

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXV—No. 14

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

A CORRESPONDENT recently mentioned the possible good effects that might have accrued at certain historical epochs from the assassination of certain reactionary figures. Adolf Hitler was actually mentioned as an example. Since when the recent assassination of Malcolm X has painfully underlined this controversial point at issue. Is assassination, whether religious (as apparently in the case of Malcolm X) political (as presumably in the case of President Kennedy) or for any other cause, ever morally permissible if not legally? Perhaps even more important, is it ever effective? For granting as we must—despite the rather confused protests of Mr. R. Smith—that historical conditions enable individuals (at least in exceptional circumstances) to influence the course of human evolution; is the assassination of key personalities ever either socially expedient or morally justifiable?

The End Justifies the Means

It would hardly be possible to pursue any serious theoretical discussion of this highly controversial subject without sooner or later coming up against the famous formula that "the end justifies the means". As is common knowledge nowadays, this advice has long been ascribed to the Jesuits, though its use by them has often been misunderstood. For whilst the institution founded by Ignatius Loyola certainly often behaved in a very equivocal way, and justified many morally ambiguous actions with a subtle casuistry which often seemed dishonest, it is a subtle casuistry that no organisation could ever have advantageously advocated this aphorism in any entirely unambiguous and unqualified sense.

Certainly the Jesuits, who as Catholic theologians were bound not only by elementary logic (an important element in the Jesuit curriculum), but dogmatically by the positive decrees of the Church of Rome interpreted in a precise sense, could not possibly have propounded such a meaningless definition. Under the heading, "the end justifies the means", all that they actually did was to advocate such commonplaces of moral casuistry as, say, shooting in itself an "indifferent" (i.e. non-moral) action, for it is only circumstances that equate it with morality.

For example, to shoot a mad dog in pursuit of a child is permissible (i.e. moral), whereas to shoot a peaceful wayfarer with intent to rob him is impermissible or immoral. The morality or immorality that results from the action of shooting is solely the effects of the contingent circumstances. In this sense everyone must agree that the end justifies the means. All schools of Catholic moral theology propound such commonplaces, and no evidence has so far been produced, at least as far as I know, that the Jesuits ever went beyond them in their theoretical formulations.

Regicide

Where these militant champions of the Counter-Reformation did give an opening to their critics, Catholic and Protestant alike, to accuse them plausibly of being basically amoral, was not in their theoretical formulations

which seem to have been impeccable, but in their interpretations and resulting actions. For several leading Jesuit theologians in the era of the Reformation (the Italian, Cardinal Bellarmine, and the Spanish Jesuits, Mariana and Suarez were the most important) arguing on strictly logical lines from the above premises, concluded that if it is agreed that it is lawful (i.e. morally permissible) to shoot a mad dog or an armed robber in defence of one's secular goods, it is at least equally permissible to kill a heretic king or leader. It was in this and only in this sense, that the theologians of the order who promulgated the legality of regicide argued. But one can understand that these fine distinctions often driven home,

not only by Jesuit subtlety in controversy, but several times actually with the point of the assassin's dagger, did not always appeal to Protestant kings and leaders who were in continuous danger of abruptly departing from this transitory life! It was scarcely surprising that both in England and France the theological treatises of the Jesuit regicides were burned by the public hangman: in England under James I (1603-25) who had himself narrowly escaped being elevated to heaven by the Gunpowder Plot of Guy Fawkes, a fanatical pupil of the Jesuits, several of whom paid with their lives for their real, or alleged complicity in the notorious plot.

The Jesuit teaching on regicide met with much opposition even inside the Catholic Church. Actually, their most destructive critic was the French Catholic Jansenist, Pascal, whose critical *Provincial Letters* were largely responsible for giving the descriptive adjective "jesuitical" the unsavoury connotation of duplicity it has borne ever since. The principal Protestant monarchs assassinated by Jesuit-inspired regicides, were William the Silent (of Holland) and Henry IV of France. Pupils of the Jesuits were also responsible for attempts to murder both Elizabeth I and James I of England.

Political Assassination

So far we have confined the subject to religious murder, not nowadays the most common or important form of assassination. For even the Jesuits have ceased to advocate or practise it, and as Archbishop Roberts SJ, would confirm, it is no longer an "objection" to Roman Catholicism. However, politically-inspired assassination has played perhaps as important a role in the 20th century as did religious assassination in earlier centuries. How far is such "propaganda by the deed" (to use an old anarchist slogan) either morally permissible in the Jesuit sense or even efficacious politically? Is it true that the arbitrary taking of any individual's life can alter the course of history?

Assassination and the Social Order

The evolution of the social order has been from the primitive to the sophisticated; from the simple to the more complex, and this demonstrated sequence vitally affects the whole problem of political murder. For whereas in an early relatively unorganised society, the murder of

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Ethics of Assassination

By F. A. RIDLEY

a single prominent individual may actually have altered the essential direction of that society, with ever growing complexity modern society depends less and less upon any one person or group of people and more and more on complex groupings and mass-movements which become more and more immune from the effects of a single killing, however dramatic. Thus in a primitive society like that depicted in the Homeric Iliad or the biblical Book of Judges, the killing of a single obnoxious individual could and did produce immediate effects.

However, the republican murderers of Caesar were unable to save the republic by this most dramatically famous of all political assassinations. And the murder of President Kennedy did not produce either the millenium or the revolution, but only President L.B.J.! No doubt some exceptions can still be plausibly argued: if, say, Lenin or Hitler had been killed. But would it really have made all

that difference? As far as we can now judge, probably not.

In a much simpler society than our modern one, in Cromwellian England, the Leveller Sexby wrote probably the ablest and most eloquent defence of political murder ever penned, his *Killing no Murder* (1656). In this literary and analytical masterpiece, he argued persuasively that the death of Cromwell would bring about an English millenium. Now it so chanced that Cromwell did die (not actually murdered, but probably of the fear of dying in which Sexby's pamphlet played its part), but what happened was the Restoration—hardly a millenium! That was three centuries ago and the futility of assassination is far greater now. So much so indeed, that its former Jesuit and anarchist advocates have nowadays given it up. The fact that it still flourishes in the USA merely proves that a technically advanced society has not yet shed all traces of primitive violence.

Churchill on Prayers for Rain

THERE has recently been some speculation on the religious—or non-religious—beliefs of the late Sir Winston Churchill. While not deciding the question, the following letter written to the *Times* on June 12th, 1919, during a period of drought, reveals at least an element of scepticism in Winston Churchill's outlook. It was not published until many years later, and we should like to thank Mrs. Margaret Knight for supplying us with a copy of it.

Sir,
Observing reports in various newspapers that prayers are about to be offered for rain in order that the present serious drought may be terminated, I venture to suggest that great care should be taken in framing the appeal.

On the last occasion when this extreme step was resorted to the Duke of Rutland took the leading part with so much well-meaning enthusiasm that the resulting down-pour was not only sufficient for all immediate needs, but was considerably in excess of what was actually required, with the consequence that the agricultural community had no sooner been delivered from the drought than they were clamouring for a special interposition to relieve them from the deluge.

Profiting by this experience, we ought surely on this occasion to be extremely careful to state exactly what we want in precise terms, so as to obviate the possibility of any misunderstanding, and to economise so far as possible the need for these special appeals. After so many days of drought, it certainly does not seem unreasonable to ask for a change in the weather, and faith in a favourable response may well be fortified by actuarial probabilities.

While, therefore, welcoming the suggestion that His Grace should once again come forward, I cannot help feeling that the Board of Agriculture should first of all be consulted. They should draw up a schedule of the exact amount of rainfall required in the interests of this year's harvest in different parts of the country. This schedule could be placarded in the various places of worship at the time when the appeal is made. It would no doubt be unnecessary to read out the whole schedule during the service, so long as it was made clear at the time that this is what we have in our minds and what we actually want at the present serious juncture.

I feel sure that this would be a much more businesslike manner of dealing with the emergency than mere vague appeals for rain. But, after all, even this scheme, though greatly preferable to the haphazard methods previously employed, is in itself only a partial makeshift. What we

really require to pray for is the general amelioration of the British climate. What is the use of having these piecemeal interpositions—now asking for sunshine and now for rain? Would it not be far better to ascertain by scientific investigation, conducted under the auspices of a Royal Commission, what is the proportion of sunshine and rain best suited to the ripening of the British crops?

It would no doubt be necessary that other interests besides agriculture should be represented, but there should be a certain broad general reformation of the British weather upon which a now overwhelming concensus of opinion could be found. The proper proportion of rain to sunshine during each period of the year; the relegation of the rain largely to the hours of darkness; the apportionment of rain and sunshine as between different months, with proper reference not only to crops but to holidays; all these could receive due consideration. A really scientific basis of climatic reform would be achieved.

These reforms, when duly embodied in an official volume, could be made the object of the sustained appeals of the nation over many years, and embodied in general prayers of a permanent and not of an exceptional character. We should not then be forced from time to time to have recourse to such appeals at particular periods, which, since they are unrelated to any general plan, must run the risk of deranging the whole economy of nature, and involve the interruption and deflection of universal processes, causing reactions of the utmost complexity in many directions which it is impossible for us with our limited knowledge to foresee.

I urge you, Sir, to lend the weight of your powerful organ to the systematisation of our appeals for the reform of the British climate.

Yours very faithfully,

SCORPIO.

ABORTION LAW REFORM BEING KEPT UNDER REVIEW

AT question time in the House of Commons on March 26th, Mr. William Hamilton (Labour, Fife West) was told by Miss Alice Bacon, Minister of State, Home Office, that the Home Secretary was keeping the matter of abortion law reform under review, but could hold out no prospect of early legislation. Miss Bacon said that she had met a deputation from the Abortion Law Reform Association, and everything it had said was being carefully studied.

Ingersoll Nominated for Hall of Fame

THE 1965 election to the Hall of Fame of New York University was due to take place on April 1st. Among the nominations was Robert G. Ingersoll, American lawyer, orator and freethinker, who was born on August 11th, 1833 and died on July 21st, 1899. The following tributes in his support are taken from the American freethought magazine, *Progressive World* (February 1965).

This is to give support to the candidacy of Robert G. Ingersoll for a place among those admitted in 1965 to the Hall of Fame. With the passing of the years it has become ever clearer that Ingersoll was the leading American of his day in upholding, through his own example, every man's right to think for himself and to say what he honestly believes. This is a right that is basic to all progress, and it is because we Americans do have a considerable measure of this right that we have been able to advance as no major people ever have advanced before.

The right to differ openly, honestly, and without unnecessary vituperation is one of the rights of which we should be most proud. It cannot be maintained unless it is continually practised and unless honour is accorded those who are outstanding in practising it, no matter how much we may differ with them. It is in fact in the expression of our honour despite our differences that we show our strength and sincerity in this area. That is what Ingersoll did. We should honour him fittingly before we can be condemned for not having honoured him if we really believe in the freedom that we profess.

HERMAN J. MULLER, Distinguished Service Professor
Indiana University, Nobel Prize Winner in Genetics

I am writing to nominate and urge the consideration of the name of Robert G. Ingersoll for inclusion in the Hall of Fame.

Robert G. Ingersoll, lecturer, teacher, writer and philosopher, was an outstanding exponent and influence for an extremely important element in the development of the intellectual and religious life of America. His thought is a significant expression of the rational and critical in the consideration of religious and moral problems. He combines the tradition of dissent and the affirmation of the American democratic process. In the period when Darwinism challenged conventional religious beliefs and had shaken the faith of millions he brought his brilliant and scholarly talents to bear on the problems of faith. He made many Americans who were in the churches and temples rethink and restate their affirmation in ways which squared with science and democratic values.

For the substantial numbers who were outside of traditional religion he was a leader and teacher who helped them restate the principles essential to a faith in man and in democracy. Among all the leaders of his generation he functioned as a gadfly, a challenge to conscience, but also throughout his writings one finds an affirmative philosophy of man involving disciplined thought and a great loving heart.

In the American struggle for freedom of mind, freedom of conscience and freedom of faith, for believers and unbelievers, the name of Ingersoll is a living force today as it was during his lifetime. For countless generations he will continue to have a great name in the roster that includes Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Emerson and John Dewey.

ALGERNON D. BLACK, Leader
New York Society for Ethical Culture

I am writing to recommend the candidacy of Robert G. Ingersoll for a place in the Hall of Fame of New York University. This I am very glad to do, since Ingersoll's writings were among the earliest religious literature which as a boy I read, and his *Mistakes of Moses* was my first introduction to the splendid literature of the Old Testament. His volumes were ranged on the shelves of my father's library, as they had a place among the books of every forward-looking American minister of those days. Ingersoll was not a trained Biblical scholar, but his lectures and writings played a most important role in liberalising the religious thinking of Americans during the post-Civil War period, and in preparing them to receive the modernised gospel created by the impact of Darwinian thought. He deserves an honoured place in the process of loosening the bonds of a literal-minded theological tradition and preparing the ground for the humanised religious thinking of the twentieth century.

Ingersoll also enjoyed a most significant part in the political life of nineteenth-century America. He was statesmanlike and widely influential in spreading the programme of an enlightened

and progressive Republicanism. The Republican party in those days, as today, needed all the enlightenment it could get, and Ingersoll rose nobly and intelligently to the opportunity.

Ingersoll is certainly a major figure in the intellectual and cultural life of the American people, and well deserves the recognition the Hall of Fame could give him.

JOHN HERMAN RANDALL, JR.
Woodbridge Professor of Philosophy Columbia University

Robert G. Ingersoll has given to Americans a great heritage in the historical image of his personal life and character. He was fearless, aggressive and rigidly conscientious in following his own convictions and ideals. At a time of intense controversy and widespread intolerance of the very idea of disbelief in a personal God, he applied to himself the term agnostic.

He chose to make of himself a balanced and rounded-out leader of men in several spheres, renouncing in so doing the much greater fame and material rewards that would have been his in exchange for single, intense application in any one of several fields. This was his deliberate decision, despite a childhood of harsh and narrow discipline. He had achieved brilliancy in statesmanlike politics, having held high office and gained recognition of the great probability of winning a higher position. He gained national acclaim as a famous lecturer, not only on agnosticism for which popular opinion has chiefly characterised him, but also for scholarly lectures on statesmen, scientists, great thinkers and writers. He took a foremost place as a leader of men at the bar, moving from a local sphere to that of the most important cases in the nation.

Engaged for many years in the bitterest polemics, he exhibited throughout his life extraordinary personal charm. The greatest of all challengers of conventional beliefs of an entire era, he conducted himself with impeccable propriety in all relationships.

For all Americans, whether of his religious persuasion or of completely opposite views, Ingersoll set an example of independent thinking, moderation and the constant use of common sense.

LE ROY BOWMAN, Retired Professor
Brooklyn College

I am glad to endorse the candidacy of Robert G. Ingersoll for election to the Hall of Fame.

As a teacher of public speaking it has been my privilege to show students of the art of speaking how the great master, Robert G. Ingersoll, influenced his generation and succeeding generations through his platform appearances. I do not suppose there is any American orator who has been more anthologised than Robert G. Ingersoll. His funeral oration at the grave of his brother is a classic. So also is his renowned address "The Liberty of Man, Woman and Child".

Think of the orators in his own generation that he influenced: Darrow, Debs, Beveridge, and many others. Albert J. Beveridge called him one of the four great orators America has produced.

His cry against all fetters that seek to bind the human mind and heart can still be heard, and it is now important that it be heard today. I am always glad to lead my students to him. Often students become enchanted with his power and read all of him.

One of his great friendships was with Walt Whitman. Bliss Perry paints an unforgettable picture of him as he raised funds for Walt's declining years and as they spent the night together talking, talking.

If anyone is to be in the Hall of Fame, surely Honest Bob should be!

LIONEL CROCKER, Head Department of Speech
Denison University, Granville, Ohio

In this day when the freedom of thought and speech is being threatened as never since the Alien and Sedition Acts, it is well for the American people to take notice of and to remember Robert G. Ingersoll. It makes little difference whether one agrees with all that he said and did. The important thing is that he dared to speak his mind even on unpopular subjects and to take the consequences. He stood for the right of every American to freedom of thought and to freedom of speech. That is a priceless contribution.

AVERY CRAVEN, Professor of American History
University of Chicago

I am advised that Col. Robert G. Ingersoll has been nominated for a place in the Hall of Fame of New York University. I am very glad to second the nomination.

Apart from pre-eminence as one of the nation's most felicitous and persuasive orators, Col. Ingersoll had a seminal role in forming that climate of opinion in our country which, in spite of

(Concluded on page 108)

This Believing World

IS ANYONE surprised that some hospital visitors are good enough to leave sick patients Christian tracts with such intriguing titles as, "Are you ready to die?" and of course—"Are you saved?" (*Daily Mail*, 18/3/65) It appears that some patients have been "very disturbed", and some have even declined necessary operations "because of what was said in pamphlets". But surely the tract distributors were doing the work of Christ in trying to bring sick people nearer to God. Yet we have the Rev. G. A. D. Mann, Secretary of the Free Church Hospital Chaplaincy Board refusing to allow any more of the tracts to be distributed. The tract donors "have no ministerial training", he says. As if that matters!

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THE VATICAN seems to be getting into another jam as serious in its way as whether Catholic women should be allowed to use contraceptives or not, or whether evolution is true or not. It is simply whether it is going to hand over a £23,000,000 tax deficit to the Italian government. Experts estimate that the Vatican has £5,000,000,000 in the kitty (*Daily Mirror*, 2/3/65), and it is known to have vast investments. Indeed an Italian left-wing newspaper calls the Vatican, "The biggest tax evader in the country". Not the right terms, surely to use for the earthly representative of God Almighty.

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WE ALWAYS love to record the wise opinions of the Bishop of Southwark, and his latest quip, given in the *Daily Express* (4/3/65) is, "There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that Christianity will ever be a popular religion. A way of living based on obedience to divine sovereignty and self-sacrifice will never appeal to the majority". Well, well. And this after being taught at school that there is actually no easier religion to follow than Christianity, based as it was and is on the simple and easily followed precepts of "our Lord" meek and mild. Of course, in the ultimate, the one Christian precept universally followed was "Compel them to come in"—a much more efficient way than merely teaching them to do so.

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HOW SUCCESSFUL this has been is shown by the assets in hard cash and property owned by the two successful branches in the business—the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. Few industrial concerns have shown such a remarkable facility for gathering in the shekels in such enormous quantities. And the founder himself had nowhere to lay his head.

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HOW OFTEN do we find the basest ingratitude when the things of God are in evidence for our appreciation! Here is Mr. W. Richards (*News of the World*, 14/3/65) spending £35,000 on building a new church in gratitude to the Lord for sparing his life 41 years ago, and nobody wants it, and it looks as if it will have to be turned into a Bingo hall. This is too terrible to contemplate. Can anyone imagine Jesus Christ conducting a Bingo game at full blast?

ADMISSION

There's hope and there's heart in it,
Men have their part in it,
Science and art deeply sound it;
So faith might be fed;
Had God simply said:
"I didn't create it—I found it."

A.E.C.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

MEMBERS from Birmingham, Bradford, Leicester, Nottingham, Stockport and Taunton were among those who attended the 59th Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society at the Horse Shoe Hotel, London. The Guest of Honour was Leo Abse, MP, and David Tribe, president of the Society was in the Chair.

Mr. Tribe introduced Mr. Abse as, "the MP for human relations" and referred to the many progressive causes for which he had worked. These included divorce law reform, improvement of prison conditions, and the implementation of the sections of the Wolfenden Report relating to homosexuality. Despite his support of causes for which it is constantly claimed that public opinion was not ready, Mr. Abse's share of the vote in his constituency of Pontypool had increased at every election. Mr. Tribe declared that Mr. Abse was an example to the social conscience of the nation.

In reply, Mr. Abse declared that it was rather strange that he should be there among Secularists. As long as anti-semitism persisted, he would always be diffident about dissociating himself from Judaism, but he had been forced into a position of opposition to religion by the extraordinary attitudes of religious leaders who regularly opposed measures which his clinical experience as a lawyer had shown him to be necessary.

The public, however, were more concerned with a rational approach to family matters than with religious theories. Morality should not be dependent upon religion. Secularists and Humanists have a great responsibility for showing a rational morality and proving that man can live upright without religion.

Peter Cotes proposed a toast to the National Secular Society, and commended modern trends in its activities. He congratulated the Society on using twentieth century weapons to meet twentieth century problems. Mr. Cotes concluded by expressing pleasure at seeing so many long-standing members present.

William Miller (Chairman of the Birmingham Branch) replying on behalf of the Society, said the Dinner should be a celebration. We had at last broken through into the mass media and received wide publicity in the press, on radio and on television.

The current Roman Catholic discussions on birth control were too late, said Mr. Miller. Catholic women were already deciding matters for themselves. But we must continue to work to rid the world of fear and superstition. Current progress was the result not only of the efforts made in the past twelve months, but of years of work by Secularist pioneers, whose example should encourage us.

Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, President of the World Union of Freethinkers, and Mr. W. Griffiths, Treasurer of the National Secular Society, sent greetings. M. McI.

INGERSOLL NOMINATED FOR HALL OF FAME

(Concluded from page 107)

inertia and active resistance, helps to transvalue the First Amendment to the Constitution from a pious aspiration into a powerful force in the American way of life. Especially on issues of religious freedom for agnostics and unbelievers as well as true believers, he received a wider hearing and won more general tolerance than any other single champion of freedom of conscience and thought, not excepting such Founding Fathers as Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, whose faith in the freedom of the mind and the toleration of differences he reaffirmed, extended, and developed a broader public acceptance for. Col. Ingersoll's place is assuredly with them among the nation's famous men.

HORACE M. KALLEN, Retired Professor
New School for Social Research, New York, N.Y.

THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

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THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d.

In USA and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, NSS.

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

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, April 4th, 6.45 p.m.: J. B. DURK, "The Problem of Freewill".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, April 4th, 6.30 p.m.: ARTHUR SMITH, "Osteopathy".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, April 4th, 7.30 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "Secular Vineyard".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, April 4th, 11 a.m.:

DR. MAURICE BURTON, "Automation in Biological Studies".

Tuesday, April 6th, 7.30 p.m.: TREVOR HATTON, "Prison Conditions in Modern England".

Sarbiton and Malden & Coombe and Kingston Branches NSS (The White Hart, Kingston Bridge, Hampton Wick), Friday, April 2nd, 8 p.m.: PETER FRYER, "The Fruits of Philosophy".

Notes and News

CYRIL CONNOLLY was right (in the *Sunday Times*, 21/3/65) to take up the implications of Lord Devlin's religious and authoritarian attitude to law and morality in his book of lectures, *The Enforcement of Morals* (Oxford, 25s.). Lord Devlin returns again and again in his lectures to two topics: Mill on Liberty and the Wolfenden Report, quoting a key phrase from each "in order to consider and reconsider various forms of demolishing them." He does not, Mr. Connolly said, "really grasp the nature of homosexuals" and "leaves the impression that to revise the law here would be a confession of weakness". As a Catholic, Lord Devlin regards marriage as a sacrament and he would like to see a greater readiness to withhold divorce, and a refusal to grant guilty parties the automatic right to re-marry. In fact, his marriage "reforms" are marked by what Mr. Connolly terms a "general aridity".

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MILL held that the only purpose for which power could rightly be exercised over a member of a civilised society against his will was to prevent harm to others. His own

good, either physical or moral, was "not a sufficient warrant". And the view of the Wolfenden Report was that it was not the function of the law "to intervene in the private life of citizens or to seek to enforce any particular pattern of behaviour", apart from preventing harm to others. Crime should not be equated with sin: "there must remain a realm of private morality and immorality which is, in brief and crude terms, not the law's business". Contrast these libertarian statements with the rigidity of Lord Devlin. "Those who believe in God and that He made man in His image will," he writes, "believe also that He gave to each in equal measure the knowledge of good and evil, placing it not in the intellect wherein His grant to some was more bountiful than to others, but in the heart and understanding, building there in each man the temple of the Holy Ghost".

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POPE PAUL VI has given his blessing to the Rotary Club, previously condemned by the Vatican (notably in 1929 and 1951) apparently because it didn't require its members to profess any religious faith. "That aspect of your programme caused the Church concern", the Pope said, "because we feared it might encourage the introduction of other ideologies into your group, or that your members would think that the Rotarian code was sufficient to meet man's spiritual needs". The *Guardian's* Rome correspondent, George Armstrong, suggested that the Holy Office had thought and possibly still did think it could detect "the faint odour of Masonry coming from the Rotarians' innocent-looking monthly cottage pie" (22/3/65) and he reminded us that the Boy Scout movement in Italy was regarded as "potentially seditious" until it came under Church control. Mr. Armstrong also reported that, before leaving the Vatican, Rotary Club officials presented the Pope with a cheque "for an undisclosed amount" to be used for Catholic Church charities.

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ATHEISM is rife among teachers in schools at Dover, Deal and Sandwich, if several speakers at the Divisional Education Executive are to be believed (*Kent Messenger*, 12/3/65). There was "a considerable amount of militant atheism among teachers", said Councillor J. Blake of Deal; some of them were "propagating atheism to good purpose", added the Rev. Ewart Roberts. The Executive was debating a motion from a Roman Catholic priest, Father Terence Tanner: "That this divisional executive is concerned about the influence of religious teaching on the conduct of children and young people, and expresses the view that such teaching should only be given by teachers who are convinced Christians". It was decided by 17 votes to 2 to make the motion a resolution at the annual conference of the National Association of Divisional Executives. And Mr. A. D. Hewlett, the Divisional Education Officer, said that he would circulate the motion to all heads of schools in the area. So if atheism is as "rife" as the speakers alleged, Christian teachers may well soon be complaining of overwork.

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"No teacher is compelled to give religious instruction," commented Mr. V. T. Ferguson of Deal and Sandwich NUT. It was his experience that "those teachers who are agnostics, or atheists ask to be relieved of giving religious instruction." And in a press release (16/3/65) the National Secular Society described RI as "an ecclesiastico-political intrusion into the life of the school". The Agreed Syllabuses were not, it said, "impartial statements about the Christian faith", but "vehicles of special pleading and attempted brainwashing."

On the Box

By TOM PRICE

(The Director of Religious Broadcasting, Television Britannicus, is discussing the programme schedule with his production secretary.)

Sir Alex Grovel: Now, Miss Smith, what have we on the saintly schedule this month?

Miss Smith: Just the usual stock stuff so far. A touch of the old ecumenicals. Another bit about the Dead Sea Scrolls. A soupçon of Schweitzer. A couple of Sunday afternoon services from remote Welsh chapels—did you know that Cwm Rhondda is now top of the Protestant pops? There's a chat about life between a bishop and a very attractive young film starlet. We haven't fixed the actress yet, but there are plenty of volunteers from the bishops. Then there's a very uplifting group discussion among the East Cheam Boy Scouts on how to build a mission hut in Mongolia . . . and I think we may dig up the odd nun or two for a debate on The Pill. We seem to be sweating on ideas for *Sunday Brake* but I've sent plenty of scouts out into the Mothers' Union branches and the skiffle clubs and we ought to be okay there. If we're stuck, we can always do something about Smethwick . . .

Sir Alex: Yes . . . yes. But have we got anything with pep, zing and go? Anything "with it"? Anything really . . . sexy? There's been an alarming drop in the viewing figures lately, Miss Smith. We could do with something way out to entice the admass from *Panorama* and *Compact*. Something . . . gritty.

Miss Smith: We *could* bash the poor old Jehovah's Witnesses, I suppose. We could probably arrange a *Face to Face* interview between one of the ministers and the director of the Blood Transfusion Service . . .

Sir Alex: God preserve us!

Miss Smith: Well, what about the Mormons? They could put on a display of their gold plate, and tell people how to stop smoking. And we haven't even touched the Exclusive Brethren . . .

Sir Alex: Contain yourself, Miss Smith. We don't want minority groups. Anyway, we are not against smoking. Half the clergy would be a dead loss if they couldn't suck their pipes during the programme.

Miss Smith (desperately): There's that offer from the Salvation Army to put on a massed beat group of 4,000 female guitarists all twanging away to the tune of "Rock me to Jesus . . ."

Sir Alex: Old hat. I'm fed up with all this folk-songism. Can't we have some decent music for a change?

Miss Smith: What about *Colour-Bar*? We've literally hundreds of nice blackies on our books. They're all itching to earn a bob or two—and most of them can sing as well . . .

Sir Alex: Done to death. The average viewer today is looking for kicks. Give him Sammy Davis, Jr., conducting High Mass and he won't blink and eyelash.

Miss Smith: One thing we haven't done—drugs. How about an RC priest, a Buddhist monk and an Anglican parson; sit 'em in the studio, give 'em a few reefers and some purple hearts and let them compare the experience with . . . let's call it "A Superior Ecstasy"?

Sir Alex: Wow! There's a germ of an idea there. Perhaps they could all go to one of these all-night teenage dope clubs and see if they can make a few conversions? Make some wonderful candid pictures . . .

Miss Smith: I've got one lined up already—a bishop who

says he's prepared to do anything if I can get him on the Box. Mind you, the teenagers might be a bit difficult. They're getting more cautious these days. Won't look at the camera without a fat fee . . . But wait, Sir Alex—there is one thing we haven't done which could be arranged quite easily . . .

Sir Alex: What's that? You mean put an atheist on the programme? Miss Smith, I've told you before—no, no, no. Completely out of our area. Last time the Other channel had one he wouldn't stop talking and I suspect he was tiddly—and a Communist to boot. Always remember that this is a religious outfit, Miss Smith. Let one of 'em in and all the other people will be saying they're atheists so they can get into the act.

Miss Smith: The trouble is, sir, that most of the available scientists, doctors, writers, social workers, philosophers and historians seem to be that way inclined. It's as much as I can do to get them even to give a mention to the Almighty.

Sir Alex: Yes . . . I know what you mean. Thank God that most of them seem to be *Christian* atheists, at any rate.

Miss Smith: One good thing—we *have* managed to fix up the *Eventide Reflections* for the month. We've got that nice Manchester clergyman who talks about the football results, and the RC priest who was saved from the demon drink, and that chap with the beard—all the ladies, er, love him . . .

Sir Alex: Good show. But tell them to put more blood into it. More local colour. Less gospel and more guts. Yes, Miss Smith—glamour, guts and God, in that order. That's the formula.

Miss Smith (cooly): Oh, Sir Alex! You are a one!

The BBC and Marx

MARX—in the second of the BBC's three television programmes on Jewish thinkers who had challenged Christianity—proved to be made of much sterner stuff than had Freud a fortnight earlier. Or rather his disciples did. True, Martin Milligan referred to a "marvellous, heightened" sense of the dignity of man to be got from the New Testament, but he clearly expressed the distinction between the Marxist view of man working out his own salvation "on earth by earthly processes" and Christian "redemption". And Philip Thody and Gerry Cohen developed this despite constant interruptions from the Rev. Joseph McCulloch. Christianity was concerned with saving people's souls, whereas Marx concentrated on this life. A "travesty", protested Mr. McCulloch. Christianity was concerned with attaining "real" life. He didn't elucidate.

The Rev. Werner Pelz's comparison of Marx with an Old Testament prophet had point. But efforts of Mr. Pelz and chairman Brian Redhead to show the closeness of Marxism and Christianity were in vain. And Jerry Cohen's final Marxist comment, "We don't see how there is anything greater than the whole of human history", carried the day.

The last programme in the series due to be shown on March 31st, will be devoted to Ludwig Wittgenstein, author of the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*.

Dr. Zeitlin and The Crucifixion

By H. CUTNER

MR. F. A. RIDLEY'S generous tribute to Dr. Zeitlin's scholarship is thoroughly deserved, and few unbiased people can deny that from his examination of Jewish and Christian authorities, Dr. Zeitlin has proved his case. I heartily concur with him that the Jews did *not* crucify Jesus.

Dr. Zeitlin stresses that his argument is based on "history". "I am not" he says (THE FREETHINKER, January 15th), "dealing with any theological problems or hypotheses, but am analysing the records as a historian", and he has every right to do so. He will allow me the same right to deal with the problem, not only from the viewpoint of history, but also from theology if I do wish it. I cannot see how any problem relating to the Jews and Jesus can be considered only from the point of view of history.

In the first place, what history? The "history" of the Gospels? Any "history" which takes angels and devils, myths and miracles, seriously, is not history at all. And once again I must stress—as I have often done in these pages—that if one believes in the existence of the kind of God we have depicted for us in the Bible, there is no need to worry about miracles. The biggest miracle is God Almighty, and there should never be any difficulty in believing the lesser miracles. Why Muslims should stress the existence of one God only, Allah, as proof that Islam is superior to other religions, passes my comprehension. One God or many is alike nonsense.

Without producing any *evidence* that Pilate said this or Jesus answered that, Dr. Zeitlin takes for granted the Christian "records"—the Gospels—and argues from them his own case as a historian. But did Pilate say what he quotes, *in Greek*? Did Pilate know a word of Greek? Was the trial of Jesus conducted in Greek? As a historian, Dr. Zeitlin who is very quick in pointing out what is or is not found in some of the manuscripts we have of the Gospels, never touches this point. Who is responsible for the Greek Gospels—old and new? Or to put the matter in another way, unless Dr. Zeitlin can produce evidence that the Gospels are authentic, how can they be cited as authorities.

It may be said that he is only quoting them to show how contradictory they are, how it is impossible to trust Matthew, for example, because John contradicts him, and so on. Well, of course the way the Gospels do contradict each other is certainly a proof that they cannot be relied upon. But the contradictions are very well known to most Christian students of the New Testament, but still they believe. They believe just as strongly that the Jews *did* crucify Jesus, and they are very unlikely to give up their scapegoats just because of a few contradictions in the Gospels.

Dr. Zeitlin is perfectly right when he says that "the Apostolic Fathers did not make the accusation of the crucifixion against the Jews", and some of them appear also to have known precious little about Jesus. In fact, while the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles (we are told) are products of the first century, and are packed with all kinds of stories about Jesus, second century Christian writers like Theophilus and Athenogarus, are quite silent about Jesus, and as for second century Pagan writers, some appear never to have heard of Christianity either.

One of Dr. Zeitlin's historical authorities is Justin Martyr who was, Dr. Zeitlin says, "the first one to blame the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus". Well, Justin had

a long dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, who roared with laughter at some of the imbecilities uttered by his opponent. And Trypho roundly told him that the Christians had "invented" Jesus, that nothing was known about him, not even where he was born. Now, how could Trypho have said all this if the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles had been in existence? Here are his exact words, according to the translation in the Ante-Nicene Library:

But Christ, if he has indeed been born and exists anywhere, is unknown, and does not even know himself . . . and you, having accepted a groundless report, invent a Christ for yourselves, and for his sake are inconsiderately perishing . . .

The *Dialogue* with Trypho is not a Jewish document, but a Christian one, and is said to have been "published" about 150 AD. We thus have the testimony of a renowned Christian admitting that there were Jews then who denied the historicity of Christ. This being the case, there could have been no crucifixion if he was right. But in addition, we have the testimony of Irenaeus, another of Dr. Zeitlin's authorities, who just as emphatically declared that Jesus was "an old man" when he died, and there is nothing following this emphatic statement that he was crucified. Moreover, if Jesus was an old man when he died, he couldn't have been crucified under Pontius Pilate who died in 37 AD.

Here then we have two very famous Christian authorities—one of them, it is true, only quoting his Jewish opponent—who, if they are right, proved as far back as 150 AD and 180 AD that the Jews did not crucify Jesus. And what is the Christian reply? Irenaeus is almost wholly ignored. In his brilliant survey of ancient religions, *Anacalypsis*, Godfrey Higgins points out, "The Church has been guilty of the oversight of letting this passage from Irenaeus escape". While the American, Judge Waite, in his *History of Christianity* is even more scathing, though the passage is too long to quote here.

But the testimonies of Justin and Irenaeus help to prove that the Gospel accounts of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus stamp them as pure fiction. As John E. Remsburg insists, "There was no Christ to crucify, and Jesus of Nazareth, if he existed, was not crucified". (*The Christ*, page 294.)

We can put the problem in another way. Christians and Jews both believe that there was a crucifixion. Christians do so because for them the Gospels are divinely true. Jews do so these days because they are tickled to death to see how a Jew is worshipped as God Almighty; and if formerly, they had hinted, as Trypho bluntly did, that the story of Jesus had been invented, it might have resulted in the wholesale massacres of unfortunate men, women and children, by Christian hordes. "How long must our mythology, with all its attendant evils, rule and curse the world? How long must an innocent people suffer for an alleged crime that was never committed?" Remsburg wrote this nearly 60 years ago.

HUMANIST HOLIDAYS

Humanist Holidays for Rationalists and friends of the Movement, Derbyshire, 14th-28th or 30th August: Camping delightful site near Hathersage, Swimming Pool, Blue John Mines, Castleton, Dales. Primarily for children, but a few adults welcome. Large tent available for boys; others bring own. Gas cooking. Share expenses. Mrs. M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. (Humanist Holiday Centres for all ages, Holland and Sussex, waiting list only.)

Philosophy of Science—Some Facets

2—SCIENTIFIC & UNSCIENTIFIC PROPOSITIONS

By DOUGLAS BRAMWELL

THE sentence "There will be an eclipse of the sun in the year 2000" is a scientific proposition. So is "Cigarette smoking causes lung cancer". But the ancient metaphysical propositions "God exists" and "There is an unknowable substance behind all appearances" are not scientific. What then is the difference between these two pairs of propositions that makes the first pair scientific and the second pair not.

Certain philosophers of science hold that a proposition is scientific if, when it is true, it can be verified by observation. Let us look at our four examples.

Obviously it will be possible in 2000 to verify, by direct observation, the prediction about an eclipse of the sun. The proposition about cigarette smoking is also verifiable, but the method will be indirect and statistical; it is due to this indirectness that current arguments are possible about whether or not the proposition has already been verified.

There seems little likelihood of there ever being a method of verification, acceptable to science, of the proposition "God exists". The supposed nature of the deity rules out direct observation. Indirect verification would only be possible if God caused certain events which could not be explained by natural laws. But such "miraculous" events could never be detected; there could never be certainty that a natural explanation would not be found.

The final proposition "There is an unknowable substance behind all appearances" need hardly be discussed. If the substance is unknowable then its existence is unverifiable. All verification depends on appearances; our substance is lost behind them.

There is an objection to this whole thesis that "verifiability" is the means of deciding between scientific and unscientific propositions. For it is easy to frame theories that are so complete in their powers of explanation that any event serves to verify them.

For example, according to certain psychiatric theories, feelings of either inferiority or superiority can be confirmation of inferiority complex—in the latter case the patient is compensating for his illness. In a similar way, no well-indoctrinated Marxist would fail to show that today's events, whatever they are, are certain confirmation of Marxist theories. Like the astrologers, they cannot lose.

Karl Popper has suggested that, to pass as scientific, a proposition should be "falsifiable" rather than verifiable. In other words a scientific theory should allow predictions of events which, if false, can be observed to be so. Sound scientific work passes this test but we get rid of some bad psychiatry, the Communists and the astrologers.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE ODIOUS, THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE USEFUL

The problem of what to do with the old parish churches is one which Mr. Jesse Collins well faces (19/3/65). They have a considerable potential use as meeting-places and the like, a curious link with part of their original medieval purpose for the community. Yet one must question the curious attitude of F. H. Snow upon this point. Not every ancient parish church is regarded by everybody as beautiful as such. But this question of beauty must be a subjective test and a more objective approach is to ask whether the building contains points of architectural or historical interest. A Norman building may not be beautiful to a great many people yet it may contain detailed elements of considerable importance illustrating Norman methods of building and design. Or again, a medieval church may be illustrative of the manner in which buildings of this period grew and may contain many examples of various phases of Gothic architecture. From the historian's viewpoint, much knowledge of objective history is contained within old church buildings simply because other sources are lacking.

To give but one obvious example, much of the history of English costume is illustrated by the surviving monumental brasses. The Church was the sole existing art patron in the Middle Ages for reasons not very creditable to theology. Thus, it is to the Church that the art historian must turn. Nor is it without interest that the various denominations themselves have ignored this point very largely. A great deal of the sheer architectural vandalism in this field which has taken place since the war has had the support of denominational officials. But we must beware of merely subjective tests based upon utility and taste. It has been the prevalence of this attitude which has led to the wholesale destruction during recent years of a great deal of Georgian and Victorian architecture of various kinds and to the resulting losses for culture and understanding.

It is clear nowadays that a number of old churches have no potential use ecclesiastically or theologically. Congregations have shrunk to vanishing point and show no signs of revival. But this fact creates problems not unlike those which faced William Morris and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings almost a century ago. The subjective iconoclasm of F. H. Snow may be far from good thinking in these fields. It may be in fact a greater contribution to freedom of thought to secure the preservation of an old building and its adaptation to modern secular needs than to sweep it away in order that one more site may be left for some faceless block of glass and concrete which our successors will probably denounce with a venom far greater than that shown by F. H. Snow to the most pedestrian piece of medieval Gothic architecture.

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

THE AGNOSTIC

May I as a reader of THE FREETHINKER and a Secularist for twenty-five years, register a strong protest regarding Douglas Bramwell's statement (26/2/65) in which he states that: "Sitting on the fence—being an agnostic—is perhaps the most comfortable position in the arguments between the atheists and the believers." And more to the same effect.

May I assure Mr. Bramwell that the Agnostic is no comfort seeker but holds his opinion on the same basis as Mr. Bramwell himself—namely honest conviction. If agnosticism describes a person's frame of mind, then he has a perfect right to use the term. The great T. H. Huxley, who coined the phrase was certainly no comfort seeker, but was foremost in the battle for freethought.

E. MARKLEY

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