one hand, or to the dynamic challenge of Atheism and of non-religious Humanism on the other, in an age of breath-taking scientific advance? Dr. Ramsey is himself alleged to have stated prior to his accession, very honestly

"He Descended into Hell"

By C. STANLEY

HELL LOOMED SO LARGE in the early Church, and indeed still does with Fundamentalists, that it is strange the "Big Four" had no knowledge of what happened to Jesus between the time he said "It is finished" and the hour that he called upon his followers for supper (Luke 24, 42). Certainly, if the Lord was under the impression that he had finished the redeeming process he was very much mistaken. Indeed, Jesus must have been badly briefed by his Father in Heaven when sent out on his mission, for he informed his parent (even before being arrested): "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17, 4).

However, the person to be thanked for what information we have of the happenings during the three days and three nights (which were compressed into about 28 hours or less!) is Nicodemus, who wrote during the first century, his Apocryphal Gospel formerly called the "Acts of Pontius Pilate". It is known from the descriptions given by Charinus and Lenthuis (the sons of Simeon), that in spite of all the fire, Hell is dark ("in the blackness of darkness") so one may imagine the surprise of the occupants when, according to Nicodemus, "on a sudden there appeared the colour of the sun like gold and a subsequent purple coloured light enlightening the place".

It was to be expected that Adam (as part author of all our troubles), would be an inmate of Hell; perhaps also Isaiah who, according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol. 15 p. 451), had misled Matthew regarding the prophecy of the birth of the Blessed Lord; but it is rather surprising to find that Simeon, who had taken the infant Jesus in his arms in the Temple (Luke 2, 29-30) should be there too. The next one who came forth, "like a little hermit", was none other than that glorious forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist, and one can only assume him to have been a stowaway, for he was "asked by everyone who art Thou?" The Baptist replied, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness", seemingly having the job of going before Jesus on all occasions announcing him both on earth and in Hell. On hearing John's words, Adam introduced his son Seth, who told a long story of a visit to Paradise to beg a cure for his father's headache.

It has generally been assumed that Satan was in sole charge of Hell, but, according to Nicodemus, there is a Prince of Hell who had an infernal quarrel with Satan. It is not at all clear what the quarrel was about but it terminated in the Prince showing Satan the door. Satan however, refused to leave.

During the time of the quarrel between the powers of evil, Jesus (waiting in the wings as it were) was getting impatient, as were the Saints who demanded, "Open thy gates that the King of Glory may come in". The Prince of Hell inquired, "Who is that King of Glory?" and

and (in my opinion) accurately, that once disestablished, Anglicanism would merely represent a small and not particularly important sect. *The Times* (perhaps understandably) does not quote this dictum.

However, *pace* our contemporary's perhaps too optimistic view of the situation, I incline to the view that the Establishment now represents the lifeline of Anglicanism and that, once withdrawn, once no longer the Church of England, the division and ultimate disintegration of Anglicanism (at least in England) would represent by far the most probable sequel.

David, the man after God's own heart, a resident in Hell, took upon himself to answer. He began to quote some of his own work, starting with Psalm 102, 19-20, when the Lord himself having lost all patience appeared "in the form of a man and enlightened those places which had ever before been in darkness". Emboldened by Jesus's arrival, David proceeded to abuse his landlord. "And now, thou filthy and stinking Prince of Hell" he ordered, "open thy gate that the King of Glory may enter in; for he is the Lord of heaven and earth". And with the Lord's appearance, all the damned cried: "Who art thou who hast no signs of corruption?" (disproving St. Jerome's idea that only the soul of Jesus went to Hell).

After Jesus had listened to peons of praise with silent dignity, he trampled upon death, "seized the Prince of Hell, deprived him of all his power and took our earthly father Adam with him to glory". The Prince of Hell then thoroughly lost his temper with Satan, and the King of Glory, as a recompense for taking away Adam and his sons, gave the Prince of Hell dominion over Satan for ever—thereby following his parents' example of making concessions to the powers of evil.

Adam, finding that after all, he was to be taken away to glory, began reciting the 30th Psalm. As this was composed long after Adam's time on earth, it can only be assumed that he learned it from David during their residence together in Hell.

Jesus then made the "sign of the cross upon Adam and all his saints" and taking Adam's right hand, ascended from Hell. The saints followed, while David, saying "Sing unto the Lord a new song", proceeded to repeat parts of the 98th Psalm.

According to Nicodemus, Jesus delivered Adam to Michael, the Archangel, and met Enoch and Elijah in Heaven, together with the "blessed thief" crucified with him. Presumably, though, he never met God, for in John (20,17), Mary Magdalene is forbidden to touch him because "I am not yet ascended to my Father".

WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS

Conference at Beatrice Webb House, near Dorking, Surrey
September 8th to 10th, 1961

Friday evening, September 8th:

8.30 p.m.: Lady Barbara Wootton, F. A. Ridley, J. Hutton Hynd and J. Cotereau.

Saturday morning, September 9th:

Professor Olivier Lutaud (Sorbonne), "Early Freethinkers in England and France, 1633-1688", and Professor Sargant Florence (Emeritus, Birmingham), "Religious Obstacles in Backward Countries".

Saturday afternoon—free.

Walk for those who wish it.

Saturday evening:

Fenner Brockway, M.P., "The Challenge of Africa".

Sunday morning, September 10th:

Professor Marcel Homès (Brussels), "Plant Physiology and Hunger in the World"; and Professor Jeger (Utrecht).

Sunday afternoon: Dr. Maurice Burton, "Scientists May Burst Bubbles"; and G. A. Kirk.

Religious Teaching — and its Results

By COLIN McCALL

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE'S Sunday reading includes both *The Observer* and the *Sunday Express*. It was certainly useful to have these two rather different newspapers on July 23rd, for they were curiously complementary. But first let us recall that the Minister of Education, Sir David Eccles—an avowed “great believer in denominational education”—asked in the House of Commons on July 17th, “How seriously is religious instruction taken in the schools?”

It was Sir David's question that prompted an article in *The Observer* the following Sunday on “Secondary Modern RK” by Arthur Barton, contrasting religious teaching forty years ago with today. Mr. Barton couldn't “pretend” that the intensive religious instruction of his boyhood (by the age of twelve he had “read most of the Old Testament, learned by heart ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth’ and a number of Psalms, knew the Gospels pretty thoroughly, and had a nodding acquaintance with a little of St. Paul's voluminous correspondence”) “made us all saints, or even that we were very different from most of the young people of the present day”, but he claims that “it gave, as the classics do in the public schools, a kind of useful lining to our minds that is often lacking today”. He doesn't elaborate on this, beyond saying, “Our moral sense went right back to Moses and ‘Thou shalt not’, tempered (but perhaps not enough) by the new law of love, and our teachers and parents appeared to accept this wholeheartedly”.

Today, says Mr. Barton, “many teachers are neither believers nor willing to pretend to be” and “because there are so few practising Christians about, RK specialists are hard to find . . .”. Religion, therefore, becomes “the Cinderella of the curriculum”, and the statutory morning assembly is often “a deplorable travesty of worship”. He has actually been on a staff where “only three out of twenty were present, and conversation drowned the prayers”, though I should think this is exceptional. I can quite believe him when he tells us that:

On a typical Secondary Modern staff there may be one or two convinced Christians, but this is by no means probable. As these persons have usually come to teach other subjects, and as their religion is their own affair, they do not necessarily teach RK at all. The rest of the staff simply have little or no interest in religion and do not wish to practise or teach it. But I can't accept that the young men who, he says, “are scathing in their denunciations of the Churches, the clergy, and the absurdities of dogma”, have “generally speaking, no religious background”. Did they not receive religious instruction (of sorts) at school, and are they not sons of Mr. Barton's own generation which was taught “conscientiously and well”? This is surely a religious background, though it may often have been discarded.

However, since the war, Mr. Barton's conviction has grown that:

it would do religion no harm, and perhaps a great deal of good, if it could be cut right out of the State school curriculum, at any rate after the primary stage. (There are perhaps enough believing women there to make it less of a mockery.) He thinks it only a question of time before this happens anyway, “and the sooner the better”.

With this, of course, I fully agree. Freethinkers have long been arguing for secular education, and they once enjoyed the support of the Labour Party (including its leader, J. Ramsey Macdonald), the Trade Union Congress, and many Nonconformists. For one reason or another—sincere, selfish or apathetic—such support is now at a

minimum, and it is left for a Christian teacher, Mr. Barton, to put forward the secular solution to the problem of religion in schools. True, his motives are different and he doesn't go the whole way, excluding Church of England and Roman Catholic schools as well as retaining the subject at primary level, but his proposals would make a worthwhile beginning. Dare we hope that our pious Minister of Education will give them consideration?

That might be too much to expect. But, judging from his public statements, Sir David would agree with Mr. Barton's remark that in Roman Catholic schools, “religion is thoroughly and efficiently taught”. Let us then turn now from *The Observer* to the *Express*; to an article by Gerald Kemmet, ominously headed, “Number of Catholics in jail is called a scandal”. And should it be thought that this is anti-Catholic propaganda, let me give details of the speaker. He is Monsignor John Bennett, Provost of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral and Chairman of the Roman Catholic Child Welfare Council, and he asked a conference of social workers in London:

“Are we to accept with indifference the scandal of our Catholic prison population, which is out of proportion to our numbers?”

“Or the proportion of Catholic children committed to approved schools?”

Monsignor Bennett described an analysis of juvenile delinquency that he himself made in Liverpool “some years ago”.

“In one ward [he said] was a Catholic school and a non-Catholic school in exactly the same environment. Delinquency in the Catholic school was greater than in the non-Catholic school”.

He thus confirmed the finding of the Rev. H. D. Longbottom as given in the pamphlet, *Creed and Juvenile Crime* (Protestant Truth Society). And he wondered “whether the impact of the natural law in the non-Catholic school was greater than the impact of the supernatural law in the Catholic school”.

The Monsignor put the blame on Roman Catholic parents who “resisted the influence of their religion”, but he can't excuse his Church as easily as that. After all, it insists on the superiority of a Catholic education and Mr. Barton testifies that in Roman Catholic schools “religion is thoroughly and efficiently taught”, this being his reason for excluding such schools from secularisation. Yet the Monsignor admits that the Catholic prison population and the Catholic child delinquent population is out of proportion to numbers in the population as a whole. Were these phenomena limited to one time or one place, it might plausibly be argued that they were coincidental, but this is no longer possible. Despite official secrecy, here and elsewhere, this paper and others, like *The Rock* of Australia, have uncovered a great deal of evidence showing that the correlation of Catholicism with a greater tendency towards crime is common, if not invariable.

“THE BIBLE HANDBOOK”

This year has seen the publication to the accompaniment of enormous publicity (not to mention a lawsuit!) of the New Testament part of the New English Bible. The translators might well have spared themselves fourteen years' mountainous labour to produce this mouse had they consulted a copy of *The Bible Handbook* by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. No Bible, new or old, could stand up to the searching statistical analysis of *The Bible Handbook*, and the Pioneer Press has just issued a newly printed 11th Edition for the still remarkably low price of five shillings (plus 8d. postage).

This Believing World

Though women are in the main the backbone of religion, there are quite a few who are not afraid to speak out and declare their unbelief. For instance, there is — according to the *Daily Mail*, July 17 — “a row” between Alderman Mrs. Dunbar who is the Socialist Mayor of Willesden, and the Conservative MP for Willesden East, Mr. T. Skeet. The Mayor, it appears, “does not believe in the traditional conception of God” — in fact, she believes that it is “man who has created God.” This has upset Mr. Skeet, who considers it was not part of her duty to declare outright, “I believe that man has created God . . .”

★

Mrs. Dunbar retorted that she is “much more concerned with what the people of Willesden think than what Mr. Skeet says”; and she added that the only complaints she had received came from two parsons; none at all from the people, who “do not appear to be disturbed”. The point to note in all this is how hurt religious people are when their beliefs are questioned in this way, and how anxious they are to make unbelievers *shut up*. Never should they be allowed to say outright anything which makes religion look silly — even if true. And yet there is no doubt whatever that it is man who has created all the Gods.

★

If thy can't convert the people of England to the nonsense which characterises the religion of the Witnesses of Jehovah these people often have their way where the lives of their children are concerned. The other day a boy of 15 had to have a blood transfusion under a doctor's order to save his life, and his very religious mother, a Jehovah's Witness, refused permission. “I would rather let him die” she angrily declared. Similar instances of this bigoted fanaticism are constantly reported, and we are glad to notice that questions have been raised in Parliament about this particular kind of pious callousness. It should be forcibly stopped by law.

★

A highly devout and saintly Protestant tract has come our way, entitled “Too Late”. The sacred stories which fill it are really too good to be true and could almost cause a chimpanzee to chuckle. One of them concerns a lady who could not sleep one night, and so got up to write a note that she would attend to her soul next week. Alas, the next day she was taken ill and died, her last words being, “I am too late! I am lost!” It just shows how you must be on your toes if you want to save your soul.

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That there are still people who can lap up this saintly drivel is truly a miracle — but there it is. The Roman Church has got a little beyond it, but not much. It finds Lourdes and Fatima more to the taste of its heavenly-minded dupes than Protestant tracts, but there is little difference in the ultimate between the two superstitions.

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By the way, Roman Catholics who are sometimes forced to discuss the Bible — it is a job they would have preferred not to do — insist that their Bible has the “Imprimatur” of the Church — as if that meant anything. No Catholic is allowed to print the Bible without an express permit from the Church. It was God himself who chose the writers and assisted them to write — though naturally he allowed them to express the inspired record in their own way. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Douai Version, the translation into English from the Vulgate, has had to be revised so many times that it now can hardly be recognised compared with the first edition. It proves how wonderfully “inspiration” can work.

Paine Commemorations

THE COMMEMORATION two years ago of the 150th anniversary of the death of Thomas Paine, in which the National Secular Society and other organisations in Britain took part, still echoes around the globe; readers may like to know that I have just received from Colonel Richard Gimbel a recent reprint of part of the proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, which not only mention a report in THE FREETHINKER of the Paine Exhibition in 1959 at the Marx Memorial Library in Clerkenwell Green, but also the meeting on 7th June at the Conway Hall, organised jointly by the Humanist Council and the World Union of Freethinkers.

These two events are contained in an interesting section that Colonel Gimbel, one of the best authorities on Paine in America, has compiled on the numerous celebrations to honour Paine's memory, usually held on anniversaries of his birthday — 29th January 1737. This booklet went to press too early for mention of the commemorative meeting that the Marble Arch Branch of the NSS held on 29th January, this year, which I had the honour to address, though work that my late father, Adrian Brunel, did to help restore Thomas Paine to his rightful place in history is given credit.

Basically, this booklet is a catalogue of a selection of Colonel Gimbel's Paine collection, on show at Yale University Library in October 1959, but I have never known an exhibition catalogue to be so thrilling, as he has expanded it into a most interesting biography of Paine, which make it a valuable addition to the literature on this great world democrat. With its many illustrations it should stimulate in a graphic way the resurgent interest in Paine.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

THEATRE

SEAN O'CASEY AT THE MERMAID

Nobody could call *The Bishop's Bonfire* (Mermaid Theatre, London) a masterpiece. Nobody, on the other hand, could deny that it has the master's touch. The boisterous comedy is interspersed with moments of poignancy and tenderness, and it culminates in tragedy. Yet “culminates” is hardly the right word, for the tragedy is really there throughout; and it is the tragedy of Ireland, a country which has—as Sean O'Casey says in his programme notes for this London première—“an almost all-powerful clergy, and the Roman Catholic Bishops are *ipso facto* the Government of the country”. Catholicism is the tragedy of Ireland, and it is the tragedy in the play. If O'Casey didn't ridicule it it would be unbearable, as unbearable as it is to some of the characters.

“The one thing that's increased in Ireland,” says Codger, “is the population of stone and metal saints.” And of one of them, he says, “It smells as much of mercy as the county court.” Delightfully played by comedian Davy Kaye, he is perhaps the only really happy character in the play, happy because he sees that the gold in the Bishop's mitre is nothing to the gold in the gorse; because he is “a bad Catholic”. The Canon and the Councillor are self-satisfied (especially when made Monsignor and Papal Count respectively) but not happy. And we can appreciate the feelings of the ex-seminarist: “When I look at the Bishop who's coming, and the Monsignor that's here, I'm glad I escaped from the honour and glory of the priesthood”. Of the two girls, one's life has already been ruined by religion, the other's is in course of being so; though she doesn't intend to give up without a fight. Annette Crosbie is charming here.

It is a sad play, then; sad like Ireland, with men taking refuge in drink or pitiful prayer (“Sweet man do you never get tired praying?”). But the comedy is glorious at times. We roar at the impersonation of the Bishop, with a lampshade for mitre, or at the potted palm on the mahogany table; the discussion on protecting Ireland from Russian invasion is O'Casey at his best, and it is an inspired touch that the revolver hung up by the Lieutenant because it hurts his hip should be the instrument of tragedy.

Yet *The Bishop's Bonfire* doesn't quite come off. It may be due to the overacting, particularly in the first act when I often closed my eyes to hear the words unhindered. And what words! O'Casey is a poet still.

C.M.C.

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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- 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. G. H. MILLS 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, D. H. TRIBE and H. A. TIMMINS.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
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- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY

Notes and News

WHILE THE PRIMARY FUNCTION of THE FREETHINKER, as the only weekly journal of its kind in the English-speaking world, must be the review of current affairs from the Freethought standpoint, it has always striven to give its readers something of permanent educational value. We are very happy therefore, to begin (on page 246) a series on "Four Philosophers" by Dr. Henry George Farmer. These longish articles—on Plato, Hobbes and Kant, as well as Socrates—will, we are sure, be much appreciated.

WE HOPE THE TRADE UNIONS and other bodies will fully support Mr. Arnold Wesker, the playwright, and his colleagues who have now drawn up a plan based on last year's TUC Resolution 42 to bring the Arts to the people. The Centre 42 Council, which includes Miss Doris Lessing, the novelist and Mr. Sean Kenny, the stage designer, hopes to set up a central base in London: "A large disused building, preferably in the centre of a community such as Camden Town or Battersea, where we can get away from the traditional concept of a theatre, concert hall and art gallery — a space capable of functioning as a cinema in the morning, a dance hall in the evening, and a night club after midnight, and capable of presenting an exhibition and a jiving session at the same time". From this centre a mobile pavilion would go out into the provinces, leading, it is hoped, to the establishment of similar centres in other towns. It is an exciting conception and we fervently hope it materialises.

F. A. RIDLEY LAST WEEK lightheartedly suggested that the frequent visits of Dr. Billy Graham "to reclaim the British people from the lusts of the flesh and the wiles of the Devil" were an insult to our "bone fide men of God". These latter, however, might find consolation from an item in *Time* (21/7/61), which indicated a deficiency in the

evangelist's powers of distinguishing heaven from hell. The former he identified with churchgoing Minnesota (his headquarters state), which he called "a moral and spiritual paradise", where there is "less crime, immorality and open sin than anywhere in the northern part of the United States". Yet Minneapolis, the city in which he was speaking, had been forced in the past month to boost taxes to fight a 30 per cent increase in crime, and a convention of building managers had described its prostitution as the most "open and blatant" they had seen.

MEANWHILE, BRITAIN'S own evangelist, Eric Hutchings, (of whom some are no doubt proud) claimed to have converted 2,000 during his "Greater" Nottingham Crusade lasting five weeks and costing around £20,000. One city church cited by Mr. Hutchings even increased its Sunday evening congregation by thirty according to the *Nottingham Evening News*. Our own Nottingham veteran, Tom Mosley, challenged Mr. Hutchings to debate any lunch-time on the Market Square, but the offer was not accepted, though some of his lieutenants held one or two half-hourly meetings there. As for the Hutchings crusade at the Ice Palace, Mr. Mosley described it as primitive stuff, viz.: "You may have gone to church or chapel all your lives and lived decently, but unless you are born again and give your heart to Jesus . . . you are doomed to hell". It was, says Mr. Mosley, "a real circus", and he wrote and told the *Evening News* so. He also asked how many Atheists had been converted. The letter was not published.

IN AN INTERVIEW with W. J. Weatherby in *The Guardian* (21/7/61), 88-years-old John Cowper Powys stressed that he had not changed at all in his own beliefs, though his son had been converted to Roman Catholicism and then had converted his mother. The famous novelist, who has survived them both "boomed": "I still hate God. I can't accept hell as a good invention, of sending people to the fires down there and look for some good in the Devil . . .". Older Freethinkers will remember John Cowper's brother, Llewelyn Powys, author of *The Pathetic Fallacy*, who died in 1940. Llewelyn was a complete unbeliever: John Cowper felt that "the real reality lies behind it all, and that 'something' in us answers to 'something' outside it all", as he wrote in the Preface to Llewelyn's *Rats in the Sacristy*.

IN THE SAME ISSUE OF *The Guardian*, Wayland Young had a mordant comment on the recent Public Opinion poll announcement that three-quarters of the Americans are prepared to risk a nuclear war for West Berlin. "Any reasonably clued-up pollster could have got three quarters of the Jews in a cattle truck to say they were in favour of ovens", he said.

AS WE NOTED last week, July 27th was the 200th anniversary of the birth of Thomas "Clio" Rickman. We were pleased to see the occasion fittingly celebrated by *The Times* under "Tom Paine's Biographer". Paine wrote part two of *The Rights of Man* while living with Rickman at 7 Upper Marylebone Street, now 154 New Cavendish Street, and Rickman had a brass plate affixed to the table used. *The Times* says: "The table appears to have been last seen in public at a Thomas Paine Exhibition held in 1896 at the Bradlaugh Institute in Newington Green Road. At that time it belonged to the daring publisher Edward True-love, of Hornsey. Where is it now? The late Adrian Brunel, a leading authority on Paine, made many unsuccessful efforts to trace it".

Four Philosophers: 1—Socrates

By H. GEORGE FARMER

THE SOCRATIC DOCTRINE that "Virtue is knowledge" is probably the earliest philosophic axiom, since Socrates was the first of the Greeks to deal with ethics upon a scientific foundation. Such was the view of Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, xiii. 4). To appreciate that statement, it is advisable to turn back the pages of Greek thought. Passing over the Pythagoreans, who seem to have applied their "theory of numbers" to ethics, defining virtue as "harmony", the first speculative interest in ethics may be traced to Heraclitus and Democritus. The philosophy of naturalism which they taught led them to the view of man's submission to the universal order of things, although many of their ethical opinions are strangely prophetic of some Socratic precepts that were to come. To these philosophers the well-being of the state was dependent on the dominion of the law.

Contentment and happiness—which were the highest good—came from man himself *via* his submission to law. (Heraclitus.) Contentment and happiness were attained by temperance and symmetry in life. (Democritus.) In spite of those opinions, ethics was not a science with those philosophers, since there is no trace that they even correlated their ethics with their physical theories, although such was clearly the outcome of the latter. The Sophists' attitude towards ethics was explained in the proposition that "Man is the measure of the universe", and they insisted that a universal objective truth was non-existent, since all that we experienced was subjective and relative. This meant that an absolute interpretation of ethics was equally as impossible as an absolute interpretation of the universe. It was into that arena that Socrates stepped, to all intent and purpose as an opponent of Sophistic teaching, to become—as Hegel said—the "inventor of morality", or more properly the "science of morality".

It is not easy however to state consistently the precise attitude of Socrates to the problem because the philosopher left no writings on the subject, our only sources concerning him being derived from two disciples, Plato and Xenophon. Further, we are faced with what would appear to be glaring paradoxes and self-contradictions. In many things, Socrates held views in common with the Sophists. Natural philosophy, they both demurred, was almost a waste of time. Nothing save ethical philosophy was worth serious attention. Yet they both believed that ethical philosophy should be the result of reflection, but they parted on the question of the means by which that reflection should function. The Sophists argued that all reflection was subjective and relative, *i.e.* that mental phenomena were the result of sensation. Whilst in partial agreement with that, Socrates pointed out that there was something more to be taken into consideration, in that natural man possessed certain instincts from all time which were distinct from the subjective world. Thus it would appear that Socrates did not differ absolutely from the Sophists of the calibre of Protagoras and Georgias, although he felt that they did not go far enough. However, it is only by taking the various postulates of Socrates as expressed in the *Meno*, *Protagoras*, and *Republic* of Plato, as well as the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, together with such directions to be found in the *Ethics* of Aristotle, that a proper perspective of the Socratic doctrine that "Virtue is knowledge" can be obtained. We must not forget that—to the ancients—happiness was the ultimate effect of a first cause which was "Knowledge". Socrates traced that back thus:—

Happiness—Good—Virtue—Knowledge. To appreciate that doctrine, a Socratic sequence of questions regarding the nature and meaning of the above would seem to be the easiest method of enquiry.

What is Happiness? To Socrates, happiness could not come from external things; and he asks us to despise all such outward signs. He conceives happiness as an inward joy, the source of which is inward good. Riches, success, and other outward visible signs, do not of necessity bring happiness, for indeed they often bring the opposite. Only in the inward sense "may it be truly said that happiness does not deceive the hope of those who put their trust in it". Socrates leads us to appreciate that there is a true and a false happiness. Just as he would trace the source of *true happiness*, so he would show the origin of *illusory pleasure* in this way:

THE TRUE	THE ILLUSORY
Knowledge	Ignorance
Virtue	Vice
Good	Evil
Happiness	Pleasure

It is manifest from the above that the only means by which happiness can be reached is through the "good", which issues from "virtue". (*Republic*, I.). It is the good man who alone is happy, and in the *Republic* (II) Plato shows how the "just man will be scourged, racked, fettered, have his eyes burnt out, and at last, after suffering every kind of torture, will be crucified", and yet be happy, because he himself is just and good.

What is Good? In the *Memorabilia* (III, 8, 9, 4) the "good" is defined as that which is useful and beneficial to man, although elsewhere (*Memorabilia*, IV, 4, 6) he says it is simply obedience to the laws of the state and the "unwritten laws" of the gods! Since the good is nothing more than that which is useful and beneficial—and everyone must desire his own good in this respect—it is therefore impossible that anyone can voluntarily choose evil. (*Meno*, 10.) If a man falls into vice says Socrates, it is not because he wills to be vicious, but because through ignorance he does not know what virtue is. Just as evil is the offspring of vice, so good is the child of virtue.

What is Virtue? This is the question which Meno puts to Socrates, when the latter is made to answer—merely for the purpose of dialectic—that he does not know what virtue is. Meno suggests that Georgias knew, and Socrates asks Meno to repeat to him his definition of virtue. Unfortunately Meno is a mere tyro at definitions, and at every attempt that he makes, Socrates seeks to prove its fallacy. To the very end of the dialogue we are kept on the tip-toe of expectancy for a clear definition. Socrates leaves us unsatisfied, and only tells us what virtue is *not!* In the *Memorabilia* the definition of virtue is still wanting. All that we are told is that he who does right must necessarily be both wise and prudent, and similarly he who is just must be wise (IX, 4, 5.) Aristotle says that Socrates thought that all the virtues were prudences, and avers that in this opinion Socrates was wrong; but that in so far as they were not without prudence, he was right. (*Ethics*, XIII, 3). In the *Protagoras* the question is pushed further, and we are there shown that wisdom and temperance cannot be different from each other, nor can justice and prudence, nor wisdom and courage, and in all these things "knowledge" must be presupposed. The proposition is best stated in the *Republic*, where Socrates maintains the opinion that four things comprise virtue.

and they are—wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. One of these, however, is supreme over the remainder, and that is justice. And so Socrates argues thus: Wisdom is the knowledge requisite for governing the state; courage is the knowledge necessary for protecting the state; temperance is the knowledge essential for the harmony of the state; and justice is the knowledge which gives perfect adjustment to the three preceding requisites. It follows, therefore, that "Virtue is knowledge".

What is Knowledge? Socrates discriminates between knowledge and opinion, and in this divergence he parted company with the Sophists. In the *Meno* it is demonstrated that knowledge is evolved from within the mind itself out of something that is anterior to sense perception. Opinion, on the other hand, is a deduction from externals. He assumes in this dialogue that the mind possesses an elemental, universal truth that is quite free and absolutely distinct from the subjective world. [Such a speculation is the *primum mobile* of all religions.] It is out of this mind of potential truth—says the author—that knowledge comes, brought forth by introspective discipline alone. To prove this Socrates takes a boy slave who is quite ignorant of mathematics, and by introspective discipline, educes from the mind of the slave the correct answers to a certain geometrical axiom which he had put to the boy. From this Socrates insists that he has proved that knowledge is no more than reminiscence, since the results were obtained from within the mind itself, without the slightest appeal to external experience, and claims that this was something that was known in a former state of existence. In the *Meno* then, Knowledge, with this particular meaning, is the only foundation of virtue, but since we see that "good" and "beauty" are used as relative terms in the *Memorabilia* (VIII), opinion must also be allowed a place in the ethical system of Socrates, in spite of apparent arguments to the contrary. (*Meno*.)

Can Virtue be taught? This question takes up a considerable portion of the dialogue of the *Meno* and *Protagoras*. In the former a brilliant discussion takes place in which Socrates insists that if "Virtue is knowledge", it follows that it can be taught. Yet he attempts to prove—equally as convincing—that since there are no teachers of it Virtue cannot be taught, but that whoever possesses virtue "it is present by a divine fate". The *Protagoras* opens with Socrates affirming that virtue cannot be taught, with Protagoras stressing the opposite opinion; and yet, at the end of the dialogue we find Protagoras using arguments in accord with Socrates, whilst Socrates actually demonstrates that *it can be taught!*

For the ancients, the Socrates doctrine opened up a new basis for ethics, by giving it a scientific interpretation through his philosophy of concepts. At the same time, the discussion of his doctrine by Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and others, showed that there were flaws in it. Moderns also find it difficult to see "eye to eye" with many of his theories. Yet the whole of his teaching shows that all knowledge must begin with concepts, a truly scientific approach. His distinction between knowledge and opinion is by no means clear. Perhaps it is mainly on account of his similes—such as the case of the slave boy—that we have difficulty in accepting some of his opinions. If we steer clear of the Socratic use of the word knowledge in its abstract sense, we have, in his doctrine, the foundation and test of all morality. Even today, after two millenia have passed, we still make right conduct depend on knowledge, and especially that knowledge which is gained by reflection. Even reasoning and reflection on non-moral subjects would seem—in the long run—to assist a proper moral outlook, since one can readily conceive an un-

reasoning and unreflecting man being—to say the least—inconsistent in moral habit. The Delphian precept—"Know Thyself", so strangely insisted on by Socrates, is as true today as then.

Finally there is in Socratic doctrine that axiom which Plato posits in the *Republic* that good or bad actions produce good or bad habits. (IV, 444.) This is developed by Aristotle (*Ethics*, II), where man is assumed to have certain innate capacities for virtue which, he says, may be improved by education and matured by habit. Although neither Socrates nor Aristotle recognised that those so-called "innate capacities" were no more than the past habits of countless generations which had become organised physiologically in the human race, yet they clearly recognised the value of habituation in moral teaching and effort. Socrates even lays it down that virtue, unless constantly exercised, will falter and die. (*Memorabilia*, II, 14-23.)

Eichmann's Austrian Accomplices

EVERY YEAR thousands of tourists and holidaymakers go to Austria to enjoy and admire the scenic beauty of her mountains; but they do not know that in two churches in the Tyrol, the true rulers of the country, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, still exhibit tablets to foster among the backward peasants, the atrocious libel of Ritual Murder as perpetrated by the Jews.

One of these shameful memorials is in the Church of St. Andrews in Lienz, an important railway junction, only a few miles away from Bad Gastein, the internationally known spa—a fashionable watering place to which, among others, Jews from all over the world are flocking. *Echo*, an Austrian weekly, reported some time ago that only last year—1960 AD—a tablet in memory of a four year old girl, Ursula Böck, was cleaned and repaired. Guides show visitors around and tell the story that this poor Christian child was murdered by the Jews on Good Friday, 1443. The same story may be read in a pertinent guide book, published by Schnell & Steiner, Munich and Zurich, Jews having confessed under torture to having committed the crime.

Various charitable organisations such as the League for the Rights of Man appealed to the Church authorities to have this tablet removed, but the hierarchy has steadfastly refused under the strange pretext that a removal of this relic of the Dark Ages would be embarrassing to the population! Those who still keep this atrocious libel alive, after the real massacre under Nazism of not just one child but 6 million men, women and children, thus become accomplices of Eichmann.

Ironically, Christianity in its beginnings had to be defended by the early Fathers against the accusation that the Eucharist involved human sacrifice. Later the myth was sporadically revived against various dissenting sects, but the chief sufferers were the Jews. In 1144 they were accused of having immolated a Christian child at Easter in mockery of the Passion; in the following century the story was varied to the effect that Christian blood was needed in the baking of Mazzoth, the unleavened bread for Passover. Needless to say this libel was usually the precursor of spoliation and aggravated persecution.

The Encyclopedia Britannica says that various Popes issued bulls exonerating the Jews of the murder of Ursula Böck, and that many Christian scholars and even ecclesiastics tried to put an end to the story. Herman L. Strack, Regius Professor of Theology at the University of Berlin, was among the non-Jewish scholars who opposed and

repudiated this outrageous libel. That the Austrian hierarchy perpetuates it and the Austrian Government remains a passive onlooker, fits in with the continuous hedging regarding indemnification of their Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

It is the duty of all decent Austrians to nail this lie and spread the incredible story of the Ritual Murder tablet of Lienz until it is removed once and for all. It is a heinous blot on Western civilisation.

O. WOLFGANG.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE COMMON MARKET

Mr. F. A. Ridley writes in his article in the issue of July 21st that the Netherlands are now equally balanced between Catholic and Protestant affiliations. That is crediting the Protestants with more importance than they really have. Especially since 1945 the Protestants have steadily lost ground. At the moment their two principle political parties—politics in Holland are confessionally based—are little more than appendices of the all-powerful Catholic party, now, in spite of a total lack of capable leaders, the axis of political life in the Netherlands. This Catholic hegemony is most felt in the field of education. The real leader of the Ministry of Education is a Catholic councillor of the Catholic Minister. So a recent bill on secondary education is *Magistri* issued by Pius XI in 1929. The Europe of the Vatican has been for the greater part realised in the Netherlands.

A. M. VAN DE GIEZEN (Middelburg-Holland).

My heartiest congratulations to Mr. F. A. Ridley on his article, "The Vatican and The Common Market". I am in a position to substantiate and even add to all the points he makes and for some little time have been observing the manoeuvres of certain British journalists, ostensibly striving for the advancement of Britain, but actually plotting the triumph of Rome. The article wanted doing badly—and he has done it well.

"FRANCIS WALSINGHAM" (Belgium).

F. A. Ridley's article "The Vatican and the Common Market" (21/7/61) was, like all his literary products, a veritable pleasure to read. I feel, however, that the exposition was perhaps not as strong as it should have been. In my view, the Common Market is rapidly revealing itself as a frightening political and religious concept which will soon threaten the peace of our planet. It is a Fascist-Catholic conspiracy comparable to that before the recent World War when Vatican agents played such a big part in bringing about the horrors of 1939-45. Popery, with its perennial drive towards world conquest is preparing for a mighty crusade against progress and happiness. Hitler and Mussolini failed in their ignoble, Vatican-backed, careers of aggression but Holy Church undaunted by temporary set-backs, is now back on the path to victory via the "United States of Europe".

DEREK GREEN.

DOUGLAS REED

Mr. A. Gregory in his letter (7/7/61) quotes an author, Douglas Reed, whose book was presumably published in 1943. Mr. Reed's statement that every man, woman and child in Lidice were exterminated is not supported by Lord Russell of Liverpool in his work on Nazi war crimes and atrocities—*The Scourge of the Swastika* (published by Cassell & Co. in 1954). From Lord Russell's account it appears that of 195 women of Lidice sent to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp 42 died of ill-treatment, 7 were gassed, and 3 were never seen again. Therefore 143 survived. Of the children, 90 were never seen again after being sent to a concentration camp at Gneisanau. The younger children were examined by "racial experts"—those passed were sent for adoption into German families and all trace of them has been lost. The unfortunate children who did not pass this "examination" were sent to Poland, and Lord Russell surmises that they were gassed.

If Reed could be wrong on that, how wrong he was about the Jews. Lord Russell quotes Sir Hartley Shawcross in his closing speech to the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, in which he stated "... Twelve million murders! Two-thirds of the Jews in Europe exterminated, more than 6,000,000 of them on the killer's own figures ...".

Though Mr. Gregory insinuates that this figure is incorrect, he does not quote any authority for the opinion that the Jews did not suffer this loss in their numbers, and appears to doubt the figures merely because they have been widely used by popular journalists.

P. J. MURPHY.

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES

Mr. N. E. S. West's analogy between the Jewish and Nazi atrocities (July 21st), breaks down on one vitally important score: whereas we know the Nazi atrocities to have actually been committed, there is every reason to believe that the Jewish ones were purely fictional. Certainly no one today can believe the Joshua stories that Mr. West cites. J. GRANGE.

FULL CREDIT

No doubt for the sake of brevity, Mr. McCall referred to Dr. Werner von Braun in *THE FREETHINKER*, July 14th, merely as "the rocket expert". Let us give him full "credit", as German inventor of the V2 in the last war prior to his engagement by the USA to supervise its rocket programme. W. J. MCLROY.

THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

According to the publishers 2 million copies of the New English Bible have been sold. Like Mr. Cutner in his article (28/7/61) I feel rather sceptical about this. Probably it would be truer to say that 2 million have been distributed by the publishers. Bookshops in my home town are full of them, each having large displays. They may also be bought in Leicester market brand new 2s. cheaper for the standard and 5s. cheaper for the library editions.

The NEB had a tremendous amount of publicity, much of it free, and doubtless booksellers anticipated a rush. Now it looks as if they have been left holding the baby.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SEX WORSHIP. By H. Cutner. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN: Its Character, Methods and Aims. By Avro Manhattan. 3rd. Edition—Revised and Enlarged. Price 21/-; postage 1/3.

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