

# The Freethinker

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TOWARDS the end of the last century, the village of Spaxton in Somersetshire acquired an unenvied notoriety so far as the concept of love be concerned. It was selected by Mr. Smyth Piggott, the leader of the free love sect, the Agapemonites, for his "Abode of Love". Strange doings were rumoured as proceedings from the settlement where the saints awaited the coming of the Lord. There was no marrying or giving in marriage in this kingdom of God with the result that spiritual brides produced material babies. For some years, the notoriety continued and then faded away as Smyth Piggott underwent the dissolution of earthly death and the first sounds of the Last Trump remained unheard. The day was to come when the last disciple had died and the once-notorious agapemone was no more.

## The Rector of Spaxton

Yet Spaxton as an "abode of love" seems fated to notoriety. Its rector is the Rev. G. B. Watkins Grubb and recently there was a case in the Archdeacon's Court concerning his conduct in the parish. The charges concerned, so far as could be judged from the press, such matters as tearing down notices put up by the secretary of the Parochial Church Council or failing to call meetings of this body. A court of this kind meets before commissioners, a trained lawyer with lay assessors, and reports to the bishop. Mr. Grubb was found guilty of most of the charges and, under the Church Assembly Measure of 1947 creating the court, he was deprived of his benefice by the Bishop of Bath and Wells. For the moment, we forbear all further comment, as the defendant has given notice of appeal. But one fact did emerge with clear evidence. The parish was split into two warring factions. Mr. Grubb himself had been treated with the greatest hostility by one side such as undergoing pelting with bad eggs at a church meeting. Indeed, the commissioners censured one churchwarden and the secretary of the Church council for calculated rudeness to the rector. It is not clear whether or not the Bishop of Bath and Wells intends to deal with them penally in any way or whether he has power under the law to do so.

There are various highly critical aspects of the case which must not await comment until after the appeal has been heard. This body is the established Church and its disciplinary doings must affect the whole population, and therefore be related to wider conceptions of the enforcement of justice than would prevail in narrowly church circles. After the extremely unsatisfactory trial of Dr. Bryn Thomas in 1962, there was a reform of the church courts which came into force in August, 1964. It must not be overlooked that the Archdeacon's court exists within this reformed state of affairs or that, since August 1964, appeal to the Privy Council has been abolished. This means that the incriminated cleric has lost the general right of the citizen to carry his complaint to the Crown in person and that his appeal cannot get beyond a body composed of members of the Church of England in the narrower sense. The case for Mr. Grubb raises

questions of the sect-conception of the Church and a belief that certain parishioners are under a curse; questions to which the average Freethinker will scarcely be sympathetic. Yet the case as a whole should be watched closely in free-thought circles in order to mark down the next steps for the evolution of the administration of justice in the courts of the established Church as well as to raise basic questions concerning the extent to which these disciplinary bodies should rank as Crown courts.

But there is a far wider issue and the hell upon earth which Spaxton ecclesiastical seems to have been raises it in a new guise. Again and again, the argument is heard that churches do no harm whatever their

belief, that they encourage the development of the individual character and that society would therefore be the poorer morally without them. It is such a case as that of Spaxton which gives the lie to any such pretensions. The fact must be faced that churches are frequently the resort of ambitious cliques and used to fulfil the social ambitions of those who would be incapable of fulfilling them over a wider sphere. The present writer has known two bodies intimately, the one of a theologically liberal and Protestant type, the other of a more traditional and established order.

## The World of the Chapel

So far as issues concerning the evolution of individual moral character were concerned, there was exactly nothing to choose between them. In the case of the smaller denomination, its great days of scholarship and cultural activity which existed a century ago were over. The ministry was largely recruited from the semi-educated who had been steeped in the particular tenets of the sect. At the centre was thrown up a dreary sectarian core made up of a group of *soi-disant* "leading ministers" who plotted and schemed among themselves. Congregations were trivial in size and content but made up largely of those who were seeking a social status and opportunity which was lacking to them in the world at large. Thus, one had the petty merchant who accounted for nothing during the week but put himself forward on Sundays as an amateur theologian. Others set out to dominate in the local chapel when life had denied them every opportunity of dominating elsewhere. The result was that they were quite cut off from the real flow of local life and merely survived as a narrow little clique imposing their views in a backwater. Almost every type of objectionable behaviour can be recalled over nearly twenty years, not forgetting the ex-confidence trickster who carried his formerly criminally fraudulent ways into religious cant and chapel insincerity. The type which Dickens knew so well in Chadband and Stiggins was prominent. Indeed, memories come flooding in of Mrs. Oliphant's once-famous novel, *Salem Chapel*, or the stories of Mark Rutherford with their especially unlovely pictures of Victorian dissent, whether of the Trinitarian or the non-Trinitarian variety. Circumstances have not changed greatly and, for the small tradesman wishing to exercise a bastard authority couched in a pious

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### *Abodes of Christian Love*

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

claptrap, there is always the bogus moral and cultural world of the chapel.

### The Church of England

Within the established Church, the atmosphere is different. The chapel had a liberal tradition politically. Nowadays, this merely means that most of the members are opposed to the Labour Party in contemporary politics, lack a political philosophy of any kind however rudimentary and incoherent, and that they are filled with a grim determination to hang on to whatever they possess at however great a moral cost. The established Church traditionally is wedded to Tory politics both in a philosophical and a party sense. As a result it stands for a caste system in society which means that the parish churches will provide public office for the well-to-do or for the successful business classes. There are always more of this type than can attain local status through such offices as government at large can provide. The more pushful will find their way to the local borough council with the wider opportunities which it offers for "getting on". Of the nucleus of the less able but equally self-assertive, some will turn to such functions as those of churchwardens or parochial church councillors. It is here that they will seek to dominate and will use the church to their own social ends. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England has little conception of the discipline of the laity. Thus, its moral dictates are largely bent to the popular clamour of persons of this type. Morals become very largely the general assessments made by the Tory Party in politics. Thus, a fairly strict though somewhat opportunist sexual morality goes side by side with the immoralities shown by the private profit motive in the modern world. At the top, the hierarchy will tend to side with the more influential laity in matters of local dispute. But, at the bottom, life in the parishes will appear in the crude and in the raw.

### The Lot of Secularism

Enough has been said to cast a floodlight upon the more unlovely side of at least two denominations. This is not to say that they have not got any other side. But it is to point out that they possess a highly active side totally out of place in any body of people claiming moral leadership. I have no direct knowledge of the moral atmosphere within Roman Catholic congregations. But I would remark that the bellowing bigots which I have encountered from time to time, or the statistics of juvenile delinquency do not show up in any healthier way when they are contrasted with their Protestant parallels. One fact remains, of which the generalised behaviour at Spaxton would seem to be an outstanding example. It is merely that churches of any denomination contribute little or nothing to the evolution of a cultural or moral character of social worth, and that they do provide a home for upstarts and *parvenus* of the worst possible influence socially through their self-seeking and ignorant self-assertion. The secularist challenge to the Churches would be more than justified on these grounds alone, as seeking to eradicate an undesirable moral strain within society. But perhaps a note of caution may be urged in that these reflections are prompted by the bear-garden at Spaxton. Bear-gardens are totally out of place in secularist circles, and anybody seeking to create such a background is merely sinking to the level of the Churches. Society today is in a moral turmoil, and it is the lot of secularism to give to it a moral leadership poised at the highest level. Certainly, if the Christian love of which we have heard from innumerable pulpits, ends by providing abodes of love of which Spaxton is now a nationwide notorious example, it is something for the loss of which society is far better off, and which calls for a constant secularist opposition.

## Gnomes, Elves and Fairies

By H. CUTNER

IN OUR nursery days, of course, we believed wholeheartedly in the fairy world of Grimm and Anderson and the other writers who made the adventures and misadventures of the little people so appealing. What could a world be like without them? Nor was it only children who were their devoted followers — witness the delightful *Iolanthe*, the success of which has never withered since it was first produced in 1882. Alas, most of us, as we grew older, while still loving the stories told of fairy antics, have to admit that they were — stories, and nothing else.

But not so our Spiritualists. In their world of spirits, they saw no reason why elves, gnomes and fairies should not exist; and some forty years or so ago, a champion of their veritable existence appeared in no less a writer than the creator of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He was a superb story teller, and in that capacity has always been one of my favourite authors; but by some extraordinary mischance he became obsessed with Spiritualism during (I think) the First World War, and afterwards he devoted his life in trying to make the world — as far as it was possible — believe in Spiritualism. He did not succeed, of course, but he did his utmost, and one of his last books was *The Coming of the Fairies*, in which he showed his belief in them was as strong as his belief in the spirits.

Why did he believe in fairies? Well, there appeared a number of photographs at the time showing a couple of little girls in a wood watching fairies dancing among the flowers — photographs which "experts" claimed as genuine. If you can photograph in this way veritable fairies — wings, ballet costumes, and all — they must have existed, and no greater proof than this is necessary.

The camera which took the pictures was of the old-fashioned plate type, and the photographer was a 15-year-old girl and "she snapped the shutter several times" we are informed, with her nine-year-old cousin as the model in the "fairy glen". The plates were developed and printed "with fantastic success all over the world" says Peter Chambers (*Daily Express*, May 24th).

I remember these photos quite well, and laughed at the idea that they could be considered authentic by anyone who had even an elementary idea of *practical* photography. I mean by this that almost anyone who had taken, developed, printed, and enlarged a photo himself, and had mastered a few technical processes, could not possibly believe that these snaps were genuine. Yet, as Mr. Chambers points out, there were photographic experts who actually vouched for these photos — though, even now, we do not know how one girl aged 9, and another 15, "worked the trick that fooled the experts of the world".

But it appears that the girl who took the photos is still living — now in her sixties — and Mr. Chambers went out to see her. Going over the story again after all these years made her laugh uproariously — and then she admitted that she did *not* believe in fairies, and though she declined to say how the photos were taken, she added: "Let's say they are pictures of figments of our imagination . . . and leave it at that."

That is, though it is an unsatisfactory ending to the story, we now know for certain "it was all a hoax". But I am afraid that Mr. Chambers is very innocent in such matters if he thinks that his exposure of the hoax will have the slightest effect on our all-believing Spiritualists. Does

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# I Know What Religious Persecution Is

By JAMES N. SNAVELY

The following is from a speech of the author reporting the recent experience of his family and himself in the town of Lebanon, Pennsylvania. It was made to the annual meeting of the Greater Philadelphia Branch of the American Civil Liberties Union on December 12th, 1964, and printed in *Progressive World*, July, 1965.

I HAVE BEEN asked to give a brief outline of the lawsuits that my family and I are engaged in with the Lebanon (Pennsylvania) Suburban School Board. In order that you may better understand the problem we have it is necessary for you to realise that Lebanon is located in the heart of the Pennsylvania Bible belt. It is here that my forefathers, eight generations ago in 1730, had chosen to settle. It is a very old-fashioned, conservative community. In this backward city of some 30,000 it is common to refer to Jews as "kikes", to Italians as "wops", etc. Some of its citizens still believe in and practise "hexorie", by which they attempt to "put a spell" on a fellow inhabitant. And if you express doubt on any fundamental matter in the Bible they regard you as a tool of the Devil.

My father was for 18 years a superintendent of public schools in Delaware and author of a book on the Constitution. His whole life was devoted to education and to promoting mutual understanding among his fellow men. Had he lived to see your organisation (American Civil Liberties Union) function, it would have been the fulfilment of a dream for him. But the ACLU is looked upon in Lebanon by the majority of its citizenry as a Communist-front organisation, this image having been painted by the same local newspaper that calls for the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren and encourages every other right-wing endeavour.

Approximately five and a half years ago when I sent my oldest child to school, the teacher gave her a card asking for my signature. This card provided for my stated permission for my little daughter to attend religious training classes in a nearby fire hall under the guidance of Child Evangelism, Inc. Needless to say I made the un-Christian move of refusing to sign the card. Several days thereafter I received a letter signed by the principal and explaining why I should sign the card. His letter said that last year 500 children had attended the religion classes regularly, that the school fully endorsed and supported this Bible study, and that a large financial contribution was made by the children last year to Christian missionaries overseas.

On the second Wednesday of this religious training my child reported that in her public school class of 37 all but one attended the religious course. The one who did not was she herself. I asked her what she and her teacher did in the empty school room during the time the religious training was in progress. She said that the teacher went to the fire hall to teach the religion class, while she (my daughter) remained alone in her regular class room. The following Wednesday I went to the school and verified this with my own eyes.

I was now becoming disturbed and I contacted the teacher at her room. She declared to me that the Bible was more important than all the school books and that there was nothing I could do about the matter. I then telephoned the principal. He said: "This is the way it is and this is the way it will continue, as it is legal under the released-time state law."

After several weeks I asked my daughter if the procedure had been corrected. She replied that her teacher

now remained with her at the school room and read Bible stories to her. One of the stories, she said, told of a group of children being put into a fiery pit and burned, but the children who had received Christ as their Saviour were not at all hurt. I was now becoming really concerned and I investigated the thing called Child Evangelism, Inc. I found that the majority of the teachers in this school belonged to the church which is known in this area as the "born again" Christian type. So I called Child Evangelism, Inc. to ascertain what they represented. I was told that a list of their officers and a copy of their faith pledge would be sent to me. The pledge stated that the King James Bible is the only true version of the will of God, that the member believes in Heaven and Hell-fire, and that he must be born again and devote himself to evangelistic work in spreading Christianity.

For almost four years I coaxed and argued with teachers, principal, superintendent and school board members. The answer I got from the principal was: "Have you been born again and received Christ into your heart? If not, Mr. Snavely, you would not understand." One board member said: "If I had my way, every child would be forced to read the King James version of the Bible."

Then finally the US Supreme Court handed down its decision on Bible reading and prayer in the public schools. When the school failed to conform to the law, I contacted the board members again and warned them that if they did not comply I would find a way to bring legal action. I was told by a board member that if I did so they would ruin me. At their very next meeting they passed a resolution to defy the Supreme Court's decision. The local newspapers immediately published editorials stating that there was no known atheist in the community, but that if there was anyone who objected to the school board's resolution he had better be quiet on the subject or life would be made unpleasant for him.

A Jewish lady called me and recommended that I get in touch with the American Civil Liberties Union, which I did. The director, Mr. Spencer Coxe, assured me that he would take up the matter with his organisation. I was immediately supplied with very able counsel in the person of Attorney General Goldberg of Harrisburg. A local newspaper then published an editorial to the following effect: "We have unimpeachable evidence that the character who brought the ultra-left-wing Civil Liberties Union into Lebanon to fight the local school board is none other than James N. Snavely, employed by the city of Lebanon as assistant parking meter supervisor, so don't be surprised if Mr. Snavely finds himself in the ranks of the unemployed at the start of the new year." The threat was carried out and my job was taken from me as of the first of January.

Suit was filed in Federal Court on my behalf and scheduled for hearing on February 11th, 1964. On February 10th I was dragged from my home, arrested by three policemen and an unidentified civilian and taken before a local Justice of the Peace, where I was charged with a two-year-old dog-law violation that had been thrown out of the courts a year and a half before. I was told by the Justice of the Peace that I must pay \$53 or go to jail.

The case was investigated by the Attorney General of Pennsylvania, who gave a severe tongue lashing to the Justice of the Peace and to the dog officer. The local courts promptly reversed the decision of the JP.

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## This Believing World

THE REMARKABLE voyage across the Atlantic of the tiny ship, Tinkerbelle, ended with a hero's welcome at Falmouth for the lonely sailor, Robert Manry when he arrived safe and sound. But unless we missed it somewhere in the accounts of his journey, we cannot remember that he ever said he had arrived safely through God's help, or because of his trust and faith in Jesus, or even because he uttered the Lord's Prayer every night and constantly sang hymns like "Nearer my God to thee". In the past, God appears to have been appealed to by nearly every explorer or voyager. But we in our unbelieving days seem to do quite well without him. The conquerors of mountains and unknown lands trust their skill and equipment rather than God.

★

IN EIRE, however, Pendennis of the *Observer* (8/8/65) found "devotion to the Church goes deep". In fact, you buy holy water, and are told, "Oh bless you sir, no home in Ireland would be without it". Yet Pendennis also pointed out, "paupers prey on the city". His article on Dublin is worth reading, and he has quite a lot to say about the decline of the arts, particularly the theatre, for which Dublin especially was famous.

★

BUT HERE in Protestant England dissatisfaction with our sacred hymns, ancient and modern, seems increasing if only slowly. Canon Watts, Rector of Hambleton, Bucks, considers it time for "another revision of our Prayer Book" (*Daily Express*, 9/8/65). We could, he says "do with a whole heap more of really good hymns and hymn tunes". Probably, he is as sick of the solemn and reverent way most of the old ones are sung as, no doubt whatever the Lord himself must be. But where are "the really good hymns and tunes" to be found? Who can be expected to write them? After all, a good pop song can make more money in a week than any hymn, however holy, could make in a century. But why not offer a substantial prize, for a good pop hymn, words and music, to show as old General Booth used to say, that the Devil has not got all the best tunes.

★

IN THE meantime, the Very Reverend W. Hassey, Dean of Chichester, wants the Psalms to be pepped up by some real top swinging tunes (*Daily Mail*, 9/8/65). He wants Leonard Bernstein to provide them, for the composer of *West Side Story* is Jewish, and Bernstein has consented. But surely the point is not so much improving Church music as making it a medium bringing in converts? Will a Jew singing a pop Psalm immediately be convinced that he ought to be a Christian, and have a Messiah? Or will pop Jewish Psalms bring wandering sheep back to the *Christian fold*? What is the Dean's real intention?

★

SEVERAL "sad Christians" have been complaining to the *Daily Mirror* that, as one of them said, "the Church is not interested in you if you stop going". A Church member from the age of ten and a choir member, choirmaster and lay reader until 1954 when he had to resign owing to ill health, he had never seen or heard from a member of the Church or a clergyman. A 72-year old Bridgend Christian, an organist for 34 years, reported a similar experience. Nor did anyone call to see a London teenager "formerly a regular Church member", and then unable to attend for a few weeks. But previously when money was needed for church funds, she said, "they sent somebody to my home to find out how much I was prepared to give each week."

## GNOMES, ELVES AND FAIRIES

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he really believe that Conan Doyle, if he were alive, would admit, especially with the experts behind him, that these Cottingley fairies (as they were called) were mere "creatures of the imagination"?

The biggest fraud I know of is spirit photography — though this does not mean I know all the ways used by the Spiritualists who practise it. But I do know a number of the methods. Let me give just a few details of what was called in America "the Great Hyslop Hoax". Professor Hyslop was one of the great early pioneers of Spiritualism and, when he died, many "circles" tried to get in touch with his "spirit". One of these was determined to get a spirit photograph of him under the direction of W. Van de Weyde, a professional photographer. Every effort was made to see that the rules laid down by Conan Doyle were strictly followed. These were: absolute control of plates, camera and photographer; the picture must be of a dead man; it must look like the dead man, but be different from any known portrait.

In his book, *Spirit Mediums Exposed*, Samri Frickell (1930) gives an account in full detail of what happened. A committee was formed, and they bought a new packet of plates. The medium was to go into a trance and a flashlight photo was to be taken of her and the committee, by Van de Weyde, and developed by him and printed. When this was done, sure enough there was a fine "spirit" photograph of the professor himself above the committee. Every possible precaution had been taken to prevent fraud, but it would take too long to detail them here. Yet it was as fraudulent as it could possibly be.

The box of plates was quite new, of course. But the box was very carefully opened by Van de Weyde and a plate taken from it. The professor had had his portrait taken by Van de Weyde some time before. The professor had chosen the portrait he liked best from several taken. The others he discarded — so Van de Weyde had a few quite unknown to anybody but himself. He copied one on to one of the plates in the new packet; this plate was put back, and the packet was carefully sealed again. This plate was of course the one exposed and later developed and printed in the committee's presence. Though all of them were convinced Spiritualists, even they were astonished to find such a perfect yet unknown portrait of Hyslop come up as a genuine "spirit". When Van de Weyde told the truth, and Frickell published exactly how easy it was to hoax a committee in spite of precautions, spirit photography suffered a severe exposure from which it has never recovered. In England, it is virtually dead. I could never get a single spirit photographer or medium to allow any test with my camera.

But reproductions of spirit photographs constantly appear in *Psychic News* as if the whole sorry story had never been exposed.

## AKIN TO ABORTION

THIRTY-FIVE prominent American Catholics—six priests, including three Jesuits, a nun and 28 laymen—have, the *Catholic Herald* reported (20/8/65) urged the use of public funds to support research in birth control and implementing programmes for family planning. When making this known, however, Fr. Dexter Hanley SJ, indicated that they had laid down certain conditions in their manifesto. There was, for instance, to be no public promotion of "the controversial intra-uterine device". Upon the "limited information available", Father Hanley said, "this was akin to abortion".

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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 (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead)—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY. Every Friday, 8 p.m.: L. EBURY and J. A. MILLAR.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

**INDOOR**

Bolton Humanist Group (Central Library, Bolton) Thursday, September 9th, 7.30 p.m. W. COLLINS "The National Secular Society."

**Notes and News**

SPANISH AND ITALIAN Communists have put forward proposals for a working alliance with Roman Catholics, according to an *Observer* report (22/8/65). "The Catholics are our main allies today in the struggle against Franco", said Santiago Alvarez in the *World Marxist Review* (Vol. 8, No. 6). And he saw this as perhaps the most characteristic and encouraging feature of the Spanish scene. There was a retreat from anti-Communism, not only among Catholic workers; it was part of "a deep-going process in which efforts are now being made to renovate the Church in Spain, and to effect a radical change." The hero of the renovation was the late Pope John. But the Communists had a responsibility in stimulating it. Marxists had never said that socialism was "incompatible with the existence of religion among broad sections of the population" Senor Alvarez added.

BUT WHAT about Marx and "the opium of the people"? Senor Alvarez cited the immediately preceding passage: "Religious misery was at one and the same time the expression of real misery and a protest against the real misery", etc. It was the "opium" phrase that had been most often quoted, the Senor said; and this was correct and necessary, generally speaking, considering that the ruling classes had always used religion as a drug. But this was "not the only aspect Marx had in mind". Logic tells us, Senor Alvarez concluded, "that the only way to test the two positions—the Marxist and the Catholic—is to begin right now joint actions to reconstruct society

and to advance, through successive stages, to the creation of a society where both idealogies will be put to the test. So why not make the experiment?"

IT IS WELL, in the circumstances, to look, not only at the words immediately preceding "the opium of the people", but those immediately following. "The abolition of religion," Marx went on, "as the illusory happiness of men, is a demand for their real happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their condition is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions."

THE *Observer* also detected "peace signs" between church and state in Poland. In the view of one leading Catholic layman, each side could well agree to lay down their arms on the present demarcation of their powers" and "within three years Poland would have established some sort of official relationship—perhaps even diplomatic—with the Vatican". Polish Communists have failed, the *Observer* said, to make a success of the lay atheistic movement they have encouraged. Intelligent, free-minded men have gathered around the magazine *Argumenty*, but their league has only 40,000 members, and their publications hardly sell. "Freethinking is indeed something which flourishes only in a middle-class, liberal environment", the *Observer* commented, and "between Communism and the Cardinal, there is precious little soil for its roots."

SECULARISM, according to Fr. Charles Davis, "is a necessary stage in the advance of the Christian faith". Many men had lost their faith, Father Davis told an ecumenical conference at Leicester University, "but the faith lost by the average man was an imperfect faith. It was simply taken for granted as part of the culture in which one lived" (*Catholic Herald* 20/8/65). With this last statement, we may agree: we cannot agree that the situation presages an "advance" of Christianity. Nor did the Anglican, Father Martin Jarrett-Kerr, entirely share Father Davis's optimism. Indeed he saw danger in it. "People won't be saved if they don't want to be", said Father Jarrett-Kerr. "Men are still free to say 'no' to God even if the revelation offered to them is only implicit". Faith did not provide ready-made answers to all problems. "We've got to look for a different kind of certainty", he went on. "The more important a human activity is, the less possible it is to produce the kind of certainty one has in mathematics". Clergymen, it will be noted, are a little less sure of themselves—and their faith—these days.

DOROTHY ROBERTS, Hon Secretary of the Humanist Teachers' Association, informs us that there is to be a further discussion on the joint Christian/Humanist statement on religious education. A meeting will be held on Sunday, October 3rd at 6.30 p.m. at 13 Prince of Wales Terrace London, W.8, at which H. J. Blackham—one of the signatories of the statement—will be present. The HTA has already discussed the statement once, but wants to have the opportunity of talking it over with Mr. Blackham before deciding whether to support it. Teachers wishing to join the Association should write to Miss Roberts at 213 Pennymead, Harlow, Essex.

THE National Council for Civil Liberties publication *Customs*, price 1s. 6d., deals with the formalities involved in entering or leaving the country—where one may land, what duty-free goods the holidaymaker may bring in with him and what information the Customs officer may demand. It is the third of the NCCL's series of citizen's guides the other two being *Arrest* and *Mental Health*.

# On the Threshold

By GEORGE R. GOODMAN

(Concluded from page 279)

"THOU shalt not seethe a kid on its mother's milk". At first glance, the impression is created that we have here to do with a highly humane injunction which abhors the cruelty in thought of boiling the offspring in the milk of its own mother. Alas, when investigated, it turns out to be a deeply rooted superstition of many nomadic tribes, right up to our times, that boiling the milk in a pot is like boiling it in the cow's udders and would certainly result in the drying up of the liquid.

And, as nomads and pastoral tribes depend so much more on milk than on the produce of fields and gardens, it is obvious that they cannot run the risk of injuring their valuable female animals on which they depend for their daily sustenance.

There is even nowadays amongst the Muslims of Morocco and Sierra Leone, a deep aversion to boiling milk, as they believe that any injury done to the milk would be sympathetically felt by the cow, who would in consequence, cease to give milk. Many tribes in Central and Eastern Africa very much share this belief and, for this reason, are reluctant to sell milk to Europeans.

Moreover, according to a medieval writer, there existed amongst the ancient inhabitants of Canaan an autumnal custom to boil a kid in its mother's milk and then, as a magical rite, to sprinkle the milk on trees, fields, orchards and vineyards, believing that in this way they would render them more fruitful in the following year. It is quite likely that the ancient law-maker had this particular superstitious rite in mind when he forbade the Israelites to copy this objectionable custom.

What is even more astonishing is that the original Ten Commandments had the prohibition, viz. not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk, as number 10.

According to Prof. K. Budde (*History of Ancient Hebrew Literature*), J. Wellhausen, Prof. R. H. Kennett and Sir James Frazer (*Folk-lore in the Old Testament*), the original decalogue ran as follows:—

1. Thou shalt worship no other god. 2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods. 3. All the firstborn are mine. 4. Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest. 5. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep in the month when the corn is in ear. 6. Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, even in the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. 7. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread. 8. The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning. 9. The first of the firstfruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God. 10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.

The most significant aspect of this earlier decalogue was the total absence of any code regulating moral and social behaviour. It was entirely a set of ritualistic decrees, issued by some very exacting materialistic priests who demanded the uttermost farthing of their tithes and strictest adherence to their ritualistic rules and vested interests.

How utterly fatuous, for instance, the injunctions "the fat of my feast shall not remain over night", and "the blood of my sacrifice must not be offered with leavened bread". Then the very profitable decree "all the firstborn are mine". These astute priests lived literally on the fat of the land, (like the priests in Roman Catholic countries today!) for they received not only the thousands of sacri-

fices and gifts of meat, poultry, showbreads, firstfruits, wine and harvest donations, but also the first born of all animals and male children (girls didn't count, they were of no commercial or ecclesiastical value!)

The boys could be "redeemed" against payment of five shekels and even today a Jew must bring his first-born son on the 31st day after his birth to the synagogue where he is redeemed with a lot of rigmarole. The father is then mulcted of a "redemption sum" suitably adjusted to his income and standing. This has nothing to do with the circumcision ceremony, which is performed on the eighth day and also involves the happy father in the payment of further shekels.

Historians and pious Jews may deny the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (588 BC) and may possibly say that the 70 years of Babylonian captivity were a great calamity, yet, actually, they were "a blessing in disguise". For the Israelites who had so far, been a crude, nomadic people with very little culture, were suddenly brought into contact with a very high civilisation.

In the 18th century BC, Hammurabi, King of Babylon had already a set of moral and social rules which were the administration of the ancient world. It was the most complete and perfect manual of Babylonian laws, comprising amongst others, such subjects as: the administration of justice, the tenure of property, trade and commerce, marriage and family, slaves, assaults, professional conduct, and agriculture and wages. Penalties were in accordance with the social status of the offender, and one cannot but admire the thoroughness of this wise king who lived in a period (lying back 4000 years) when "might was right".

Copies of Hammurabi's Code were also found at Nineveh and there is no doubt that when the three Israelite tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi were allowed by the Persian King Cyrus (who, in his turn, had conquered Babylon) to return to their own land, the Israelite priests drastically revised the decalogue and then added some of the moral precepts which they had learned during their sojourn in Babylon.

How did the priests who wanted to alter the Ten Commandments, erase six of the purely ritual ones and replace them by six moral, ethical and social precepts? Very simply, really. They invented the story that Moses, when he came down from the Mount Sinai and saw that the Children of Israel had made themselves (under the direction of Aaron, if you please!) an Egyptian Bull (Apis) and danced around it, he became so angry that he threw the tablets down and smashed them. Then Moses had to go up again, received a new and altered set of Commandments, and that was that. No difficulty at all.

The tablets, by the way, were not made of stone, but of clay and written on *both* sides (Ex. 32, 15) and when the clay is fresh one can write on it quite easily with a pointed metal pencil called style. Moreover, the priests had no need to worry that anybody would find the original shorthand notes of Moses, because, according to the story, they had been destroyed!

Incidentally, because Moses is said to have covered his head when he talked to the Deity on Mount Sinai, no prayers can be recited without the head being covered either by a skull-cap or a hat, irrespective of whether this

happens in the home or the synagogue, and whether the person is a layman or a rabbi. Skull-caps and birettas are also worn by popes cardinals, bishops and priests, but not by the ordinary folk who are told to take off their caps as a sign of respect.

Although the injunction "thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk" was removed from the decalogue, it still formed part and parcel of the dietary laws, so much so that, owing to the scores of rabbinical additions during the Middle Ages, it became a veritable burden to the Jewish housewife. Cutlery, plates and utensils used for food containing milk products, may not be used for dishes containing meats or fats, and vice versa. Consequently, a family has to provide itself with 1. a complete set of table ware and pots for "milky" dishes; 2. a complete set of utensils for "meaty" dishes; 3. a complete set for Passover "milky" dishes; 4. a complete set for Passover "meaty" dishes. And if the people are well-to-do and do a lot of entertaining, then they must have another double set for guests or special occasions.

Moreover, flesh and milk are never cooked in the oven together nor placed on the table at the same time; different table-cloths have to be used too.

A meat-dish may follow a milk-dish, if the partaker waits half an hour, but a milk-dish may *not* follow a meat-dish so quickly; the time is then extended to 2-6 hours (according to local custom) because meat is not quickly digested and remains in the stomach so much longer. Tea or coffee served after a meat-dish are therefore without milk.

There are innumerable injunctions and instructions on what to do when a drop of milk falls on to "meaty" utensils or cutlery and vice versa, or when a milk spoon falls into a substance like meaty soup; or a meat-knife is accidentally used to cut butter or cheese.

Many tribes in Africa have similar rules and evince a strong aversion to the eating of meat with a milky dish; the boiling of milk is very rarely countenanced, because it would adversely affect the cows of a herd; it might even result in the drying up of the milk-supply.

Thus, the prohibition not to boil a kid in its mother's milk was originally directed against the objectionable magical rite of sprinkling the milk thus obtained on to fields and trees in order to produce a fruitful harvest. The law-giver (whoever it was) had this, no doubt, in mind and did not want the Israelites to ape this silly custom.

But, during the last 2,000 years, rabbinical subtlety and inventiveness embroidered this injunction to such an extent that it became far too cumbersome to observe. In consequence, many modern Jews have ceased to observe the highly intricate dietary laws and have adopted a modified form, more in accordance with 20th century conditions. For, when the rules were made, the Jews lived in ghettos, and enamelled, nickel or chromium-plated utensils and pans were unknown and stainless steel had not yet been invented.

As in Roman Catholicism, too much rigidity and regimentation often produces antipathy and aversion and, thus, defeats its own object.

#### MR. MICKLEWRIGHT ON TV

Our popular contributor and author of Views and Opinions this week, F. H. Amphlett Micklewright can be seen on television on September 12th, when he will appear in the ITV programme *Sunday Break* in discussion with the Methodist Lord Soper. We only need tell readers that Mr. Micklewright is as lively a speaker as he is a writer. His erudition are already known to them.

## Points From New Books

ALFRED JARRY was born in 1873 in Laval and died in Paris in 1907. The surrealists doted on tales of his eccentricity such as his habit of taking loaded pistols into cafés and firing them into mirrors to ruffle "the calm", and Jarry has been hailed as the father of the Theatre of the Absurd. His best known play is *Ubu Roi*, which was produced when the author was twenty-three. This work has been available in translation by Barbara Wright since 1951, and was published by the Gaberbocchus Press who later, in 1961, produced in collaboration with New Directions of USA a paperback edition. Both editions have illustrations by Franciszka Themerson. The play itself has the vitality of a gloriously outrageous schoolboy joke.

Now Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor have edited *The Selected Works of Alfred Jarry* (Methuen, 45s.). Perhaps this book does little to add to the author's literary reputation — for the key piece will always be *Ubu Roi*; but it does provide us with some happy curiosities such as an article which describes The Passion as if the whole business were "an uphill bicycle race".

Then there is a translation of an article, in the form of a dialogue, which Jarry wrote for *The Wild Duck*, a French anti-clerical paper named after the Ibsen play. Here, among many other ingenious and blasphemous devices, the author discusses the possibility that the famous Manneken-Pis statue in Brussels could be given a few legends. First, it could be announced that the statue does not represent a little boy who offended by peeing on a holy procession and in consequence was condemned — a new and Christian Wandering Jew — to continue his act until The Last Judgment. No. And it would now be suggested that the statue is really a miraculous effigy of Jesus dispensing the stream of blessings to the world in a symbol of baptism. It could be hinted that during the human life of Our Lord vegetation grew miraculously and reached almost tropical abundance wherever he performed certain natural functions.

Anyway, once such an atmosphere of piety has been established, statues of the Virgin and Child could be converted into statues of the Virgin and the Manneken-Pis. A fine new market. A baptismal font could receive the overflow and an alms box the offerings of the astonished faithful!

Generally, it is unforgivable for a reviewer to give readers a hint of the plot mechanism in a novel of suspense. Yet I believe many freethinkers may have missed *The Road To Hell* by Hubert Montheilhet (Chapman & Hall, 18s.) because they have been unaware of the special character of the story. Therefore, in this case, saying something about the core of the book can only bring new readers, since M. Montheilhet's brilliant notion is that psychoanalytical sociologists carry out sexological surveys in a small French town by hiding tape recorders in the confessional.

The results are extremely funny and mysterious. The investigators consider such problems as the measure of control that such a religious exercise as confession exerts over the acts of the believer, and they decide that confession is just a garbage chute. Religion is revealed to be not an originating force of behaviour but a mere epiphenomenon. Meanwhile, the most bewildering things happen in the town, and the local Abbé is given a bizarre penance for his sins of the flesh. A most intelligent caprice by a cool writer of adult mysteries.

## I KNOW WHAT RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IS

(Concluded from page 283)

The Federal Court hearing was re-scheduled for February 24th, 1964. Several days prior to this hearing, the school board met and rescinded its resolution regarding the religious training course in favour of a resolution calling for a mandatory course of study *about* the Bible. The Federal judge, with the assurance of the board's attorney that there would be no prayer or Bible reading, ruled that he would maintain jurisdiction of the case for 90 days, thereby giving the board time to prepare and submit its new course.

The local newspaper had, in the meantime, carried a front-page picture of my wife and myself with the caption: "Admits to being the instigator of a plot to remove the Holy Bible from the schools." It mentioned again that I worked for the city of Lebanon. Since that day to the present this newspaper has run editorials, public letters, twisted news stories and pictures, tearing my family and me apart, and portraying the American Civil Liberties Union as a Communist front.

Several further extensions of time were granted by the Federal judge to the school board. The latest brainstorm and means to circumvent the law by the board is now in the hands of the State Department of Instruction. This new course, which was to have been based on the literary and historical value of the Bible, is actually made up to a large extent of Bible "story books".

Since the suit was filed there have been many incidents showing the utter contempt that this school district has for the law of the land. For example, one teacher told her pupils to line up along the wall, those that go to church on one side of the room and those who do not attend church on the other side. The count was 30-some to 3, my son being one of the three who did not go to church. All three of my children have, as late as the present school term, been told by their teachers at prayer time to "bow your heads, close your eyes, fold your hands and pray." This was testified to in Federal court and admitted by the teachers concerned. My son and another child were forced to repeat the Lord's Prayer in front of the class because they failed to close their eyes during the first prayer. For their failure to conform my children have been taunted and physically abused by other children in the school.

In this one year the case has created for me and my family a lifetime of such personal experiences as I would have expected to read about only in a history like that of the Salem witchcraft days long ago. There have been a few bright moments, however, brought to us in our mail from the country at large, though local letters have contained threats on our lives or advice to "go to Russia". Our greatest encouragement has come from our contacts with Attorney General Goldberg, Spencer Coxe of the ACLU, and the outside news media, which have all been humane and understanding. I would like to close by expressing my thanks to the ACLU and its representatives. It is the one American organisation that seems to understand the whys and the wherefors of that great document — the Constitution of the United States.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

I was very interested in Mr. Quiogue's article in the edition of Friday, July 30th, because I am, at the moment, studying Schopenhauer's Essay on "The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason."

May I quote some extracts from the abstract of this essay, translated by Haldane and Kemp? (The essay appeared in 1813):—

Chapter II . . . Schopenhauer in this chapter traces historically the forms in which the principle had been stated by his predecessors, and their influence. He points out that in Greek philosophy it appeared in two aspects—that of the necessity of a ground for a logical judgment, and that of a cause for every physical change—and that these two aspects were systematically confounded. The Aristotelian division, not of the forms of the principle itself, but of one of its aspects, the causal, exemplified a confusion which continued throughout the Scholastic period. Descartes succeeds no better. His proof of the existence of God that the immensity of his nature is a cause or reason beyond which no cause is needed for his existence, simply illustrates the gross confusion between cause and ground of knowledge which underlies every form of this ontological proof. "That a miserable fellow like Hegel, whose entire philosophy is nothing but a monstrous amplification of the ontological proof should dare to defend this proof against Kant's criticism of it is an alliance of which the ontological proof itself, little as it knows of shame, might well feel ashamed. It is not to be expected I should speak respectfully of people who have brought philosophy into disrespect." Spinoza made the same confusion when he laid it down that the cause of existence was either contained in the nature and definition of the thing as it existed, or was to be found outside that thing. The true picture of Spinoza's "*causa sui*" is Baron Munchausen encircling his horse with his legs, and raising himself and the horse upwards by means of his pigtail, with the inscription "*causa sui*" written below.

Chapter IV . . . When a new state of one or more objects makes its appearance, it must have been preceded by another on which it regularly follows. This is causal sequence, and the first state is the cause, the second the effect. The law (of causality) has thus to do exclusively with the changes of objects of external experience, and not with things themselves, a circumstance which is fatal to the validity of the cosmological proof of the existence of God. It follows also from the essential connection of causality with succession that the notion of reciprocity, with its contemporaneous existence of cause and effect, is a delusion . . .

Chapter VIII . . . In conclusion, Schopenhauer points out that just because the principle of sufficient reason belongs to the *a priori* element in intelligence, it cannot be applied to the entirety of things, to the universe as inclusive of intelligence. Such a universe is mere phenomenon, and what is only true because it belongs to the form of intelligence and can have no application to intelligence itself. Thus it is that it cannot be said that the universe and all things in it exist because of something else. In other words, the cosmological proof of the existence of God is inadmissible.

The above extracts were taken from an appendix to the third volume of *The World as Will and Idea*, by Arthur Schopenhauer, translated from the German by R. B. Haldane, and J. Kemp, in three volumes, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

The reason I was so interested in Mr. Quiogue's article is that he referred to the ontological and cosmological "proofs" of the existence of God.

JOHN C. SUTHERLAND

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