

The Freethinker

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WITH THE general election only a few weeks away, the time appears to be particularly opportune to discuss the relationships both past and present of religion (by which is meant primarily of course in this country, Christianity) with the various British political parties. It may be remarked in the first place, that clericalism in its Continental sense as political Christianity (and in particular political Catholicism) does not exist to any significant degree here, where political

conflicts dictated largely or exclusively by religious ideology (such as Bismark's *Kultur-Kampf*, or the French Dreyfus case) have been unknown since the Civil War, in which Calvinistic ideology played an important political role.

Today, all British political parties subscribe in general to religion as a necessary (and presumably desirable) social institution. But the partisan alignment that in recent centuries bound, say, the Tory Party to the established Church, or the Liberal Party to nonconformity, is not particularly evident today.

Similarly the strong pro-secularist trends that co-existed with radical nonconformity during the early days of the British Labour movement, appear nowadays to have shrunk to vanishing point in the increasingly respectable Labour movement. Just as a 19th century Liberal politician once declared that we are all socialists now, so everyone today is a professing Christian in the sense that he (or she) professes to translate the sublime (but scarcely original) precepts of the Sermon on the Mount into the current practice of the Welfare State. A Labour MP, who will probably be a member of the next Labour Government—if there is one—once told me that Charles Bradlaugh was "a very great Christian".

The Tory Party at Prayer

It was long true—ever since "good King Charles's golden days", in fact—that the Church of England was "the Tory Party at prayer", a political attitude immortally described in several diverting stanzas by the anonymous author of *The Vicar of Bray*; and such a definition presupposed that the Tory party itself represented the political standard-bearer of official Anglicanism. Rather ironically, though, the soubriquet "Tory", coined by its Whig rivals during the heat of the Exclusion Bill to disinherite the Roman Catholic Duke of York (the future James II) about 1680, referred originally to a band of Roman Catholic Irish cut-throats who were partisans of James. But whilst the historic connection between the Tory Party and the Church of England stood as virtually inseparable for centuries, by no means all the individual Tory leaders, particularly the most brilliant of them, have been actually professing Christians.

This applies in particular to Bolingbroke, perhaps the most individually brilliant leader that the Tory Party ever had; for this prospective (but never actual) Jacobite Prime Minister to a Catholic monarch (the "Old Pretender" James Stuart) was not only a radical Deist, but was perhaps the original English predecessor of John M.

Robertson to deny the historicity of Jesus Christ. In more recent years Disraeli was scarcely orthodox; A. J. Balfour wrote *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt* (again scarcely orthodox), whilst Winston Churchill is reputed to be an agnostic in personal belief. In which connection I cannot refrain from quoting the pleasant, if rather irreverent anecdote of Churchill's reply to the then Bishop of London when his Lordship once observed, "Mr. Churchill,

I have a very large house with no less than fifty bedrooms". Churchill replied as quick as a flash, "Splendid my lord, but you have only got articles in thirty-nine of them".

Our present Scottish Prime Minister, we presume, follows the example

of his gracious sovereign, Queen Elizabeth, and is a Presbyterian believer in predestination north of the Tweed (where he actually lives) and an Anglican believer in free will when on official business in London. At any rate, should his ex-Lordship be again returned to power in October, we do not foresee that either he or his chief lieutenant, Mr. Butler (the instigator of the 1944 Education Act that made religious teaching compulsory in the schools) is likely to make any serious changes in the present *status quo* as between church and state; certainly not one in any humanist or secularist direction.

Methodism and Marxism

Some years ago, the then secretary of the Labour Party, the late Morgan Phillips, made the historic comment that "the British Labour movement owes more to Methodism than to Marx". Actually, whilst this remark came in for considerable criticism in the more radical—and Marxist—sections of the movement, not much fault can really be found with its substantial accuracy. For the writings of Marx and Engels have perhaps had less influence in Britain—where many of them were written—than in any other European industrial land. Though it is, of course, quite true that even before Marx and Engels, early English socialists like Robert Owen or the Chartist Bronterre O'Brien and, of course, George Jacob Holyoake, were militant unbelievers. But the mass Labour and Trade Union movement in this country was strongly influenced by the nonconformist tradition that it inherited from its Liberal predecessors. This was so particularly in the Trade Unions.

Catholicism

In recent years another and violently anti-rationalist, religious influence has become very powerful—Roman Catholicism and Catholic Action based mainly on continuous Irish immigration. In which connection, it is not merely an accident that the only professedly Marxist (and therefore atheistic) educational body formerly officially recognised by the Labour Party, the National Council of Labour Colleges exclusively devoted to avowedly Marxist education within the Labour movement, has just been officially dissolved, and that the man responsible for its dissolution was the present General Secretary of the TUC, George Woodcock, a reputedly ardent practising

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Religion and the British Political Parties

By F. A. RIDLEY

Roman Catholic. But nonconformist or Catholic, religious influences in the British Trade Union movement have always been very powerful. Nor on the purely political side have things been very different. For Christian socialists and lay preachers (including the present leader, Harold Wilson) have always swarmed throughout the political Labour movement, whose now acknowledged founder, Keir Hardie, was a Christian socialist who habitually quoted the Bible in his speeches

Here again, as in the case of the Tory Party, there were of course, some individual exceptions. Ramsay Macdonald was a professed agnostic, so was the then leader of the left, James Maxton. But Maxton, with whom I was closely associated during his last years, and who was, incidentally a great admirer of the former editor of *THE FREETHINKER*, Chapman Cohen, nevertheless always got the Catholic vote in his Glasgow constituency, Bridgeton. In more recent years, Aneurin Bevan and Fenner Brockway, both leading members of the Labour party, also professed a secularist outlook. To the left of the official Labour Party, the Communist Party began (in 1920) as a militantly anti-religious body and even then seriously considered establishing a British section of the Russian

League of Militant Atheists, later suppressed by Stalin during World War II. But since Stalin took up with the Popular Front and the CPGB with the former Dean of Canterbury, the official attitude of the Communist Party towards religion can only be described as somewhat ambiguous. As it is also on the Continent, where the professedly Marxist governments of the People's Democracies still officially subsidise the Churches. Actually, as far as I know, the only socialist party in this country to insist on atheism as an essential condition of party membership, is the Socialist Party of Great Britain, a magniloquently named, but actually small and rather doctrinaire body which has equally little use for what it describes as "bourgeois secularism". But, like the late Guy Aldred, another intransigent atheist, the SPGB is unlikely to poll many votes in the general election.

A Dismal Scene

It is clear, unfortunately, that the general election of 1964 seems unlikely to do much to further the twin causes of humanism and secularism. However, "nothing is permanent except change". We must take courage from the classic injunction of the Vicar of Bray and await better days when "the times do alter".

It is Obvious and Cannot be Doubted

By A. E. MANDER

CAN WE as sensible persons, believe anything simply on the grounds that "The Bible says so"? In particular: can we believe on those grounds that there exists—objectively—a "Personal" God . . . ?

Even [a] cursory survey . . . is I suggest sufficient to destroy any notion that the Bible itself is reliable evidence of the existence of such a God. And certainly we must avoid the only argument which would appear (falsely) to give the Bible validity—namely, the "circular" argument. We *cannot* reason in a circle that there must be a Personal God because the Bible says so . . . and that the Bible is to be believed because the God inspired it.

Exactly the same fallacy must be avoided with regard to the Church. We cannot take the fact that "The Church says so" as evidence of the existence of a Personal God—because, *unless* there is a God to have inspired the Church (which is the question at issue), the Church is without authority. The Church cannot be allowed merely to assume the existence of a God, and then claim to speak in his name.

The Roman Catholic Church itself admits this: at any rate it admits that one cannot base a belief in the existence of God on the fact that "The Church says so". Nor does the Church assert that the existence of God should be merely "assumed". What it does officially claim is that the existence of God "can be known with certainty by the natural light of reason"—leaving it at that!

Leaving it where? In the ordinary use of language, we know something by "reason" only when we have adequate *reasons* for believing it to be true. So, if it is asserted that the existence of God can be shown by reason, we ask at once: Well, *what is* the evidence? *What is* your reasoning? *What are* your reasons for believing it?

But the Catholic Church does not mean "reason" in this modern sense at all. When its spokesmen today use those words as quoted, they are playing a verbal trick—harking back to an absolute medieval concept of what used to be called "natural reason". The nearest modern

way of expressing it would be to say that something is "obvious". Or that it is "only plain commonsense". Or that, as sometimes still we hear uneducated people say, "It stands to reason"—meaning that something is so self-evident that it cannot be doubted.

And this is the official basis of Catholic belief in the existence of a Personal God. That it is obvious!

Obvious, we may ask, to whom? To those who believe it? Certainly it is not obvious to the hundreds of millions of people in the world who do *not* believe in the objective existence of a Personal God. It has never been obvious to all the millions of Buddhists, or all the millions of Confucianists, or all the millions of people even in so-called Christian countries—who individually have no such belief. (Rather unfair of the Deity to make his existence "obvious" to half the human race, but not to the other half!)

Joking aside, we are rather suspicious nowadays of statements which are said to be obvious. It is not so very long since it was "obvious" that the Earth was flat; and "by the natural light of reason" anyone could see that the Sun and Moon and all the Stars went gliding across the sky-roof above the stationary Earth. Similarly, it was "obvious" that malaria was caused by bad air emanating from the swamps. It was "obvious" that all that would happen in a man's life was determined by the position of certain stars at the time he was born. It was "obvious" that insane people had little demons inside them. It was "obvious" that ugly old women were able to practise witchcraft. And of course it was "obvious by the natural light of reason" that a king was a different sort of being, intrinsically superior to ordinary men. semi-divine.

What does "obvious" mean, as the word is generally used? It means no more than that something is taken for granted and accepted without question.

But so often have "obvious" beliefs been subsequently

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The Bastard

By BOB CREW

FOR CENTURIES in Britain the bastard has been an object of social scorn, conventional wink-and-snigger sympathy, and furtive persecution by the religioso. Unavoidable problems have been enlarged for him and avoidable ones created and elaborated. An interminable shower of psychological theories have been rained upon his bastard face, whilst doom-prophets and original sin merchants of the Christian faith have wagged many a finger of warning (to others) before his bastard eyes. Always the most popular social outcast of our times, the bastard has not been without his uses. He has been a source of comfort to those proud parents in need of reassurance of an early and continued celibacy prior to marriage. He has been an easy prey for the youngsters wanting to ridicule some inferior being during their periods of naughtiness, and he has been a heaven-sent gimmick for the Church, both as an excuse for it to demonstrate a tireless capacity for Christian charity and as a reason for pointing out the error of our ways.

There is surely no doubt that the bastard has served society well and that he has got little in return for it. The Church in particular should reproach itself, for all who have persecuted the bastard have done so largely because of the way in which the Church has conditioned their minds, and for all its charitable efforts to help sustain this popular social outcast, the Church has never once sought to help the bastard in what is perhaps the most practical way possible—by legitimising him.

However, the bastard has survived all. He is still with us and going strong. In recent years his numbers are reported to have increased and unlike the old days he is not found so frequently in the Institutions for the Homeless or the Hostels of Christian Charities for Street Urchins. Nearly forty per cent of Britain's bastards are to be found in stable but unmarried families unrecognised by the law and the Church—as if they weren't there! And the moral attitude of the law, like many attitudes of convention, have been fashioned by the Church. Not until the fashions become hopelessly outdated, or even forgotten, do people wake up to the idea that someone has blundered!

Bastards born in stable, unmarried families have good reason to be wary of the Church. In the past the Church has had the knowledge to make them the same as all the other children. It has had the option to legitimise them and, because they have not been abandoned by those who procured them, it has been a relatively simple task for the Church to approve and the state to perform. Rather than help the bastard out of his allegedly abnormal condition the Church has preferred to isolate him, to keep him around face to face with the problems it has shaped for him.

But now the Church looks like losing its power over the stable bastards in this country, and British society stands to lose nearly 40 per cent of its popular outcasts. There is disquiet in the House of Commons about the increasing number of illegitimate children born to people who are unmarried (either because one of them is already married and separated from the legal mate but unable to get a divorce without consent, or because the procurers do not wish to conform). A few noble gentlemen in the House of Commons have suddenly decided that these bastards have no problems other than those we choose to create for them. They have questioned the competency and authority of the Church and declared that the time

has come to get on with helping the bastards. God and his disciples are seen to be sitting on the fence with no apparent desire to lend a hand.

In the absence of an Act of God, British Parliamentarians in the year 1964 are promoting a Bill in the House of Commons which would result in the legitimisation of the great majority of Britain's bastards—amen. It is to be hoped that they succeed, but one wonders why there is such a sudden twinge of social conscience for our time-honoured friends. They have survived all the knocks and are probably in need of less protection today than at any other time in their history. With a social decline in established morals and more widespread freedom of thought, with superstition and mythology blown thin, people are generally more tolerant—the bastard's position in society would seem to have strengthened quite naturally without too much help from those who have clearly neglected him for so long. He is surely better able to blow raspberries at convention than he ever was. It would seem a bit late and really rather pseudo to go so melodramatically to his rescue now. However, for the record, it looks good, and it does at least make history of another Christian failure.

In the months ahead there will no doubt be much controversy inside and outside the House as the Bastard's Bill is examined. Already there is some opposition from the religioso. It would be premature to record it here; that can be better done at a later date when we have the full measure and quality of it. Because I am an optimist I shall be looking forward to a quick and painless death for these stable bastards. In cynical anticipation of the garish Christian funeral which is bound to attend the bastard's exit, I offer the following dialogue between Mr. A. and Mr. B., as a suitable epitaph to be inscribed on the tombstone:

A. What is a bastard?

B. A bastard is many things to many men.

A. But what does the word mean?

B. As the most personal of pronouns it refers to the fact that one is born out of wedlock. That is all. Not one who is conceived in any way dissimilar to other conceptions—merely one who is conceived by persons not joined together in legal or holy matrimony. At the same time, as an inarticulate adjective, bastard means one who is, for one reason or another, objectionable, unsavoury, distasteful and so on—such is the tone of Christian phraseology. Now do you understand what a bastard is?

A. I understand that a bastard is either a fact or an opinion.

B. You are quite right.

A. I also understand the need to express the opinion but I am not certain of the need to distinguish the fact.

B. And why not?

A. Simply because it is not usual to put a label on things so insignificant and obvious. It is logical that babies should be called babies and that until such time as they become of distinguishable age they be called new-born babies because there is a very clear distinction between a new-born and its elder. But I fail to see the distinction between a bastard baby and one who is born to a married woman. It is of no avail and the only possible differences are illusory.

B. Ah but you see people have to be warned about bastards—they are a social phenomenon.

A. Stuff and nonsense!

B. No, you are wrong. You see a bastard has come into this world in an immoral way and what is more he is without parental protection when he arrives.

A. Why so?

B. Well, let me say that he is without parental protection if those who conceive him abandon him as they often do.

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This Believing World

We are delighted to name a vicar who is about to form a club for Atheists and Agnostics—on the lines of Mothers' Unions and Scout Clubs. He is the Rev. S. May, Vicar of Effingham, Surrey, and though he is not out for "conversions," he claims (*Daily Mail*, September 10th) he could show Atheists why they are wrong, for he loves nothing better than an argument. Obviously he knows nothing of THE FREETHINKER for he would find, often in a single number, enough argument to last him a lifetime. Perhaps he would like to try his prentice hand with it before forming his club. It may even lead him to abandon the idea!

★

Another vicar, the Rev. C. Porter of St. Andrews, Ilford, appears to have caused a wave of horror to pass through his parishioners. He publicly supports "mercy killing." There is a case for it "when all hope is gone, and the poor victim is suffering intolerable agony," he says, and naturally, his congregation is horrified, while the Bishop of Exeter insists that, "The Church is in no doubt that euthanasia would in fact be murder." Well, the Church has insisted on many things, and has more often than not been forced to change. What about slavery, supported for many centuries by the Church and Jesus?

★

That very loquacious lady, Miss Barbara Ward, so long a favourite speaker on radio's *Brains Trust*, and a staunch Roman Catholic, was interviewed by John Freeman and Lord Boothby the other evening, as to whether her views on birth control had changed as well as on other "doctrines" held by her Church. We suspect that the two gentlemen never expected the flood of words with which she managed to cover her uncertainty. Of course, the Church's doctrines would never change, but its "organisation" in these more modern times, might. But it would be most interesting if the interviewers could now tell us where Miss Ward really stood on anything at all.

★

Some years ago a German writer, Werner Keller, wrote *The Bible was Right*, which was greeted with almost delirious enthusiasm by both British and German Christians. He has now published a sequel, *The Bible as History in Pictures*, which of course is greeted with equal religious enthusiasm. How wonderful it is can be shown by its providing an "historical" picture of Adam and his precious serpent, and lots of other true incidents. In fact, a London *Evening News* critic (September 12th) says it gives us "the mighty panorama of Biblical history". No doubt as piously authentic as Biblical miracles!

★

We cannot help wondering what the Jewish community in England will think of an Anglican church shaped like a Star of David to be built near Richmond in the near future. Although Jesus is the only Son of God, and nobody has claimed God is descended from David, all Christians believe that Jesus is certainly of Davidic descent. Moreover, the Star of David has always been a Judaic symbol, and more or less treated with conspicuous contempt by nearly all good Christians. We are certainly living in a time of sharp religious dissent or progress—or even despair.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

New Victoria Hotel, Corporation Street, Birmingham
Saturday, September 26th Reception 6.30 p.m.
Tickets 17s. 6d. each from Mrs. M. Miller, 62, Warwards Lane,
Birmingham 29. Telephone: Selly Oak 1121

It is Obvious and Cannot be Doubted

(Concluded from page 306)

found to be false, that no thinking person today can regard a statement that any idea is "obvious" as being an indication that it is true. It is futile, then, to assert that the objective existence of a Personal Deity is obvious by the natural light of reason. This means no more than that some people are so convinced of it that they cannot conceive even the possibility that they might be mistaken.

One is able, however, to explain why an idea seems obvious to many people. If a belief is implanted in the mind of a young child, and if that child grows up without any query being introduced into his mind, there is always a likelihood of the belief—whatever it is—becoming so firmly rooted that it does in the end become impossible for him to doubt it. There will be a strong tendency for him to go on, as long as he lives, regarding it as "obviously" true.

Hence comes the reputed saying of the Jesuits: "Give us a child till he is seven, and it matters not who takes him afterwards". Whether it is a belief in the existence of a Personal God, or a belief that black men are essentially inferior to white men, or a belief that one's own country is the finest in the world, or a belief that Dad is a wise man who knows almost everything, or a belief that policemen are one's natural enemies—whatever it is, if the idea takes root during childhood, there is always a strong tendency for it to persist all the rest of one's life.

Even if the individual does, in adult life, develop a questioning intelligence strong enough to enable him to reject his childhood belief—even then, something usually remains of it. In a time of deep emotional stress, when his reasoning powers are temporarily overwhelmed, he may find himself once again in the grip of his childhood prejudice against coloured people—or, at another time, pray frantically for help from his childhood God.

However, it seems probable that there is a second period in life, almost equal to that of early childhood in being especially favourable for unreasoned convictions to take root. This is the time of adolescence, with its sensitivity and the intensity of the emotional experiences which often then occur.

[The above is an excerpt from A. E. Mander's new book, *The Christian God and Life After Death*, published by the Rationalist Association of Australia Ltd., Box 738 F, Melbourne, price 5s. plus postage].

SECULAR EDUCATION MONTH

PLANS ARE well advanced for Secular Education Month which is being organised by the National Secular Society. During November, meetings will be held in the London suburbs, and in Birmingham, Glasgow, Reading, Nottingham and Inverness. The final meeting will take place at the Alliance Hall, Westminster, on Monday, November 30th, when one of the speakers will be Margaret Knight. Harold Pinter, the distinguished playwright will also speak, engagements permitting.

In a letter to Mr. William McLroy, General Secretary of the Society, Earl Russell (Bertrand Russell) says "The attempt to impose religious belief on children should be resisted. Religious doctrine is arbitrary and entirely the province of those who wish to maintain such views as they find adequate to their needs. It is entirely unacceptable, however, that doctrine should be foisted upon the young as a matter of duty in the course of their education. I welcome the campaign against compulsory chapel and religious coercion in our schools".

Messages of support have also been received from Kingsley Martin and Lord Willis. Full details of the campaign will be issued in mid-October.

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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 J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD.

(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

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, September 25th, 7.15 p.m.: A meeting.

Notes and News

THE HOUR has sounded in history when the Church must say of herself what Christ intended and willed her to be", Pope Paul declared when opening the third session of the Vatican Council. "She must", he continued, "complete the doctrine which the first Vatican Council was preparing to enunciate but which external obstacles [] prevented it from defining, except in its first part". The first part referred to, was, of course, the dogma of papal infallibility, which the Pope clearly indicated he had no intention of surrendering. Nor, despite his fraternal welcome to "the separated brethren" present, did he leave anyone in doubt about the primacy of the Church of Rome. Peter and his rock were duly invoked and Pope Paul's hope that "one day" every obstacle and misunderstanding in the way of unity would be removed, sounded somewhat hollow.

★

THE REVISED draft of the resolution on the Jews to be put before the Vatican Council has "particularly distressed" Rabbi Unterman of Israel and Rabbi Abraham Herschel, a conservative American professor of Jewish Ethics, wrote Ivan Yates in *The Observer* (13/9/64). This is because it lays more emphasis on the conversion of the Jews than did the first draft, which was withdrawn at the last session of the Council because of opposition from extreme conservatives at the Vatican and "from others who feared adverse reactions from the Arabs". The new draft is also reported to be "less unequivocal in exonerating the Jews from decisive and weaker in condemning anti-semitism". Pope John's brief reign and, it seems, his "revolution" are over.

THERE is nothing that makes for antagonism to the Roman Church among other denominations so much as its uncompromising attitude about children, said the *Daily Telegraph* (3/9/64) commenting on an interview with Dr. Heenan on the subject of mixed marriages in the Roman Catholic magazine, *The Word*. While there were obviously "certain propositions" which would be put to the Vatican Council, Dr. Heenan would not be prepared to say that the Council would decree that it no longer matters about the non-Catholic partner promising to bring up the children as Catholics. "I cannot imagine, myself, that the Council will say that", said the Archbishop. Yet, as the *Telegraph* pointed out, the rules applying to mixed marriages have hitherto been regarded as "disciplinary" and not "dogmatic", which means that they can be altered. "Indeed, they have been", it went on. Before 1909 the faith of the children of such marriages was a matter for arrangement between parents. Then the decree *Ne temere* laid down the present rules.

★

A "FEED THE MINDS" religious campaign is to begin on October 29th, with the support of various denominations, and with the intention of raising a million pounds "to distribute more Christian literature to the newly literate people of the world." Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and leaders of the main Nonconformist Churches will be present, we are told (*Daily Telegraph*, 1/9/64), when the campaign is launched at St. James's Palace. Through the United Nations, 330 million adults were being taught to read and —says the campaign's first newsletter—"Whatever they read today will influence their lives, the conduct of their countries for many years to come, and will decide whether there is violence or peace and goodwill." Never before, said a spokesman for the campaign, "has there been such united action on the part of the Churches and religious societies."

★

THE FACT that "Christ taught and believed the doctrine of everlasting hell" is, G. M. Lee of Bedford informed us (*The Observer*, 13/9/64), "by no means established". Indeed, he doubted whether Christ believed in hell, "as we understand it, at all". Miss Stevie Smith (*The Observer* critic who dared to make the remark) seemed, in Mr. Lee's eyes, "to be more of a fundamentalist than the average orthodox Christian". She didn't "allow for Oriental hyperbole, or for the early distortion of Christ's teaching on so fertile a subject". Hell, Mr. Lee went on, "occupies only a small space in the Gospels" and "is most prominent in passages which are suspect on other grounds, and there the language is vague". But what of hell's concomitant? Supposing Miss Smith referred to Christ's teaching and believing the doctrine of eternal salvation. Would Mr. Lee use the same arguments against her? Would he inform her that this was "by no means established", that he doubted whether Christ believed in heaven, "as we understand it at all"? Would there be the same talk of "Oriental hyperbole" or of distortion of Christ's teaching? Would Mr. Lee urge Miss Smith—and us—to be suspicious of the vague language of the Gospels? To ask these questions is to answer them.

★

A LAST reminder to those who get their FREETHINKER on Thursday morning. The debate between National Secular Society President, David Tribe, and Lord's Day Observance Society Secretary, Harold Legerton, will be held in the Alliance Hall, Westminster on September 24th, at 7.45 p.m.

The Bastard

(Concluded from page 307)

A. Then he is no more significant than other children who do not have parents to look after them, or children who have parents who do not look after them very well. He is merely a child without parents. And what of those children born outside conventional wedlock whose parents do look after them? Why should they be called bastards?

B. Because their parents are not married.

A. That is no reason.

B. It is a good Christian reason endorsed by the Church.

A. But I would strongly suggest that Britain is a secular country. Only one-tenth of the population is churchgoing. Why should the rules of such a small minority be imposed on the vast majority around it?

B. The Church still has influence with the other nine-tenths.

A. Even bad influence?

B. I suppose so.

A. I do not understand.

B. Well you see most people at one time or another in their lives have been conditioned by the Church and even when they get caught up in the rough and tumble of life they tend to rely on the Church for guidance in these matters requiring extra-special consideration because they lack the conviction of right and wrong.

A. That can be dangerous, particularly if the Church happens to be wrong or acts in such a way that exploits their good faith.

B. But the Church is never wrong or unwise.

A. That is a half-witted observation. I would suggest that, in the case of Britain's stable bastards, the Church is criminally wrong. I concede that the Church has the right to impose its views on those who belong to it, deny communion to them and excommunicate or expel those of its members who break its rule, but it has no right to dictate the law of the land to those outside the Church. Why does the Church persecute so relentlessly and why does the Government allow it to enshrine this persecution in the law as if it were a virtue? Because of God's will? If the so-called bastard is conceived by people unmarried, either their union should be approved because they are fit to look after their baby, or the child should be cared for in an institution.

B. But an institution is cruel.

A. Precisely, then if the child is to remain with its procurers like other children, what is the point in calling it a bastard. Is the Church so vain and stubborn that it would rather children were submitted to institutions as their designation suggests rather than allow their parents to marry and so legitimise their children?

B. What should the Church do?

A. It should legitimise the bastard by recognising the marriage. What else does it want to do? There is no problem that I can see.

B. But supposing the proposed husband cannot get a divorce from his first wife. He cannot be married twice.

A. I think it is wrong that one partner should prevent the other from remarrying because he or she may be spiteful, revengeful, or plain daft. If consent is not forthcoming, the law should decree that after a given period of time the old marriage be annulled without consent, particularly when one of the partners is already in the process of a new life elsewhere and procuring children.

B. But the Church contends that this change would be unfair to a particular individual if he or she did not want a divorce. The Church says that it is inhumane for one partner to enforce a divorce when the other does not wish it. The Church says by mutual consent or not at all.

A. That is unrealistic. The Church has a guilt complex. It is not possible to settle such matters on the basis of who is guilty and who is not. It takes two to make a marriage, and since one cannot do it alone, it is enough that the other has become an ex-partner by virtue of a permanent relationship elsewhere or by virtue of the fact that there is a separation. When marriage breaks down it is right and proper to recognise it, and a matter of tidiness to sweep up afterwards. To make it linger on like a sad myth, or to leave the broken bits and pieces around is typical Christian sensationalism which only succeeds in getting matters out of perspective and misplacing what is true of a situation. Does the Church take pride in this?

B. Do you not allow the Church a few shortcomings here and there?

A. As a believer, no. As a disbeliever, yes. But if the Church has its shortcomings it is wrong that others should suffer for them. There is a need for some higher and kinder authority to take the initiative in these matters. It seems to me that the Church is guilty of flagrant misuse of its special position in society. It should be sacked.

B. But it is inspired by God.

A. That is either a lie or a pity, but if you are right that God should be sacked, too.

B. Are you blaspheming?

A. I think not, I am only using the reasoning God gave me. I think God must have given me greater reasoning than the Church.

B. That is conceit!

A. It is an observation or a small measure of conceit in comparison to that of the Church, prolonging unpleasantness which could be resolved.

B. You suggest that the Church persecutes some people by forcing them to observe religious views about marriage they do not possess?

A. Yes I do.

B. But the Church is not ultimately responsible for law.

A. Then we are fortunate, but the Church is responsible for the intellectual state of mind which fashioned the law. The bad influence of the Church must be continually exposed so that the law can be altered and justice be done.

Religion Scrutinised—With a Twist

By GREGORY S. SMELTERS

Sociology of Religion, by G. M. Vernon (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1962), explores religion in its interaction with the entire society, and is meant as a text for junior-senior undergraduate courses. The author expertly discusses sociological characteristics of religion, and religious influence on other social institutions—government, education, economy, marriage, stratification.

The book is a well-written summary of the American social studies of religion—but with an odd twist. Being a militant atheist, I turned to it eagerly to see what modern sociologists have found about religion and how they differ in its criticism from Freethinkers.

But as my reading progressed beyond the preface, I grew more and more amazed and annoyed to see an abnormally split personality at work. The bulk of the book was a regular, well-informed, interestingly displayed sociological survey, but in between a Fundamentalist was persistently spilling false remarks intended to stultify the validity of the scientific point of view.

Then it happened one day that I checked up in my encyclopedia on Brigham Young, at whose college the author is teaching. That instantly classified the mysterious schizophrenic twist, and simultaneously I realised the extreme plight of the social scientist and the schoolteacher in the contemporary American society. Like the Humanists of old he is humiliatingly forced to stultify publicly his own scientific reasoning just to escape being fired from his precarious post.

With this point always in mind, the reader will nevertheless find the facts (if not always their interpretation) informative, useful, and even entertaining, but for sociological debunking of religion it must be counterbalanced with such books as Prof. Leuba's *God or Man?* (which is ignored by the author) or by H. L. Mencken's classic *Treatise on the Gods*, supplemented—for a historical background and perspective—with, say, Prof. H. E. Barber's *Intellectual and Cultural History of the Western World*.

Adrian Pigott

THE NEWS of the death of Adrian Pigott at his home in Amersham, Bucks., on September 9th, 1964 (announced briefly in last week's issue), will have been received with very real feelings of sorrow and loss, both by his personal friends, and by those who knew him only through his writings. A few days before his death, with characteristic courage and thoughtfulness, he prepared biographical information to help the writer of his obituary. Adrian Pigott was a native of Keighley, Yorkshire. He served as a naval officer from 1912 to 1944, when he was disabled, and had eight war medals. He had, in his own words, "travelled far and wide in the five continents and had observed the poverty, misery and illiteracy prevailing in many Roman Catholic countries; and this led him to write his paperbacks *Freedom's Foe, the Vatican* and *The Vatican versus Mankind*."

His views on Life and Death were those shown in the poem, "My Creed," by Alexander Kaddison:—

Reason my final arbiter shall be;
Blind faith is barred from my philosophy,
Nor God nor Christ know I. My deity
Is Man. My Creed
Bows to no fetish. Neither do I crave
Salvation in a life beyond the grave.
Far better strive mankind on Earth to save—
Through word and deed.

Adrian Pigott would have preferred to leave it at that, but those of us who knew him feel that this short account does less than justice to a man who was a good friend, and a valiant fighter for the causes in which he believed.

Most readers will remember him as an outspoken foe of the social and international mischief-making of the Vatican, and this he was proud to be. It should be realised, however, that this opposition sprang from a deeply-felt compassion for his fellow human beings. He was raised in the Evangelical wing of the Church of England, and his antipathy to Roman Catholicism arose later because of what he saw when he visited various parts of the world.

He decided to spend his retirement fighting the Vatican, and it was clear to all who knew him that he relished the fight. He was, however, no bigot, always distinguishing between the Roman Catholic system and its victims, and realising that there are vast differences between individual Roman Catholics. While apprehensive at the time of President Kennedy's election, for example, he came to regard him highly, and was saddened by his assassination. Neither had he any illusions that the Church of Rome would be mortally wounded by his assaults, but he felt that it was the duty of everyone who believed as he did, to do his part, however small.

The success of his book *Freedom's Foe, the Vatican* which ran to five editions, surprised and delighted him. It brought him many friends and correspondents from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and even Malta and Spain, as well of course, as various parts of the British Isles. With characteristic generosity, he waived all royalties on this book. His second book *The Vatican versus Mankind* was published recently, and early indications are that it will repeat the success of his first.

He wrote many articles and letters to the press, and kept up a large correspondence with like-minded people all over the world.

Adrian Pigott's undoubted hero was Confucius, and he greatly admired Marie Curie. Of recent authors, he especially admired Bertrand Russell, H. G. Wells, Paul Blanshard, Avro Manhattan, Emmett McLoughlin, Ed-

mond Paris and F. A. Ridley (a personal friend). He was a Secularist, a member of Marble Arch Branch of the National Secular Society, rejecting supernaturalism in any form, and quoting with approval Ingersoll's dictum.

The time to be happy is *now*
The place to be happy is *here*

an ideal which he put into practice in his own life. His happy marriage and family life gave strength to his antipathy to the fraud of clerical celibacy and to his sympathy for those who had been tricked into it at an age when they were incapable of appreciating what they were giving up. He felt that many of mankind's sufferings were self-inflicted through ignorance and superstition, and he had a hearty hatred of those who exploited and maintained ignorance to satisfy their own greed and will to dominate. In politics, he supported the Labour Party. To his friends, he had always openly said that he would prefer to die while still in full possession of his mental faculties, and while his zest for life was strong. This wish at least has been granted. For some time before his death, he knew that the end was not far off. The prospect did not frighten him. He continued to take an interest in the sales of his new book, the affairs of the National Secular Society, to correspond with his friends. The last letter which I received from him, about four days before he died, was as usual friendly, gently humorous, and largely concerned with my affairs. At the end, he wrote:

"I must impart some sad news, viz the time is not far off when I shall be receiving the extreme unction . . . I have about a week or two to live, and slow exhaustion will be quite painless I imagine. I am strangely happy, as I have done most of what I hoped to achieve, and have many pleasant memories, including you [and my other friends]"

Our deepest sympathy is extend to his widow Mrs. Betty Pigott and his family, His wish that "no religious or memorial service should be held" was carried out, and he was cremated.

D. J. McCONALOGUE.

Obituary

LORD RAGLAN

THE DEATH of Lord Raglan, Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire, on September 14th, is a sad loss to the Rationalist movement. He, perhaps more than anyone else, epitomised the questioning, critical attitude—based upon wide learning—that is an essential part of a scientific approach to human problems.

Lord Raglan, a great grandson of the British commander in the Crimean war, was 79, but his recent book, *The Temple and the House*, showed no failing of faculty. Having had the pleasure of reviewing it for *The Humanist* and of receiving an appreciative letter from its author, my own view might not seem completely dispassionate. Here then is, *The Times Literary Supplement's* conclusion: "Thanks to his provocative book we can no longer think of 'the house' in so simple or unquestioning a fashion as we have been used to do, and this is just the kind of effect that social anthropologists aim at . . ."

Lord Raglan was, it will be recalled, elected President of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1955. Married in 1923, he had two sons and two daughters, and his heir is his son, the Hon. Fitzroy John Somerset.

C.McC.

The Unattainable

By A. O. SNOOK

ACCORDING to Bertrand Russell one cannot be happy until one has recognised the fact that the world is "horrible, horrible, horrible".

I, for one, cannot understand what the great man is talking about. Surely the fact that the world—that is to say, the world as at present organised by *Homo sapiens*—is undoubtedly a very horrible place, ghastly, in fact prevents any but the complacent and grossly self-centred from achieving any happiness whatever. How can one be happy, even in the security of one's own family circle and home, when millions are dying of starvation, and hundreds of thousands are confined in cancer and mental hospitals?

Galsworthy once expressed his horror at the "sum-total" of human and animal suffering to H. G. Wells. Wells denied that there was any such thing as a "sum-total" of suffering, his point being that suffering in the aggregate was demonstrably no worse than the suffering of an individual, whether animal or human. Whilst I see Wells's point, nevertheless the sight of one hundred people dying of cancer is surely a hundred times more unbearable than the sight of one cancer victim, and Galsworthy's "feeling" is more intelligible than Wells's "logic".

The question of "happiness" sometimes crops up in the columns of this austere journal, and Mr. A. Smith made one or two pertinent comments on the subject, particularly when he refuted the idea that unhappy people are indifferent to the sufferings of others. Though biblical and fictitious, the "widow's mite" illustrates the point. I have personally found that generosity and kindness stem from impecunious and unhappy people rather than the reverse. Poor people are invariably more generous, in proportion, with charitable donations than the well-to-do.

How many readers of THE FREETHINKER would declare themselves happy? As for Christians, some of the most unhappy people I have known have been believers in a compassionate deity. One hundred yards from my window is a magnificent Anglican church. Several times a day a black-robed clergyman wanders along to the church, to perform some obscure piece of mumbo-jumbo for the benefit of three or four old women. This parson's face is one of the unhappiest I have ever seen, and seems to indicate that the joys of Christianity are not all they are advertised to be.

In conclusion, even if one is bound to agree with Sophocles, that "the best is not to be born", nevertheless it is often possible to look on life with a certain wry humour, as exemplified in some of Thomas Hardy's poems.

Epitaph on a Pessimist

I'm Smith of Stoke, aged sixty-odd
I've lived without a dame
From youth-time on; and would to God
My dad had done the same.

The world is now dominated by the "our-bombs-are bigger-than-your-bombs" school of thought. Doubtless it is more painful to be killed by the cross-bow than by the atomic bomb, so perhaps some progress has been made after all.

TEN NON-COMMANDMENTS

(A Humanist's Decalogue)

by RONALD FLETCHER

(recently appointed Professor of Sociology in the University of York)

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CORRESPONDENCE

G.B.S.?

On August 28th, Mr. A. Smith quotes Bernard Shaw as saying: "Hell is the home of the unreal and the seekers for happiness." I should be very much obliged to Mr. Smith if he would give me the context of these words.

REGINALD UNDERWOOD.

ETHICS

I read Margaret Knight's article "Morals without Religion" with great interest, but for my life I just can't accept her views regarding ethics. Surely it is quite obvious to her that the behaviour of a person depends largely upon his character rather than ethical teaching. One could no doubt find many good hearted and good living people among Humanists and Christians, but I don't think for a moment that it is just the mere knowledge of ethics that makes them that way.

One is either kind and good hearted or one is not, that is all there is to it. Human kindness and good nature cannot be motivated by the mere teaching of ethics, whether they be Humanist ethics or otherwise, because the foundation of morality can't be taught, no more than genius can be taught.

Humanists who are kind and good natured would still be so even if they accepted the Christian ethics, because they are inclined by nature and temperament to be that way. Ethics has little or nothing to do with it. No ethic can make the heart good if we are hard hearted by nature.

Burns expresses this very well in one of his poems:

The heart aye's the part aye,
That makes us right or wrong.

A man may possess a good head, but a bad heart, and a man may never see the inside of a prison, yet still be a rascal. It is true that man is a social animal, but it should always be remembered that so is the wolf.

IAN FRASER.

HUMANISM

Owing to contemporary carelessness in the exact use of words, I find that religious authorities are under the impression that Humanists believe that man "is ultimate" as they put it. In other words that we set ourselves up as the be-all and end-all of life.

I am glad to note in your issue dated August 28th that E. R. Roux in the article "Humanism" says that Catholics and Humanists believe in the "uniqueness of man."

To believe in the "ultimacy of man" is as dogmatic as stating either that God is, or that God is not. The rational Agnostic does not know, and accepts that he cannot know at present. Man is unique at this time because he seems to be the only living organism with a thinking brain on earth—that's what gives him such a burden of responsibility for the future.

The first living form to emerge from the primeval "soup" was also *unique*, in that it was alive, but just look what has resulted from it!

I think it's only the religions stemming from Judaism which believe man to be a special creation without an evolutionary development to follow him? It is an arrogant idea, anyway, and humanism and reason should correct it.

ISOBEL GRAHAME.

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