

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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I RECENTLY came upon a book, *Church and State in Italy, 1850-1950*, by A. C. Jemolo, the English translation (published by Basil Blackwell, Oxford) of a larger work on the same subject originally published in Italy in 1948. The present abridged version appeared here in 1960, with a postscript by the author which brings his narrative up to 1959 and consequently to the accession of the late Pope John XXIII. From the specific point of view of students of mutual inter-relationships between church and state in the country that is the apparently permanent headquarters of the world-wide Roman Catholic Church, this postscript is of special interest. It reflects the considered opinion of a liberal and learned Catholic publicist upon the present quasi-medieval relationships between church and state in contemporary Italy; a one-sided relationship that must, we assume (though the latest phase of the problem is subsequent to the publication of Signor Jemolo's treatise) undergo some modification in view of the plans for Christian reunion envisaged by the Vatican. Perhaps the learned Italian author will devote another equally lucid and learned volume to this contemporary ecclesiastical problem.

## Prisoner of the Vatican

At the time when Signor Jemolo's narrative begins, 1850, the Italian scene was very different from today. The feudal rulers of a still divided Italy had only recently been restored to their thrones by French and Austrian bayonets, after the forcible suppression of the Italian revolutionaries in "the year of revolutions", 1848, when democratic republics had been proclaimed in Rome, Venice and in other parts of the Italian peninsula. Amongst these exiled rulers who (as a contemporary poet phrased it, "crept out to feel the sun") was Pope Pius IX (1846-78), who was restored as the temporal ruler of the Papal States by the intervention of a French army, which forcibly occupied Rome and liquidated the liberal republic set up in that year by those pioneer champions of Italian unity, Mazzini and Garibaldi. From 1850-1870 the Pope retained his temporal power under French protection.

However, during these eventful years, the rest of the Italian peninsula gradually ceased to be merely "a geographical expression" (as that arch-reactionary, the Austrian Chancellor Prince Metternich once scornfully described it) and evolved into the Kingdom of United Italy under the rule of the Catholic but anti-clerical House of Savoy. In September 1870 when the outbreak of the Franco-German war forced the French government to withdraw its garrison from Rome the Italian army entered and put an end to the pope's temporal power. Henceforth, papal sovereignty was limited to the Vatican and as "the prisoner of the Vatican", Pius IX continued to pose as a martyr to illegal violence and to refuse all offered relations with the newly-constituted kingdom of Italy with Rome as its capital. By an ironic coincidence, the same year, 1870, which saw the end of the papacy as a secular

ruler, also saw the pope presented with theological infallibility at the first Vatican Council!

## Disaster and Success

As Signor Jemolo shows with appropriate detail, Pius was followed in this attitude by his successors, Leo XIII, Pius X and Benedict XV, though Pius and Benedict relaxed their predecessors' intransigent attitude, at least to the extent of permitting loyal Italian Catholics to partici-

pate actively in local and national Italian politics, thus giving an implicit form of recognition to the upstart Italian secular state founded on the ruins of papal temporal power. Signor Jemolo shows that it was precisely during this era

that the foundations were effectively laid for the present-day Italian regime in which (as our author demonstrates clearly in his postscript) the modern Italian state created by anti-clericals of the calibre of Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi has become in effect a "confessional" state dominated by clerical parties subordinated to the present-day Vatican with only a minimum of toleration for non-Catholic creeds. From the point of view of the papacy, if the years 1850-1900 were years of disaster, 1900-1950 have been brilliantly successful.

## The Lateran Treaty

First however, there intervened the Fascist era, 1922-45, during which Mussolini ruled Italy with dictatorial power in the Fascist "one-party" state. From the point of view of the Vatican, this era represented, as it were, a mixed grill. For Fascism, whilst putting an effective end to the spectre of Communism which threatened to engulf Italy after the first world war, also put an end to the revival of political Catholicism, by suppressing all opposition parties including Catholic ones. More dangerously still, the Fascist state claimed a totalitarian monopoly over the educational system, that traditional stronghold of clerical power.

However, Mussolini whilst himself (like his political prototypes, Caesar and Napoleon) an unbeliever, needed the support of the Church in such an overwhelmingly Catholic land as Italy. In return for clerical support both in Italy and in his foreign adventures in Spain and Abyssinia, he concluded the Lateran Treaty (1929) which restored to the papacy its status as a temporal power, though only over the restricted area of Vatican City. Of more permanent importance (as Signor Jemolo shows), were certain legal enactments representing the pope's juridical status throughout Italy, which are still accepted by Mussolini's present democratic successors, and which still make any genuine anti-papal or anti-Catholic propaganda impossible in contemporary Italy. However, Mussolini himself was never altogether *persona grata* at the Vatican. A speech in which he gave to Christian origins an entirely rationalistic explanation provoked in particular an angry retort from Pius XI ("heretical and worse"). It was not forgotten that Mussolini had once been a militant atheist and the author of a pamphlet en-

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Church and State in Italy

By F. A. RIDLEY

titled *God does not Exist*.

### Confessional State

No such murky past inhibited Mussolini's post-war successors in Italy where, since their brief honeymoon with Togliatti's Communist Party, the Christian (Catholic) Democrats have held exclusive sway. Their most important leader, Alcide de Gaspari (Prime Minister 1945-53), had actually been a papal librarian.

All the post-fascist parties (including the Communists) upheld the Lateran Treaty and its accompanying "Law of Guarantees" which makes the papacy sacrosanct and virtually immune from criticism anywhere in the contemporary Italian state. In his most instructive chapter, entitled "First Twelve Years of the Italian Republic" (1945-57), A. C. Jemolo shows that the papacy and the Church have rarely been more powerful in Italy than they are today. (He cites some astonishing legal decisions in favour of the Church, including the notorious case of the Bishop of

Prato in 1958). For present-day Italy is for all practical purposes—and despite some nominally liberal clauses in its official constitution—a virtual "confessional state" in which Roman Catholicism is effectively the only fully recognised religion, and in which the legal system in particular is entirely subservient to the Church.

No anti-Catholic criticism would even be conceivable in present-day Italy, and Signor Jemolo, himself a Catholic, deplors the current situation of non-Catholic sects who, he asserts, have scarcely more religious freedom than in Franco's Spain. (This was written before Pope John's reforms.) A century of chequered and frequently stormy mutual relationships culminates in an apparently brilliant successful clerical "turning movement". For anti-clericalism, rampant in 19th century Italy, now appears to be moribund, since even the powerful Communist Party does not attack the Church openly. Shades of Garibaldi and Mazzini! Will they rise again?

## Soap and Civilisation

By EVELYN INGLIS

IN SOME, but not all, of the countries of Europe today cleanliness comes next to godliness. The Finns even equate these two aspects of daily life: "Two places are holy" they will tell you, "church and sauna". The ancient religions of India, China and Egypt prescribed periodic cleansing as a civilising, purifying custom, and laid down rules for bathing, making it a religious rite.

At Memphis, and at other Egyptian temples, special rooms were set apart for bathing, plentifully supplied with water. Among the aristocracy in Egypt it was common to take a bath three times during the day; several bathrooms and dressing rooms were built in most of the larger houses. Soap traces its origin to ancient Egypt where the natural soda of the Nile valley, when mixed with animal and vegetable fats, was found to be an effective compound for washing clothes and the body.

In Greece the bath was a pleasure for both the rich and poor, both in private and in public baths. A private bath shaped like a round pottery bowl has been found during recent excavations at Phylakopi, the Mycaenean city on Melos. Frequent mention of bathing in Greek literature shows that this was a popular custom. In the *Odyssey* we learn that "In the meantime the beautiful Polycaste, King Nestor's youngest daughter, had given Telemachus his bath. When she had bathed him and rubbed him with olive oil, she gave him a tunic and arranged a fine cloak round his shoulders, so that he stepped out of the bath looking like an immortal god".

Odysseus describes how he was frequently given baths by the hospitable people who received him on his journey; Homer writes of Hector returning from battle to find a hot bath awaiting him, and Herodotus tells us of sweat and vapour baths. Throughout most, if not all of this period, the men and women of ancient Greece took their baths together. The Spartans, in keeping with their rigorous, hardship-loving attitude to life, prescribed only cold baths for the men.

Like the Greeks, the Romans indulged in regular bathing and, like them, used oil, not soap, to clean themselves. In fact, the Romans, at the time of Christ, learned of soap from the Gauls and Germanic tribes. The enterprising, seafaring Phoenicians had carried soap to the south of France from Egypt 600 years before the birth of Christ, and through France the making of soap spread to Spain, Italy and Germany.

The time and trouble spent by the Romans in building plentiful bathing establishments is shown by the many water courses of lead piping built on gigantic aqueducts. The magnificent Aqua Claudia supplied Rome with water from the Sabine Hills, forty-five miles away. In the reign of Constantine there were nine of these aqueducts which carried water for 11 large public baths, 850 smaller ones, 135 public fountains, as well as for the baths of countless private houses in this vast city. The population of Rome varied, in the time of the emperors, between 1 million and 2½ million.

The most lavish public baths were laid out by, and named after Caracalla, Diocletian and Constantine. The Baths of Diocletian could accommodate 6,000 people at a time, and included 3,000 individual baths and three big swimming pools, as well as reading rooms, galleries and gymnasiums. Singers, musicians and lecturers entertained the bathers, and shops sold scents and cosmetics. Part of this is now the church of S. Maria degli Angeli; another part is a museum. The Baths of Caracalla are now used for open-air performances of opera.

The Roman bath was based on the same principles as the indigenous Finnish bath, hot and cold air, and hot and cold water. The average Roman bath had special rooms for undressing, tepid and hot bathing, sweating, washing, massage and oiling. Such was the lavish splendour of these baths, that Seneca wrote nostalgically of the more rough and ready life of the early Romans:

"I am writing this letter" (Epistle 86) "from the villa of Scipio Africanus . . . There is a tank beneath the house and garden, big enough to water an army; and a narrow bath, dark as they usually were in ancient times—our fathers did not think a bath was warm unless it was dark. It was a great pleasure to me to consider Scipio's customs compared with ours. He, the terror of Carthage, he to whom Rome owes the fact that she was captured only once—in this corner he washed his body when it was tired of field work. For he took exercise by working; as they did in those old times he turned the soil himself. He stood beneath this mean roof, this cheap pavement felt his foot steps. Nowadays who would bear to take a bath in such a place? Every man thinks he is poor and miserly unless his walls glitter with great costly tiles, unless he has Alexandrian marble set off by Numidian overlay, unless Thasian stone (once a rare sight in an occasional temple

lines the pool into which we lower our bodies exhausted by long sweating, unless the water flows from silver taps . . . .

In another letter, Seneca, deploring the luxury and indulgence of the fashionable bathing resort at Baiae, near Naples, paints a vivid picture of the lighter side of Roman life: "Drunk men wandering along the beach, banquets in boats, the lakes echoing with the voices of singers . . . do you think Cato would have ever lived in one of these houses to count the adulterous women sailing past him, to watch the painted boats floating on a lake amid a tide of roses, to hear the noise of singing every night?"

Horace has recorded one of the minor but no less delightful pleasures of the bath: "Many recite their writings in the bath. How pleasantly the vaulted space echoes the voice!"

In Spain, the western, and Asia Minor, the eastern extremity of the Roman Empire, Roman baths were built after Rome itself had fallen. After the Arabs had conquered Spain, they revived the custom; but it disappeared soon after they were driven out by the more warlike, but less hygienic Christians of northern Spain. In Asia Minor and Palestine, the Crusaders found the Roman or, as it now became known, the Turkish Bath, and this, together with other such civilised amenities as silks, tapestries and carpets, they gladly brought back to their bare, cold and draughty castles in Europe.

### Dirty Monks, Damned Women

In the Middle Ages, the Christian Church deemed cleanliness to be the opposite of godliness. Bathing was damned in the belief that nakedness was sin. "To those that are well" ordered St. Benedict, "and especially to the young, bathing shall seldom be permitted". Those that carried the fear of indulgence to the extreme limit and lived as hermits away from civilisation, or had themselves bricked up in or near a church, where they could neither move nor wash, were even venerated and had special prayers said for them by the clergy. However, the monks allowed themselves a bath in a tub three or four times a year, on Saturdays. Before meals a cold wash in a stone trough was permitted. The Cistercians were forbidden to bathe altogether, except at Christmas and Easter.

The scorn and abuse poured by the celibate priests on women in general, and on the physical aspects of love in particular, were strongly reinforced by the undeniable, inescapable odour of the human body. Europe, unlike Egypt and Greece, is a chilly continent; in the many towns and villages of Europe in the Middle Ages, water was not easily available and heating it meant the laborious collection of wood. Undressing and washing in small quantities of cold water, in cold houses and hovels was understandably an ordeal not readily undertaken, especially as it was not recommended by the Church. Only a little exercise of the imagination is needed to understand the attack on sexual intercourse by the celibate priests. St. Jerome had already called women "the food of worms, a vile dung-hill". St. Anastasius thought that a woman was "a laboratory of devils". Innocent III, before becoming Pope, wrote "How filthy the father, how low the mother, how repulsive the sister . . . Consider the plants, consider the trees. They bring forth flowers and leaves and fruits, but what do you bring forth? Nits, lice, vermin . . . They diffuse the sweetness of all grace—you, the most abominable stink".

### Love and Soap

This ubiquitous dirt was indeed a formidable barrier to the Christian principle of brotherly love, and to the advance of civilisation itself. It also heightened the barrier between the filthy, the poor, and the not so filthy, the rich.

The true champions in freeing men and women from the "stink and nastiness" at this time inseparable from love, were not the priests but the sopers, the men who turned once more to the fabrication in bulk of the soap brought to Europe more than a thousand years before. The Greek physician Galen (c. 130-200 AD) had recommended its use, and in the 9th century, the alchemists investigated it for magical properties. The two main centres of production were Marseilles and Savona, in northern Italy, from which the Roman "sapo" and French "savon" are perhaps derived. But the first mention of its manufacture in Britain in existing records does not appear until about 1000 AD. During the next five hundred years Bristol, Coventry and London are mentioned as the main sources of manufacture. Stow, in 1598, mentions the import of soap to London from Bristol and Castile in Spain. In England, Castile became known as a type of soap regardless of its place of origin; and in the same way until the first half of the 19th Century, soap made in Holland was often stamped with the name of Bristol.

It was not until the later Middle Ages in England and the rest of Europe that soap was made on a large enough scale to offset the general reluctance of the people, rich and poor, to keep themselves clean. The Turkish Baths—of hot water or of steam raised by hot stones dropped into water—became a sociable affair, where, if you liked, you could spend the whole day. The sexes mixed, and music and dancing, food and wine were additional inducements to prolong the enjoyment. Not surprisingly many baths or "stews", as they were called, became too popular as brothels, and in many parts of Europe were closed by the authorities.

This did not apply to Finland and northern Russia where bathing was treated more as a serious pleasure. Back in the 10th century, the Russian monks built "bathing establishments for the poor" and attached them to the monasteries. The Greek Orthodox St. Andrew visiting Novgorod in the 11th century wrote that "During my travels I saw many wonderful things in the country of the Slavs. I saw bath houses built of wood. When they have been heated to a very high temperature, people undress themselves completely and go inside. They pour tepid water on the backs of their necks, take a bunch of fresh birch branches in their hands and lash themselves to the point of exhaustion. Then they pour cold water on their bodies and are thus quite refreshed. They do this every day, quite voluntarily. They go of their own free will, and not at all to torture themselves".

In the 18th century, an Italian traveller Giuseppe Acerbi wrote enthusiastically about these baths, or sauna, in Finland. After the bath, he wrote, "they often go out completely naked and roll themselves in the snow while the temperature is 40° or 50° below freezing point. They wander naked in the open air, talking to each other and even with a chance passer-by. If a traveller in search of help happens to arrive in a remote village at a time when all the inhabitants are in the sauna, they will leave the bath house in order to harness or unharness a horse, to fetch hay, or do anything else without ever thinking of putting any clothes on. Meanwhile the traveller although enveloped in a fur coat, is stiff with cold, and does not dare to take off even his gloves".

### Elizabeth and Louis

In England, at this time cleanliness was considered, by and large, an unnecessary refinement. One of the many ways in which Elizabeth I was considered unusual was that she had bathrooms installed in the royal apartments at Windsor, and a contemporary wrote that "the Queen

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## This Believing World

We used to think that the dear old Protestant tracts so beloved of our grandparents were a thing of the past but, alas, we are mistaken. Some have again come our way, relics of the past glories of evangelical faith. Though published in the last decade, they are full of Victorian drivel—for example, Thomas Paine is depicted crying out during “his last moments”—“Oh Lord, help me! God help me! Jesus Christ, help me!” And not to be outdone, Voltaire is presented as crying, “I am lost! I am lost! Oh, that I had never been born!” It is all very sad.

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So another rival to the Presidency of the United States has appeared; no doubt, in his opinion, with the strongest claims to be, unlike so many other Presidents, an out-and-out Christian. He is Dr. Billy Graham and, says the *Daily Express* (February 1st), he is giving “earnest and prayerful consideration” to the idea. We are sure that the Lord himself will give divine consideration to the idea. In the opinion of Protestants like Dr. Graham, a Roman Catholic is not altogether an ideal head for God’s Own Country; and who in the whole world can fill the role so well as Dr. Graham who has brought untold millions to the simple but ever beautiful teachings of Jesus Christ?

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There appears to be always some row in the Church of England, and in Protestant Churches generally. The latest is that over a vicar who was thought by his parish council to be a bachelor and who had in reality been married and divorced. We can almost see the horror of his Mother’s Union and parish council (some of whom resigned) at this dreadful revelation—in fact so bad was it, that if Jesus had been there, are are sure the unfortunate vicar would have been conveyed in an instant to the place where the fires are never quenched.

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As it happened, the unlucky village which had to bear the brunt of it all—Orspath, near Oxford—as well as the vicar, the Rev. S. Bird, had to await what his bishop had to say; and the bishop actually took the side of the vicar (*Daily Mail*, January 25th). That was enough to cause two more members of the council to resign, including the font of all secular wisdom in a country village, the chief schoolmaster. So even in many almost forgotten villages in the country, where religion is always so strong and so faithfully credulous, the Church cannot ensure its proverbial love and tolerance!

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How difficult it is to kindle real religious enthusiasm in these blatant materialistic days can be seen in the case of the Rev. F. Harte, Vicar of St. Dunstan’s, Bellingham. With the devotion of a true Christian, he used to organise an annual service to King Alfred—who is a minor saint in the Church of England—but, to his dismay, the response was so poor that he is dropping the idea altogether. He used to get only three or four people sharing his ardent fervour. What is the matter with these country strongholds of the faith? Are they not still the backbone of British Christianity—which, with the Bible, as dear old Queen Victoria used to say, gave us England’s greatness?

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And to cap all, a dour, stern Scots minister unbent the other day, no doubt in the interests of unity, and allowed a Roman Catholic priest to say Mass in his anti-Catholic Church. “It is beyond belief that such a thing could happen”, the Secretary of the Anti-Catholic Reformation Society complained (*Daily Express*, February 1st).

## Is School Religion Out of Date?

By E. G. MACFARLANE

EVERY SCOTTISH teacher is regularly made familiar with the Lord’s Prayer, a hymn or psalm and perhaps a reading from the Bible if the headmaster is going the second mile in this department of school life.

Undoubtedly this practice, with its emphasis due to repetition, has an effect upon the mass of Scottish pupils which is out of all proportion to the importance placed upon the actual beliefs involved in the practice by the adults of the nation. It has become a ritual without relevance to a modern attitude to the knowledge and speculation which educated people exercise in their contemplation of the universe. It contains ideas and beliefs which may have been appropriate for life in a pre-scientific society, but it contains little that is appropriate to our age and the hopes we have of organising a world-wide human society in which modern views and modern technology are put to the fullest use.

In my view one of the most urgent requirements for educational advance is a new broom operation in this department of school life. And I am hopeful that the many more modern views—which are beginning to spread via television programmes—will help to prepare the way for the inculcation of a more critical and speculative attitude among our pupils than is possible when their minds have been closed by the imaginary certainties which they absorb from the school religious services.

The philosophical attitude of the scientist is necessary in any system of education that proposes to prepare pupils for life in the modern world. We cannot hope to run a society which will make full use of the new knowledge and technology, unless we also teach and train our pupils to understand the objectives and attitude of mind of those who have provided us with all the new knowledge and machines.

There is an understandable fear on the part of old-fashioned teachers, who were brought up to fear God and dread hell or punishment after death. To set pupils free to think of the real nature of the universe and the ultimate significance of life for themselves, will only lead to disaster for human society. But they need not be afraid. The task of living with the fact that life is fundamentally mysterious rather than known and forever settled by the terms of an ancient book will bring its own disciplines and excitements, which will provide food for thought and material for doing work on, which will have precisely the opposite effect. It is an ancient platitude that idle hands find “evil” to do. I think the same can also be said of idle brains, and I am certain that, once a generation of pupils grows up under a regime where it is generally recognised that all the universe around us is a problem which any person who cares may try to understand and grapple with, we will have nothing less than a renaissance of fundamental thinking and knowledge-seeking which is without parallel in the history of the human race.

Already there is awareness among the clergy in England of an urgent need to overhaul our ideas about God, and the more intellectual journals are ever more frequently referring to the ferment which surrounds such attempts at making a minimum change of this kind. At the moment the ferment is remote from the schools, and there is no attempt at telling the pupils that such ideas are being contemplated by educated adults. This, of course, is dishonesty in education, and such practice cannot go on for long without being discovered and commented on by the

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# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

### INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, February 18th, 7.30 p.m.: GEORGE JELF, "Disarmament and International Co-operation".  
Hornchurch and Romford Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane), Tuesday, February 18th, 8 p.m.: MRS. ISABELLE GRANGER, "Problems of Illegitimacy".  
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, February 16th, 6.30 p.m.: EDMUND TAYLOR, "Charles Darwin".  
Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), February 16th, 7.30 p.m.: 100TH SUNDAY EVENING LECTURE. Subject and Speaker to be announced.  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, February 16th, 11 a.m.: DR. JOHN LEWIS, "The Failure of Nerve in Western Civilisation".

## Notes and News

WE ARE grateful to Francis Carr, editor of *Past and Future*, "the history magazine with a forward look", for permission to reprint Evelyn Inglis's "Soap and Civilisation". The article appeared in the December/January issue of the magazine, along with items on censorship, on Alexander I of Russia (by Mr. Carr himself) and "The Real Character of Shakespeare", by Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper (reprinted from the November 1962 issue of *Réalités*). *Past and Future* (which incorporates *Popular History*) is published at 34 Hillgate Place, London, W.8, at 2s. 6d.

E. G. MACFARLANE's article on school religion, which also appears this week, was first submitted to *The Scottish Educational Journal*, the official organ of the Educational Institute of Scotland, which avowedly welcomes controversial articles. To quote the President of the Institute, Mr. Kenneth Macdonald: "The Editor was prepared to consider sympathetically any article from an informed, responsible source about education or teaching however controversial it might be—and the more controversial the better!" The Editor informed Mr. Macfarlane—an experienced teacher, by the by—that the article had been read with interest but was unacceptable for publication.

THE DECISION of the Trading Stamps' Association to offer Bibles and church organs in return for trading stamps is—we are informed by *The Distributive Trades Alliance Bulletin* (17/1/64)—being received "with some reserve" among clergymen. The Church of England Information Office said that "the question of accepting trading stamps to help churches is being left to the individual parochial church councils". But, "in principle, the Church of England would not wish to take any action which might cause injury or hardship to a particular retailer by diverting trade from one shop to another to obtain stamp discounts". Methodist Dr. Donald Soper, however, was utterly opposed to the idea of trading stamps. "This is cheap and nasty", he said. "I will have nothing to do with it".

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"YOU MAY . . . think as I think, that the conduct of this man after the accident was despicable. But the fact that he behaves like a fool and a liar afterwards does not say necessarily that he was behaving badly before the accident". Thus, the Manchester city coroner, Mr. Donald Summerfield at the inquest on Joseph Noble Sewell, who died in hospital three weeks after being knocked down by a car. Mr. Summerfield was speaking of the driver of the car, a Roman Catholic priest, Father Leon Morris, who did not stop and who, on December 4th, 1963, told a policeman: "I cannot recollect at any time being involved in an accident or knocking down any person" (*Manchester Evening News*, 22/1/64). Next day, when the policeman confronted the priest with evidence, Father Morris altered his statement. Some distance before a set of traffic lights he suddenly saw a man in his path who "seemed to stop and hesitate". The man lunged, "I felt a bump. I was still travelling. I was shocked and found myself driving on automatically. I kept going, not realising what I was doing". The jury brought in a verdict of accidental death.

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"IF WE could send just a few of the ponography tycoons to jail it would be an effective deterrent for others." That remark was made by the Rev. T. Corbishley, SJ, Chairman of the London Committee Against Obscenity, who declared, however, that he was not against the idea that there was fun in sex and "not one of those people who think that sexual sin is the only sin that matters" (*The Guardian*, 4/2/64). Father Corbishley and the representatives of other religious denominations who comprise the committee, believe that "obscene matter" has a corrupting influence on "both the young and on adults", though they admit the impossibility of proving it. Clearly opinions will differ—even among Freethinkers—on the desirability or otherwise of banning pornography. Personally we are opposed to it (even assuming "pornography" could be satisfactorily defined) believing that it would do more harm than good—forbidden fruits and all that!

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CERTAINLY WE are violently opposed to any committee—of priests and parsons or of laymen—interfering with the right of adults to read "obscene" literature if they want to. And for all Father Corbishley's protestations, he must in the nature of things have a somewhat different view of sex from that of most of the population. The Committee was not concerned, Father Corbishley said, with "borderline cases like *Fanny Hill*". But it soon could be, given the chance.

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THE TELEVISION appearance of Mr. D. H. Tribe, announced for February 16th, has been temporarily postponed. New details will be given when available.

# A Reply to Mr. McCall

By G. L. SIMONS

LIKE MR. MCCALL I am also worried at times by the attitudes of "some distinguished Humanists" on various topics; unlike him, I do not admire Humanism when it resembles religion in being dogmatic, trite and superficial. Mr. McCall's recent article, in which he criticises my views on psychical research, is a fine example of this brand of Humanism. Here I believe that Mr. McCall expresses views which are both muddled and potentially dangerous.

He suggests that my "main confusion is between method and interpretation". There is, however, no dichotomy between (scientific) method and interpretation of empirically-gained evidence. I do not confuse the two because there *are* not two—one is part of the other. The correct interpretation of evidence looks to scientific method for its criteria. How Mr. McCall would interpret evidence satisfactorily without using scientific method is a mystery to me.

I am further puzzled by his apparent belief that souls are not relevant to psychical research. Is not an aspect of psychical research concerned with establishing the existence of a spirit-world? Are souls irrelevant to the notion of a spirit-world? I would not have thought so; surely Mr. McCall does not either.

But these objections, although important, are secondary. They indicate some confusion and a need for less superficial thought. There are other secondary objections too, which it may be profitable to state. But Mr. McCall's minor confusions pall to insignificance when set beside his major one. I refer to his complete inability to distinguish between an intellectually sound position and a working hypothesis which must be adopted for practical purposes. Mr. McCall resented the "lecture" on science and scientific method, which does not mean that he did not need it; I hope that he does not mind another one too much?

In working out a philosophy we have to make an initial vital decision. Either we use logic, believing only what it justifies, or we rely on our emotions, refusing to accept displeasing logical conclusions. The former alternative is the way of the responsible rationalist; the latter is the way of the religious believer and, I regret, Humanists like Mr. McCall. If we are honest, and possess the barest logical ability, we are bound to admit that *at the purely intellectual level* it is impossible to prove the non-existence of all sorts of weird phenomena—from Jesus Christ's ascension to hobgoblins. At this level only things that are self-contradictory (e.g. the Christian god) are impossible. To admit this (as I maintain we are compelled to do) is not to be indecisive *at the practical level*. Here, if one is rational, one conducts one's life as if gods, fairies, hobgoblins, witches, angels, etc. did not exist. Hence the social attitude of the agnostic is quite as secular as that of the atheist. If this is so, one may ask, what does the abstract reasoning of the agnostic matter?

The way in which the secularist answers this question determines whether he has a mature philosophy or a superficial creed, little better than the childish notions which he is so eager to replace. To say that the abstract reasoning of the agnostic is unimportant (which is what Mr. McCall is implying) is to sink into an emotional stupor which can have the most damaging consequences.

To Mr. McCall things seem to patently absurd that he is not prepared to keep an open mind on them. But suppose that in the future new scientific advances show

that these things are *not* absurd, that they can be conceived as very reasonable possibilities. If Mr. McCall's disciples (supposing such to exist) have state power what will their reaction be to these advances? The disciples will already have a clear criterion of what can or can not be true—namely the status quo. Mr. McCall will have taught them to have closed minds on all topics that do not square with the current scientific view of things. Their reaction to new scientific advances will be exactly the same as Mr. McCall's reaction to telepathy (true or false). They will not be "in the least worried" by the way in which the new advances contradict existing scientific law but they will be worried "by the credulity of people who so easily accept" the new advances. And what happens then? Unable (by logic alone) to preserve intact their intellectual beliefs on a national basis (the next advances having produced dissension) they resort to the inevitable measures always employed in these circumstances—persecution, book-burning, rigid censorship, discrimination on the basis of personal belief.

Mr. McCall will say that the above account is a parody of his position, and to a certain extent it is. But what he fails to realise is that his attitude serves as an encouragement to every atheistic fool and bigot to propagate a creed of crude materialism and self-righteous intolerance. Unless strong opinions are grounded in logic they will almost always tend to produce emotional prejudice and irrational dogma. They may not so tend in a few noble minds (perhaps Mr. McCall has such) but the social efficacy of a doctrine depends upon its reference to ordinary mortals, not to saints. If Mr. McCall encourages dogma he will always find men unworthy of himself to implement it.

It is very difficult to achieve the attitude in which one has both undogmatic opinions and a social philosophy which enables one to act with courage and strong conviction. But such an attitude is essential to a responsible rationalism, and characterises the best Humanists. All secularists must keep open minds on all sorts of seemingly absurd topics; as soon as minds are closed they are unphilosophical, unscientific and unworthy of enlightened thinkers. But this openmindedness should not inhibit action, which should be enthusiastic and confident. We should retain a willingness to consider ideas which conflict with our cherished beliefs, but our present beliefs (based on the positive findings of science) should motivate our behaviour.

Mr. McCall confuses an admission of what we are intellectually entitled to say with practical and social indecision. The two are distinct; intellectual agnosticism in many matters is never incompatible with a thorough-going rational working-hypothesis with which to face life and organise society. We need both intellectual honesty (so that we never need to resort to persecution, indoctrination, censorship, etc.) and a strong social creed (so that human life can be made as rich and full as possible). These two aspects of secularism are essential if it is to be free from dogma, logical and self-correcting. Few secularists seem able to achieve this synthesis; Mr. McCall, in misunderstanding my position as he does, is not one of them.

I am a firm supporter of militant freethought; any of my friends will testify to this. But I think that opinions can be expressed resolutely and confidently without be-

traying logic by supporting a position that it cannot sustain. I firmly believe that there is no reason whatever for believing in God, an afterlife, souls, angels, etc., and that people who do believe in such things lack honesty or logical ability. I firmly believe that priests degrade human nature, corrupt curiosity, destroy imagination and instill a cruel and misguided morality. The small amount of good in religion could easily be retained in a secular society; the tremendous amount of bad can only be discarded when religion is discarded. I regard religion as an anachronistic, superstitious hybrid of legend, special pleading and irrational prejudice, maintained solely by the indoctrination of children and by playing upon the primitive fears of weak and unreflective minds.

I have a tremendous emotional inclination to complete and unqualified atheism; it is only philosophy that keeps this inclination in check. Intellectually I am convinced (for the reasons I have given) that my inclination should be restrained within the limits imposed by logic. Only in this way can I maintain a philosophy which is superior to the emotionally-sustained doctrines of my opponents.

## A Rejoinder

By COLIN McCALL

IF MR. SIMONS didn't call me dogmatic in his first article, he has remedied the oversight. But in what way am I dogmatic? Mr. Simons says he firmly believes that "there is no reason whatever for believing in God, an afterlife, souls, angels, etc.": I say that I do not believe in them. Does that make me dogmatic? Our positions are the same, though his statement is more guarded. He seems to think, quite erroneously, that an expression of belief—or unbelief—cannot be surrendered in the light of new evidence, unless one has made all the necessary qualifications beforehand; that it is less dogmatic to say "firmly . . . that there is no reason whatever for believing . . .", rather than "I do not believe . . .". In fact, it is simply less direct.

I confess that there are things so patently absurd that I do not keep an open mind on them. The moon being made of green cheese is one of them; demoniacal-possession is another. I cannot disprove either of these on the "purely intellectual level" that Mr. Simons is so fond of, yet I consider the evidence against them—and for alternative explanations—to be overwhelming. I therefore dismiss them, as does the astronomer and the physician, respectively, and as, indeed, does Mr. Simons, at the practical level.

Now, if anybody is guilty of a false dichotomy, it is Mr. Simons, with his "purely intellectual" and "practical" levels. Only a "purely intellectual" person could aspire to a "purely intellectual" level, and no such person exists, not even G. L. Simons! But there is a difference of philosophical outlook between him and me. For him philosophy is verbal logic, an academic exercise with little or no practical significance, where only things that are self-contradictory are impossible. For me it is more: it is an attempt to reach something like a world view. If it be argued that this is the task of science, I shall not object: I have always insisted that a sound philosophy must be scientifically-based; but I see a role for philosophy as a generalisation from the sciences, continually developing as they develop, and even as an aid to their development. "The philosophers", said Marx, "have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it". And while one might retort that it is not the job of the philosopher to change the world, it

seems futile to confine him to the word-play exercises so dear to Mr. Simons and the dominant English philosophical "school" of the present day. (Thank goodness things are different in America!) He enjoys it, of course, and I do not want to deprive him of his pleasure. I wish, though, he were not so ready to lay down the law for others. He who calls me dogmatic!

I am also told that I am emotional rather than logical; that my attitude "serves as an encouragement to every atheistic fool and bigot to propagate a creed of crude materialism and self-righteous intolerance". Mr. Simons even visualises "persecution, book-burning, rigid censorship, discrimination on the basis of personal belief", all because I do not believe in telepathy and say so. And he calls me emotional!

I think, however, that we should get back to the point: psychical research. I have never suggested that the Dr. Rhines, Dr. Soals and Professor Vasilievs should not be free to pursue their experiments to their hearts' content. I have never suggested that they should not publish their findings. What I insist upon is the right to criticise those findings and, if I consider them invalid, to say so. This is, in fact, the position. I have found on investigation that there is no satisfactory evidence for ESP; it contradicts my own experience and is contrary to certain well-established scientific laws. Of course those laws are not sacrosanct, but they are the basis of a great deal of our knowledge and practice today, and it would require indisputable evidence to displace them. If scientific "laws" are supported by an enormous amount of demonstrable evidence, as are gravitation and the inverse square law, for instance, we are justified in incorporating them into our philosophical outlook.

Mr. Simons seems to regard an ESP experiment as no different from, say, a chemical or physical one. There are some similarities, of course, but there are important differences, the crucial one being the human subject(s). (Another is unrepeatability.) Where human subjects are concerned there is the possibility of conscious interference with the experiment, and a noticeable feature of many ESP experiments is the appallingly poor attempt at control.

I never said there was a dichotomy between scientific method and interpretation and certainly not that evidence should be interpreted other than by scientific method. What I did say—and what is surely indisputable—is that results obtained empirically sometimes permit of more than one explanation. Hence the role of hypotheses and theories in science. And in a case of alleged telepathy, though the method of investigation may be empirical, the result may be interpreted as due to chance, ESP or collusion.

I consider it significant that Mr. Simons has completely avoided discussion of the subject on the practical level, preferring instead to pontificate against "dangerous views", "childish notions" or "emotional stupor", and to paint his horrific picture of dictatorship, while congratulating me, in a covering letter, on my liberal editorship of THE FREETHINKER. I am sorry he has seen fit to twist a number of things that I said (on souls, for instance). In short, Mr. Simons has presented, not just a parody of my position, but a travesty of it. The reason, I believe, is that his own position is not so sound as he would like to think. In some ways, in fact, his open-mind resembles a split one.

## JEWES AND THE POPE

THE JANUARY 31st issue of *The Jewish Chronicle* reported "mixed feelings" among Italian Jews on the Pope's pilgrimage to the Holy Land. "Has the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church changed much", they were asking, since Pius X told Theodor Herzl at an audience in 1904: "We cannot favour this [Zionist] Movement . . . The Jews did not recognise Jesus our Lord, and we can, therefore, not recognise the Jewish people". A Dutch Jew, Professor Yeshai Leibowitz of the Hebrew University of Amsterdam, had no doubts. The main purpose of the pilgrimage was, he said, to emphasise the claims of the Church to the Holy Land. Another factor was the Church's intention to convert the Jews. Christianity could not accept the continued existence of the Jews and Judaism, the Professor continued, since this undermined Christianity's claims to have replaced Judaism.

## SOAP AND CIVILISATION

(Continued from page 51)

hath a bath once a month whether she need it or no". Louis XIV had seven marble baths installed, one of which was a rose-pink marble octagon ten feet wide and three feet deep. It is now in the Orangery at Versailles.

The English Queen was indeed in advance of the times in matters of hygiene. Two centuries after her, Dr. Johnson advised a friend to avoid bathing. It was best, he said, "to let well alone and be content. I hate immersion".

Nevertheless, the use of soap for the townsfolk, at any rate, was now increasing steadily. The generous Samuel Pepys made a note in his Diary, in 1659, that "In the morning I fell to my lute till nine o'clock; then to my Lord's lodgings, and set out a barrel of soap to be carried to Mistress Ann [Lady Ann Montagu]". The poorer people made their own soap, mixing wood ash and fat from the kitchen.

(To be concluded)

## IS SCHOOL RELIGION OUT OF DATE?

(Concluded from page 52)

rising generation. If we are not to be despised by our children, we must remedy this omission as well as remove the religious services which make the explanation necessary in the first place.

The required revolution in our educational life will of course involve the politicians in the task of reforming the education acts which prescribe the observances I am discussing. I feel however that it is for teachers to lead and guide the politicians in a matter of this kind, and I hope the services of our "new look" *Journal*\* will be actively directed to this end.

\**The Scottish Educational Journal*, to which the article was first submitted (see Notes and News).

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY 58th ANNUAL DINNER

Followed by Dancing

SATURDAY, MARCH 14th, 1964

at The Pavious Arms, Page Street, London, S.W.1

RECEPTION 6 p.m. DINNER 6.30 p.m.

Vegetarians catered for Evening Dress Optional

TICKETS 21/- from the Sec., 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1

## CORRESPONDENCE

### DUTCH TW3

In the issue of Friday January 24th you had not heard yet whether the Dutch government considered taking any action against the (socialist) broadcast on Saturday evening January 4th criticising the new religion of TV in biblical terms.

The government has abandoned the intention of doing so. After a first furious clerical outburst of hate and hypocrisy sustained by some liberal politicians against the socialist association responsible for the broadcasts, a quite unexpected counter-offensive, not from socialist side, but from liberal circles in the whole country, headed by the two big liberal newspapers, stopped the clerical fury and forced clericals and government into retreat. So no measures will be taken against the responsible socialist association.

It is to be hoped that the change of climate revealed so suddenly by this surprising incident will prove to be lasting.

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

### DOGMATIC ATHEISM

G. L. Simons says "God is a logical possibility" ("A Rational View of God", 31/1/64) I doubt it! "God" is a term unacceptable without definition to the dogmatic atheist who has no "idea" of "God". Try it this way: If (1) a term capable of definition is a logical possibility, and (2) "God" is a term capable of definition, then (3) "God" is a logical possibility. The logic is flawless but the term "God" remains undefined. There is no case to answer: the dogmatist is invincible. Now I'll go back to my garden.

ALFRED ARRAN  
As a "dogmatic Atheist" I could take issue with G. L. Simons on his entire article. Space and time prevents this, but I still contend that his idea of agnosticism is tantamount to a non-disbelief in whatever is meant by the nebulous term "god".

If "the agnostic is driven . . . to reduce the status of God to that of a fairy, a unicorn a Father Christmas", where does this leave him?

Fairies, hobgoblins, leprechauns, unicorns, ghosts and phantoms are all phantasmagoria of man's mind, a heritage of a more primitive mode of life. Likewise gods and angels and devils created by man in his irrational and superstitious image have been left behind by psychiatry and psychology.

It is ridiculous to make the assertion that because something cannot be proved not to exist, judgment must be reserved and an open mind be kept on the possibility of its existence. Mr. Simons may claim to be always accompanied by a seven-foot white rabbit and state that I and others are irrational and dogmatic to deny its existence.

By the same token it would be folly to deny the existence of flying saucers, Elijah's fiery chariot or the Apparition of Lourdes. But for a philosophy to teeter along on such absurd disclaimers is to emasculate it to the level of a Mad Hatter's View of Reason.

B. J. CLIFTON

### SPIRITUALISM

Have you ever thought what a wonderful dictator you would make? This past week or two I have followed with interest the correspondence of Mr. D. Youlett, and I was disappointed to read that Mrs. Nason had refused to demonstrate.

To my mind there are two mountains in this world, one a mountain of knowledge, Spiritualism, the other a mountain of ignorance, Materialism. There are right and wrong thinkers on both sides, but generally speaking they all have one thing in common—they are waiting for the other mountain to come to them. Fear is the valley between.

BILL WARWICK

## NEW PAPERBACKS

Guide to the General Election, by R. L. Leonard (Pan Paper). 3s. 6d.

Cuba: An American Tragedy, by Robert Scheer and Maurice Zeitlin (Penguin Special). 5s.

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The Concept of Mind, by Gilbert Ryle (Peregrine). 10s. 6d.

The Economics of Everyday Life, by Gertrude Williams (A Pelican Original). 4s. 6d.

Down and Out in Paris and London, by George Orwell (Penguin). 3s. 6d.

A Dictionary of Modern History, 1789-1945, by A. W. Palmer (Penguin Reference Book). 5s.

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