

# The Freethinker

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IT IS a heartening comment upon the place of Freethought within the contemporary English scene that the education controversy has arisen with renewed force. The whole question of religion in the schools is one which dominated the political scene at the beginning of this century. It was allied with the more general demand for ecclesiastical disestablishment and for the abolition of state support for any particular religion. In 1906, a liberal government was elected and was said to have had the support of a House of Commons containing more non-conformists than at any period since the days of Oliver Cromwell. It must certainly have appeared to the then contemporary world that the day of state established

and endowed religion was over for good. Unfortunately, the government lost its way. A violent controversy over the state subsidies to Church schools petered out, the first world war changed the scene and the only two possible legacies were the Welsh Church Act which disestablished the Welsh Church in 1920 and the Enabling Act, 1919, which gave a certain measure of self-government to the Church of England. But this self-government was severely limited. In 1928, the revision of the Book of Common Prayer was rejected by Parliament and, even in 1964, the exact vestures to be adopted by the clergyman at certain time of religious ministration has actually become a subject of parliamentary debate. At the same time, there has been an obvious decline of interest within the House of Commons in ecclesiastical questions whilst it may well be that a Parliament concerned with exact problems of education dreads anything like a revival of the religious controversies which bedevilled educational progress at earlier periods. Yet one point is now very clear. The particular compromises upon religion which were effected in the 1944 Education Act are not working out in a very satisfactory manner, and rumblings are to be heard from both sides of demand for revision.

**Tolerant?**  
For the Freethinker or Humanist, the general principle is clear enough. Constitutionally, an agreed religious syllabus can never be satisfactorily achieved within a state which contains wide diversities of religious opinion and in which these diversities have been legalised by a series of measures of inclusion commencing with the Toleration Act of 1689. It is scarcely the business of the state to teach religion at the expense of taxpayers in any denominational form which could, at best, satisfy a small minority of its citizens. Indeed, so considerable an Anglican historian as the late Dr. Hensley Henson came to recognise that the Toleration Act, 1689, was in fact the first step towards the disestablishment of the Church of England. Quite naturally, the Freethinker will have many philosophical and critical objections to the teaching of a supernaturalistic view of religion as a state-educational subject, even the more so as it is compelled by statute. But his constitutional objection is final to him as a citizen. The use of the money of unbelieving ratepayers to teach

a series of dogmas from which they dissent is at best a grave anomaly and at worse a base injustice.

Now that the controversy has revived in various somewhat unexpected quarters, it behoves the Freethinker to ask what line he should take. So far as the battle is still anti-clerical and anti-ecclesiastical, it falls directly upon him. One suggestion is that the old methods and battle-cries are out of date and a hindrance to-day. It is said that

they will not rally public opinion and that they will only exacerbate the situation. The Christians have grown more tolerant, as is exemplified by the Bishop of Woolwich and his supporters. A getting-together of Christians and Humanists might well result in a

more generally tolerant attitude towards the treating of religion in school as an open educational subject. Such a course would be pleasing to the politicians who would be spared a battle on the subject in the House of Commons. A flexible democracy could thus contain vital differences of opinion and, at the same time, undertake the necessary factual education concerning religion as a social influence. The old secular controversy would thus be by-passed and a contemporary approach created.

## Peace?

At first sight, there appears to be something to be said for this viewpoint. It suggests an atmosphere of peace and sweet reason within which education could gain and prosper. But the question arises as to whether it is really practicable. The attitude of Church leaders has long been that of showing a kindly tolerance towards the Humanist opposition. They can well afford to do so for they know that, if they gain an equivalent response, the teeth of the opposition will have been drawn. It would be a grave error in taste to meet such an approach with the older antagonisms! Of course, they also well know that the bringing into such a picture of the extraneous pressures dependent upon ecclesiastical establishment or "the Catholic vote" would go far towards guaranteeing that the ecclesiastical viewpoint would prevail. When such pleas are heard, it may well be asked how far the liberal tolerance of a handful of academic or quasi-academic Christians really represents the religious outlook of the majority of believers.

A glance around utterances at the parochial level will illustrate the point. Within recent months, Humanist views have been blamed for the spread of moral collapse, venereal disease and the crime wave! The statement that education should build character and that character depends upon Christian moral beliefs is trumpeted forth too frequently to demand exact reference. Local clergy, appointed as they are to Local Educational Authorities, are far more likely to represent some such viewpoint than to be exponents of the nebulous modernism of the Bishop of Woolwich or of "South Bank" religion. Nor is it without significance in this connection that the "South Bank" moralist, Canon Rhymes, reaches the old conclusions in his book, *The New Morality*, even though he considers

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### *Freethought and Education*

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

fresh means of achieving them, and that even this cautious restatement has roused the obscurantist fanatics in the diocese of Southwark.

Among the Roman Catholic clergy, it is merely unthinkable that there should be any fundamental concessions to a tolerance representative of views upon religion held to be basically untrue. Indeed, it was Mgr. R. A. Knox himself who wrote that, when Catholics are in a majority, they are under no obligation to tolerate Protestants, as toleration has never been a dogma of the Roman Catholic religion. Nor perhaps were controversialists of the age of Lord Ellenborough or Lord Eldon entirely wrong when they pointed out that allegiance to the will of a foreign pontiff undermines exact allegiance to the constitution of this country.

It is reflections of this type which must lead the Freethinker to see that the old battle is still present. The Education Act, 1944, so far as it affects religion in the schools, was the achievement of the Christians in the resolving of their own internal differences. It has proved an utter and drastic failure. The measure of its educational success may be gauged by the protests of the National Union of Teachers against the employment of unqualified persons to teach religious instruction. The Act itself represents the determination of the Churches not to loosen their stranglehold upon state-supported education. It is of interest to notice some of the results which have come about.

#### Denominational Schools

The supporters of "undenominational" religion in the schools wish the subject to be refurbished. Roman Catholics have stressed the advantages of denominational education and have pressed ahead in their demands for new schools for which the taxpayer is expected to pay in very large measure. Many Anglicans feel that a mistake was made in 1944 and that the Church of England should both build new denominational schools following the Roman Catholic example as well as special training-colleges from which they might also infiltrate the state schools. Huge sums have been voted by the Church Assembly for this purpose, although little attention seems to have been given to the academic status of the new establishments or to whether the newly created teachers shall be of graduate rank. Indeed, on the Church side, the whole stage seems to be set for a take-over. Even the contemporary demand for attention to be paid to morality and sex in the school curriculum is advantageous to such efforts. It is all too readily assumed that such instruction will be related to religion and that the R.I. teacher shall have a prominent place in the inculcation of moral instruction. To a generation which is not without some knowledge of the names of Margaret Knight, G. M. Carstairs and Alex Comfort, the demand is still blandly made that sexual morality shall once again be grounded upon a theological basis.

It is clearly impossible for the small band of organised Freethinkers to face every issue of the whole controversy at one and the same time. But two immediate facts would seem to stand forth. The one is that the Humanist movement must be wholeheartedly committed to a thorough-going opposition to denominational schools. These institutions are opposed to the general ground plan of state education in this country and only got in under the Cowper-Temple clause in 1870 by way of a compromise. They are not centres of objective education but of indoctrination. In some areas, teaching standards are low and many teachers are unqualified even today. Many of them are the slums of the educational system. It is a gross piece of impertinence that any group, and Roman Catho-

lics in particular, should expect the ratepayer to dip deep into his pocket to pay the cost of their choosing to contract out. If they want private denominational schools, they should pay for them out of their own resources. Whatever may be thought about private schools in general or the so-called public schools, some parents will insist upon their right to use them and pay for so doing for as long as they exist. But they do not claim normally to be excused from also paying their education rate. There is absolutely no equitable reason why religionists should expect particular prerogatives within the state system whilst, with regard to Roman Catholics, there are the further difficulties expressed during the controversy of 1829 regarding the soundness of their citizenship.

The second considerable area of related controversy is that concerning ecclesiastical establishment. This is clearly the fact which lies at the roots of state-aided religious education in England and explains why the United States of America has a purely secular system. So long as establishment remains, it is to be expected that the dogmas espoused by the state Church will obtain certain clear prerogatives in all areas of life which Parliament covers. A demand for disestablishment with disendowment is obviously one of the necessary claims to be made by the Freethinker in the education controversy as elsewhere.

In the last resort, Freethinkers must make themselves felt with a strength parallel to that of the religionists. Local circumstances should afford a constant sphere within which the Humanists and Secularists of the locality can express their views. Certainly any Freethinking teacher or parent is under a moral obligation to contract out of the religious part of the state educational system unless he wishes to see his democratic freedom whittled away by an ecclesiastical oligarchy. It is not unknown for Roman Catholic teachers to remain inside in order to assist this end and even to sponsor staff room plots to secure that Freethinkers shall not be allowed to exercise their statutory privilege of contracting out. Thus, it certainly behoves any freethinking teacher or parent to be clear concerning his legal rights in this matter and, if necessary, to seek injunction in the courts when these are infringed. But, above all, nothing is to be gained by thinking of the pains of parliamentarians and by seeking to remove the whole question of religion in the schools from politics. In the last resort, the whole issue becomes one of statutory provision which must be settled in the House of Commons. It is this elementary fact which defines the lines of the coming struggle and which calls for a whole-hearted freethinking opposition to the ecclesiastical demands made upon the state educational system of today. English state education has achieved for many years a position in which it is free and compulsory. The present difficulties suggest that the most practical demand of the present time which the Freethinker can make is that it should also be secular and undenominational in religion and morals alike.

#### Secular Education Month

The National Secular Society Working Committee on Education decided at a recent meeting to organise a Secular Education Month. During November meetings will be held in London and the provinces, and members will be asked to write to their MPs and the Minister of Education on the question of religion in the schools. In order to meet the costs of the campaign a Secular Education Fund has been launched. Donations should be sent to the Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London S.E.1.

# Two Pseudo-Sciences — Astrology and Theology

By F. A. RIDLEY

ONE OF THE most curious products of our present era of Beatles and Bingo—not to mention other species of bunkum—is the curious but apparently almost universal revival of astrology, in particular in the popular press. For apart from a few highbrow papers, practically the entire press boasts its "What the Stars Foretell" column, so that the fortunate inquirer after celestial lore is in the desirable position of paying his (or her) money and taking his (or her) choice. Nor does the political complexion of the newspapers seem to enter into it: left and right, *Sunday Mirror* no less than *Daily Mail*, claim expert information from celestial sources with regard to the future destiny of their subscribers.

Though, of course, political bias may not be entirely lacking, for at least one well-known lady astrologer—boldly defying Gallup polls and current betting odds at the bookmakers—has bravely gone on record that Sir Alec Douglas-Home and his Tory colleagues will still be in office at the end of this year! Or, put into current stellar jargon, Sir Alec's "lucky star" will be in the "ascendant" upon whatever the day will be in October when the next General Election takes place. But no doubt one of our Labour-inclined contemporaries will prove both to his own satisfaction and to that of his readers, that the appropriate stellar formations will favour Mr. Wilson when the day eventually dawns.

In his little-known, but remarkable book, *Thomas More and his Utopia*, the German socialist historian, Karl Kautsky, devotes some very interesting and instructive pages to the cultural phenomenon of the Renaissance, amongst which astrology figured largely. For everyone from Luther to the Pope then firmly believed that man's terrestrial future could be read in the heavens like an open book by instructed professors of the Royal Art. Occasionally, indeed, theological curiosity got the better of terrestrial caution, for the learned historian of the Italian Renaissance, Jacob Burckhardt, relates how a certain Florentine astrologer cast the horoscope of Jesus Christ born upon 25th December, 1 AD. But this rash forecast had unhappy results for its author; the Roman Inquisition (like Queen Victoria upon a famous occasion) was "not amused" and burned the unfortunate star-gazer alive. For after all, our redemption was determined by God from eternity and was in no way due to the then conjunction of the constellations! Here, the two celestial sciences of astrology and theology clashed head on! Astrology and theology observing the same phenomenon, the death of Christ on Calvary, gave divergent causal explanations.

However, as Kautsky goes on to remark, the tremendous vogue of astrology at the Renaissance had its origins in contemporary sociology rather than in the dogmas of the Christian Church. For he noted that both the major epochs during which astrology was (in its own phraseology) "in the ascendant" were epochs of cultural decay and of violent social disintegration: the decline and fall of the Roman Empire and classical civilisation of antiquity, and the Renaissance, which marked the violent dissolution of the feudal social relationships of the Middle Ages and the violent impact of the new social order based upon the omnipotence of money and upon the newly-discovered world-market which the discoveries of Columbus and da Gama had opened up to West and East.

In both these epochs, the eager quests for information

from the starry skies above, were directly caused by "the changes and chances of this mortal life," then marked by extreme uncertainty and a complete lack of either emotional stability or economic security here below in this vale of tears. One could perhaps relevantly add that our present undeniable vogue of astrological lore may have similarly *sociological* causes in our own so terrifyingly uncertain era of the atomic bomb and the impending exploration of other worlds in space.

Assuming, as I think we can, the correctness of Kautsky's historical interpretation, it would presently appear that astrology has at least one prerequisite in common with religion: both are founded essentially on fear; people turn to the stars, as formerly they turned to God, for the effective solution of the gnawing uncertainties that surround them. Nor is this the only thing theology, self-styled science of divine things, and astrology, the science (sic) of the stars in relation to human destiny, have in common. They are essentially pseudo-sciences. That is, they are pre-scientific in substance, but scientific in form. They share this hybrid character with, say, psychic research, palmistry and—some would go on to add—Freudian psycho-analysis.

For in form, both theology and astrology (at least in the hands of their most capable exponents), are rigidly scientific. The logic of, say, St. Thomas Aquinas, is impeccable once his pre-scientific premises have been granted, whilst the Athanasian Creed develops in the technical phraseology of classical Greek philosophy, a metaphysical Trinitarian theology re-hashed ultimately from the prehistoric myths of ancient Egypt. Similarly, astrology involves an elaborate technique running into many highly technical pages of abstruse calculation: in which connection incidentally, a learned astrologer (now deceased), whom I knew and whose own horoscopes were, if not luminous, at least voluminous, always insisted that astrology, had really got absolutely nothing to do with the journalistic lucubrations that pour out from the popular press under the omnibus title of "What the Stars Foretell." The whole business, said my sky-reader, was nothing but a money-making stunt and bore no conceivable relationship with the authentic Royal Art and *bona fide* science of astrology. For, or so he insisted, horoscopes simply cannot be drawn up in this *ad hoc* omnibus manner.

Whilst I believe it is true that astrology is actually taught as a subject in some American universities, I have never heard that this is the case here. Whilst the curriculum taught at Oxford is often criticised as out of date in this era of the scientific revolution, astrology at least is not taken seriously as an academic subject. However, theology still is. In this obviously pseudo-science, one can take a whole corpus of academic degrees from the elevated rank of Doctor of Divinity down to the modest degree of Licentiate of Theology (which I hold myself). Is it not high time that this anomaly was rectified, and that comparative religion, which is a genuine science, should succeed and supercede the pseudo-science of theology in which primitive concepts are served up in a pseudo-scientific phraseology? This would surely represent an important, as well as a much overdue, educational reform. Then the out-of-work theologians could appropriately join up with their astrological brethren in the *News of the World*.

## This Believing World

There doesn't seem much difference between the Christian dictum, "Love one another" and the Alice Labusha Church in Northern Rhodesia which teaches, "white and black men shall love each other." Christians have hardly ever stopped killing other Christians or people of other religions, while Alice's followers have killed hundreds of people, some of whom were burnt alive.

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The tribesmen who follow Alice insist that she "died" ten years ago but was "resurrected." and, like the shepherds described so vividly by Luke, Alice has seen Angels. The missionaries in Rhodesia just hate her "baptising" her followers, and altogether they find it very disturbing that she has—like Mary Baker Eddy—begun another Christian sect. Anyway in her Church, she tells us, "The people find a special power to resist temptation." Every Christian talks like that.

★  
Considering that mediums say they can get into almost perfect touch with people like Hannen Swaffer, Lord Northcliffe, Conan Doyle, and other celebrities directly they have "passed on" (or is it now "translated?"), when it comes to murder, they all completely fail to spot the murderer. And bank robbers as well nearly always get away with their swag. If they are caught it is due to somebody telling the police and never to a medium. We cannot remember a single murder being solved by the aid of a medium.

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Oh yes—mediums do come up with the yarn that they did solve this or that murder twenty or thirty years ago, knowing full well that they won't be checked. Here, in a few weeks have been four murders of "unfortunate" women, and there isn't a medium in the world who can give the police a clue. But when it comes to telling us what Uncle George was wearing at his wedding fifty years ago, or of what Lord Northcliffe said to Swaffer, or to Lord Beaverbrook, we get page after page in the psychic journals. How stupid it all is!

★  
We are always getting pamphlets on the "proof" of the Bible and receive them with unflinching gratitude. The latest coming our way is an American one by the editor of a widely circulated evangelical magazine, *The Plain Truth*, and for him "prophecy" is the proof of "divine revelation," in fact, "the Proof of God." And the "City that confounds the Skeptic" is Tyre, the destruction of which was prophesied in Ezekiel; and how could Ezekiel write about something which was going to take place hundreds of years or so after? Only God alone could have inspired him to write it.

★  
Of course, Mr. Armstrong (the editor) does not trouble to deal with the question of Ezekiel at all. He just accepts what his Bible says about it, but the fact remains nobody knows when Ezekiel wrote his "prophecies," or whether there ever was a genuine Ezekiel, or who put his book into the canon of the Old Testament. And the question of a fulfilled prophecy depends on all these things before it can be accepted. But the really interesting thing about it in this case is that far from proving it was to be Nebuchadnezzar who would destroy Tyre—for that is the prophecy—Mr. Armstrong does his utmost to show why the great Neb. did *not* destroy the city, which was actually destroyed by Alexander the Great. In other words, there was no prophecy.

★  
We have never been able to place Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge on any problem of religion—that is, does he

believe in Jesus Christ and the Christian religion, or not? He is very "slippery" about it. Hearing him sometimes on TV cynically trying out a parson or a priest, we might well think he is an unbeliever, but he would rarely if ever clearly say so. Unfortunately, we can't get his latest programme on BBC 2 and so are missing his talks to young people on "controversial" subjects. Do they really believe in the conglomeration of Oriental ignorance, credulity, and superstition, which still has hundreds of millions of adherents under the name of Christianity? And what really is Mr. Muggeridge himself?

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Whatever Christianity may really be the *Sunday Mirror* (July 12th) has no illusions about Big Jim Taylor whose brand of Christian belief is hotly attacked by that journal. Indeed, it wants Big Jim banned from Britain altogether, as his "Exclusive Brethren" is an "evil sect." We cannot help wondering what it would have called the Christianity of "Bloody" Mary who butchered hundreds of Protestants, of Elizabeth I who did the same for Catholics, or James I in whose reign "witch hunters" had the time of their lives following the Bible in killing every witch they could find. We now know that the poor old women who were burnt alive were mostly quite harmless.

### FROM ABROAD

#### Germany

Under the title "Society and Individual" it is reported in the German *Der Freidenker* (July 7th, 1964) that in a city in which a telephonic spiritual advisory service (*Telefonseelsorge*) had been operating for the last three years, 15,300 calls were received of which very many more than half were from women. Thirty per cent. of these came at night time. The calls related to the following subjects:

matrimonial troubles	22 per cent
family and education	13 per cent
social problems, work and occupation	17 per cent
sickness, depression, neurosis and suicidal intentions	12 per cent
loneliness and human relations	15 per cent
religious questions and spiritual advice	10 per cent
other matters	11 per cent

Thus only 10 per cent dealt with religious or "spiritual" matters. Does this not show the small demand for religion? It might even show a demand for a secular advice bureau.

#### Austria

Some months ago a report was given in this journal on the number of German citizens belonging to Church organisations. Now the latest data from Austria are available. The figures there are as follows:

Of the 7.07 million inhabitants 89 per cent are members of the Catholic community and 6.2 per cent Protestants. One per cent belongs to other religious organisations and 3.8 per cent have no religious tie—they are Freethinkers. Although the number of inhabitants has increased by two per cent between 1961 and 1961, the religious distribution has not altered.

The number of persons without any religion is 266,000 of which half live in Vienna and form eight per cent of the city's population. Styria and Salzburg show a four per cent, whereas in Lower and Upper Austria and Carinthia the percentage is between two and three. The other Austrian regions have an even lower percentage, and in the Burgenland the number of unbelievers is the lowest.

From the *Kirchenfreie* (May 1964).

L.J.F.

# THE FREETHINKER

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Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Brough 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.

## Notes and News

WE HAVE JUST seen a reprint of John Crosby's Column in *The Minneapolis Star* of June 16th. Entitled "A Gentle Heretic," it tells of Dr. Alan Stuart, "a brilliant, tough, twinkling Irishman," who resigned his Church of England living because he thinks the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection "and the rest of it," are nonsense that no thinking man could subscribe to. "No clergyman who is intellectually honest can believe in the Virgin Birth or the other pagan beliefs," said Dr. Stuart. "Imagine. The Archbishop said to me, 'Write out what you believe in and what you don't so we can see what you subscribe to.'" Mr. Crosby, nevertheless, thought that Dr. Stuart was "the most religious man I ever met"—a typically meaningless journalistic remark. We, too, have had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Stuart, who incidentally contributed a fine article, "Humanists and Teilhard de Chardin," to *The Rationalist Annual* in 1963. We shouldn't call him an Atheist, because he retains a vague sort of belief in God, but he is far from the most religious man we ever met.

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CHRISTIANITY—a Tokio University professor told the Friends' World Committee at Waterford on July 24th—is still an alien religion to the Japanese. Out of 96 million people in Japan today, only 70,000 were Christians, said Professor Yukio Irie, and out of these only 200 were Quakers. In the minds of many Japanese, he continued (as recounted by the *Belfast Telegraph*, 25/7/64), Christianity stood for nothing but hypocrisy. While Christians preached the blessedness of humility and meekness, others saw them as haughty and aggressive; Christians might preach peace, but others saw them as warlike. "What do prayers and rituals mean," the Professor asked. "when just a push on a button can kill a million men in a moment, religious and irreligious alike?"

THE SAME (25/7/64) issue of the *Belfast Telegraph* reported that an American Roman Catholic priest who asked Pope Paul to dismiss Cardinal McIntyre as Archbishop of Los Angeles, had been transferred to a parish in suburban Anaheim, California. The 29-year-old Rev. William H. Dubay requested the Cardinal's removal in June on grounds of "gross malfeasance in office" by failing to give Roman Catholics a lead on racial issues. Throughout the controversy, said the *Belfast Telegraph*, Cardinal McIntyre had remained silent.

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ALSO FROM Ireland, but this time from the South. *The Irish Times* has been publishing a controversy on Pius XII and the Jews (Rolf Hochhuth certainly has stirred things up!). The outspoken O. Sheehy Skeffington explained that his previous praise of Pius was due—in Dr. Johnson's words—to, "Ignorance, madam, pure ignorance." I was, Dr. Skeffington said, "over-generous and under-informed" (*Irish Times* 1/7/64). Having now investigated the matter, he found it "difficult to resist the conclusion" that if Pius's "prayers had been met," and the Nazis had won the "victory on the Eastern front" on which he thought "the fate of Europe depended," the Pope "would never have deemed it expedient to refer in public to Hitler's 'arrogant apostasy,'" and any tears that Pius "might have spared for the slaughtered Jews would have been prudently shed in private."

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AS HIS contribution to the controversy, Irish author Sean O'Faolain cited Cardinal Tisserant's letter to Cardinal Suhard of Paris, dated June 11th, 1940. "Since the beginning of December," wrote Cardinal Tisserant, "I have insistently asked the Holy Father to issue an Encyclical about the duty of the individual to obey the dictates of his conscience, for that is the vital point of Christianity . . . I fear history will have to reproach the Holy See with having pursued a policy of convenience for itself, and not much more."

★  
ADRIAN PIGOTT's *The Vatican versus Mankind* (reviewed by D. J. McConalogue last week) was briefly mentioned by *The Methodist Recorder* (30/7/64). The book was not, the *Recorder* said, "intended as an irenical piece." We are sure Mr. Pigott will agree.

★  
THE EDUCATION controversy has, as F. H. Amphlett Micklewright says, arisen with renewed force. Next week we hope to print further contributions to the controversy by Bob Crew and Nigel H. Sinnott. Readers' opinions will also be welcomed.

### T. M. MOSLEY

As a tribute to one of the most popular members of the National Secular Society, the Nottingham *Evening News*, recently published an excellent portrait of Tom Mosley. "Eighty and arguing still," with a brief account of his life and work. It was particularly well deserved for no one has worked harder in his spare time, not only for Nottingham's famous debating Society, the *Cosmo*, (from 1928 to 1958) but as a regular speaker for the NSS in the Old Market Square; which, says the Nottingham *Evening News*, "makes him one of the most interesting men to listen to in Nottingham." His wide reading and unflinching good humour helped to make him a formidable opponent of Christianity—as nearly all those who have opposed him in debate know, and there seems little diminution in his memory though he has now passed his eightieth year.

May he continue for many years yet his splendid work for the cause. H.C.

# A Guide to Ghosts

By COLIN McCALL

I SUPPOSE IT is one of the penalties one pays for being a Freethinker that the supernatural should lose its appeal—and its terror. I have never quaked with fear over a ghost story, though there may be natural horrors that make me shiver. I hasten to say that I don't regret the loss; on the contrary, I have always found it much more exciting to solve a mystery rationally than to attribute it to unknown powers. But the fact remains: those who really want to keep their ghosts should shun Freethought. They should also shun Eric Maple, who has followed his excursion into *The Dark World of Witches* with a journey to *The Realm of Ghosts* (Robert Hale, 1964, 21s.).

He himself is a Freethinker, and dull would be the reader who failed to detect it. For the most part, however, Mr. Maple is content to tell his stories straightforwardly and leave the interpretation to others. But he can't resist the occasional wry comment which keeps the subject where it belongs—on earth. Very effective it is, too, especially at the end of a chapter.

Strange that a ghost should have stood guard over a grave for fifteen hundred years, successfully defying medieval treasure hunters and modern robbers until the arrival of an iconoclastic age in which the terror of ancient demons had been superseded by the cold curiosity of the antiquarian.

Or:

This kind of commonsense was, alas, far too advanced for a population who were as certain of ghosts as of God.

The realm of ghosts, for Mr. Maple, is not supernatural it is quite simply natural. But we can't ignore the ghost, he argues. "For thousands of years its activities have been observed and recorded by generation upon generation of competent witnesses, and purely on statistical grounds alone the case for its existence has been securely established." One might question that "competent," and one should certainly contest the similar remark that the ghost is the "best authenticated phenomenon of history." Not "authenticated," Mr. Maple, for which Chambers's definition is "genuine . . . true, entitled to acceptance, of established credibility." Statistics there are—Mr. Maple gives us plenty—and those content to accept the ghost "purely on statistical grounds" will find support from kings, prime ministers, prelates, lords and commoners. Yes, even from the nowadays-so-important scientists! Indeed, as Mr. Maple observes, people will continue to believe in ghosts until they have "attained the supreme dignity of facing absolute extinction at death without fear," and that is not easy in a culture still largely infused with Christianity.

Ghosts, of course, are much older than Christianity, and Mr. Maple has chapters on those of primitive and pagan peoples (and a reminder that we have Greece to thank for the ghost story). Thenceforth he pretty well confines himself to English or English-speaking spirits (for the ghost did go west, and seemed to become noisier as he did so) whose escapades he recounts in roughly chronological order. Only roughly though. Ghost stories have a remarkable tenacity, and Mr. Maple sometimes rightly decides to follow one through to its end.

Christendom abounded with angelic and devilish ghosts. Was it not calculated that there were six and a half or seven and a half million devils in Hell? And all have heard—or sung—of the hosts of angels. The British forces reputedly had their aid at Mons; the Crusaders enjoyed a similar privilege some eight hundred years

earlier at Antioch. St. Joan, too, it will be recalled, carried the Holy Ghost himself on her standard. But though helped by the good, Christians have fallen ready prey to the evil and mischievous. Devils have quoted scripture, disguised themselves as holy men and found countless ways of plaguing the pious. "The satanic organisation consisted of a great hierarchy of devils under the supreme authority of the arch (unfrocked) angel, Lucifer, the first heretic." And there were times when it seemed that "all nature wore devil's horns and in the mummery of forked tail, scaly legs and hideous masks, with which they had been garbed by the imagination of the monks, the demons swept through the abodes of man sparing neither palace nor hovel en route to the principal targets of their loathing, the clergy whose prurient imaginations had transformed them from beneficent deities into malevolent fiends." This, I feel, cries out for illustration by Hieronymus Bosch. Mr. Maple chooses instead a later Salvator Rosa drawing, which may fit in well with Jacques Callot's bespectacled charging demon of Bosch.

Monks and nuns have haunted as well as been haunted, and even the higher clergy has taken leave from Heaven to return to this vale of tears. The title-page of a pamphlet printed in 1641 (also reproduced by Mr. Maple) bears witness that, when Archbishop Laud was in the Tower of London, "The Apparition of Cardinall Wolsey did present himself unto him on the fourteenth of May last past: It being The third night after my Lord of Strafford had taken his fare-well to the World." Thomas à Becket, too, we are told, revealed himself in a dream to a sleeping priest, and kings have also done their share of haunting. Among ghostly animals there have been cats, dogs, horses, bulls, bears, beavers, polecats and wolves, to mention only a few.

"A pleasant legend"—as Mr. Maple calls it—that was "in circulation at one time in royal circles," concerned the Duchess of Mazarin, ex-mistress of Charles II, and Madame de Beauclair, ex-mistress of James II. Having been cast aside in favour of others, the two ladies became friends in retirement and agreed that whoever should die first would return and recount her experiences.

The Duchess was the first to die and as she lay deathbed her friend reminded her of this promise. Several years afterwards Madame de Beauclair was sitting in her chamber when she saw clearly the spirit of her old friend gliding gracefully into the room. The ghost fastened its gaze steadily upon her and said "Beauclair, between the hours of twelve and one this night, you will be with me," and disappeared. As the fatal hour drew near Madame Beauclair grew very sad and became lost in thought. Then shortly after twelve she suddenly cried out: "Oh, I am sick at heart and fell dead."

Less "pleasant" was an incident involving the Duke of Cumberland, "that sinister son of George III." The Duke's valet was found in his bedroom with his throat cut, and although the official verdict was suicide, many suspected the Duke of murder. Anyway, the ghost of the valet haunted St. James's Palace for some time after the tragedy, "confirming, rather unnecessarily one would have thought, that his end had not been a happy one." The Duke moved temporarily into Carlton House to elude the spectre, only to increase the suspicion.

John Aubrey had never seen a ghost but firmly believed in them from hearsay—like so many people today.

This seventeenth-century antiquary was, as Mr. Maple says, a "very doubtful authority indeed," and at times "irritating" with his brevity. Not here though:

Anno 1670. Not far from Cirencester was an apparition. Being demanded whether a good spirit or bad, it returned no answer but disappeared with a most melodious twang.

That is, I think, my favourite ghost story. But I also like that of the woman who discovered a set of teeth in a graveyard and took them home and put them by her bed only to be awakened in the night by dreadful cries of "Give me back my teeth!" outside her bedroom window. The terrified woman threw the teeth through the window where "no doubt they were picked up by the toothless spectre which hastily replaced them in its mouth and crept back to its grave in the churchyard."

Mr. Maple, it must be said, provides enough to choose from, down to the present day when, if one is to believe the popular press, "One of the most common activities

of the modern clergy . . . is to respond to the anguished calls of some parishioners for the expulsion of a recalcitrant ghost." After one such case in February 1963, an "eminent" occultist told the press that the vicar should have used a different form of exorcism. "Possibly a little psychology would have been more helpful," Mr. Maple comments.

*The Realm of Ghosts* is, then, an entertaining, interesting and basically sane book. Mr. Maple might have been a little tougher on Harry Price over Borley Rectory; might have avoided meaningless comparisons of ghosts with "a distinct species of sub-human being," and speculation—however brief—on "a set pattern of human consciousness," but these are small criticisms. And even here Mr. Maple insists that further exploration should be by psychologists and not occultists, "who have traded far too long upon the superstitious fears of their fellow men."

## Is it Wrong to Blame the Jews?

By N. E. S. WEST (USA)

FOR CENTURIES the Roman Catholic Church has cursed the Jews for being Christ-killers. But an Ecumenical Council statement said (according to reports) that all mankind (not just the Jews) is to be blamed for Jesus being crucified.

Well, in all fairness, that alleged crucifixion took place nearly nineteen centuries before my birth, and so I deny most emphatically that I am in any way legally to blame. And I further deny that the Ecumenical Council has any right to adjudicate in the matter or to accuse me of any responsibility for such a crime (if it was ever committed in fact) or to do so without giving me an opportunity to defend myself before my guilt was declared.

The declared infallibility claim is less than 100 years old (1870). Maybe Paul VI or his successors will renounce that claim to get some kind of Christian unity — since at present, it cannot be obtained by use of the wheel, the rack, the dungeon, or by burning opponents alive at the stake! Maybe, or maybe not, but to get to the substance of the declaration made by the Ecumenical Council statement as reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, November 9th, 1963.

The Church communique declared that, the part that the Jewish leaders of Christ's day played in bringing about the crucifixion does not exclude the guilt of all mankind. The personal guilt of these leaders cannot be charged to the whole Jewish people either of his time or today. The sacred events of the Bible, and in particular its account of the crucifixion cannot give rise to disdain, or hatred, or persecution of the Jews. It is therefore unjust to call these people God-killers, or to consider them cursed by God. The responsibility for Christ's death falls upon sinful mankind.

In earlier times the Roman Catholic Church objected to the ordinary laity reading the Bible, for fear they would not understand it. The Church took the position that it alone could determine the real meaning of the Bible.

So now, perhaps, when I quote from the Catholic Bible I should ask the Pope to tell me what the meaning is. Since he is far away and hard to reach we can read the Catholic Bible and tell him *what* it says. At least he cannot tell us (in 1964) that the book means a thing is black when the book says it is white. There could be instances when the meaning might be obscure, but when

the book says A killed B the Pope cannot tell us that the book really meant that C did it.

Let us now deal with the points made by the Ecumenical Council. First, that the guilt of all is not excluded by the Bible language. Re-read the Gospel accounts of the trial and the crucifixion, and we do not find that there is any hint of guilt on the part of others. The Jews were the complainers and they demanded the death of Jesus Christ. They said, "Let his blood be on our hands and of our children forever." The language *does* exclude others. The language blamed the Jews and the Jews *only*. If a witness says A did it he thereby excludes B, C and others. Moreover, the evidence shows that the Church has blamed the Jews — exclusively — for the death of Christ for over 1,800 years, which is completely at variance with the Council document, which said, "We must not blame the whole Jewish people or their progeny."

The Bible language, according to the Ecumenical Council, does not warrant disdain, persecution or hatred. It has taken a terribly long time for the Roman Catholic Church to come to such a conclusion during which it has murdered and persecuted Jews by the thousand. It is unjust, we were informed, to call the Jews Christ-killers. But I refer Christians to the second chapter of I Thessalonians, where Paul definitely calls the Jews Christ-killers. Does the Council propose to rewrite the Pauline Epistles? At present, very definitely the Bible accuses the Jews of being Christ-killers.

Another point made by the Council was that we cannot consider the Jews cursed by God. But here again a reading of I Thessalonians II, verse 16, contradicts this. The Catholic Bible says that the "wrath of God is come upon them to the end." I begin to wonder if the Council had read its own Bible.

The idea that responsibility for the death of Christ falls upon sinful mankind also conflicts with the Bible(s). Nor is it in harmony with the past conduct of the Roman Church. Not only have the Jews suffered torture at the hands of that Church and others, the Churches have not previously blamed anyone else for the crucifixion.

If the Roman Church says now that it has been wrong in its persecution of the Jews for almost two thousand years, it has paved the way for the Jews to bring civil action for damages. For, as the *Los Angeles Times* of

November 11th reminded us: "The Catholic liturgy still uses the term, 'perfidious Jew,' in its Easter liturgy. This liturgy was objected to by Pope John XXIII, who eliminated it from the service in St. Peter's Basilica."

If the Jews sue the Roman Catholic Church for being maligned, held up to public ridicule, and hampered in their commercial and social relations, and if the Jews win the suit — the penalty could be plaques (paid for by Catholics) to be placed in Jewish synagogues, declaring:

"We have unjustly maligned and persecuted the Jews for centuries. We humbly apologise."

(Signed) For the Roman Catholic Church, Paul VI, Pope, (dated) . . .

Just a moment, though! I learn now that the Ecumenical Council statement was not authoritative after all; the matter was discussed but not decided. It seems the plaques will have to wait.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### CHARLIE PEACE

It is obvious that Mr. McKenzie cannot get the bee of my article on Charlie Peace out of his pro-religious bonnet. I thought that I had made clear the point that Peace essentially belongs to a period and that, among other things, he illustrates the type of behaviour and character which could exist in mid-Victorian England side by side with a whole-hearted and apparently sincere avowal of evangelical religion. This being so, it was perfectly legitimate to mention religion in an article on Peace, based as it was upon a recent study of his life and character. May I merely content myself by replying to Mr. McKenzie, "What I have written, I have written"?

F. H. AMPILETT MICKLEWRIGHT.

### HUMANISM

It is a pity that Mr. Smith relies on Kierkegaard for a description of Humanism. (It is because we do not "belong to a faith" and have no "creed" that it is quite in order for some to consider Humanism to be a religion while the rest of us don't). I distrust anyone who does *not* wish to "escape from suffering and live a life of happiness" and suspect that those who relish their own misery are the most likely to be callous about other people's.

As Mr. Wright admits, Russell is "by no means a pessimist" or he would not still care so much about the survival of the human race in this "horrible" world. I cannot agree that a lively awareness (or even experience) of tragedy necessarily kills optimism, although perhaps I put forward a more balanced view in my book than in the article in question. At the root of Humanism today is the recognition of the urgent need to make this world *less* horrible but also of man's potential ability to achieve this purpose. Defeatists, pessimists and masochists, be they atheist or Christian, are destructive not only of their own well-being but of progress itself.

But I think I do agree with Mr. Carter's dictionary and it is certainly possible to be overbearingly undogmatic!

KIT MOUAT.

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M. McI.

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