

The Freethinker

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ONE OF THE more (or less) plausible fictions put forth by exponents of what purports to be the Christian religion is that the keynote of this religion is love. If we were to ask an average habitual churchgoer what he makes of this, his answer, if he were not too flabbergasted or embarrassed by the question, would most likely be that it either means the love of God for man or the love of man for God or maybe both. He would almost certainly be a little uncertain—not unlike the absent-minded professor who, having just become the father of twins said he couldn't remember for the moment whether they were boy and girl or whether it was the other way about. According to that more sentimental than intelligible rhapsody on love known to us as the First Epistle General of John, God not only loves, God *is* love. If that is so it would seem to follow that if a man loves God he is, so to speak loving love and if God loves man it is love loving man. And if man . . . but a Freethinker has to be as far as he can a clear thinker. No amount of thought however free and clear can produce coherence out of thought that won't cohere. John's exposition of love is to put it mildly a trifle abstruse. It is best left to the theologians who revel in this sort of thing. It gives them such scope for providing interpretations. Unfortunately their interpretations cohere no better than the text.

Vapourings

John rambles on with a sort of avuncular senility to those he addresses as his little children. These little children must have been pretty far gone in their second childhood, for although John seems to be under the impression that he knows what he is talking about, it is difficult to think that anybody else does. Normal little children, who are often very sharp, would hardly be similarly impressed. They would be more likely to let John's vapourings go in at one ear and out at the other. It is true that here and there we come upon a statement that makes plain sense as it stands by itself. But on the whole John's disquisition amounts to an Epistle so very general that by the end of it we have become lost in a veritable mist of generality and are little the wiser as to what John is trying to convey when he expatiates on love. It has been said that love is always one and essentially the same thing, differing in degree but never in kind. This however seems rather difficult to maintain when we reflect that while some men love their wives, others love roast beef, others music, others tinkering about with their cars. Such discrepant aspects do not bother John. He maunders blissfully on. One can easily visualise the expression on his face, that rapt, imbecile expression so familiar to us in the famous oil-painted faces of medieval saints. But there is one significance which does unmistakably emerge from John's rhapsodisings, whether he was conscious of it or not. It is the eternal competition between fear and love in relation to whatever is meant by the God who is love and the Church said to be founded on, but which has since been very much confounded by,

the uncompromising injunctions of Jesus Christ her Lord.

John says explicitly that there is no fear in love, that perfect love casteth out fear. But he is hopelessly vague about what he means by perfect love and it does not seem to occur to him that in any case, perfect love either towards man or God must be forever beyond human attainment. He seems to be dimly aware that if imperfect love comes into conflict with fear, it is more likely that it will be the

fear that will cast out the love. And that seems to be largely what has happened to the religious system we have come to call by the euphemistic name of Christianity. Or more particularly that gradual development of Christianity we have so

long known as the inextricably mixed-up Christian Church. For no matter how eloquently the advocates of Christianity may prate of love, organised Christianity has never been notorious for much practical expression of it. The actuating principle of Christianity has been fear. Even Jesus is recorded as having stooped to use fear as a persuader. And there are indisputably, circumstances in which fear can be a much more potent persuader than love. How well the Church has known it. It was not the inspired hope of heaven, it was the inculcated fear of hell that drew or drove people into the churches and kept them under ecclesiastical or evangelical domination. The Roman Catholic Church has ruthlessly frightened more of its followers into abject submission than it has ever lovingly won into compliance. Protestants have been little better with their Bible-thumping insistence on the stern law-giver and the wrath to come.

Human Love

Now if ever there was a word that eluded a comprehensive and comprehensible definition, it is love. Philosophers have tried their hand and almost always love has disappeared in a maze of verbiage. Tolstoy maintained that to analyse love is to destroy love. But, whatever its object, we all know perfectly well what we ourselves mean by love, without the aid of philosophical theorising. As usual, simple folk, who are apt to be more ruled by feeling than thinking, have managed to give love a more pointed verbal articulation than all the scholars. They have described love as a tickling of the heart which you cannot get at to scratch. And those who dismiss that as a piece of bumpkin buffoonery will miss it as a pithily expressed truth—as the experienced can testify. For, scratch as scratch can, is that not exactly what human love is? A stirred emotion quite beyond our voluntary control, that loveth where it listeth. Something we may express but cannot repress, which wells up within no doubt for reasons but never for reason, which cannot be dammed and is never (or not often) damned, which brings out the best in the worst of us . . . but which requires the warm reality of flesh and blood, the irresistible attraction of human personality. Anything less would be loving a ghost and to love a ghost would be to make a ghost of love.

Wherever love, thus understood, occurs between two

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Church's One Foundation

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

human beings, no matter in what capacity, marital, parental, filial, platonic, the lover will be possessed by a genuine desire for the welfare of the beloved — in spite of what some psychologists may say. Here indeed we have a specified emotion that may differ in degree but not in kind. Here is what we know as love. And although it is abundantly obvious that this most disinterested of all man's faculties can function with the utmost immediacy between two human beings, it is impossible to believe that it can do so in the same way between man and God, that is, between a man and a myth. How could any man love a hypothesis? We might speak of him as being in love with a hypothesis. But that is merely a figurative way of describing an intellectual state. It isn't love. A man could never love an idea as he could love another human being. He could never overflow in any sense with a desire towards what, even to the most devout believer, cannot be any more than a conjured-up mental image. Yet that seems to be the sort of love religion pretends to be. Simulated outpourings of gratitude, awe, adoration, worship and the like can be induced with the greatest facility in those unable to withstand the stimulus so craftily applied by the experienced myrmidons of the Churches. But as emotions, they are spurious. And if we say this sort of thing is love we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Love of God

As for the claims made on behalf of the love of God towards man, they cannot be shown ever to have passed beyond the sphere of speculation, and the wider the speculation the narrower the support it provides. It may be tedious, but it must once again be insisted that the postulate of an omnipotent God who is at the same time the God who is all love is, in face of the world as we see it, not only a preposterous impossibility which no ingenuity has ever been able to get round, it looms more and more as an outrageous attempt to pervert intelligence to the purposes of ecclesiasticism. It is of course not impossible to conceive a limited being, a sort of minor god who could have created the world but who, possessing neither omniscience nor omnipotence has been frustrated by stronger powers or gods from exercising the benevolence he had primarily intended. Not that there is a scrap of evidence for such a being and certainly no such being could be identified with the Christian God Almighty, that dismal old fraud who, judging by the signs of the times is at last on the way out. So much for his vaunted objective reality. One wonders what we shall be asked to love or prompted to fear next, when he has finally faded.

Fear of God

All things considered, there seems little justification for supposing that the keynote of the Christian religion is love. "See how these Christians love" has for generations been a scathing comment on the most blatant of hypocrisies. That Christians are more loving towards each other than non-Christians is a libellous pretence. The Church's one foundation may have had some proportion of love incorporated into it. But this must have been very small and a long way from perfect, for in the superstructure it manifestly did not cast out fear. Indeed for centuries, the Christian religion has been so permeated by fear that it became a byword for its terrorism. It was always fear that gave the Church its stranglehold on so large a section of mankind. It still does. And not only is it fear of posthumous punishment, but where Catholicism rules, fear of inhuman reprisals against those who dare to flout the sinister Romish authority. The Christian God himself has commonly been represented as more an object of fear than of love. And one cannot love what one fears. Like all gods, God originated and

developed through man's primeval fear of the unknown. In turn, God became largely the feared unknown. The so-called godly man is never referred to as God-loving but always as God-fearing. Pious exhorters never thunder about putting the love of God into the recalcitrant, they always threaten to put the fear of God into him. It is certainly fear that casteth out perfect love.

We may however console ourselves that this fear of God has its mitigations, since we are gravely informed by those who presume to know, though on what grounds we are not told, that God is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. Lest this might seem too mitigating, we are also warned that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. All the same, that by comparison is nothing it seems to falling into the clutches of that other old fraud, God's insuppressible rival, the arch-enemy whom, despite his omnipotence God cannot control, who bears a variety of well-known titles but who is probably most widely and popularly known as Old Nick. The cloven hoof has always had a livelier potency than the crucifix. The smoke of all the incense ever burned has never been able to quench the underlying odour of brimstone. An old reprobate who realised that he was nearing his end, applied in desperation to the parson to help him through. That reverend but severe comforter at once characteristically demanded, "Do you fear God my man?" "No sir," came the trembling reply, "it ain't him I mind so much, it's t'other old b—— I'm frit at."

This fear of what is so patently nothing but a childish if a sinister fiction is still strenuously fostered by the interested bigotry of the Roman priesthood. Nevertheless it is fading fast. Even Catholics will often laugh it to scorn. It might be too grim a joke to say that this fear is being cast out by love. Knowledge would be more appropriate, the sort of knowledge likely to guide to the inspiring love which, as a great Humanist has intimated, is the only sure foundation not of any Church, but of the good life humanly understood.

National Secular Society Annual Conference 1964

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held in the Leicester Secular Hall on Whit Sunday, May 17th, in two sessions. Mr. David Tribe was re-elected President of the Society, Mr. L. Ebury and Mrs. E. Venton, Vice-Presidents, and Mr. W. Griffiths, Honorary Treasurer. A goodwill message from Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, President of the World Union of Freethinkers was read.

Resolutions carried included the following:—

"That this Conference reaffirms its commitment to the principle of secular education and calls on the Government to amend the 1944 Act accordingly"—(Glasgow Branch).

"That this Conference calls on the Society to bring increased pressure to bear on MPs and public figures with a view to getting the Sunday Observance Acts repealed."
—(Manchester Branch).

"That this Conference, in pursuit of the NSS Immediate Practical Objects, urges the BBC to set up a department for the broadcast of Freethought and minority views".
—(Executive Committee).

"This Conference requests the Executive Committee to seek to amend the law which grants the executor the right of the disposal of a corpse contrary to the known wishes of the deceased; and to urge the amending law which requires a relative's approval before a person can successfully will his or her body for medical research".
—(North London Branch).

The Conference was preceded by a reception at the Secular Hall (by kind permission of Leicester Secular Society), refreshments being arranged by Mrs. W. Hill.

Religion in Canadian Schools

By LANJE GARDYEN

THE French-Canadian *Le Devoir* recently printed the findings of a poll on religious attitudes inside a Quebec *collège classique*, a school where you learn (a little) Latin, (a little) Greek if you want to, and what is roughly equivalent to a North American high school or French *lycée*. For instance, my own daughter went from a *collège classique pour jeune filles* to a secular *lycée d'état* in France. She found that the French were ahead of the French-Canadians in Latin and Greek; more *universal* in their French (although my daughter ranked among the best at her school here in Montreal); in English slightly behind my daughter, who has been speaking English as well as French since birth, but probably equal to the average classical college standard. Maths was much more advanced in the French *lycée*, and history and geography more up-to-date.

Our classical colleges, however, teach "philosophy" — in their own way. This means, of course, the theological philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. You see, there is no lay or secular classical college in Quebec; they all belong to one or another religious congregation: the Jesuits, who have several in Montreal, the Fathers of the Holy Cross, the Redemptorists, and so on. With the possible exception of recent graduates from the *polytechnic* (technical school), all boys and girls had to go through classical colleges in order to get to university. The clergy, therefore, could — and did — eliminate any "undesirable element" by simply refusing him or her as a student in the college. The "bad" English-speaking Protestants have no clergy barring their way, going from high school to university.

Now, back to *Le Devoir's* report. The college, Sainte-Marie, is owned by the Jesuits and is for French-language students (Loyola College being the English-language equivalent). The students themselves conducted the poll and the results proved rather surprising.

Asked "Do you practise your religion?" 23.9 per cent of the students answered "no," and 15.3 per cent only "more or less." Did the social and family context "force" them to practise it? "Yes," said 21.6 per cent; 53.3 per cent said it "incited" them; 22.5 per cent felt they were left completely free.

"Do you believe yourself a practising believer?" "Yes," said 47.2 per cent; 31.3 per cent considered themselves simply believers; 11.9 per cent agnostics; 5.7 per cent atheists.

"Do you subscribe to all the dogmas of the Church?" Yes, 46.5 per cent. "Or to you are these dogmas simply propositions?" Yes, 49.1 per cent.

Why did the students attend a Catholic college? For 10.6 per cent, primarily because it was Catholic; for 50 per cent, because the education was better; for 32 per cent, because they felt "forced to attend a confessional institution."

"Granted equal quality of the institutions and a free choice, would you attend a confessional or non-confessional college?" Confessional, 54 per cent; neutral, 33.6 per cent. "Would you choose to attend a non-confessional school even knowing that the church condemns the principle of neutral schools for the faithful?" Yes, 46.1 per cent. In addition, 59.2 per cent favoured the creation of "mixed" schools (without distinction of creed), and 36.9 per cent the creation of neutral schools.

Finally, 78.2 per cent of the students consider the demands of parents who want neutral or non-confessional schools for their own children to be fair.

Le Devoir commented: "The value of these results is principally symptomatic. It is fair to deduce that the meaning of the questions was not always understood precisely, and that perhaps some students took a sly pleasure in adopting 'radical' attitudes so as to give the results of the poll an explosive quality. But the document is still of a sort to invite reflection, and it is to be hoped the study will be continued, on a scientific basis, in other Quebec classical colleges."

Religion in schools has also been hitting the headlines at the other end of the country, in British Columbia. The place of Bible readings and the Lord's Prayer in the classroom has caused controversy for ten years at conventions of the BC Teachers' Federation. Finally, on March 30th, 1,200 delegates rejected the customary motion to table the issue and, using terms like "farical," "meaningless," and "mumbo-jumbo," voted overwhelmingly to eliminate religious exercises entirely.

According to a Canadian Press report of the convention, Jack Gilmour of Burnaby said schools are forced by the Public Schools Act to set aside the first five minutes of each day for a prescribed Bible reading and recital of the Lord's Prayer. "What about the Catholics, Jews, Atheists, Muslims and children of other faiths in our school?" he asked. "Shouldn't we consider their religious beliefs, too?"

Edward Vogt of Surrey was the only delegate to support the exercises. He said: "It is not so much the meaning of what is read but the perpetuation of the Christian heritage that is embodied in the exercises."

George McLean of Burnaby said the practices only antagonise students and smother their interest in religion. "The exercises have a negative result on our children. They are mumbo-jumbo which have no meaning. I believe that prayer is a sacred and vital thing. There is nothing sacred and vital about the exercises in school."

Mr. McLean suggested the law interferes with religious freedom. "The Department of Education cannot make the human heart enter into communion with God by ringing a bell."

Dave MacDonald, a teacher at a Vancouver secondary school, said he used to give the exercises as prescribed. But: "One day I asked my students to write out what had been said in the Bible reading. Most of them returned blank pieces of paper. One student wrote: 'Christ stood up in a boat and said merrily, merrily I say unto you.' I realised that religious instruction was a waste of time."

"Every year for the past 20 years," Mr. MacDonald said, "I have asked my students if they wanted religious exercises. They have said no, so I have given them a study period instead. This is illegal, I know, but nobody complained." And, he asked: "If Christianity is a force in the world, has it done any good? Millions of Christians have murdered one another in two world wars. The atheist Chinese never went to war in 500 years . . . Uncle Sam says: 'Starve Cuba.' Jesus says: 'Love thine enemies,' and Uncle Sam says: 'Hate them.'"

The Teachers' Federation request will now go to the British Columbia Department of Education.

This Believing World

It must have been bad news for those Christians who heard on BBC TV Bishop Yashiro, Primate of the Anglican Church in Japan, tell them that Christianity was making little or no progress in Japan. The Bishop looked as doleful as he spoke. There were, he said 400,000 Christians in Japan, but that was not very many in a population of nearly 100 millions. But some Japanese seem a little confused about the situation here. The *Radio Times* (May 16th) quotes a Japanese as saying "in Europe even the agnostics are *Christian* agnostics", which may or not please agnostics. In Japan we learn, "religious life has virtually vanished".

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Two writer in the "Psychic News" (May 23rd) have actually queried the Crucifixion! One, Mr. George Rulf, insists that it was merely "a yearly mummary play similar to our Guy Fawkes", while the other, Brother John, claims that nobody can produce any evidence that it ever took place or did not take place. So he, for one, has discarded God's Precious Word. But why cannot some medium contact "our Lord" and find out what really occurred? Surely Jesus should be only too glad to give the full details once and for all?

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Meanwhile, if we can't "materialise" the Son of God, we can and do get hold of that more or less elusive figure, William Shakespeare, at times. One of the latest "contacts" was that of the late Hester Dowden, the daughter of a distinguished Shakespearean scholar. She excelled in getting messages from the spirits, and was told by the immortal Will that, as he himself was a powerful medium, he was able to get into the minds of Francis Bacon and the Earl of Oxford and the three of them produced the plays.

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"Psychic News" added that Miss Dowden declared Shakespeare to be "the greatest literary medium in history". Some of the psychic "conversations" Miss Dowden had with the spirit of the late Percy Allen have been published, and it is difficult to conceive more appalling rubbish. But then, spirits and mediums produce between them very dismal accounts of Summerland and what happens there.

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The Rev. R. Jennings thinks that children throwing dice for Bible prizes (*Daily Mail*, May 20th) is not gambling, but merely "a novel way of distributing the Bible". After throwing the dice from a cup, the child with the highest number gets a Bible, and we cannot help wondering whether getting a top number does not please the little gambler more than getting the Bible as a prize. Or perhaps, he would prefer to get the cost of the Bible in hard cash?

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Even thorough believing Christians cannot in many cases adopt a child if they don't go to church. The *Daily Express* (May 21st) reports a 31-year-old lady who is "heartbroken" at not being allowed to keep a baby she has "mothered" for some weeks. She feels she cannot hypocritically go to church every week just to adopt him. Of course, the reason for not allowing the adoption is that it would be against the rules of the Society. But should concern for rules take precedence over concern for the baby? It is encouraging to note that the case is going to be looked into. Mind you, had the lady been an unbeliever, she would have been told to go elsewhere, said the Rev. Harold Beech the parson in charge.

Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare

AFTER attending *Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare*, at the Alliance Hall, London, on May 19th, I feel profoundly sorry that so many people, as I suspect, have a narrow view of Shakespeare, as a result of the ram-it-down-your-throat kind of education. No mere bardolatry this, for David Tribe, in his address put the ideas of Shakespeare and the ideas of his critics and interpreters in their historical context. (How very right for a Freethinker, who must be used to dealing with people who read what they want into the Bible, to deal analytically with those who bend Shakespeare's words to their own ends.)

Having debunked the false, he showed the clarity of Shakespeare's thinking, his humanism and his power with the emotions. Towards the end of his lecture Mr. Tribe said that an important way of judging a person's humanism was in examining his attitude towards women. Here Mr. Tribe handed over to Joan Miller, who gave a number of fine extracts from important women characters in Shakespeare's plays. It clinched Mr. Tribe's case.

Throughout the lecture Mr. Tribe called on Miss Miller, Richard Ainley, Kathleen Ewart and her accompanist Miss Anna Sloan, to contribute well-selected illustrations from Shakespeare's works, and, as well as serving his purpose, they were wonderful entertainment in their own right.

For example, Miss Miller and Mr. Ainley gave a reading from *Macbeth*, at the end of which, as well as feeling the emotions of Lady Macbeth and her husband, one could almost smell the gore of their victims. Yet, without props or gimmicks, there were Miss Miller, wearing her very modern spectacles, and Mr. Ainley without a spot of blood on his shirt or tie! There was all the skill of the professional for you.

Equally, what delights came so seemingly effortlessly from Miss Ewart in the songs she gave us, simply accompanied at the piano by Miss Sloan. I am not one of those, who decry the use of echo chambers and other electronic tricks, used today by modern recording stars to improve their performances, but Miss Ewart's voice is so pure that, had any of these things been at her disposal, they would have been redundant.

I have been enthusiastic in praising the lecturer and performers (all of whom, incidentally, are very close to the work of the Freethought movement), for they not only gave those of us in the very full audience a most stimulating and entertaining evening, but they helped pay tribute to the genius, who was born four hundred years ago. The National Secular Society also deserves praise for arranging this salute to William Shakespeare. And, with *Macbeth*, let me say, "I would applaud thee to the very echo".

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

FROST v. GRAHAM

THIS SATURDAY, June 6th, on BBC 2, David Frost will be questioning Dr. Billy Graham about his religious beliefs. This is one of three religious programmes planned for BBC 2 by Mr. Kenneth Lamb, head of the corporation's religious broadcasting, who has described his task as more difficult than missionary work. "We are not dealing with people who have not heard the Gospel", he said (*Daily Herald*, 5/5/64), "but those who have heard it and rejected it". Well, Frost v. Graham ought, at least, to be lively.

THE FREETHINKER

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THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25, half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

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 and J. A. MILLAR.
(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: 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

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, June 7th, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Humanism and the Problems of Peace and Security".

Notes and News

ARE PARSONS really all that poor? In a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* (13/5/64), Dorothy Riches of Wimbledon set out "to explode once and for all the myth that Church of England clergy are poor". The humblest and youngest, she said, start at more than the national average income and yet "we are constantly asked to admire and pity them for their poverty". The minimum starting salary is £750 a year, plus free accommodation; the parson gets £100 on marriage and £50 for each child. As for an archbishop, he "retires on a pension of £2,000". The same day, the *Telegraph* reported the House of Commons debate on toll bridges introduced by Mr. Hamilton (Labour member for Fife West) who said that the list of proprietors of Whitchurch Bridge included three clergymen. In his researches, Mr. Hamilton had been forcibly struck by the highly developed acquisitive instincts of the aristocracy and the clergy. "Whatever the hereafter may hold in store", he added, "there is nothing like fostering your nest in the herebefore."

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WHATEVER our conclusion about the Church of England and its clergy, we need have no doubt about the Church of Scotland. It "has fallen back, temporarily please God, in its response to the Lord's call to staff and support His Church overseas", as the Rev. James Munn told the General Assembly in Edinburgh (*Daily Telegraph*, 22/5/64). The Church of Scotland has, Mr. Munn said, "been hit by sickness, the sickness of prosperity, of security and of things". "For the moment" it has "faltered in its gallantry of spirit" and "left this arduous and sacrificial missionary service to a few". Mr. Munn is convener of the Foreign Missions Committee, and he had to report that for three years there had been no probationer in an Edinburgh training college preparing for service abroad.

IN MEMORIAM

Jarwaharjal Nehru,
Freethinker,
Founder and Leader of the
Secular Republic of India

THE Royal Society of Saint George has, we learn from *The Guardian* (22/5/64), produced a leaflet saying that the patron saint of England was born of a noble Christian family in Palestine in AD 270 and executed at Nicodemia in AD 303. Gibbon, of course, tells a different story, that from an "obscure and servile origin", George "raised himself by the talents of a parasite; and the patrons whom he assiduously flattered procured for their worthless dependant a lucrative commission, or contract, to supply the army with bacon. His employment was mean; he rendered it infamous". Gibbon's identification is false, declares the Columbia Encyclopedia unequivocally. Who, then was St. George? "He was *perhaps* a soldier in the imperial army who died for the faith in Asia Minor", says the Encyclopedia, which dates him, "4th cent?" So you take your choice.

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WE HAVE taken ours. We like Gibbon's story best: "The odious stranger, disguising every circumstance of time and place, assumed the mask of a martyr, a saint, and a Christian hero; and the infamous George of Cappadocia has been transformed into the renowned St. George of England, the patron of arms, of chivalry, and of the garter".

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THE Quebec Department of Revenue — Lanje Gardyen informs us — has advised parish officials that only those materials used in the construction of churches and presbyteries are now exempt from the provincial sales tax. In a circular, the department said that such exemption does not extend to articles purchased by clergymen for their own use. Previously, it was possible for them to buy goods through parish officials without payment of the sales tax, so long as such sales were made directly to the parish". The new ruling is due to an amendment to the tax law governing retail sales.

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THE OLDEST Fascist regime in existence, that of Salazar in Portugal, celebrated its 38th anniversary on May 28th. How much longer it will last depends to some extent upon the assistance that Portuguese freedom fighters receive from outside. On page 182, we print latest news of repressive measures taken against Salazar's opponents. The article is reprinted from the *Portuguese and Colonial Bulletin*, published by K. Shingler, 10 Fentiman Road, London, S.W.8. The annual subscription for the *Bulletin* is 15s., and Mr. Shingler would also welcome donations to help him keep Britain informed about its "oldest ally".

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WE ARE pleased to say that F. A. Hornibrook's *The Culture of the Abdomen* has just been published by Icon Books. This is the 19th British edition of a book which well conveys its author's commonsense approach to good health. Mr. Hornibrook is, of course, well known in Free-thought circles, and *The Culture of the Abdomen* may be obtained from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop, price 3s. 6d. plus 6d. postage.

NEXT WEEK

NEHRU: AN ASSESSMENT
By G. N. DEODHEKAR

Repression in Portugal

(From a Correspondent in Portugal)

At this moment, in the towns and villages of Portugal, people are fighting Fascist oppression, organising themselves to defend their rights, struggling for a better life and conditions, against the colonial war, against terror. They constantly defy this terror, they constantly defy the sinister PIDE. Many are arrested, tortured, brought to trial, thrown into jail. But they still fight on. Salazar cannot imprison the whole of the Portuguese people. And it is the people together who fight against the Fascist dictatorship.

Anxious to repress the steadily-growing organisation of the democratic forces of opposition, the Portuguese Government have now hit on another subtly-disguised way of checking the movements of the population.

Under the slogan "Less Death on the Road," officers of PVT (Traffic police, armed) and PSP (Public Security Police, also armed) are frequently engaged on so-called "operations stop," supposedly aimed at controlling road misbehaviour.

One of the "operations" to cover the whole of the country was staged on the 1st-2nd February for 24 hours. Five hundred police officers using 40 car-units, 600 motor-cycles and 85 stationary posts, all in permanent contact through radio, halted road users of all kinds — pedestrians, bicycle, scooter and motor-cycle riders, car and lorry-drivers, even peasants taking their cart-loads of fresh fruit and vegetables to the nearest markets.

This may seem innocent enough, but the real nature of these "operations," as well as their motivation, became clearer once it was seen that PIDE agents were "co-operating" with the other police forces, while cars were thoroughly searched and people arrested, particularly in cases where "road misbehaviour" could not be used as grounds for detention. According to reports published in the Portuguese-censored press, 35 car-drivers were arrested during February, 1964. Names were not disclosed. Since the first occasion these "operations stop" have been repeated weekly, with the toll of fines and arrests increasing progressively.

The machinery of the Lisbon and Oporto Plenary Courts follows its implacable course. From January 1st to March 11th of this year 135 people were brought to trial in these courts accused of political or "subversive" activities. Here are some of the trials since 21/1/64:

On 21/1/64 Antonio Cesario sentenced to two years in prison.

On 13/2/64 Adelino Pereira da Silva, a metal worker, sentenced to three years in prison, plus security measures, and dragged from the court when attempting to make his defence.

On 18/2/64 three shipbuilding workers from Lisbon, Joaquim Amaro and Pedro dos Santos and another were given prison sentences.

On 20/2/64 Manuel Rodrigues, a 59-year-old worker, and his wife, Lucrecia Ramos, 54, given prison sentences with security measures.

On 24/2/64, in Oporto, eight people were tried, four of them sentenced.

On 25/2/64, in Oporto, two people were given prison sentences.

On 3/3/64 four railwaymen, Jose Milheiro, Manuel Luz, Goncalo de Matos and Domingos dos Santos were given prison sentences.

On 11/3/64 five other railwaymen were tried, four

given prison sentences and three, Firmino Martins, Jose Duque and Jose Gaspar, put into jail.

Since December last 19 railwaymen have been brought to trial accused of claiming better wages and conditions, and of political activities; 17 of them are now serving prison sentences.

Four lawyers, Robert W. Kenny and Robert E. Treuhardt, from the United States, Norman Endicott, from Canada, and Conrado Gomez, from Argentina, were recently expelled from Portugal by Salazar's Police, while attempting to investigate human rights in Portugal.

In the political prisons, especially in Aljube, Caxias and Peniche, the prisoners are kept constantly under a hard regime. This is particularly bad in Peniche, where there are 110 long-term prisoners.

Manuel Guedes, who has been in Fascist jails for over 16 years, last arrested in 1952, sentenced to four years but kept in prison since 1956 under "security measures".

Jose Vitoriano, first arrested in 1948 when legally elected President of the State Cork-Workers' Trade Union. Sentenced in 1953 to four years, and while in prison sentenced again to a further 6½ years, plus "security measures" because of showing solidarity with his prison companions. He has now a total of 14 years in jail.

Also in Peniche are Adolfo Ramos, a dockyard worker, arrested in 1955, sentenced to three years in 1956, and kept for the last five years under "security measures"; 56-year-old Pires Jorge, sentenced in 1962 to 10 years, with seven years in jail before; Antonio Dias Lourenco, Octavio Pato and Dr. Orlando Ramos, a physician. Letters to all these people, addressed to Cadeia do Forte de Peniche, Portugal, would be greatly appreciated.

In the Caxias fortress there are women prisoners. Amongst them Ivone Dias Lourenco, daughter of Antonio Dias Lourenco, arrested in 1957 when she was 20, waited trial for three years, sentenced to two years, now under "security measures."

Maria da Piedade Gomes dos Santos, arrested in 1958, sentenced to two years, with three years of "security measures"; in very bad health.

Also in Caxias, Maria Alda Nogueira, sentenced to eight years, the longest sentence for a woman political prisoner; Sofia Ferriera; the physician Dr. Julieta Gandra; Albina Fernandes, Natalia David, etc. Letters to them should be addressed to Cadeia do Forte de Caxias, Caxias, Linha de Cascais, Portugal.

The trial of the 86 people involved in the Beja rising of 1/1/62 which adjourned on January 30th, resumed on April 21st. Sixty-six of the accused are in prison. Amongst them Captain Varela Gomes, held in Caxias together with Catholic leader Manuel Serras. Letters to them are also very welcome.

The liberation of Manuel Rodrigues de Silva was a great encouragement to the struggle of the Portuguese people and to the campaign against repression for an Amnesty in Portugal. The valiant Portuguese anti-Fascists who struggle under the difficult conditions in Portugal felt, with deep gratitude, the great help of the international campaign against repression in their country. They ask for renewed efforts; they are full of hope; they intend to pursue with even more determination their task of winning the release of more political prisoners from Salazar's jails; even of obtaining a hard-fought Amnesty.

A Repository of English History

By F. A. RIDLEY

Some places seem to embody the past more definitely and decisively than others. Such places are to be found by the banks of the Thames, which, as it winds through the peaceful English countryside, passes many a scene made historic by past human action. It is sufficient in this connection to recall Runnymede, where King John, very much against his will, signed Magna Carta (1215), an epoch-making constitutional development which, however, was significantly, and no doubt deliberately, ignored by Shakespeare in his play *King John*.

For it must not be forgotten, even in this year of Shakespearean quatercentenary, that the Swan of Avon was not only a supreme artist but an Elizabethan courtier, and probably shared the deep-rooted suspicion with which the absolute monarchy of the Tudors instinctively regarded all subversive democratic movements. To be sure, Old Father Thames has been, one might almost say, a major character in the English scene ever since Julius Caesar first waded across it (traditionally between what are now Kew and Brentford) in the year 54 prior to the Christian era.

As however, the Thames after interminable twists and turns approaches the metropolis (now officially extended by the recent London Government Act to include Thames-side down to Kingston and Richmond) the sense of history deepens. On the same bank stands Chiswick, redolent of English history, strewn with memories and monuments of the past. Hogarth's tomb is in Chiswick churchyard, engraved with David Garrick's famous lines, whilst just round the corner is commemorated one of the most famous scenes in English literature, where Becky Sharp threw the dictionary out of the window.

But if the wayfarer continued his pilgrimage of memories towards Hammersmith Bridge, he would soon pass the house of another eminent contemporary of Thackeray, William Morris, artist, poet, and socialist agitator who, however, is probably best remembered as the author of an imaginative forecast of a future "Merrie England". For it is where Hammersmith Bridge now stands that Morris's "time-travellers" set out on their journey into the future, far from the dust, dirt and degradation of the industrial revolution and of Victorian England.

Percipient social and literary critics have often noted how dead dull, how incredibly insipid, utopias usually are, from Thomas More's original to Bellamy's once famous *Looking Backward*. But I, at least, will always assert that in William Morris's *News from Nowhere* — written in Hammersmith Mall in full view of the river (where a memorial plaque commemorates its author) — Morris, perhaps unique amongst utopians, created a utopia that was really utopian! I think I should have taken a ticket there or rather, since its artistic author did not envisage railways, I would have walked along with Hammond and company, in quest of "Nowhere".

However, let us return to the Thames. In that haunt of history which is bounded by Hammersmith and Chiswick bridges, Chiswick Church — or more precisely, the Parish Church of St. Nicholas — may be said to mark the centre. The church itself is an ancient building dating in its present structure from about 1430, but built upon soil which holds the sites of earlier churches since Anglo-Saxon times and the earliest beginnings of Christianity in England. (cf *A Guide to Chiswick Parish Church* by C. Brook Coles).

Indeed, Mr. Coles in the course of his well-documented

and well illustrated survey, cites from no less an authority than the Venerable Bede, the worldly-wise advice given by Pope Gregory the Great to Mellitus, the first Bishop of London: "After mature deliberation on the affairs of the English, I have determined that the temples of the idols be not destroyed but only the idols, and that the temples if well-built be converted from the worship of devils to the worship of God". So, suggests our author, the ruins of pagan temples of Odin and Thor, may well have provided the building materials for the older London churches, including Chiswick. Be that as it may, if I may judge from a brief perusal of the parish magazine of St. Nicholas, the kind of theology taught in that venerable pile, is itself decidedly ancient.

However, in one article the vicar did make an original and daring suggestion which I herewith respectfully pass on to the Bishop of Woolwich for use in his next *Honest to* — book. According to our Chiswick theologian, angels' wings are now superfluous in this dawning space-age. Perhaps Chiswick's geographical proximity to London Airport may have suggested this bright idea! But however puerile the theology preached from its ancient pulpit, both historically and geographically Chiswick Church is a deeply impressive building. It commands a fine view of the Thames as it curves away towards Barnes and Mortlake (and no doubt of the annual Oxford and Cambridge boat race).

Chiswick churchyard is also rich in history. Two daughters of the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, lie buried there, whilst dominating the churchyard stands the majestic tomb of the great artist, William Hogarth (1697-1764), a native of Chiswick in his lifetime, engraved with the famous epitaph composed by Hogarth's own contemporary, the actor, David Garrick:

Farewell great painter of mankind!
Who reached the noblest point of art,
Whose pictured morals charm the mind
And through the eye convert the heart.
If genius fire thee, Reader stay;
If nature touch thee, drop a tear:
If neither move thee, turn away
For Hogarth's honoured dust lies here.

It has I think, been stated that Robert Louis Stevenson, at one time also a resident of Chiswick, expressed a desire for burial in Chiswick churchyard, but the mortal remains of that "hunter home from the hill", repose far away in the Pacific Ocean beneath the Southern Cross.

CORRESPONDENCE

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

May I thank Mr. W. Collins for his correction. He is, of course, quite right. My use of "save" for "strafe" in the J. C. Squire quotation was just one of those stupid slips it is so dismayingly easy to make. I am ashamed to confess that even in the printed version it escaped my notice, so smoothly does the sound flow over the sense.

REGINALD UNDERWOOD.

CATHOLIC RENOVATION

There is widespread belief that the Roman Catholic Church is steadily losing its reactionary features and that her complete adaptation to modern thought is only a matter of time. The following event may answer the question, whether this belief is justified and what is the real renewal force in present-day Catholicism?

De Nieuwe Linie ("The New Line") is an Amsterdam Catholic weekly with three Jesuits on its editorial staff. It is striving for a better mutual understanding between clergy and laity, for

bridging the abyss separating them. The editors deal with such questions as Dutch politics, foreign literature, birth control, celibate and matrimonial life, all this from a modern outlook. An ever-increasing number of subscribers proved that the effort of the paper was much appreciated.

Then, on April 23rd, the Provincial of the Netherlands published a communique running as follows: "Since the course of *De Nieuwe Linie* obviously deviates from the line the most reverend Father General of the Jesuits in Rome had conceived, the latter esteems it necessary that the Fathers should cease their contributions to the paper."

No answer had been given to the request of the Supervisory Council of the *Nieuwe Linie* to be heard by the Roman superiors (the General, the Fleming J. Baptista Janssens and his Dutch assistant, Father P. van Gestel) before a decision was taken.

De Vlaase Linie, ("The Flemish Line"), which printed most of the Dutch *New Line* items, had been suppressed a month earlier.

The Jesuit renovation attempt in Holland thus seems to have come to an end.

A. M. VAN DER GIEZEN (Netherlands)

WAR TRIALS AND RELIGIOUS STATISTICS IN GERMANY

Though I agree with many views in his article "War Trials", I cannot agree with Mr. F. A. Ridley in hoping that "the matter will be allowed to drop and that this will be the last judgment". As far as I am informed there will be over two hundred more war trials during the next few months. Crimes must be made known to the police as soon as possible, and they must be tried according to German law. If we stopped trials now, there would be no legal justification.

In my opinion there are two cardinal problems:

Only after 1955, the year of our so-called sovereignty, did legal procedure started to wind up the series of war crimes not yet tried. Now, twenty years after the atrocities took place there are hardly any witnesses. Hitler not only liquidated the Jews, gypsies, Slavs, but with the utmost care, political opponents in this country. These people are missing today. And trials on atrocities in Poland and Russia have hardly any German witnesses.

This lack of evidence fully distorts the weight of accusation against those accused.

(b) Second: For the third time since the year of the Russian Revolution of 1917, Western Germany, with the assistance of Western countries has been rebuilt as a bulwark against Communism. "They have never had it so good" after losing two world wars. Unlike the German Democratic Republic this country did not remove Nazis from office. The way they succeeded in regaining their social prestige, with earnings higher than during the Third Reich makes them unable to understand their guilt. "Hitler was right, at least with anti-communism, and that is what we are up to right now, and for the time to come".

In one of your March or April issues you had a letter saying that statistics might help to unveil the religious background of National Socialism. With the help of the director of Nuremberg Public Library, I tried to find out. There was a publication, officially, in 1936, dealing with religious statistics based on inquiries made in 1933. Among Christians of evangelical denomination are as different groups as Lutheran, Calvinists, Methodists, Christian Science members, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarians (62.2 per cent of the population); the Roman Catholic Group amounts to 33 per cent; the Orthodox, i.e. Eastern Christian Churches to 13,000 people, not countable in percentage; Catholics free from Rome—(Dollinger movement) double the number of Orthodox! Jews 502,799 or 0.8 per cent of the population; members of non-Christian religious groups — including Theosophists, Anthroposophs who according to my knowledge base their belief on the Bible's contents—0.2 per cent and "other groups", including free-thinkers, freemasons (of whom at least up to 80 per cent were Christian) and many splinter groups of Christian origin, 3.7 per cent; no information given 0.1 per cent.

To be frank, statistics of Christians, near Christians, non-Christians are in a hopeless mess; a mess the official Churches are not interested in clearing up. For this reason statistics on religion are useless. There is one thing certain, however that the Christian bloc is no bloc at all, but in reality dozens of sects that walked out of the official churches.

GERDA GUTTENBERG (Nuremberg)

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