

FREE THINKER

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RACE RELATIONS

The Government has just set up a Race Relations Board to investigate discrimination in public places. This is in accordance with the Race Relations Act of December 1965, itself deriving from the controversial White Paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth*. But many people are asking if this is a serious attempt to deal with the many human problems involved or merely a piece of window-dressing.

When the Conservative Government brought in the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 there was much protest from the Labour Opposition. Before the 1964 General Election Mr Wilson promised to repeal the act, and shortly afterwards described the newly-elected Conservative Member for a racist area of Birmingham as a "parliamentary leper". Since then there has not only been no mention of repeal, but in August 1965 a White Paper considerably tightened up existing immigration procedures, slashed the ceiling to 8,500 per year, removed the category of unskilled immigrant without a job waiting, and made it considerably more difficult for parents to bring in teenage children. As something of a sop for these harsh innovations, a Race Relations Bills was introduced and the 1936 Public Order Act amended.

Ostensibly these were to "prohibit discrimination on racial grounds in places of public resort" and "penalise incitement to racial hatred" respectively. In practice, the Race Relations Board will set up a number of committees to seek to effect conciliation where there is complaint of discrimination; if this is unavailing, they will refer to the board, which will then refer to a court, which may issue an injunction; if this is not observed, the offending party will then be in contempt of court. Those who work in this field say, however, that it will be virtually impossible to negotiate such complicated machinery, and that discrimination should have been declared an offence as under American Civil Rights legislation. They say, moreover, that virtually nothing will be covered but restaurants and pubs, and that the more important fields of housing, employment, insurance, credit facilities, private boarding houses and holiday tours will not be included. The amendment of the Public Order Act does not specifically mention the offence it was supposed to deal with but merely follows the traditional "breach of the peace" formula, which has in the past been used not to prevent race hatred, but political protest and blasphemy.

There is certainly no shortage of organisations in this field, and if their presence alone were enough to achieve results there would be no problem. There is the well-established Institute of Race Relations. In 1962 there was set up the Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council (Chairman, Lady Reading of the WVS). There are the

Survey of Race Relations, the Council of Christians and Jews, the Student Conference on Racial Equality (SCORE), the British Caribbean Association (friendship society), the Society of Friends' Race Relations Committee, the Catholic Institute for International Relations, the British Council of Churches' Standing Committee on Migration, the para-Humanist Racial Unity, the National Secular Society sub-committee on racial problems, the National Council for Civil Liberties.

Among the better-known specialist organisations in the field are: Racial Adjustment Action Society (RAAS), an industrial action extremist all-black body under Michael de Freitas (Michael X), similar to the American Black Nationalists, but not yet committed to racial *apartheid* or repatriation to Africa; the Standing Conference of West Indian Organisations, all-black but not extremist; the Pakistani Welfare Association; the Indian Workers' Association; the Campaign against Racial Discrimination (CARD), the only general membership organisation, open to all, in this group (23 St George's House, Toynbee Hall, Commercial Street, London, E1), with West Indian Dr David Pitt as Chairman and Jocelyn Barrow as General Secretary (this is now split by those who oppose and those who support the National Committee) the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, set up under the White Paper with the Archbishop of Canterbury as Chairman, Nadine Peppard as General Secretary, and Martin Ennals, General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties as PRO designate (this is already split by those who wish to concentrate on social work and education and those who want to oppose the Government's racial policy); various Liaison Committees between different immigrant organisations or set up by local mayors; the Action Committee for a Rational Immigration Policy (ACRIP), with Reg Freeson, MP, as Chairman and Martin Ennals as Secretary; and the Race Relations Board (Chairman, Mr. Mark Bonham Carter).

The above assemblage looks impressive. But many most concerned with this work point out that a handful of devoted campaigners are the moving spirits in many now duplicating organisations, while a certain race relations "industry" has grown up, with journalists and writers carving out niches for themselves without advancing the cause.

Racial prejudice is no new phenomenon. It has been noticed from Aristotle to the American Indians. In contradistinction to the popular slogan "unlikes attract", unlikes in fact repel, particularly where the dissimilarity involves colour or physiognomy. Religion has been an added divisive factor. Like most other primitive gods the Old

Testament Jahweh was simply a tribal deity in opposition to other tribal deities. The Christian god extended the "mystical body" to include all races, but the prevalence of slavery for almost two thousand years of Christian societies shows that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free" is not to be taken literally. Religious allegiance always establishes an in-group "chosen" from those outside, and throughout the world can be seen as a disruptive political force.

MAGGOT IN THE APPLE

Otto Wolfgang

Every great Council until now has been followed by schism. The danger of actual schism in the 20th century may be slight, but the Council has revealed—and created—tensions in theology and discipline which will not soon be resolved.

This warning was sounded by the Rev. Howard Root, Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. But oddly enough the reverberations of the Ecumenical Council—to which he went as an official Anglican observer—are less perceptible in the Roman Catholic Church with its strict regimentation than in the more modern and democratic Protestant camp.

"Rome has set the pace," exclaimed Root, who came back deeply impressed. The RC Church had been considered a monolithic block that could never change; and yet, "What other institutions, secular or religious, are prepared to undertake such massive reform?"

But has "this most venerable institution in our culture" (as he calls it) really changed? Merely on the surface they have polished it up here and there to make it look more up to date, but the contents are the same old mixture. They left untouched the pagan pomp of Mariolatry, of Lourdes and icon adoration, of celibacy. They are still hedging around the problems of contraception, abortion and divorce—all dictated by bronze age superstitions, in short, nothing *essential* has been changed since this would have meant the negation of the church itself.

Formal changes cannot go deep into the calcified body of RC Christianity, but they have caused a sharp stirring within Protestantism. "Can an educated person be a Christian today?" asks David L. Edwards in the *New Christian* (December 2, 1965). Biblical stories are impossible to believe. "I should like to see it more openly acknowledged that it is not compulsory to believe that everything written in the gospels actually happened like that . . . I should like the churches to set scientifically minded people free from the burden of pretending to believe things against which their intelligence revolts . . . I should like to see it recognized that Jesus did not bequeath a complete system in theology." However, this is exactly what the Roman church would never allow: once you take out a foundation stone from the edifice the whole structure is bound to crash down sooner or later. *There's no half-way house in religion.*

Already in 1944 the young German Protestant theologian and anti-Fascist, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis, wrote in a letter from Tegel Prison, Berlin: "We are proceeding towards a time of no religion at all: men as they are now simply cannot be religious any more." He frequently spoke of "God without religion", an idea from which sprang the book *Honest to God* in this country. Bishop Robinson even exults in the "death of God". In the United States, where they see a Communist under every bedstead, the complete break with

For many years Britons pointed the finger of scorn at America and South Africa, implying that racial prejudice couldn't occur here. Indeed, there are even sociologists today, like Geoffrey Gorer, who suggest that racial discrimination is no more than the ordinary insularity of English village communities. To her credit, America has faced up to her problem and, at least at the national level, has made valiant efforts to solve it. Britain must stop tinkering with her dilemma, and be no less courageous.

religions is somewhat dangerous and has been replaced by a shallow but exhibitionistic mass bigotry. Paperback volumes of Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* sell in the thousands on campuses and in seminaries.

Unlike the Roman church (which under pressure convened the Vatican Council for the purpose of window dressing—and be it noted that the two opposing factions of Council fathers were only those who understood the necessity for formal changes and the others who did not) the Protestants want a radical transformation, a second Reformation of modern Christianity.

The American *Newsweek* of January 3 deals rather extensively with this phenomenon, together with a review of a survey, published in Glock and Stark's new book *Religion and Society in Tension*. This survey shows that "differences between some Protestants and Catholics are trivial compared with the divisions within the Protestant church itself". Unification of the Protestant church is therefore a far-off goal, to say the least. The article states:

With German theologian Rudolf Bultmann, they "demythologized" the Gospels and with the late Paul Tillich they reconstructed Christianity in a systematic encounter with contemporary existentialism. In Karl Barth, they found newer, more stringent norms for Christian orthodoxy, and in Reinhold Niebuhr, political liberalism advanced through the fires of a searing Christian conscience.

Taken together with the French "heretic" Teilhard de Chardin it is striking, I consider, that in this theological shake-up as well as in the *avant-garde* of Existentialists French and German names prevail and that both movements may be explained as a result of the sobering shock of occupation or military defeat. The echo in victorious—and because of the war immensely prosperous—America is that her leading Protestant churchmen call for an "opening-up" of their church with more interest in social ills. Harvey Cox of Harvard Divinity School, whose provocative paperback *The Secular City* has become a kind of handbook for church reformers, celebrates the progressive secularization of the world: "We must learn to speak of God in a secular fashion. . . . It will do no good to cling to our religious metaphysical versions of Christianity in the hope that one day religion or metaphysics will once again be back". And others call a stop to the squandering of millions of dollars on buildings to spend the money better on the furtherance of peace.

The world has come of age (as Bonhoeffer termed it) and the nuclear age has proved that we can do without the support of any deity. What society needs is not empty double-talk but a bold facing of facts in a secular way.

If unorthodox Protestants recognize this necessity we are ready to collaborate with them and have discussions in secular language and practical terms; but we are not ready to waste time with orthodox religionists who want to talk in their metaphysical gibberish.

PROFESSOR FINDLAY'S PHILOSOPHY

G. L. Simons

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CAVE (Allen and Unwin, 32s) by Professor J. N. Findlay comprises the First Series of a course of Gifford lectures given at the University of St. Andrews from December 1964 to February 1965. (A Second Series, continuing the same theme and called *The Transcendence of the Cave*, was to have taken place from December 1965 to January 1966; presumably the Second Series is now complete and will be published in due course.)

The title of the book derives from Plato's famous cave-myth in the seventh book of the Republic. In this myth, shackled cave-dwellers know of the outside world only by fragmentary shadows cast on a cave-wall and by voices echoing from it. Plato likened the difficulties of the mythical cave-dwellers to those of real men striving to understand the world, and the analogy has been the subject of much controversy. Professor Findlay does not enter into this controversy but uses the image of the cave. "Precisely because it is a great image, it can be used on reflective backgrounds quite different from that of Plato" (p 23). He likens the complete human environment in all its aspects to the cave, full as they both are of lights and shades, certainties and uncertainties, realities and unrealities.

Professor Findlay is primarily concerned with an investigation, by means of imagery and reflection, of the "human predicament", the situation which is "full of queer discomforts" and which "does seem to involve cramps, pressures, irruptions, strangenesses" (p 21). These things are not intended to denote the everyday difficulties of people in the business of living: such problems as acquiring food, shelter, friendship, and combating disease and prejudice. They are intended to denote the disturbing aspects of feeling and perception which give men pause and make them reflect on the human "plight". Findlay (almost reluctantly) recognises that to speak in this way of "ordinary this-world situations" has "every mark of being a confusion or an affectation" (p 41). I rather agree with him. Bland talk of the "human predicament" often reminds me of the religious Problem of Evil; to the sober atheist there is less of a problem.

Having justified his imagery as well as he is able to he defines the "furniture of the cave", i.e. the entities of the world. These include inanimate bodies, minds, the plane of their meeting in perception, values, God, etc. He suggests that the values are "impersonal or impartial" but makes no attempt to justify this. His introduction of God is just as arbitrary: "God, the Divine, can at least be set beside such a thing as the unending series of natural numbers, or the infinite extent of space, as a phenomenon with roots so profound and so various that it may practically be said to be 'always there' in the human cave" (p 33). (A justification may be attempted in the Second Series, where some lectures, according to their titles, deal with religion, spirit, soul and God.)

Findlay then outlines the methods he is going to adopt in his enquiry. These derive from two philosophers: Husserl and Hegel. From Husserl he adopts the phenomenological approach (not to be confused with the phenomenalist), which is intended to involve the whole of experience, i.e. which avoids the "mistake" of traditional empiricism, the "error of thinking that superior clarity and certainty attaches to the so-called data that some special theory distinguishes" (p 61). And he adopts the

Husserlian emphasis on essences rather than particulars: "Phenomenology is of types . . . and never of individual specimens" (p 46). From Hegel he adopts the dialectical approach, which in a mobile and progressive way is intended continually to refine our concepts: "Dialectic . . . is . . . a clarification and development that involves what we may call *higher-order comment*, self-criticism from a perpetually shifted meta-standpoint, so that what is clear and fixed at one level of consideration may be quite transformed and shifted at the next" (p 78). Findlay admits that this process may lead to statements that "the ordinary man finds puzzling and self-contradictory" (p 79).

The subsequent chapters deal with bodies and minds. Bodies are considered at rest (where there is much discussion of space) and in motion (where there is much discussion of time); much of this derives from Kant. Towards the end of the section on bodies Findlay argues that psychic phenomena are plausible, states that he does "think . . . there is sufficient reason to hold that phenomena of a truly marvellous kind . . . occur from time to time in our world (pp 155-156), and says that Plato may have been right in claiming that "the science of nature can only be justified in terms of the science of some sort of 'supernature'" (p 159). Regarding minds Findlay is anti-sceptical (p 169), anti-materialist (p 171) and anti-solipsist (p 186). He believes in the ego and denies the validity of the efforts of traditional empiricists to "reduce" it away: "The identity of an ego is therefore phenomenologically given as essentially a 'deep matter', something 'metaphysical' and 'transcendental', if one likes" (p 193).

Findlay is sympathetic to mysticism. Throughout the book there is much talk of what we feel "in our bones", of ways of knowing that transcend the sensory: "A careful examination of what we ourselves know . . . makes us sure that in every field . . . there are ideas . . . that we perfectly understand . . . which are nevertheless not such that we were ever *shown* instances of them" (p 59). At the same time he does not wish "to do away with logic" but to round it off, and for me the most interesting statement in the book is the denial of the neutrality of formal logic (p 70).

Findlay dislikes the "old" empiricism where experiences are reduced to "sensations, sense-contacts or sense-data". He claims that phenomenology can provide a comprehensive empiricism that avoids the rigidities involved in alternative schemes; linguistic analysis, for example, is criticised for what he considers its undue emphasis on words. But the more flexible functional analysis, reinstating common sense (as in Austin), is praised. Not surprisingly Findlay admires Moore. And in the chapter "The Realm of Minds" there are sentiments similar to those of Gilbert Ryle, and a short time later (p 201) Findlay gives support to what he calls a "Rylean behaviourism".

I do not find this an impressive book. In parts it is badly written; vague processions of adjectives and nouns, and long sentences, contribute little to elucidation or readability; and there is often needless repetition. We are told three times that by *Sprödigkeit* Hegel means "frangibility" (whatever that is). In part these oddities arise because of the lecture form of the chapters, but only in part. (There are four or five obvious printing errors—unusual for Unwins.)

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THIS WORLD

Defence Review

THE GOVERNMENT'S precise proposals for defence are technical and political matters beyond the scope of this publication. But Humanists generally are likely to welcome the ceiling of £2,000 million and withdrawal from Aden by 1968 as adumbrating a gradual reversal of the dangerous policy of "escalating" defence costs and commitments "east of Suez".

IT is unrealistic to expect Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union to forget the shock of unpreparedness in 1939 and 1941 and set about dramatic or unilateral disarmament. Yet nothing can be expected of the Geneva talks without a token of goodwill by the major powers. It is encouraging that Britain has now joined Russia in rationalising her military budget, and that Lord Chalfont accompanied Mr Wilson to Moscow. If America will have the good sense to withdraw from Vietnam, she will be able to follow suit, and planned, progressive disarmament will spread reassuringly round the earth.

Christian Disunity

SHOWPIECE of Christian Unity, the Church of South India, is flying apart at the seams. With American backing an Independent Anglican Church is being formed as a breakaway, with ordinations effected by an Anglican bishop with disputed orders. Cause of the trouble seems to be that while the Holy Ghost led to integration of the coffers it didn't lead to integration of the castes.

Broadcasting

TRACK called a public meeting on February 24 to discuss rumours that the Government plans to introduce some form of commercial radio. In line with this concern, Messrs Boris Ford, Richard Hoggart, Peter Townsend, Raymond Williams and Richard Wollheim wrote a letter to the *Guardian* (February 23) describing such a step as "mistaken and deplorable". It would, they said, limit the range of broadcasts and encourage preferential development in densely populated areas where radio was less important as a social force.

COMMERCIAL values do not, by and large, advance arm in arm with cultural values. But to Secular Humanists, inadequate as it is the co-operation of commercial TV in publicising the great secular issues of our day has shown up the hitherto almost complete boycott by its BBC rival. A fact which is the more discreditable in that the BBC is nominally independent of pressures from TAM ratings and is financed by the licence fees of all. At its last EC meeting the National Secular Society appointed Mr Siegfried Kuebart (233 High St, Brentford, Middlesex) as its monitoring officer. Readers are invited to contact him offering their services to cover specific channels at specific times, regular features or special programmes of social concern. Commercial TV is of interest in this undertaking, though primary attention focuses on the BBC for the above reasons. Religious broadcasting combines devotional and propaganda programmes, and tendentious and unchallenged statement often appear in the latter. There are, in addition, news, magazine and current affairs programmes which must be watched for a religious bias, shown in the selection of "newsworthy" material and "public figures" asked for topical comment. It has been suggested that whereas **Tonight** has always been free of this malpractice, **Woman's Hour**, **The World at One** and **Any Questions** leave much to be desired. There is also a section of important and happily more frequent programmes on socio-ethical issues of the day, schools broadcasts, personal

problems and psychiatry (the BBC consultant psychiatrist represents the 5 per cent of professionals who are pious and not the 95 per cent of sceptics), where bias can enter in. Day in, day out, in addition to religious broadcasting, plugs for Christianity are being insidiously dispensed, while antidotal programmes like the **Brains' Trust** have one by one been dropped in the quest for ratings. What, one wonders, would be the fate of religion if determined by TAM?

Illegitimacy

THERE is joy on earth, as in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth. Wellknown Catholic MP Mr Norman St. John Stevas is to be congratulated on introducing into the Commons a private member's Bill to make it possible for "illegitimate" children to claim against a natural father for maintenance and against his estate on an intestacy. In our Judaeo-Christian society the sins of the fathers are still being visited upon the children, if not to the third and fourth generation.

Signs of the Times?

AT Keele University on February 18, the Union debated the subject: "This House deplores compulsory religious instruction in schools". At the end the voting was: for, 93; against, 33; abstentions, 16. At South-East London Technical College, a Liberal Studies class of 17 ONC students was asked to vote on what it regarded as the main incentive towards ethical conduct. The verdict was: fear of social consequences, 1; loss of self-respect, 6; way one was brought up, 2; religious sanctions (hell-fire), 0; religious incentives (love of God), 0; distress to others, 0; undecided, 8. No student suggested the religious considerations as a possible motivation, and one or two protested they were so irrelevant as not to warrant a place on the list.

Capital Punishment

THE Bristol Campaign against the Death Penalty (Chairman, Mr R. W. Burt, Clapton-in-Gordano, Bristol) invites support for its abolitionist campaign. It is generally thought that the Westminster Abolition Act removed capital punishment from Great Britain, but the act does not apply to Northern Ireland, whose recently debated Stormont Justice Bill recognises capital homicide.

Belgium

PART of the nationalist feeling in Belgium between French-speaking Walloons and Flemings derives from the intense Catholicism of the hitherto less industrialised Flanders. New industry around Antwerp and the habitual birthrate of Catholic regions have recently made Flemings a majority of the population and increased their industrial-political power. Out of this development has arisen the *Volk sunie*, described in the *Observer* (February 20) thus: "Fanatical and bigoted ('God made us Flemish: only politics made us Belgian') the *Volk sunie* verges on clerical Fascism". Is there anywhere in the world where religion has fostered peace and goodwill?

Family Planning

MINISTER of Health Mr Kenneth Robinson is to be congratulated on urging local authorities to provide free family planning services through their own clinics or the FPA for women whose health would suffer from further pregnancies. He would receive even more congratulations if he were to introduce a Bill to extend the scope from medical to social considerations. Should there be a shortage of parliamentary time for such measure, perhaps it could replace Mr Crosland's projected Bill to hand over further millions for the sectarian indoctrination of those whose absence of family planning is placing an intolerable strain on educational resources.

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

INDOOR

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental Place), Sunday, March 6th, 5.30 p.m.: Speaker: DENIS CHESTERS. Subject to be announced.
Bristol Humanist Group (Transport House, Victoria Street), Tuesday, March 8th, 7.30 p.m.: PETER R. WATKINS, "The Negro Problem in the U.S.A."
Havering Humanist Society (Friends Meeting House, Balgore Crescent, Gidea Park), Sunday, March 6th, 3 p.m.: Family Meeting.
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, March 6th, 6.30 p.m.: Speaker: C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, March 6th, 11 a.m.: Dr JOHN LEWIS, "Freud and Religion"; Tuesday, March 8th, 7.30 p.m.: ERIC DE LEEUW, "Growth in Personal Relationships".
West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, E.11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

PROFESSOR FINDLAY'S PHILOSOPHY

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There is too little argument and too much assumption. Too often, bare statements, important for the philosophy, are introduced without support. Findlay is sometimes aware of the lack of argument and says "It is not possible in this lecture to argue for . . ." (p 174) and that he "need not go into" hostile arguments (pp 205, 206). He *assumes* that knowledge can be gained in a non-sensory way. He *states*, in connection with the understanding of infinity, that children "find no difficulty in what perplexes mathematical philosophers". He *assumes* that we do have knowledge that cannot be illustrated in a concrete way; maybe, but it needs arguing. And he too blandly dismisses the work of orthodox empiricist philosophers such as Russell and Ayer (although Ayer is not specifically mentioned).

On the dust-jacket we read that the Second Series is "essential" to the "complete understanding" of the theme, and so perhaps we had better suspend some judgment until later. It also says, in contradistinction to Professor Findlay's philosophy, that the "puzzles and discrepancies in familiar experience" can arise "out of the misunderstanding and meaningless abuse of ordinary ways of thinking and speaking". It is for this sort of alternative interpretation of confusions and inconsistencies that I would opt.

POINTS FROM NEW BOOKS

Oswell Blakeston

GRAHAM GREENE was once a menace! He is so gifted as a writer that his Catholic propaganda was horribly insidious. He could almost make us believe that in a crisis a really religious man might put charity before dogma—even a priest. But in his new novel *The Comedians* (Bodley Head, 25s), the propaganda is simply interpolation and is not integrated with the text. In a summing up there is a bland assertion that the only unforgivable sin is indifference, that "Catholics and Communists have committed great crimes, but at least they have not stood aside." This is a shoddy attempt to whitewash Catholics. One has only to say "Hitler was not indifferent" to realise the falsity of the emotional appeal. As I wrote in *Tribune*, Mr. Greene will at least succeed in making some readers ponder on the superiority of the Buddhist to the Christian ethic, for the Buddhists have the courage to affirm that stupidity is a sin.

But one can read two thirds of the book for excitement—the day to day horrors of the secret police in Port-au-Prince; and I'm sure that the author will receive a great ovation on the strength of his past successes. But what will any freethinker *think* when he finds a character saying "You are a Catholic. You believe in reason"?

Aidan Higgins, in his poetical novel about the decay of the Ascendancy in Ireland, *Langrishe, Go Down* (Calder-Boyers, 30s), mentions that Johannes Scotus Erigena was stigmatised as a heretic because he announced that the sexual organs would not be resurrected on The Last Day. I suppose the RCc might mark this up as an act of good sense, but . . . how one sympathises with a middle-aged socialist in Eugene Burdwick's *Nina's Book* (Putnam, 21s) who begs the *Kommandant* of a Nazi concentration camp to shoot him because he senses that he is going mad under starvation diet and is beginning to believe in God!

Mr. Burdwick certainly gives a masterly and horrifying picture of the camp, of men and women in extremity, with the bones pushing against their skin and glittering eyes consuming all the substance of the body, groaning "like cattle standing outside the stockyards of Chicago". It is salutary to remember that the Vatican made a concordat with the Nazis. Perhaps this is what Mr. Greene means by Catholics not standing aside?

There are some fantastic details about early Mormon days in Wallace Stegner's *The Gathering of Zion* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 42s). The Mormons' "holy murders" finally lead Mr. Stegner to say: "They were a more dangerous order of beings than fiends: they were Christians just off their knees". It is also odd to read about the swearing indulged in by some of the "saints" who evidently had too forceful a gift of tongues. But there are also some delightful passages of humour. Brother Ellsworth, for instance, always married a girl with the same Christian name, for he hoped that in his harem this would prevent any awkward slip of the tongue when he addressed endearments to one of his wives. Then there is the recorded occasion when the Lord gave his starving people his own recipe for boiling animal hide and serving it as a dish to be eaten gratefully after a pious grace. Finally, Mr. Stegner reminds us that although the early "saints" scorned riches, the present Mormon Church is "a powerful commercial and industrial corporation".

Well, the publishers say that William Eastlake's *Castle Keep* (Michael Joseph, 25s) is a novel which is "as modern and blunt as pop art"; and it is undoubtedly aptly amusing to find one of the characters exclaiming, "I felt like God. How did it feel? Irresponsible."

THE HUSSITES

Leslie Hanger

THE YEAR 1965 contained so many anniversaries, from Kipling to Agincourt, that it is not surprising if we in this country overlooked the fact that it was also the 550th anniversary of the death of John Huss. Yet UNESCO named this as one of the events to be commemorated that year, and the story of Huss and the Hussites, as told by Professor Josef Macek of Prague University in *The Hussite Movement in Bohemia* (Lawrence and Wishart, 7s. 6d.), is of considerable interest to Humanists.

John Huss, born about 1370, began his career as a poor student at Prague, where he was influenced by the teaching of John Wycliffe, who had attacked the Church in England and started the Lollard movement. But whereas the Englishman was a theorist, the Czech popularized his ideas and preached them to the common people. At the end of the fourteenth century Czech lands had been drawn into the network of papal financial policy. No lucrative benefice in the land was occupied without the consent of the papal court and without payment of a tax in gold, and the streams of gold pouring forth from Bohemia were acquired by the prelates through the raising of taxes and bondage rents. It was quite common for the priests to hold several benefices, to own inns and brothels, to live openly with whores, and be continually gambling and drunk.

Huss agreed with Wycliffe that "sinful authority ceases to be an authority". He spoke out saying, "The cowsheds on the Church estates are more imposing than the Lord's castles and the churches. Rain does not wet the prelates, mud does not get into the monasteries, hunger and thirst have been held at bay by their wealth. The Church is the receiver of gifts, the Church buys while everywhere the poor are in need". And again, "One pays for confession, for mass, for the sacrament, for indulgents, for a blessing, for burials, funeral services and prayers. The very last penny which an old woman has hidden in her bundle for fear of thieves or robbery shall not be saved. The villainous priest will grab it . . ."

Not only the common people but the burghers and lesser nobility were being crushed by the priests. The feudal system was breaking up and the Church, as usual, was trying to increase her power and wealth, while at the same time putting the clock back. At last the Church decided to silence John Huss, and he was invited to attend the Council of Constance with a guarantee of safe conduct. The safe conduct was, of course, a fraud. Huss was arrested, denounced as a heretic, and on refusing to recant, burned at the stake. The precept of John Huss was, "Seek the truth, teach the truth, listen to the truth, abide by the truth and defend the truth". It was the truth as he saw it and it led, as no doubt he foresaw, to death. No man can do more.

In burning Huss the Church started a fire that was not easily put out. His martyrdom was the signal for a great revolt of the Czech people. The Church mounted Crusade after Crusade in an effort to crush the Czechs and bring Bohemia back under the power of Rome. For twenty-two years the Hussites resisted and they won many victories, first under the leadership of Zizka and after his death Prokof, both brilliant generals, even carrying the fight

beyond their own borders. The onslaughts of the Hussite armies shook the economic and ideological power of the Church, the strongest feudal power in Europe. In the fifteenth century Bohemia was the only country where the feudal power of the Church had been almost completely destroyed. Europe was shaken to its foundations and the stage set for the Reformation.

Though the ideology of the Hussites was religious, the real motives of the movement were social and economic. So the Hussites were split into two from the beginning, a split that proved fatal in the end. The lesser nobility and the burghers wished to assert their political power and regain the wealth they had lost to the Church. The poor, having nothing to lose, were more iconoclastic and formed the radical wing. Calling themselves "The Warriors of God", these radicals built themselves the city and fortress of Tábor, which stands as a tourist attraction to this day. There they sought to live by the Scriptures, all goods were held in common as in the days of the Apostles, and they called for the abolition of serfdom. Having no notion of social progress, they went against the actual march of history in trying to establish the utopian apostolic poverty and equality of a thousand years before. Naturally this fantastic attempt at a classless society was doomed to failure. Not the proto-Marxism but the Book of Revelation was their inspiration, and they joyfully looked forward to the end of the world and the destruction of their enemies. And it is of interest to note that only a few weeks ago two Jehovah's Witnesses were jailed in Czechoslovakia for saying that Satan was preparing the destruction of the world. So perhaps the revolutionary work of St. John the Divine is not yet a spent force?

Among all the remarkable people thrown up by the Hussite movement is one who may be claimed as one of the forerunners of modern Humanism. This was Martin Húska, the most outstanding thinker and orator among the poor. He and his many followers were prepared to carry their militant fight against the Catholic Church to its logical conclusion and sweep away all the dogmas and rites of clericalism. When these views indicated a fundamental disbelief in the Lord's Supper, the majority of the Hussites turned against them. Martin Húska saw in the Lord's Supper no longer a mystery but an ordinary object that grew musty when damp and which mice could gnaw at. The communion was the very centre and unifying rite of the Hussites and they carried the emblem of the Chalice instead of the Cross on their banners. There was a bitter battle and the armed bands of the Radicals were wiped out. Sixty of their leaders were burnt as "abominable heretics", thus proving that dog can eat dog and heretic burn heretic.

Húska escaped his enemies for only a short time. When caught he was imprisoned and tortured but refused to recant, saying, "If people were to continue to suffer as they suffer now, I do not want to be a priest". So in his turn he was condemned to die the death of a heretic. Standing at the stake, Martin Húska refused to pray and, urging others not to pray for him, died cheerfully convinced he had done no wrong. For a brief moment he had pulled aside the veil of religion and caught a glimpse of the material world.

DICKENSIAN SCANDAL OF CHURCH HOME

George Armstrong

(The following article was first published in the Guardian (January 17), to whom I express gratitude for kind permission to republish. Comment is unnecessary. It tells its own horrifying story. The important point is not that such people could arise in a system which professes universal love, but that such a system seems immune from the ordinary democratic processes of investigation and reformation in countries where it is entrenched. Those who, for one reason or another, are trying so hard to strengthen the system in this country might pause before it is too late.—Ed.)

PRAYERS were said and a special collection was taken this morning in all churches in the diocese of Prato for the Institute of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, an orphanage founded and run by a Capuchin friar.

Since yesterday, the orphanage has been without children; 104 of them were sent away, 22 to hospitals for treatment of trachoma, the others to various Church-run homes in Florence.

The story of the Prato orphanage might have been beyond the imagination of Charles Dickens, and does not belong to this century. It is an instance of the breakdown of responsibility by Church and civic authority in this land of "Christian democracy".

Sued for Slander

The Bishop of Prato, Monsignor Pietro Fiordelli, achieved some notoriety in 1958 when he was sued for slander for having publicly called two parishioners "public concubines" because they chose a civil wedding over a church wedding. He was acquitted. Four years ago, if the Bishop did not know what was happening in the Prato orphanage, everybody else did.

Two boys escaped from the place and were found by the police to be covered with bruises and festering sores. An investigation was called by Prato's Communist mayor, but it got no co-operation from the Bishop or from the founder and director of the Institute, Father Leonardo Pelagatti, aged 81. He brandished a crucifix in the face of a city health inspector when he appeared at the gate.

WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

SINCE my young days, the Christian religion has been engaged in giving certain of its doctrines a new look. Modern knowledge has compelled it; scientific discovery has forced abandonment of some of Christendom's most strongly-held tenets. Organised secularism has been the chief force in bringing this about.

But what now of organised secularism? Is it engaged in washing its face, too? There are those within its ranks who would smooth the sceptical sword; who advocate a relaxing of direct attack on Christian doctrine; who think we should allow those of the religions who have adopted the new look to get away with their double-thinking, and delude themselves and many who shape their views on religion after the latest fashion, that the Christian creed is now scientifically justified, and that secularism is a virtual fellow-traveller.

My fear is lest the image of atheism should become blurred in a fog of humanistic ideations. What do we secularists stand for, if not outright opposition to belief in and worship of a supernatural deity, whether the old-fashioned, personal one, or a formless and featureless

The two escaping boys were returned to the care of the friar.

The boys at the Institute, which was founded in 1934, were recruited in mysterious ways, mostly from five or six impoverished hamlets in Southern Italy. They slept two or three to a single bed. They had no schooling and no bathing facilities. Their uniform was a sky blue coloured smock, and for that reason the neighbours called them the "Celestini".

The staff were laymen and women who dressed in clerical habits. Boys who spilled anything on the floor, including their own urine, were made to lick it up. The children were required to kneel and pray "for the sins of the world" for hours on end. Talking during prayers would be punished by locking the boy in a room filled with rats.

Father Leonardo is still in his orphanage with his staff. No charges have been made against him.

MPs' petition

Prato is a thirty-minute drive from Florence, and is a modern industrial textile centre. Another mystery, of less importance, concerning the foundling home is its financial holdings. Father Leonardo does not keep accounts and once told his children that the money was delivered to him in a bag at night by St. Joseph. However, most of the considerable property used by the orphanage was owned by a company, whose president is an industrialist.

Two Left-wing Socialist MPs, Alessandro Menichinelli and Renzo Pigni, have petitioned the Ministers of Finance, the Treasury and the Interior "to investigate the financial links which exist, or which have existed", between this tycoon and the orphanage, "and to ascertain if there is truth in the suspicions that a charitable institution was used as a front for commercial speculation, or for tax evasion".

Whatever the suspicions are, in the wake of this scandal the company now has "given the Institute and its property to the diocese of Prato". Hence today's prayers and collections in favour of the next group of "Celestini".

F. H. Snow

Something, such as current theism leans towards? Should we soften up our offensive in order to please the "reverent" humanists who have increasingly identified themselves with rationalism—and present the appearance of having lost the critical virility which has been so great a pressure on the churches' doctrinal shufflings?

How that would gladden religionists!

I am not tilting at Humanism—that is, the humanism which aims at the conduct of man's affairs without reference to the ordinances of a supposititious deity. I am myself a humanist, as, I hope, is every atheist. The humanist label is, however, sported by many who are far removed from atheism, and charge its ardent propagandists with wishing to destroy religion, regardless of the moral and spiritual detriment to those deprived thereby of its consolations. The answer is this: the atheist has come by his convictions the hard, hard way. They are the product of dogged reasoning, inspired by love of truth, and his attacks on superstition are motivated by burning desire for the triumph of that which meticulous study of religion's claims has convinced him is truth. Ceaseless exposure of

the falsity of the faith based on that hotch-potch of Jewish history, myth and legend, the Bible, will alone achieve the general recognition of that truth. The atheist, therefore, wars against fallacy with all the weapons in his armoury. He is not out to destroy morality and spirituality. Most of his kind have great regard for morals and are not strangers to mental elevation induced by aesthetic reaction to the beautiful. They are reluctant to disturb the emotional comfort of believers, but must nevertheless strive for the victory of intellectual honesty over religious delusion and sophistry. Is not this the objective of all true secularists? The signs of the times are that it is in danger of being obscured.

I do not suggest, as do some freethought stalwarts, that a "fifth column" is at work amongst us, but there are certainly too many anaemic secularists in our movement for its vigorous health. There should, of course, be full freedom of opinion in rationalist circles, and yet that principle is assisting in the watering-down of sceptical propaganda sought by those who are ethicists rather than anti-theists, and encouraging the churches in their fight to keep the people religiously blinkered.

Roman Catholicism, the principal bulwark of mystical faith, finds this compromising trend very pleasing. Capitalising on her power of advertisement, she has for years assiduously wooed the non-Catholic public, with special focus on the naïve, through the medium of her Enquiry Centre, and sees great help in her campaign for the religious mastery of our realm in the spineless "rationalism" which she has reason to hope is in process of succeeding the dynamic atheism of Bradlaugh, McCabe and Chapman Cohen.

Just recently the Jesuit Father Corbishley, writing on "The Challenge of Humanism", expressed gratification at the tone of the rationalist spokesmen in a radio series to which he had listened. He described it as carrying no danger to Christian belief, said that the talk might almost have been by Christians, and that Humanism could be regarded rather as an ally than a bogey. What kind of rationalism is this that so soft-pedals as to cause the religious to rub their hands in satisfaction? Is this the stuff we have fought to have the privilege of putting over the air? If they can do no better than talk on morals in the pleasant-Sunday-afternoon style, representatives of our sceptical cause—call it Freethought, Secularism, Rationalism or Humanism—have no warrant for broadcasting.

Obviously the Churches' deadly fear is of forthright atheism. Hence their great efforts to keep it off the air and out of the newspapers. They know that were the public to become intimate with it, the death-knell of Christian belief would soon be sounding. They know that their nonsensical creed depends for its longevity on exemption from the assault of trenchant scepticism.

Let those within our movement who favour any measure of such exemption seriously consider its consequences. Let them, as members of the brotherhood founded to fight against religious dominance, for freedom of thought and the principle of intellectual integrity, ask themselves the question: "What do we stand for?"

LETTERS

Scrolls in Manchester

I WAS very pleased that the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibition was opened in Manchester on February 14 at the John Rylands Library. Those who were there on the opening day were able to listen to a theological clash between the Bishop of Manchester, Dr Greer,

and Mr John Allegro, a lecturer in Old Testament Studies at Manchester University, who has been editing and transcribing the Scrolls since 1953.

It was an unexpected feature of the opening of the exhibition in Manchester. The dispute began while the two men were examining an exhibit, and continued for about ten minutes.

Mr Allegro, who was the first British representative on the international team in Jerusalem, and has made ten trips to Jordan, where the Scrolls were found, told the Bishop the Scrolls made Jesus nothing more than a fictitious character. He believed they will one day prove conclusively that the New Testament is based on legend and folklore and not history, and that there will be no stone of New Testament scholarship remaining when the research is complete.

Dr Greer replied, "I shall hold you to that in ten years' time." A clash seemed inevitable when Dr Greer said the Scrolls did not contradict, but rather corroborated New Testament studies during the last twenty years. Mr Allegro said he was convinced that Christianity is an offshoot of the beliefs of the Essenes, a group of fanatical Jews who lived not far from the cave where the Scrolls were found by a shepherd boy in 1947.

More than 300 parties, representing up to 20,000 people, have already booked to visit the exhibition, which lasts a month. What are Manchester Secularists going to do to give the point of view of Mr Allegro? Why not a public meeting at the Wheatheaf Hotel and the distribution of leaflets dealing with the Scrolls?

(OLIVER SMITH)

Prayer

Mr. JOHN SUTHERLAND says that he had a complete mental breakdown in 1960 and that Jesus brought him back to health and strength.

Funnily enough, I had a nervous breakdown in 1960 and was brought back to "health and strength" by the music of Richard Wagner.

Does Mr. Sutherland suggest I should pray to Wagner?

I. S. Low

A Critic Criticized

I HAVE always enjoyed the literary criticism of Mr. Oswald Blakeston that has appeared in the FREETHINKER from time to time; his wit and irony are weapons that very few writers can use with effect. But when he attempted to castigate a literary effort by Mr. A. A. H. Douglas entitled *Credo: The Faith of a Humanist* (FREETHINKER, January 21), it seemed to me that he poured forth a lot of trivialities that hardly deserved putting on paper.

Mr. Douglas obviously has the gift of verse and if he puts his talent to poetical use then let us hope his talent will increase in power and thought. The two couplets Mr. Blakeston selected bore the flavour of that great master of satirical verse Alexander Pope, whose place in English literature no informed person will deny. Did not Pope remind us

The proper study of Mankind is man
Surely a sentiment that Mr. Blakeston will endorse. And let me point out Mr. Bayard Simmons has also put the Secularist "Credo" in splendid verse which Mr. Blakeston would do well to add to his reading if he has not done so already.

He laments also that these things have been said before. Well of course they have, in season and out of season, even in the pages of our own paper the FREETHINKER, but does this lessen the interest or invalidate the truth of what is said? Of course not. Then why should Mr. Blakeston complain in such a cold wet-blanket manner? I do not know the extent of Mr. Blakeston's reading, but let me point out that poetry does not lend itself to long detailed analysis, or logic-chopping that one finds in lengthy prose works. But truth can be amply served in the poetical field if only one will search long enough. Our "Bardic" heritage, if I may use the word, is probably the finest in the world—the great poets of Ancient Greece alone excepted. In poetry your reviewer hopes "to discover the creation of excitement", but if this is the limit of his search then I suggest he spend his time collecting stamps, which are always interesting. His reference to small piping voices devoted to ethics I am unable to make sense of—but what a miserable world it would be without those same "piping" voices which appear to irritate Mr. Blakeston so much. And even Wayside Pulpits can serve a turn, especially if one is speeding along in a bus to the daily "grind" as millions of us are compelled to do.

Let me hope that Mr. Blakeston will strike a more cheerful note in his next article. In the meantime I shall not hesitate to dip into Mr. Douglas's *Credo* if it should appear on our local bookstalls.

E. MARKLEY