

# The Freethinker

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EVERYTHING that can, and much that cannot, be said of Winston Churchill has already been said. How does one sort out the myth from the reality? Is the myth perhaps more important, as it is more interesting? He has been described as the greatest man of his generation and the greatest Englishman of all time. How does one measure greatness? Is the yardstick of the hearth the same as that of the study? Is either that of the newspaper office?

There can be few who witnessed the state funeral who did not find it a moving experience. England does this sort of thing supremely well. At the vulgar level it was an unparalleled gathering. In social terms everyone who was anyone was there—captains and kings, judges and presidents, mayors and prime ministers, high commissioners and ambassadors. One hundred and ten member nations of the United Nations were represented—probably more than at any one time may be found in the General Assembly itself. As they stood on the steps beneath the epic west front of St. Paul's Cathedral, overlooked by a polyglot concourse and nondescript buildings like the one from which Lee Harvey Oswald is alleged to have fired "successfully" at a moving target, who could guess the psychopathology and the fears of those present? And yet as I looked around, the uniformed police were as usual unarmed, the troops had their arms reversed in tribute, and there was not a single person visible that one could recognise as a security officer: either then or when later the cavalcade of cars passed within a few yards of where I was standing. Surely no other country could manage so daunting an operation with such consummate discretion. There was, in fact, nothing to distract from one's private thoughts.

## Things to forget

In theory everyone was there simply to pay tribute to a man. Though he admitted to religious scepticism when young and always referred to God in the manner of Abraham Lincoln, it cannot be said that a religious funeral was, like Nehru's thrust upon him. But it was a pity. The phrases the world remembers are purely secular, and the diverse company sat oddly under an Anglican roof. Probably few thought about the service. It was a time to remember the best about the man.

*De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* Best to forget the histrionics in South Africa and Sidney Street; the opposition to women's suffrage, Indian independence and the welfare state; strike breaking in 1926, and the Gallipoli fiasco in 1915 (which was probably not his fault). Best not to look too closely at celebrated paintings and speculate how widely they would have been acclaimed if from a lesser hand. Best not to savour too carefully the histories, blanch at the telegraphese and the egocentricity, or linger on the journalistic one-upmanship that ensured the relevant documents remained the property of himself and not of the Public Records Office. Best not even to examine the teeth of the strategic hobby-horses he mounted during the great conflict, or the elocution of the great oratory. Best not to

recall, in International Co-operation Year, his contribution to the cold war.

It is easy to be cynical about politicians and statesmen. The anatomy of power is in many ways a gruesome cadaver. Sensitive folk find it too pachydermatous, and the intellectually discriminating too discoloured. Perhaps intellectuals are advised to keep away from it, for contact has seldom glorified either it or them. President Johnson and the Texans have in one year stage-managed through Congress a hundred measures that President Kennedy and the intellectuals failed to advance in three. I find such acknowledgment sad. But it seems to be true, nevertheless.

Or one can be merely contemptuous. "If you fail in everything else you can turn to politics," it is said. "They weren't able to teach Churchill anything at Harrow, and they couldn't later on. But it takes a dunce to make a political success." This is going as far in one direction as the myth does in another. For here is no mountebank, but a man with towering qualities.

There is courage:—the physical courage of Omdurman, Sidney Street and "see-for-himself" throughout the war, and the moral courage of twice crossing the floor of the House and facing the political wilderness in the thirties. If he rushed in and made mistakes, what a refreshing change from most "leaders" who make mistakes by doing nothing. There is imagination. True, it may have been the imagination of the Whig rather than the social historian; but there are occasions when men need to be stirred, and they are stirred by a vision, not a statistical table. There is enormous energy. At 65, the age most men are retiring, he undertook paramount responsibility in this country and—what was then no hack, embarrassing phrase—the Free World. No man could have worked harder. Twice the victim of pneumonia and in the knowledge of being the special target of every *Luftwaffe* bombardier, he kept going by unflagging willpower and a unique ability to relax. In those years he came to look like the British bulldog he represented throughout the world.

## The Roar

At the creative level they thought of him as a many-sided genius. Not perhaps in the intellectual tradition of the Renaissance which has not by and large appealed to the English-speaking peoples. Rather in the manner of the amateurish versatility of the *Boy's Own Paper* heroes. What however was his actual achievement in the arts? I do not consider him a great writer, in that he is not to my mind sufficiently distinguished by psychological insight, command of mood or nuance of language. But in evocation of the heroic he is superb, and he would clearly have made a great political or war correspondent (which at one time he was). Though he might not have satisfied Professor Higgins, his diction was admirably suited to the roll of his oratory, inspired by the psalms in the Authorised Version, noble, simple, full of rich parallelisms and onomatopoeia. On the occasion of his eightieth birthday celebrations he said, with perhaps uncharacteristic

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

## That Funeral

By DAVID TRIBE

modesty: "It was the nation and the race dwelling all round the globe that had the lion's heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar." But what a roar it was.

### Man of Culture

Insensitive to music and trite in painterly appreciation (preferring chocolate boxes to Graham Sutherland), he was yet, in a way that few public figures can claim to be, a man of culture. He relaxed with Edward Gibbon, not Ian Fleming. If Sir Gerald Kelly exaggerated in describing his oil of a snow scene at Chartwell as the greatest English painting of this century, and if his feats with a bricklayer's trowel were amplified by Smith Square, he represented a tradition of creative hobbies now yielding to the paralytic cult of the goggle-box.

To the many thousands along the funeral route and the nameless millions who followed television and radio commentaries, on steppe and prairie, in desert and jungle, he was *the* Great Commoner. They forgot his aristocratic connections, and remembered how, almost unique among the War Cabinet, he had declined elevation to the Lords. Impulsive, often irrational, alternating between insensitivity and sentimentality, blowing up into sudden squalls, subsiding into genial calms, mispronouncing "Nazis" and doing badly at school, he was the common man writ large. Though not consciously ambitious like him, unconsciously they identified with the Cinderella story of the mediocre schoolboy who made good as a man, of the middle-aged failure who triumphed in old age. They identified too with the St. George of the Garter, who might run before big rats in the ratrace, but stood his ground when a dragon was in the path. They didn't care whether he was given a salute of 17 or 19 guns, or whether the Queen created a precedent by attending his funeral.

### Finest Hour

For the English it was an especially moving occasion. Truly 1940 was "their finest hour". For the last time Britain almost, if not really, ruled the waves, but in a sense unassociated with the gunboat imperialism of former centuries. It was the coinciding crest of two waves that often swell in opposition—power and glory. There was something like it in 1815, whose hero enjoyed the first great non-royal state funeral of 1852. But whereas Napoleon represented oppression with reform, Hitler represented oppression with barbarism.

In the Freethought-Humanist movement we often criticise English society. We are right to do so. We disagree with the platform of the ecclesiastical Establishment, and "the function of an Opposition is," as Lord Randolph Churchill observed, "to oppose". Such labour is a public service. Complacency is the besetting national sin. There is no lack of ability. Were industry organised as efficiently as the state funeral, there would be no economic crisis. But it is fitting to pay tribute too.

At the time of the Algerian war there was lively multi-national discussion in my Greek barber's one day about the shortcomings of the English. Suddenly an Algerian intervened, slowly and calmly: "You can say what you like, but you live longest in England". The disputation died away. We must never forget that when Karl Marx had been ignominiously ejected from most of the capitals of Europe he was afforded sanctuary in the British Museum to plot the downfall of the ruling classes. There are injustices here that need a National Council for Civil Liberties or an ombudsman. But there are great freedoms too. I like to think that statesmen of the world gathered round Churchill's coffin to salute English freedom, very far from perfect, but a damned sight better than in most of their own countries. It may sound corny, but it's not such a small thing.

## THE CHURCHES IN POLITICS

THE Churches must face the fact that their faith is irrelevant to very large masses of the less privileged in Scotland, said the Right Rev. Dr. Kenneth M. Carey, Bishop of the Edinburgh diocese of the Episcopal Church. And, the Bishop added, "if we are realistic, we have got to face the fact that the world as a whole thinks that the gospel as preached and practised by the Churches today is almost totally irrelevant to its hopes and dreams and desires" (*The Glasgow Herald*, 5/2/65). Christians—and the Churches—should therefore be involved in, and care passionately about politics. They should point out that the Old Testament was "crammed with politics".

It seemed, from the parliamentary debate on the Teaching (Scotland) Bill on February 4th, that the Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic Churches need no encouragement from an Episcopalian bishop to be involved in politics. Mrs. Judith Hart, Joint Under Secretary of State for Scotland, winding up the debate, reported that the Secretary of State had had representations that the two Churches should be assured of places on the proposed Teaching Council (*The Scotsman*, 5/2/65). Mr. Michael Noble (Conservative, Argyll) had said that if no Government statement was forthcoming the Opposition would seek to amend the Bill in its later stages. Mrs. Hart duly promised that an amendment would be introduced during the committee stage. The six members of the council to be nominated by the Secretary of State would "take account" of the two Churches. This—as the *Scotsman* suggested—indicated a change in Government attitude. For on February 2nd, the Scottish Secretary himself, Mr. William Ross, had hoped that "people who become members of the council will not be representatives or delegates".

The only consolation is that, in some respects at any rate, the two Churches are likely to cancel each other out.

## ZIP OR ZIPPER?

THE other night, here in Canada, an English friend and myself were having one of those silly conversations centering around the alternatives of English versus American linguistic usage. The relative merits of "lift" versus "elevator", "petrol" versus "gasoline" finally degenerated to a consideration of "trousers" versus "pants" which sparked the even more trivial "zip" versus "zipper". I had always assumed that there was no little onomatopoeia behind the etymology of this word but on this point I was at a tremendous disadvantage for by some great coincidence my friend was one of the engineers responsible for the design of this fastener which was at one time not, named satisfactorily. I do not need to remind anyone how the success or failure of a new product very often depends on its name so that you can imagine the interest my friend took in this aspect of his problem. He went on to tell me how he once let a clergyman demonstrate the new fastener in private by trying on a pair of trousers fitted with this device that was destined to replace buttons for many purposes. The clergyman was, of course, a novice and understandably botched his only attempt at closure but not without some pain as was evident from his sharp cry of surprise. After a hasty reflection he asked with a wince, "What kind of Zipporah is this?" (cf Exodus 4, 25) whereupon my engineer friend (who is slightly hard-of-hearing) exclaimed, "Zipper did you say? That's it!"

Well, there you have it, the origin of the word "zipper".

D. M. CHAPMAN

# Are Science and Religion Compatible?

By D. A. RICKARDS

WHAT do the terms science, religion, and compatibility really mean? Let us begin with definitions. The word compatible means to co-exist in harmony or to be non-contradictory.<sup>1</sup> The word science means knowledge, based upon a detailed study and testing of nature. The methods used in science consist of making controlled observations and the knowledge gained from experience and experiment is used to describe, explain or predict the event in question. The object of all science is to co-ordinate our experiences and bring them into a logical system.<sup>2</sup> Science is interested in truth—but what is truth? Truth consists of an accurate report and nothing more. It is the complete description of a particular event in time and space. Science seeks the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It does not lie for the glory of some ancient fable—it does not twist its results to suit some political group. It lets the observations speak for themselves.

A scientific theory is governed by the law of parsimony and all that this means is that there must be no extra trimmings—the plain simple facts are enough. In the words of the astronomer, Laplace, “there is no need for [God] in the hypothesis.”<sup>3</sup>

Scientific belief differs greatly from religious belief. The belief of a physicist in Einstein's relativity; or the belief of a biologist in Darwinism is based on probability, it is acceptable only as long as it is satisfactory and until a better or more complete concept comes into existence. It is never believed in dogmatically as an absolute truth. Scientists are not bound to believe what other scientists believe and no scientific theory is beyond challenge and improvement. To science doubt is the beginning of knowledge. To scientists, doubt is the beginning of wisdom. Next we must define religion.

Literally, the word religion means “fear of the gods”. But it originated from two other words: “re” meaning “again”, and “ligere”—to tie. Hence the word religion means to hold back or to be tied down<sup>4</sup>, to a set of beliefs or dogmas. There are a great number of religions in the world, but our discussion will be confined to those found in the Bible—namely Judaism and Christianity. A belief in either of these involves an all powerful God (Jehovah) who created the universe and everything in it. The various books of the Old Testament relate the experiences and customs of the Jews. The New Testament describes the foundation of Christianity for which Jehovah sent his only son to earth in human form to save mankind for sin!

As in so many other mythologies, the son of God was born to a virgin; led a miracle-filled life, raised the dead, cured the sick and finally was killed. However, he came back to life and after a trip to hell, he ascended in glory to be seated on a throne at his Father's side. We are told that all who believe will be saved, while unbelievers will burn for ever and ever.<sup>5</sup> The key word in religion is “fear”—the fear of punishment, fear of death, fear of God. In the book of Psalms we read that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and in Proverbs comes the verse—the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

There is not time to discuss religion in detail, but one way of assessing its real value is by reviewing the effect which it has had on men and nations. As the saying goes—by their fruits ye shall know them.<sup>7</sup>

We must review the history of science and religion and ask ourselves, in all honesty, have they been truly compatible? It is inconceivable that anyone could seriously

say yes, because when religion flourished, science declined. And as the boundaries of science were widened, the domain of religion was narrowed. Not only was religion incompatible with every branch of scientific work, it was actively opposed to all scientific progress. The conflict between theology and science was the conflict between authority and observation.<sup>8</sup>

The attitude of St. Augustine in the 4th century (350-430 AD) was typical of the early Church Fathers. It went like this: “Nothing is to be accepted save on the authority of scripture, since greater is that authority than all the powers of the human mind.”<sup>9</sup> Can you imagine the stifling effect which this doctrine exerted upon science? The Bible was divinely inspired and everything that man could need to know was to be found within its contents. So why study the stars? Why study disease? Why study the earth when it's all in God's book?

Were religion and science ever compatible in any field? The answer is no. Look at the history of medicine and you find that the religious theory of disease was based on magic. It varied between divine wrath on one hand, and satanical intervention on the other. Treatment consisted of appeasing God and insulting the devil. Great faith was placed in the use of holy water and fetishes such as the bones of dead saints. Demons were expelled by special incantations. The Churches always considered themselves better informed than the physicians.

Do you call this compatibility?

Take astronomy. Religion said that the earth was flat and stationary in the centre of the universe. Heaven was above the earth and hell beneath it. It was a sin to believe that the world was round or that anyone could live on the other side of it.<sup>10</sup> Astronomers agreed with the Church or bore the consequences, and under such conditions, Christianity failed to produce a worthwhile astronomer for 1500 years!

Even when Copernicus rediscovered<sup>11</sup> the truth about the solar system, he was afraid to publish his opinions until he was on his deathbed.<sup>12</sup> Galileo also knew the truth—he knew that the earth revolved around the sun but he was forced to recant. Why? Because such an idea was contrary to the scriptures! What kind of compatibility do you call this? Take geology and you will find that it was shackled to the Bible for 1700 years.<sup>13</sup> Earthquakes were the will of God and everything had to conform with a world which was created in 4004 BC! Take biology—you will see that it was impossible for real progress to be made until Darwin and Wallace broke away from the absurdities of special creation in Genesis and explained the origin of species on the basis of evolution. Take meteorology—you will find that the Churches knew all about the electrical storms which toppled their steeples and ruined their places of worship. These were the devil's works. They could not be prevented but they could be lessened by the use of holy water, bell ringing, special prayers and occasional witch burning. It took Benjamin Franklin—the infidel—to invent a lightning rod which could protect a church from both the wickedness of Satan and the wrath of God!

What caused this religious fanaticism which drove men to persecute their enemies rather than to persuade them? What made the true believers so intolerant? What else but the pseudo-morality which abounded in their holy books? The God of the Old Testament was bloodthirsty

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## This Believing World

As some readers may have noticed during the funeral week of Winston Churchill, most, if not all, the writers of the tributes to his life and work woke up to the fact that he never, or very rarely, referred to Jesus or to God, and certainly never to Bible miracles as of any help whatever in his long life. It is true that the *Sunday Express* (January 31st) had a page article headed "When Sir Winston spoke about God and Heaven," but only at the end of the third column were we told about his "dissertation on God, the world, and the hereafter," without any hint of Jesus, or any real details of what the dissertation said.

★

In fact, the only other references are: "I wonder what God thinks of the things his creatures have invented?"; and "When I get to heaven I mean to spend a considerable portion of my first million years in painting . . .". There is nothing else in the 24 extracts from his own words" given by the *Observer* (January 31st).

★

Why was Churchill so reticent about clearly expressing his belief? Obviously, because he could find no evidence of any part played by God in the affairs of the world. Also perhaps because he had read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* three times. One need only read Gibbon once to see that that master of history had demolished Christianity as a divine religion once for all.

★

Alas, a distressing disclosure unearthed by *Psychic News* (February 6th) has dislodged Mrs. Jeane Dixon from her throne from being the first seer or prophetess who foresaw the murder of President Kennedy. She was apparently preceded by a Miss Taylor Caldwell who actually "saw it in detail" months before it occurred. The President was of course told and ignored it. She published the prophecy "weeks" before it happened, as did other newspapers, one of which was called *The Wanderer*.

★

Miss Caldwell has two other distinctions—she is a "famous author" and "a natural psychic" as she told *Psychic News* herself. One of her books is about Ghengis Khan, about whom she knew literally nothing. Yet her book is absolutely accurate in every detail. All her dreams always come true, for her grandmother was Irish and used to tell her as a child she was "fey". What a pity that Mrs. Dixon and Miss Caldwell cannot give us the name of the next Derby winner!

★

The writer of the London "Evening News" "Saturday Reflection" (January 23rd) not being able to connect Winston Churchill to God in all his travels, left him severely alone, and turned to the wonderful adventures of Paul as detailed in Acts—which is quite as much a work of fiction as Esther. Paul "was a deeply religious man" (which was more than could be said of Churchill) so we got a "reflection" about him, written with evangelical enthusiasm, though the two accounts of Paul's "missionary travels" (in Acts and the Epistles) contradict each other in nearly every detail. Still, thank God, both are divinely inspired.

★

How often we read about a perfectly honest person becoming an impudent thief and, when caught, immediately "passing the buck" to the Christian devil. We hold no brief for this long-living and happy gentleman, but we decline to believe he is always to blame for somebody else becoming a thief. Here we have a Mr. Fambegbe, a postman,

stealing £238 from Littlewoods, and then indignantly claiming that he wasn't to blame but "the devil inside him". The magistrate declined to blame the devil, however, and the postman got three months.

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and barbaric.<sup>14</sup> His son in the New Testament predicted an early end to the world and threatened his enemies with torture and eternal damnation.<sup>15</sup> Is it any wonder that beliefs like these encouraged the Church and its followers to act as badly to those who disagreed with them in this world, as their God promised that he would do to his enemies in the next world.

Some people try to differentiate between religion and the Church. Religion was good, they say, but the Churches were bad. Don't you believe it. The Judaeo-Christian religion made the Churches what they were and the Churches with all their intolerance were firmly based on religious principles. Another thing which must be made clear is that the Roman Catholic Church was no worse than any other religious group. Luther called Copernicus an upstart astrologer and a fool! Calvin preferred to believe that the earth could not be moved and quoted the 93rd Psalm<sup>16</sup> and Wesley thought that it was preferable to give up his belief in the Bible than his belief in witchcraft!<sup>17</sup> It would be easy to continue to give examples but the time has come when we should ask ourselves—why on earth did the Churches change their point of view? Was it because they realised that their existence was threatened and that their future was at stake? Or did they get a new revelation from God?

To be sure, Christianity no longer persecutes the scientist. No more are heretics burned at the stake, no more can witches be tortured. We have reached the age of compatibility! Ministers, priests and rabbis are still arrayed like Solomon in all his glory. They are still called upon to give their blessings and invocations but in reality, they have become like the legendary emperor—they have no clothes. The Church was faced with compatibility or extinction. It is understandable that it preferred compatibility.

1. Webster's Dictionary—second edition.
2. A paraphrasing of definitions by Bertrand Russell, Werner Heisenberg, A. J. Carlson and Albert Einstein.
3. Quoted from Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*, p.58.
4. Webster's Dictionary—second edition.
5. Mark 16, 16, etc.
6. Psalms 111, 10; Proverbs 1, 7; Proverbs 9, 10.
7. Matt. 7, 20.
8. Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*, p.16.
9. St. Augustine. *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*—Book 2, Chap. 5.
10. Migne—*Patrologia*—Vol. VI, p.426.
11. Aristarchus of Samos had described the solar system correctly in c.250 BC.
12. *Revolutions of Heavenly Bodies* (1543).
13. A. D. White, *History of the Warfare between Science and Theology*, Vol. I p.209-248.
14. Numbers 31; Joshua 10, 40, etc.
15. Matt. 25, 41; Luke 19, 27, etc.
16. Quoted in Bertrand Russell's *Religion and Science* p.23.
17. Wesley's *Journal*, 1768.

### WITHOUT COMMENT

*Religion and Humanism*

Ronald Hepburn, David Jenkins, Ninian Smart, Howard Root, Renford Bamborough

Distinguished philosophers and theologians discuss questions of the gospel and logic, the functions of religious language and its relation to truth, the possibility of religious reconstructions and of what common ground may exist between Christians and Humanists.—BBC Publications advert (*New Statesman*, 8/1/65).

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

### 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

Ascension Church Hall, Malwood Road, London, S.W.12, Sunday, February 21st, 8 p.m.: Debate "That Religious Instruction and Worship should not take place in State schools", MARGARET MCILROY and CANON H. G. OCKWELL.

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, February 21st, 6.45 p.m.: C. BLYTH, Subject to be announced.

Bristol Humanist Group (Kelmescott, 4 Portland Street, Clifton), Sunday, February 21st, 7.30 p.m.: R. HUSSEY, "Factor Farming—For and against".

Dundee Humanist Group, (College of Education), Wednesday, February 24th, 7.30 p.m.: Mrs. SAGGAR and E. G. MACFARLANE, "The Teaching of Sex".

Leicester Secular Society, (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, February 21st, 6.30 p.m.: Professor HYMAN LEVY, "The Political Role of Religion".

South Place Ethical Society, (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday February 21st, 11 a.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "Is Existentialism a Humanism?" Tuesday, February 23rd, 7.30 p.m.: H. C. CREIGHTON, "Cultural Relations with the USSR".

Surbiton and Malden & Coombe and Kingston Branches NSS (The White Hart, Kingston Bridge, Hampton Wick), Friday, February 19th, 8 p.m. A meeting.

## Notes and News

THE 59th Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society will be held at the Horse Shoe Hotel, Tottenham Court Road, London, W.1, on Saturday, March 20th. The President, Mr. David Tribe, will be in the chair, and the Guest of Honour will be Mr. Leo Abse, MP, well known to readers for his work for divorce law reform. The toast to the Society will be proposed by Mr. Peter Cotes, the theatrical producer, and Mr. W. Miller, Chairman of the Birmingham Branch will respond. Tickets, price 22s. 6d., are now available from the Secretary, NSS, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

THE outspoken American Catholic magazine *Ramparts*, contained (in its November 1964 issue) a damning attack on Cardinal James Francis McIntyre of Los Angeles, whom it compared with Senator Goldwater. The Senator thought he could "reinstate *laissez-faire*"; the Cardinal thought he could "perpetuate sixteenth-century religious precepts". Senator and Cardinal would treat Communists with "appropriate firmness", the former by "atomising them" and the latter by "anathematising them". And neither man, *Ramparts* said, cared for the masses of the dispossessed. Indeed, it was "no coincidence" that Goldwater forces dominated the Southern California political scene. As leader of one and a half million Catholics, Cardinal McIntyre's deliberate refusal to speak out on the racial question, "his support of the John Birch Society, as well as his newspaper's constant hate-communism campaign have, *Ramparts* maintained, "directly aided those forces that make up the Goldwater philosophy". It is encouraging to know that, on November 3rd, that philosophy was overwhelmingly rejected by the American people.

POPE PAUL'S first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, also revealed a "sixteenth-century mentality", according to *Ramparts*, which had looked in vain for an extension of "the horizons set up by Pope John" in *Pacem in Terris*. Pope Paul had "raised liberal hopes with his opening address to the second session of the Vatican Council", but then "somehow, and in an almost mysterious way, something happened". For "some inexplicable reason" the chapters on religious liberty and the Jews were not brought to a vote. "Many were convinced," *Ramparts* said, "that an international stall was taking place". *Ecclesiam Suam* explained where Pope Paul stood "in all of this". It proved "the despair of those who truly believe in *aggiornamento*, while at the same time allowing men like Cardinal Ottaviani to sleep, untroubled by dreams".

"OH, it is neither pride nor presumption nor obstinacy nor folly but a luminous certitude and our joyous conviction that we are indeed living members of the Body of Christ, that we are the authentic heirs of the Gospel of Christ, those who truly continue the work of the Apostles. There dwells in us the great inheritance of truth and morality characterising the Catholic Church, which today possesses intact the living heritage of the original apostolic tradition". This passage from *Ecclesiam Suam* can be said "to delineate Pope Paul's thinking," said *Ramparts*. And if one were to read the encyclical "in splendid isolation from reality", one would "never suspect for a moment there were such places as Spain or Latin American . . .". One would come away, *Ramparts* added, ignorant of the fact that the Church in America "has been disastrously derelict in the matter of racial justice and his failed completely to declare itself on the barbarism of nuclear war."

"ROME is not just any city. It is the See of the papacy. It is a sacred city. To perform this play here is a grave insulting and inadmissible provocation." The play is, of course, Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative*; the paper quoted is *Il Tempo*. Another paper, the neo-Fascist *Il Secolo* urged that the play be stopped "by all means available". And stopped it was, though attendance was to be by membership or invitation. Rome police, acting on "orders from above", marched on to the stage during the press preview and ordered the critics to leave. Those who hesitated "were carried forcibly from the theatre" reported the *Guardian's* correspondent George Armstrong, and two "unco-operative" members of the audience were charged with participating in a "seditious gathering".

# Martin Heidegger on Death

By R. SMITH

THE "dying of others" says Heidegger, in his famous *Sein und Zeit*, is seen often enough as a social inconvenience, if not even downright tactlessness, against which the public is to be guarded. "The 'the' does not permit us the courage for anxiety in the face of death," he says. Thinking about death is regarded by the public as cowardly fear, a sign of insecurity on the part of *Dasein*, and a sombre way of fleeing from the world.

Heidegger's technical expression for man is *Dasein*, which means literally "being there". According to him the existential interpretation of death takes precedence over any biology and ontology of life. Methodologically, the existential analysis is superordinate to the questions of a biology, psychology, theodicy, or theology of death. In the inauthentic flight from death we hear death treated with indifference. Depersonalising death by reducing it to an abstract and universal category, and refusing to recognise it as something oneself must undergo. In Leo Tolstoy's story "The Death of Ivan Ilych", which Heidegger refers to, we get a literary representation of what Heidegger is getting at in relation to man's indifference to man in his anxiety towards death.

When Ivan develops certain bodily symptoms he becomes very anxious and finally decides to see a doctor. "To Ivan Ilych only one question was important; was his case serious or not?" But the doctor ignored that inappropriate question. From his point of view it was not the one under consideration. It was not a question of Ivan Ilych's life or death; the real question was to decide between a floating kidney, chronic catarrh, or appendicitis. And that question the doctor solved—brilliantly as it seemed to Ivan Ilych—in favour of appendicitis, with the reservation that should an examination of the urine give fresh indications the matter would be reconsidered. All this was just what Ivan Ilych had himself brilliantly accomplished a thousand times in dealing with men on trial. The doctor summed up brilliantly, looking over his spectacles triumphantly and even gaily at the accused. From the summing up Ivan concluded that things were bad; bad for him; for the doctor and perhaps for everybody else, a matter of indifference. And this conclusion struck him painfully, arousing in him a great feeling of pity for himself and of bitterness toward the doctor's indifference to a matter of such importance.

He said nothing of this, but rose, placed the doctor's fee on the table, and remarked with a sigh, "We sick people probably often put inappropriate questions but tell me, in general, is this complaint dangerous or not . . . ?" The doctor looked at him sternly over his spectacles with one eye, as if to say: "Prisoner, if you will not keep to the questions put to you, I shall be obliged to have you removed from the court . . . I have already told you what I consider necessary and proper. The analysis may show more." And the doctor bowed.

Yet prior to these symptoms Tolstoy's Ivan Ilych's attitude to death was no different from that of the doctor's. Death for him was a matter of indifference, a biological or universal social category. But this indifference to death, plus its concealment, was immediately swept away when he was forced to consider his own death. Like us all, Ivan Ilych knew about the certainty of death, but it was not until now that he had become authentically certain of his own.

The inauthentic fleeing from death according to

Heidegger is in publicness, fallenness, idle talk, and gossip. Idle talk is always ambiguous about death. It is not authentically discussed or explained: it is rather concealed. "This evasive concealment in the face of death dominates everydayness so stubbornly," Heidegger says, "that in being with one another the 'neighbours' often keep talking the dying person into the belief that he will escape death and soon return to the tranquilised everydayness of the world of his concern." This concealment is witnessed in the everydayness of *Dasein*. "One of these days one will die too, in the end, but right now it has nothing to do with us."

The existential view of death is much different from that held by the ordinary man and the traditional philosopher. Death is a great theme for existentialists, although Heidegger did not claim to be an existentialist. Schopenhauer says, "Death is the true inspiring genius, the muse of philosophy." Existentialists all seem to agree with this. However other philosophies have given death a back seat. Epicurus said that death does not concern us—with the explanation that "when we are, death is not". And Spinoza said, "A free man thinks of nothing less than death, and his wisdom is not a meditation upon death but upon life." The Stoic also looked upon death with great indifference, and Christianity has a lot in common with the Stoic view.

Whatever one may think about these traditional views on death, they are easily seen to be quite superficial and fall into insignificance when seen from the profound analysis of death given by Heidegger. According to Heidegger we neither can nor should shut out the consciousness of death or refuse the anguish and despair which the consciousness of death entails. Even the Christian existentialists regard the despair of the atheist existentialist as more authentic than the Christian who has allowed the belief in heaven to blind him to the tragedy of human conditions.

The existentialia are, according to Heidegger, ontological necessities of the human condition from which no one can possibly escape, but in the state of fallenness (*Verfallenheit*) or inauthentically they become degraded. In this mode of being our attitude is determined by habit, or a vague sense of what is required of us by *das Man*, which is often translated as the "one", the "public" or the anonymous "they".

One says, "Death certainly comes but not right away". With this "but", "they" deny that death is certain. "Not right away" is not a purely negative assertion, but a way in which the "they" interprets itself. The authentic man according to Heidegger is he who has escaped from the banality of everydayness, by recognising and facing up to death authentically.

In Heidegger's analysis of death there is no room for life after death. In that sense he is an atheist, as well as being a first class philosopher. However, he is not a philosopher for the squeamish, especially those people who jump down your throat when you start talking seriously about the question of death.

## COMMENT ON THE ABOVE

I AM sure that R. Smith, as a regular critic of FREETHINKER contributors, will not mind a few criticisms of his own article.

I am not, so far as I am aware, "squeamish" about death. Nor, I think, are most Freethinkers. They can and

do discuss their own deaths rationally and make what provisions they can for their dependants. I don't exactly know what is meant by "recognising and facing up to death authentically", but I do know from considerable experience that Freethinkers generally face up to it realistically.

Consciousness of death need not, however, entail anguish and despair, as Mr. Smith and his mentor assert. And it is quite invalid to label an Epicurean or a Spinozan view of death "superficial", as opposed to the "profound analysis" of Heidegger. The contrast is not so "easily seen" as Mr. Smith thinks.

Spinoza was surely right in regarding wisdom as a meditation of life, not of death. "A free man," he wrote in the *Ethics*, "that is, one who lives according to the dictate of reason alone, is not led by the fear of death, but directly desires what is good, that is, to act, to live, and preserve his being on the basis of seeking what is useful to him. And therefore he thinks of nothing less than of death, but his wisdom is a meditation of life."

Wisdom, I take it, means worldly wisdom and one learns worldly wisdom from living not dying. Indeed, one can, by the nature of things, learn nothing whatever from dying. One just dies. Before this, however, one has had to live, to grapple with problems, "seeking what is useful" to oneself. The free man thinks of nothing less than death because he is occupied with the business of living. But this doesn't mean that he is unaware of death or afraid to face it, as Mr. Smith seems to think.

Mr. Smith's—and Heidegger's—mistake is to treat death as *the* fact, when it is merely *a* fact along with many others. Certainly the fact that we shall die is no more "significant" than the fact that we are alive at present. It is we who give significance or profundity to a fact.

Now it so happens that Mr. Smith is pessimistic. To find out how he became so would require knowledge of his life—his upbringing, his trials and tribulations—his condition, that I don't possess. Suffice it to say that, for him, the "evil" of living outweighs the "good": the human lot is tragic. The philosopher—or poet—who appeals to him must, therefore, be a tragedian.

This I can understand—even sympathise with. What I try continually to bring to Mr. Smith's notice is that not all men are as unhappy as he. Nor does this make them "superficial": they are aware of suffering, and have to some extent experienced it, but they have also experienced happiness; their aim, in fact, is to eliminate as much suffering as possible and to replace it with happiness.

COLIN MCCALL

#### ADVT.

H. F. Haas of 1111 Broughton, NW, Orangeburg, SC 29115, USA, would like to obtain copies of the following, all by John M. Robertson: *The Jesus Problem, Christianity and Mythology, Pagan Christs.*

## The Humanist Letter Network

By KIT MOUAT

THIS Humanist project was started in January 1964, and eighty-six Humanists, Secularists, Freethinkers and Rationalists joined during the first twelve months.

The purpose of the Network is to try and help those who are isolated or who just want to write to others who have rejected the Christian and religious attitude to life. There is no longer any doubt in my mind that such a service is needed. The ages range from 14 to 84. Young men want to write to young women, widows and widowers and those who are cut off by their domestic responsibilities have all welcomed the opportunity to make contact. The encouragement and appreciation I have received have quite made up for the few inevitable failures and problems.

I had expected only Britishers to join, but have been delighted to hear from Humanists from eleven different countries and of thirteen different nationalities. I am now trying to interest the New Zealand and American Rationalist Associations (the Australians have already joined), and am trying to extend the European field from Holland and Germany to Scandinavia and anyone else who is wanting to make friends through such a Network.

In order to join it is necessary to let me know your age, whether or not you are married and to give a brief account of your interests and hobbies. I have been asking for a minimum of 1s. 6d. and a stamped addressed envelope, and have been able as the result of members' generosity to send £2 (plus a specific donation of £5 15s.) to the Agnostics Adoption Society, £1 to the Humanist school in Bechuanaland and cover my expenses. When the postage goes up to 4d. a letter, however, I am going to ask for 2s. from those living in the UK (or on the 4d. postage rate) and 2s. 6d. from those living abroad. Indeed, 1s. 6d. has really not been enough to cover the cost of air mail letters abroad, and, if anyone is interested, the best way of sending small sums is by the International Reply Coupons. I shall be grateful to hear from interested Freethinkers and Humanists who read this, and will try to find them interesting correspondents as soon as possible. Sometimes delay is unavoidable. It depends on the number of people writing in, and unfortunately I am always very short of women.

I have been grateful for help from the Ethical Union office in stencilling and "rolling off". I need as much publicity as I can get, and would like, if possible, to reach potential Humanists as well as British Humanist Association and National Secular Society members. But this is not easy. One non-Humanist magazine did accept an article, but I have just heard that the *London Weekly Advertiser* refuses to accept an advertisement. The reason is intriguing, but perhaps the words "Humanist" and "Secularist" still suggest something worse than unorthodox to the ignorant!

Nevertheless, I am sure that during 1965 the Network will develop, and the larger it becomes the easier it is for me and the more choice members will have. I have rejected the suggestion that I should somehow (I don't, in fact, know how) publish lists of people who are available. To some extent the Humanist world is a small and fairly closed circle, and I think that many women are already too timid to write in. If they thought that I might publish even an anonymous description of them, I am afraid none would join at all. For this reason perhaps I have too much control. At any rate I take all the blame, and it must be remembered that with only 86 people of such varying ages and interests there is not very much choice anyway. There may indeed only be two or three people

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY 59th ANNUAL DINNER

Guest of Honour: LEO ABSE, M.P.

at the

Horse Shoe Hotel, Tottenham Court Road, London, W.1.

SATURDAY, MARCH 20th, 1964

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

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

Vegetarians catered for Evening Dress Optional  
Tickets 22/6 from the Sec., 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1.

in the right age group sharing any one interest, while I may find myself with an elderly woman of 82, a boy of 17, one man of 40 who hates music, and one woman of 42 whose passion is opera. It is all very interesting, and after all I am not running a marriage bureau. Not yet, anyway! It has been suggested by one Humanist that I should try. Although I cannot see any possible way in which this could be done I do recognise that it might well provide a valuable service, but if that were ever to happen, there would have to be more Humanist women! At the moment I am afraid they just don't exist. (Anyone who has any ideas as to how we can attract more women, not just to the Network, but to the Humanist-Secular movement as a whole, do let us know. This really is a vital problem.)

In the meantime, if you would like to write to someone who is also a Humanist, do write to me at Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex, with a s.a.e. I will do my best to help I have been encouraged, most of all perhaps, to discover that secularism is an attitude of mind that makes sense to men and women of every possible kind, educated, not-so-educated, high IQs and low, intellectuals and non-intellectuals, professionals and those who work with their hands.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### BURNS

Mr. R. Smith states that "Burns was in a way a religious man" and quotes two irrelevant verses to support this assertion. But the scathing, searing satire in many of Burns's poems proves quite the opposite, particularly in *Holy Willie's Prayer* which Ingersoll rightly described as "the greatest, sharpest, deadliest, keenest and wittiest thing ever said or written against religion":—

O Thou, who in the Heavens does dwell,  
Who, as it pleases best Thyself!  
Sends one to Heaven and ten to Hell,  
All for Thy glory,  
And not for any good or ill,  
They've done afore Thee!

I bless and praise Thy matchless might,  
When thousands Thou hast left in night,  
That I am here afore Thy sight,  
For gifts and grace,  
A burning and shining light  
To all this place . . .

And in a letter to one of his friends on March 7th, 1788, Burns said: "Religious nonsense is the most nonsensical nonsense".

Space forbids further quotation, but his declaration that "twenty times I rather would be an atheist clean, than under gospel colours hid be, just for a screen", shows that Burns was a very long way indeed from being a religious man and that he was, and remained an agnostic up to the day of his death.

WALTER RIDLEY.

### DAVID AND SOLOMON

I am always greatly interested to read an article by Mr. H. Cutner, his lucidity and forthrightness are very stimulating. But does he not carry his scepticism a little too far in his "Dr. Zeitlin and Jesus" (22/1/65)? I can grant him Noah, and perhaps Moses, but can he dismiss David or Solomon so lightly as being mythical?

After all we do have contemporary Assyrian evidence for such Judaeans kings as Hezekiah, and Menasseh, they did not just appear as if from nowhere; they must have had several predecessors leading to the founder of the dynasty, known as the Davidic.

Also the remains of stables found at Megidah which many scholars place in the 10th century, and attribute to Solomon (for, the book of Kings says, Solomon had many horses) though it is quite likely that they belong to the following century and were built by King Ahab.

Still, it would be of interest to know which of the Old Testament characters Mr. Cutner does consider historical, and why.  
"BEN-YEHUDAH"

### FAMILY PRESERVATION BILL

The Parliamentary machine is working on the nonsensical Family Preservation Bill. The 500 Exclusive Brethren who attended the House on Friday, February 5th, must have been disappointed when the Bill was not debated. (It couldn't get a second reading.) They have no cause to worry; Parliamentary democracy will kick the Bill about until it gets lost. A pity; we would love the debate.

C. FRANKLIN.

### OBITUARY

The death of Stewart Martin Caines, President of Wales and Western Branch of the National Secular Society, on February 6th, brought to an end a long and very painful illness, which he bore with quite remarkable fortitude. Our heartfelt condolences go to his wife, Suzanne, who attended him with devotion, and to his children of five and three.

Born in British Guiana, Martin Caines came to this country in wartime and served with the RAF. He was later a commercial artist, but resigned to become warden of the Bute Town Community Centre in Cardiff's Tiger Bay, and was respected both inside and outside the coloured community. Indeed, although a militant Freethinker, with a scorn for things religious, Martin's amiability was such that religionists rarely retained ill-humour at his searching criticisms, and he was a man without enemies.

Employed as he was, by the Cardiff Education Department, he never shrank from public declaration of his secularist outlook. He was a popular speaker, especially commanding on outdoor platforms. He was the first Freethinker I met in Wales, and I made no better friend.

DAVE SHIPPER.

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