

# FREETHINKER

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## PREDICTION

We have just passed through a period of forecasting the election results and are now in a position to know how accurate the forecasts were. At the same time the *Observer Magazine* has run a series on the business of occult prediction. In a scientific age it is a depressing commentary on human nature.

The future has always been a source of mingled fascination, expectation, apprehension, and at times terror, and anyone who makes predictions with enough self-assurance is certain of a hearing and often a good livelihood. In a world of casual relationships it is not unreasonable to extrapolate present contingencies into the future. Scientific hypotheses are tested by their ability to "predict" what will—or will not—happen under given conditions. Doctors regularly give prognoses of disease; meteorologists, tomorrow's weather forecast; economists, next week's share prices. Today some biochemists claim ability to predict the sex of babies, and some criminologists future from a psychological study of 5-year-olds. Moving further away from pure science, journalists are now invited by broadcasting producers to anticipate next week's news, while racing tipsters are joined by pools tipsters and forecasters of sporting results of all sorts. Where more ordinary people than ever before have loose money jingling round in their pockets and rags-to-riches stories constantly in their daily papers, more and more things are being gambled on and more attention given to those who claim a system to forecast the flight of fortune's slings and arrows. It is now apparently—since 1964—an acceptable City operation to offset a share investment with a counter stake on the results of the next election.

Alas for human impatience or cupidity, it is rarely possible to know the existence or assess the relative strength of all the contingencies which operate in any one situation. The further into the future one goes the more unimagined contingencies intrude. So that while doctors, meteorologists and economists are often right in the short run, long-range predictions are usually confounded. By the most eminent practitioners they are rarely if ever attempted. The public appetite is generally appeased by second-raters connected with advertising, public relations and fringe journalism. Where fortunes can be made by founders of successful cults, holders of patents, columnists known to the general public as "authorities" in certain fields, Harley Street "specialists", property speculators and financial "wizards", there are today unparalleled openings for the charlatan or the not too scrupulous even in professions with authentic expertise and scientific theory behind them. How much more is this so in the burgeoning world of the mystical, mysterious, occult, fanciful and downright fraudulent.

### Paradise for the bogus

The development of science was not altogether the rational affair one would like it to have been. Mathematics was studied to improve magic; architecture, temples and tombs; the stars, astrology; chemicals, alchemy. Right up till the start of modern empiricism and the scientific revolution brilliant practitioners clung to the most palpable superstitions, were stimulated by the most crackpot of phantasies. Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Newton and Bacon were closer in spirit to Nostradamus than modern rationalists usually admit. But when science and philosophy stabilised themselves in the eighteenth century and the Goddess of Reason was erected in Notre Dame during the French Revolution, it looked as if a new era was about to dawn. So it did. Unfortunately it was shortlived.

In 1829 Sir Walter Scott observed:

It appeared on mature consideration that Astrology . . . does not now retain influence over the general mind sufficient even to constitute the mainspring of a romance.

As if the Age of Reason had imposed too great an intellectual strain upon Europe, along with the Romantic Revival came a great tide of irrationalism. So that in the following decade or two there suddenly came into flower Morrison's neo-astrology, d'Arpentigny's chiromnomy, the Fox sisters' spiritualism, chiromancy and phrenology. Far from giving people a greater understanding of the natural world and a more logical approach to their personal problems, the upsurge of science seemed only to confound, disconcert and—through the social changes it brought, many of them in the late nineteenth century far from salutary—alarm ordinary people, while at the same time it provided new tools for charlatans to delude the masses. Whatever their personal beliefs, eminent scientists found a great part of their time taken up sitting in at séances to test the claims of clever rascals.

### Seventh heaven for the bogus

With the successful prosecution of most leading physical mediums and a decline of theosophy as sudden as its rise (which whisked Annie Besant away from the secular movement), it looked as if the twentieth century would sweep away the occult with the Victorian aspidistras and the tear-jerking ballads and paintings. But not for long. "Sensitives" became mental mediums—a masquerade more difficult to prosecute, especially since the 1951 Fraudulent Mediums Act implies that there is genuine mediumship, "telepathy, clairvoyance or other similar powers". Since R. H. Naylor cast a horoscope for Princess Margaret in the *Sunday Express* in 1930, "the stars" have become a regular feature of every popular newspaper and magazine. *Prediction, Horoscope, Fate* and countless smaller publica-



tions have hopped on this literary bandwagon in a "specialist" capacity. Teacups, ouija boards and crystal balls have been joined by electronic devices to induce the right "vibrations". Since 1927 at Duke University, North Carolina, old wives' tales and party games have gained university status under the imposing name of "parapsychology", and despite the exposures of C. E. M. Hansel the cult has spread officially to Holland and even Czechoslovakia and Russia. Various described as psychics, astrologers, palmists, clairvoyants and spiritualists, fortune-tellers have moved into Harley Street and Belgravia, and are said to be consulted by writers in search of inspiration and magnates in search of business decisions. *Tarot* cards and witches have descended on us from the middle ages, and druids from prehistory. In the twentieth century the occult is doing better business than ever.

To a rationalist there is a reason even for unreason. To a humanist there is humanity even in stupidity and cupidity. Is it that modern life is too dull, modern work too repetitive, modern leisure too uncreative to satisfy man's

"spiritual" needs? Is it that free educational and medical services are unappreciated while clairvoyants like William King are valued for saying (*Observer Magazine*, March 20):

I started from the top, not with the daily women or the girl from the shop. I get no dumb chucks. I only like intelligent people, people who don't count the pennies. I have been brazen, saying, If you can't pay my fees you don't come here.

Perhaps such performers are answered by a like snobbery. Or is modern life so frenetic, so uncertain with its wars and rumours of wars, its inflations and recessions, so complex, so noisy, so "unpredictable" that people are desperate for reassurance and advice? Or are our uprooted communities and unfriendly cities so isolating that people are yearning for some sympathetic ear, some plausible manner, some persuasive words? The boom of the prediction industry is an index of the gullibility and greed, pretence and imposture of modern life. It is also an index of a deep human need for comfort and care that somehow our Welfare State is failing to give.

## TWISTED AND DISGRACEFUL

### SYMPOSIUM I

Kit Mouat

AS the BHA ignored my letter of 15 October to your predecessor (about the Humanist "dialogue" with RC priests) I presumed that their PRO did not read the FREETHINKER. It seems, however, that his discourtesy then may have been as deliberate (and as unjustified) as his attack on you now. I considered your own remarks were fair, moderate and timely. Mr Vernon confirms my suspicion that the EU/BHA is more anxious to pay its respects to the Church of Rome than to the NSS and its members. His comparison between your comments and "MRA tactics" would be laughable if it were not clearly meant to be offensive. I have never supported the idea of a "fifth column" and I don't now, but Mr Vernon's letter must surely give the most undesirable encouragement to anyone who does, for it does seem as if he finds it easier to attack *us* than to defend the actions of his own organisation.

All I want to know is—by what democratic (if any) procedure was the decision for this action taken, and do the majority of BHA members really approve of it? I cannot believe that Mr Vernon will continue to refuse a straight answer to a straight question, Mr Editor, and the sooner he gives that answer the better for Humanist-Freethinker relations ("public" or otherwise). Let him not dare to suggest that we who are anxious that our secular ideals should be preserved without compromise do not also care for genuine toleration and co-existence! I resent the accusation that has been made against me on this score, but it is not our self-defence that matters, but the defence of Secular-Humanism and its image.

### SYMPOSIUM I

Robin M. Payne

WHILE APPRECIATING the position of Tom Vernon as Information Officer to the British Humanist Association, and necessarily therefore a defender of the faith, I think newcomer to the movement". his vituperative attack on the FREETHINKER is hard to reconcile with the blushing innocence of "a relative

As a BHA member and not a member of the National Secular Society it cannot be construed as sour grapes if I seek to question the virtues of the BHA in the realm of practical work as extolled in this letter. It is surely true, for instance, that while BHA agencies have always been keen to capitalise on the practical work and enterprise of individuals within the ranks, it has shown little inclination to initiate such schemes from the centre. At heart BHA and its sponsoring bodies remain conservative and highly resistant to change; to anxious, as in the case of Swaneng School, to claim all the credit, too quick to condemn, as when the Agnostics Adoption Bureau and Humanist Approach were started.

I think it is particularly regrettable, furthermore, that at a time when Catholics and Anglicans are achieving such practical results from co-operation, the Humanist Council lies in fragments and BHA is content to wax "holier than thou" with Christian bedfellows.

### SYMPOSIUM I

Phyllis K. Graham

THE TONE of Mr Tom Vernon's letter—whatever the provocation—is regrettable. How sad that a Humanist cannot take criticism from his own side without acrimony. And surely to the President of the National Secular Society, which is just celebrating its Centenary, some respect was due from an official of the BHA, which, Mr Vernon might remember, is as much "a relative newcomer" as himself.

*From his own side . . .* but *are* we all on the same side? It is difficult to be sure of this, when our "leaders" insist on keeping us in the dark about their ecumenical activities, shrouding their contacts with the enemy in a hush-hush diplomacy apparently modelled on the Roman pattern. When an editorial in *International Humanism* reeks of fulsome—even fawning—phrases about pope and church, its flimsy Humanist bias more pathetic than convincing. When a Humanist official states coldly: "Freethinkers and Humanists have many aims in common, though their methods of achieving them differ". From which it would appear that F and H are separate entities with no real



point of contact, since even their common aims require different methods, and apparently there are other "aims" on either side which are not "in common"—not included in the "many". Concerning such we may be certain that Mr Vernon's "side" at least will preserve impenetrable silence.

From various impressions (I will mention only two) I gather that the BHA's "respect" is unlikely to be squandered—at present—on any form of Free thought outside itself. (An attitude not unnatural or unusual in precocious youth.)

(1) A recent lecture on "The British Secular Movement: a Historical Survey" left me with a sore, depressed feeling of "down-and-outness" in Secularist slumland beside the rising glory of "The Humanist Movement". Emphasis laid on lowly social origins, lack of intellectuality, etc. in the rise and development of British Secularism in the last century seemed almost to indicate snobbery—at least on intellectual frontiers. Reduced to "a very small minority, mostly men" (!) the now superfluous—but still obstreperous—Secularist group is felt as a thorn in the flesh of "a wider, more intellectual, more tolerant Humanist Movement". I may be mistaken, but this is the impression I was left with. Can it be something more—a diplomatically contrived public image?

(2) A correspondence with "someone at the top"—provoked by the above-mentioned editorial—convinced me that "those in power" see co-existence with the churches—possibly with one in particular—as a not altogether disagreeable necessity. The current of sympathy is liveliest along intellectual circuits, for the adherents of christianity "number some of the most intelligent people". This fraternal peace may be disturbed only on lower levels. It may even be that *rapprochement* between Humanist intellectuals and their Christian opposite-numbers is more congenial to Humanist leaders than mental hit-and-miss with their own rank and file.

None of this is meant to be spiteful. It is just a heart-cry from one among many "religious refugees" who thought they had escaped from the horrors of witchcraft and were safe at last in the Humanist haven. Our doubts and fears, our darkest memories, already well roused by contrasting jesuit-tactics of mystery and silence, are not likely to be soothed by the stark aggressiveness of the Vernon letter.

## SYMPOSIUM I F. H. Amplett Micklewright

I WAS MORE than surprised by the letter from Mr Vernon criticising the article published in the FREE-THINKER of 26 February. Its author had not mentioned the BHA, a fact which shows that this body is more than sensitive where any implied criticism of itself may be concerned.

It is merely a notorious fact that many rationalists are dissatisfied with the quasi-religious orientation of the BHA. The task of rationalism is to attack entrenched theology with its ecclesiastical organisations. It has been historically a specifically and anti-clerical movement and both the RPA and the NSS have evolved within this tradition. The EU had a different tradition bound up with ethical religion, a fact which may be verified from the writings of the late Dr Coit. The dominance of the EU tradition as it is reflected in well-known leaders of the BHA, to the practical exclusion of the rationalistic viewpoint, gives rationalists every right to be dissatisfied. There has been a steady winding up of any inherited organisation

with a specifically rationalistic purpose. The blasphemy legislation is still unrepealed yet the specific association for securing this end has disappeared. The Secular Education League was wound up just at the time when its theme was becoming a living issue once more. We now hear of the abandonment of the aim of securing secularity in state education. At a time when the Roman Catholic Church is more clearly than ever the foe of progress and freedom, we have *soi-disant* humanist ecumenical discussions with the Vatican! On the side of theological controversy, we would seem to have a policy of masterly inactivity. Indeed, praise for the mild nature of recent humanist broadcasts came from none other than Fr Corbishley, SJ. At the same time, the historic tradition of the RPA would seem to be blanketed by its BHA affiliation. When one considers the constant work done by ecclesiastical propaganda, it is small wonder that the NSS and the FREE-THINKER have become disgruntled by the many stabs in the back which they have received. Indeed, if real unfriendliness to historic rationalistic causes be sought today, one need look only to South Place or the BHA. The reference to remarks in the FREE-THINKER as parallel to those of MRA is merely silly. It is more likely that some in BHA would provide support for the propaganda of MRA than that such support would come from those of the rationalistic tradition.

Mr Vernon talks of the work of BHA as showing a practical enterprise. Does he refer to the Swaneng Hill School or to the Agnostics' Adoption Society? He says that he is a newcomer to the humanist movement. Had he not been so, he might have known that much of the initial work in these enterprises came from members of the RPA and the NSS. Does he refer to the humanist groups up and down the country? In this case, I am bound to ask for an assessment of what these groups are doing locally in the cause of an anti-clerical rationalism. Such subjects as law reform or social philanthropy are important in themselves but they are not the specific job of secular humanism. In any case, questions of abortion, divorce law reform, family planning, homosexuality and the like frequently involve difficult legal or medical questions and are best left in detail to the specialist organisations dealing with them.

Unlike Mr Vernon, I would suggest that the questions raised go far deeper than a mere difference over method. They are basic to the whole movement and the time has come when they should be seen as such. What of the future? Is the RPA to continue blanketed where religion and ecclesiasticism be concerned? Is it to be diverted from its historic policies? Where is the BHA going to lead us? Are we to be a mere humanising adjunct to the churches in the general society pattern? Are we to fiddle away with Vatican discussions whilst Rome itself burns up the renaissance heritage of liberal humanism as a civilising force making for a rational secularity? Mr Vernon may if he will think my comments also to be "untrue and uncomprehending". The fact remains that they remark upon vital issues and the manner in which the BHA has approached these issues has given a grave concern to many rationalists and secularists. It is useless to continue pretending that these criticisms do not exist or lack point and meaning. The time has now come when such bodies as South Place or BHA must face them and either show that they stand in the historical anti-theological and anti-ecclesiastical tradition, or recognise that for many who are in this tradition they are lost to the movement and belong in spirit to the world of the churches rather than to that of rational thought.



## THIS WORLD

### Icy

WITH its March *Newsletter*, the International Co-operation Year campaign, to which the National Secular Society was affiliated, came to a successful conclusion. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations, a series of projects, conferences, discussions and exchange schemes took place under seven working groups: education, political parties, medicine, science, service overseas, youth and women's groups. The general verdict: "The British people's most impressive display ever in support of the United Nations".

### Around the World in Ninety Minutes

RICHARD AINLEY, son of famous Shakespearean actor Henry Ainley, will be remembered among other notable performances for his distinguished contribution to the NSS Quatercentenary tribute, *Free thought and Humanism in Shakespeare*. On April 17 at 8 p.m. he is to present "an entertainment of pleasantries, prose and verse" at the Hampstead Theatre Club, Swiss Cottage, London. Tickets are 10/6 and 7/6 each.

### Religion in Schools

CAPTAIN of Camberwell's Wilson's Grammar School, Michael Keen, is conducting a poll of senior pupils in his campaign to have collective worship made voluntary.

I think prayers are a waste of time in their present form. Most of the boys just don't believe, or couldn't care less about religion.

Only 2 of the first 50 approached disagreed. Often the headmaster has to remind the school to say "Amen" at the end of prayers. Editor of the school magazine, Allan Margetts, has similar views:

People don't sing or join in the prayers because they don't believe in God or couldn't care less.

Few thinking people will disagree with Michael's last words:

I want to make them think about the problem and cultivate an interest in it—either for or against.

AFTER a major split in the Australian Labour Party leading to the formation of the breakaway Democratic (Catholic) Labour Party a few years ago, there is a fresh dispute. In a search for votes, Deputy Leader Edward Whitlam and a group of influential MPs is demanding party support of State-aid for Australia's church schools. Though a Catholic and a Papal Knight, to his credit Leader Arthur Calwell, like President Kennedy in another constitutionally secular country, is holding out against this demand. Official Labour Party policy is to initiate court procedures against the present law allowing aid. Mr Calwell favours grants to all parents, whatever school their children go to. Indirectly this would help church schools, but this is not enough for vociferous Catholics.

### Mixed Marriages

'DARLING, have you heard the wonderful news?'

'No, what?'

'We'll be able to get married in church after all.'

'I thought that was what you'd always intended.'

'You didn't expect me to go to a registry office, did you? I mean, we'll be able to be in the church proper and not just the vestry—and we can have flowers, a blessing and some music.'

'That'll be nice.'

'You don't sound very enthusiastic. I think it's wonderful of the Holy Father—so full of charity. We'll even be able to have that old heret- . . . I mean, our separated

brother your vicar will be able to be present.'

'That's nice.'

'With the bishop's permission, of course.'

'Which bishop?'

'The bishop, of course.'

'I see.'

'Why, he may even take part—'

'In the sacrament?'

'Good heavens no! He can say a few words of congratulation and exhortation and join in some of the prayers.'

'I expect—'

'With circumspection.'

'I expect we can now bring up the children the way we want to.'

'Of course we can. Catholic, same as before. But one thing you'll be delighted about, you won't any more have to promise—'

'That's awfully trusting of—'

'In writing, I mean, if its all right with the bishop. You'll still have to promise—but oral will probably do. Oh darling, hasn't the Church become wonderfully liberal since Vatican II?'

'Which Church?'

'Why, the Church of course.'

'I sec.'

'Darling, I know we're not thinking of nasty things like this at a time like this—but . . . just in case you might get any wrong ideas . . . you still won't be able to get a divorce, you know. I mean, marriage is an indissoluble bond. Mind you, I can still claim the Pauline Dispensation or Matthevan Exception and get an annulment if the worst comes to the worst . . . Darling?'

'Yes, dear?'

'Darling, what it is? You're looking terribly thoughtful.'

'Er, yes . . . dear. I—I—wonder if we've made the right decision.'

### Noise Abatement

A BATTERY record-player has now been marketed. The Noise Abatement Society thinks it should be fitted with earphones. The manufacturer doesn't think that would be "economical". Drugs as the major health hazard to young people are always in the news. But a more insidious and universal phenomenon is bedlam.

### Show Me the Way to Go Rome

PRIMATE of the Established (Protestant?) Church of this country, Dr A. M. Ramsey, has just created a constitutional problem by paying an official call on the Pope. Secularists have no rapport with the bigotry and tactics of Ulster Protestantism, but they may perhaps feel a sneaking sympathy for those pastors who turned up in Rome with tunics labelled "Archbishop Ramsey a traitor to Protestant Britain" and "Courtesy visit a curse". A vulgar form of demonstration, no doubt, but would a more polite intervention have got any publicity in the "Protestant" press of this country?

### Football and Piety

FOR a long time, on the strength of "Abide with Me" at the Wembley Cup Final, we have been told how devout English football crowds really are. Now Liverpool has been exposed as singing "God Save Our Team" and "Come let us adore them, Liverpool". Maybe the Wembley crowds have been singing "Abide with Me" to their paramours.

### Seeing the Light

ABORTION is so rife in Chile (one in every three preg-



## FREETHINKER

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## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

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

King Alfred School (Manor Wood, North End Road, London, N.W.11), Day Conference, "Ethical and Moral Values in Education". Speakers: JOHN WILSON, JAMES HEMMING, JOHN WREN-LEWIS and MARGARET KNIGHT. Saturday, April 30th, 9.30 a.m.—6 p.m. Conference fee (including morning coffee, lunch and tea) £1 1s. 0d. Details from Edwin Savitt, 25 Grove Court, Circus Road, London, NW8.

British Humanist Association, Essex Branches (Civic Centre, Chelmsford), Saturday, April 16th, 2.30 p.m.: District Rally. Speakers: MARGARET KNIGHT and DERRICK LEE. Transport from Havering, children looked after. Details, S. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford.

Birmingham Branch NSS (New Victoria Hotel, Corporation Street), Sunday, April 3rd, 6.45 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Religion Today".

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental Place), Sunday, April 3rd, 5.30 p.m. Speaker: DENIS CHESTERS. Subject to be announced.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, April 3rd, 6.30 p.m.: Dr A. F. AKRAM SAYEED, "Pakistan through Western Eyes".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, April 3rd, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Charles Bradlaugh and his Circle"; Tuesday, April 5th, SUDHIR BISWAS, "Women in India".

West Hame and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green E11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.e. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

It has been reported that the Secretary of State for Education and Science proposes to bring in legislation to raise the Government building grant for church schools from 75 to 80 per cent.

## PUBLIC MEETING

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13th at 7.45 p.m.

ALLIANCE HALL,  
Caxton Street, London, S.W.1

(nearest Underground: St. James's Park)

Speakers:

MARGARET KNIGHT HECTOR HAWTON  
WILLIAM HAMLING, MP.

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

Organised by the National Secular Society,  
103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1

## THIS WORLD *continued*

nancies) that birth control is being made available under the National Health Service. Director of the Latin American Economic and Social Development Centre at Santiago, Fr Roger Veckemanns, SJ, came out in full support, adding that if the population growth is to be halted the Government must stop rewarding large families with special housing and grants. The Hierarchy said he did not speak for the Church, but they have not opposed the Government FP scheme. Even in Italy a bill to legalise birth control has been introduced by seven MPs (no Christian Democrats) who say the abortion rate there is a million a year, with several thousand fatalities.

## Don't Let Labour Ruin It

PREMIER Catholic peer the Duke of Norfolk has just entered into an arrangement designed to give a 10-year-old second cousin £1 million and save his £3 million estate some £550,000 in death duties.

## RATIONALIST AND HUMANIST BELIEF

WHENEVER GOOD PEOPLE ask what my philosophy, creed or religion is, or what I believe in, this is my reply:

I believe the hope of the world lies in fostering good health (sound minds in sound bodies), intelligence (selection of the fit and sterilization of the mentally unfit), and education (in ethics, economics and the natural sciences, not propaganda); and in the gaining of international justice, honesty, equal opportunities, good government, and better living conditions for all.

I find in nature, science and art, and in all attempts to live a good, useful and moral life, all the religion I want. The teaching of ethics does not require the teaching of religion. As people are freed from superstitious beliefs, I believe they will achieve much greater wisdom and understanding. Each of us is the result of heredity, environment and education, and these three factors should be of the best.

I believe the greatest aim in life is self-development (maturity), and that the principal impulse of life is the quest for happiness. Nowhere are these concepts revealed in the Christian or Jewish Holy Scriptures. Teaching the Christian Bible or the Jewish Scriptures as "the divinely-inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God" is the greatest deception and fraud ever imposed or practised on the human race.

*How Comes Evil?*

(Compare with Isaiah 45, 5 and 7).

Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot;

Or he can, but does not want to;

Or he cannot, and does not want to.

If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent.

If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked.

If he neither can, nor wants to,

He is both powerless and wicked.

But if God can abolish evil, and wants to,

Then how comes evil into the world?

(Epicurus, 341-270 BC).

Evil causes distress, harm, injury, misery, pain or sorrow. A disastrous earthquake, flood, tidal wave (tsunami) or tornado may be considered evil. However, these so-called "ACTS OF GOD" are simply "the Forces of Nature" in action, a part of "the Laws of Nature" noted in the US Declaration of Independence.

Evil is more than the absence of good. It includes rudeness, selfishness, unfaithfulness; anger, cruelty, dishonesty; graft, greed, injustice; lust for power, quackery, religious fraud, shysterism, and "the legal standard" of honesty in business. Such attributes of human nature are often found along with many good traits in men and women.

Appreciation, consideration, love, loyalty, self-restraint and understanding do much towards nullifying evil. But since we are the result of heredity, environment and education, it behoves us to do our utmost to prevent the transmission of bad genes and greatly to improve environment and the moral, economic and scientific education of all people.

The four "Natural Virtues" of fortitude, justice, prudence and temperance, and the three "Learned Virtues" of humour, patience and tolerance, are also well worth contemplation and adoption. They may be called "The Seven Cardinal Virtues".

(Dr) WILLARD E. EDWARDS (Honolulu)



## EINSTEIN AND GOD

Gonzalo Quiogue

JOSEPH LEWIS, an outstanding American atheist who lives in New York City, is fond of running Einsteinian quotes in his bi-monthly magazine, *Age of Reason*. Two of these quotations are as follows:

I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures.

An individual who should survive his physical death is also beyond my comprehension.

The above quotes simply prove that Einstein denied the existence of the Christian-Jewish God and life after death, two of the foundations of traditional religion.

### X-God

To a Christian or Jewish layman, therefore, Einstein was an atheist; but not so to pantheistic theologians. For Einstein had a sort of X-God (a super-super intelligence) and a "scientific religion". His X-God seems to be a queer patchwork of personal-natural deity. In his book *The World as I See It*, chapter "The Religiousness of Science", he said:

His [scientist's] religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection.

### Childhood relic

Einstein's achievements point him out as a great physicist and mathematician; but instead of saying that wonder is simply inherent in nature, he said in effect the harmony of natural law reveals a super-super intelligence. Religion and God-belief are deeply ingrained in the minds of Jewish children. In his maturity as a scientist he could not help throwing away his Jewish-Christian God, but he was unaware of a drossy sediment, a primitive thinking, left by this in his subconscious mind. He felt he had to put something behind a wonder in nature to explain this wonder. This is the very start of God-belief and religion in primitive times. Primitive men invented all sorts of gods to explain the wonders in nature. We can see now how a religious training in childhood can do a terrible disservice to a great truth-seeking scientist.

The term "superior intelligence" gives the impression that Einstein's God was personal. It was not personal. And if it was not personal, it must be impersonal or non-human or natural. There is no other alternative. It is obvious that, despite his use of the word "intelligence", Einstein was a pantheist—one who deifies nature or an aspect of nature. In his book *Out of My Later Years*, chapter "Convictions and Beliefs", he said:

In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God, that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast powers in the hands of priests.

### Not a deist

It is clear then that he cannot also be a deist; for the deistic God is personal—the God who is always creating men by the million, but who does not care to help them in their miseries.

Einstein attached a human trait, intelligence, to a deity and yet called this entity impersonal. Perhaps only a famous scientist like him can do that and get away with it. We simple folk get the impression that the God he made is a *Whatdyacallit*. But whatever he did, he cannot escape a dilemma.

There is a *seeming rationality* in worshipping a personal, although imaginary God of tradition; but deifying an impersonal aspect of nature, a so-called super-super intelligence, is *sheer nonsense*. We can be sensible and rational only when we express ourselves in terms of and within the realm of present knowledge.

## E. R. ROUX

Colin McCall

THE SUDDEN DEATH of Dr Edward Roux at the age of 62 is a terrible blow to South African—and world—freethought; it is also a blow that I feel very deeply. Though we never met personally, we had corresponded for many years; we had common friends as well as common ideas, and he was always willing to help me with articles for the FREETHINKER, until the Verwoerd government banned him from writing, as it banned him from entering the University of the Witwatersrand, where he held the Chair of Botany.

Born in Pietersburg in 1903, Edward Rudolph Roux was educated at Jeppe High School, at the University where he was destined eventually to attain his professorship—from which he graduated with an MSc—and Cambridge. As a keen Communist he attended the Comintern Conference in the Soviet Union in 1928, and was politically active on his return to South Africa. He was banished from Durban in 1931, but defied the order and was arrested. A year later he was banished from the Rand, but again he defied the order, and he had several other clashes with the police and the authorities. In 1936 he left the Communist Party, and later helped to form the Liberal Party.

Dr Roux joined the staff of the University of the Witwatersrand in 1946 as a senior lecturer. He was appointed Professor of Botany in 1962, but he was banned from entering the University or any other educational establishment in December 1964. The ban also prevented him from attending any meeting or writing any article. This ended his active chairmanship of the South African Rationalist Association and the editorship of the Association's journal, *The Rationalist*. It also deprived the FREETHINKER of its most distinguished contributor.

Whether the ban on work and activities that meant so much to him affected his health, I do not know. He was admitted to Johannesburg General Hospital on March 1, suffering from anaemia; he died from a heart attack the following day. And at the funeral on March 5, Professor I. D. MacCrone, Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand, spoke of the "great blow" that Dr Roux had suffered by "the termination of his appointment at the University by ministerial decree". He "fully realised that he might have avoided dismissal if he had been prepared to retract some of his convictions, but this was something he would never do". Though Professor MacCrone did not share Dr Roux's convictions, this did not affect the cordial relations between the two men. "Eddie Roux was tolerant of the view of others, but he was not tolerant of injustice." The motive that animated him all the time was "to try to improve the lot of the less privileged".

Mr Donald Livingstone, Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University, who conducted the non-religious service at Braamfontein, referred to the "deep human compassion" which was the "mainspring" of Dr Roux's being.

Without professing to have known Eddis Roux anything like as well as these close associates, I can, I believe, confirm these tributes from my correspondence and—at least on my part—friendship with him. I, of course, did share many of his views and convictions. No one could fail to admire his clarity of thought and expression; he brought a scientific, humanistic mind to bear on all problems. With Eddie's death, freethought has lost a fine advocate and the South African rationalists have lost their mentor. I am sure that all FREETHINKER readers will join me in sending condolences to his wife, Winifred, and his daughter, Mrs Alison Pineschi, who flew from her home in Italy to attend the funeral.



# TEMPLES OF HUMANISM?

F. H. Snow

HOW LONG will religion survive? The question must often occur to non-believers, or rather, to those actively interested in religion's demise. And, if they frankly face the situation, they must feel that belief in and worship of the supernatural will not die out for very many years—unless Humanism becomes dynamic. Every town has an abundance of churches, each village at least one, the cities teem with them, and they are being built in quite considerable numbers. The ancient and decrepit are, in most cases, restored. The work of keeping places of worship going is proceeding as though most people are in need of them, and will be in the distant future. The age of science and realism might still be far off.

Sometimes, as I survey the massive structures of brick and stone which rear themselves towards the sky beyond which those who worship believe their God holds court, I wonder whether they will be standing some centuries hence. And then I think that the matter should not perturb me. I have no *animus* against the bricks and mortar and stonework of ecclesiastical buildings, though disliking the decayed aspect of many such erections. And so, if I could revisit the world when it has grown centuries older, it would not be the churches that might still be standing which should dismay me. But if they were being kept up, as in this twentieth century, for the worship of a hypothetical God, or of the supernatural in any guise, then I might well be troubled.

I have the feeling that by the time I visualise, unless the present population growth is curbed, there will not be room in our land for churches, but, to revert to the subject that prompted this article, how long will religion continue to be the *raison d'être* of such buildings?

## Rationalistic motivation

The accusation is often levelled at rationalists that rancour chiefly animates their desire to get rid of religion. This has caused me to re-examine my own antitheistic motivations.

Primarily, I want the end of religion because it is fallacy. I want my fellow men to realise the imbecility of belief in an all-powerful, all-knowing, utterly inactive, ever-invisible and wholly uneventful God. Secondly, I want their minds to be freed from a belief forced on them in childhood, and which, if offered for their acceptance in adulthood, would earn their scorn. But do these reasons justify my wish to eliminate the religions which loom so importantly in the world, and whose cathedrals, churches, mosques, temples and synagogues are time-honoured institutions? Is there no more to it, and does rancour at the churches' still powerful influence mainly inspire my wish to bring the religious fabric tumbling down?

## War and religion

Seeking to answer these questions, I consider first the attitude of believers towards war, and am compelled to confirm my long-held view that the great majority of Christians support war—or, rather, the use of armed force against nations or races they deem unrighteous—by those they deem righteous or less unrighteous. They believe always that the God they worship approves their own country's cause, which they identify with the Good and

Right, as against the Wrong and Evil of the enemy. This was so even in Hitler's Germany, where both Catholics and Protestants, save for a small minority, were behind the Nazi leader in his bid for world mastery. Both sides, too, in the First World War claimed God as their ally, and the belts of the German soldiers bore the inscription: "*Gott Mit Uns*" (God With Us). By the way things went, he started off with them, but came over to us when superiority of armaments and manpower assured victory for the Allies.

That Christians, as a whole, do not want war, I believe, but they put trust in arms first and their Lord afterwards, and support, tacitly or otherwise, the manufacture and retention by his people of the nuclear bombs which, in the event of a major war, would virtually destroy civilisation. Their God, again, though they don't trust him, is their authority. He destroyed the enemies of those who worshipped him—and which were therefore his—in Old Testament days. That most religious nation, the United States, where churchgoing, in contrast to Britain, is in strong vogue, has troops in many places far from her shores, warships patrolling many waters, and a record of fighting unparalleled in recent years.

## Misery and religion

The slaughtering, tortures and other atrocities in religion's name, which befoul the history of most Christian states, confront me as I reappraise my desire to expunge superstitious faith, whatever its sentimental appeal. And the fact does not escape me that, although these crimes are long past, the churches still exert very considerable power to oppose reforms which conflict with their archaic doctrines; support the world-wide possession of wealth by the comparative few; condone, by their own heaped-up riches, the poverty and misery of the many. The Vatican towers above appalling slums; in the United States temples to the Christian God proliferate whilst grim circumstances afflict millions of its people; in religion-dominated South America, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, India, opulence and pauperism hideously contrast. Under religion, the ideals for which Humanism fights—the drastic amelioration of the conditions of the masses and the promotion of a truly humane global brotherhood—show no promise of attainment.

## Rededication

And so, when I look up at the imposing edifices of cathedrals or the lesser sanctuaries of the Unseeable, I feel fully absolved of the charge of rancour in wishing, and working for, the end of the superstition they keep alive. If they must stand, let us hope that we can expedite the time when the genuflecting, supplicating addicts of religion's opium no longer congregate within them. If these monuments of stupid credulity—a credulity particularly stupid in this scientific age—are indefinitely to linger, it is our secular duty to ensure that the ultimate philosophy to be expounded in their precincts will be that of Humanism, and, to that end, to campaign relentlessly for the exposure of the greatest confidence trick ever.

I am bold enough to conceive the eventual dedication of even the historic pile where Becket fell and Dr Ramsey now pontificates, to the service of our rational and compassionate creed.



## NO COMMENT

"I can remember little of what I was taught at my convent save for a biological fragment which has remained with me. Most of the biology lessons kept safely to neutral subjects such as how to grow watercress on a face-flannel or broad beans in a jam-jar. On the one occasion we ventured into the animal kingdom I recall being told that rats were masculine and mice feminine"—Norman St John-Stevan in *Catholic Herald*, March 18.

"Long ago, the British Broadcasting Corporation (otherwise known popularly as the British Brainwashing Corporation) gave up all attempts to give its television public unbiased information. . . . Known Leftists have some of the most important positions on regular programs. . . . Its religious programs on Sundays are so full of veiled hate and political Leftism that one wonders how on earth it can ever appear on the Sabbath"—*Truth Seeker*, February.

## LETTERS

(Many excellent letters from overseas cannot be printed because they arrive after the relevant correspondence has been closed. Letters from abroad should be on general rather than topical issues, on principles rather than particular articles—Ed.)

### Christianity and Humanism

I OFTEN WONDER what the real point is in Humanists' trying to destroy religious belief. What do they expect to gain by it? Life is hard at any time for people without trying to undermine their belief. And every man has a right to believe what his heart desires.

I think myself that most Humanists and atheists attack religion just because they have lost their own faith, and are determined to make others lose theirs. A sort of jealousy, and it comes out in many of their articles. We all know the best-hearted people never write articles criticising other people's behaviour or beliefs.

If man could not go beyond reason he would go mad. I therefore say all men have the right to believe in a religious faith and have their children given religious instruction. If Humanists do not want this let them get out of it, or have schools of their own instructing their children in atheism. But whether their children will turn out any better by doing so is questionable.

R. SMITH (Dundee)

MR R. SMITH'S dogmatic claims about "Jesus the Man" are conspicuously devoid of rational foundation, in contrast with Mr Jones's well-substantiated assertions. I don't know whether or not Mr Smith calls himself a Christian but we have here a clear example of the still prevalent influence of Christian teaching, which can be found even among non-Christians.

I hardly believe that Mr Smith is referring to the historical Jesus. After all, we know practically nothing about the historical Jesus; we do not even know whether he ever existed, much less do we know about his character. I therefore assume Mr Smith speaks about the mythical Jesus as described in the Bible.

I am far from pretending that this mythical Jesus is an utterly depraved character, but I see no reason for considering him a paragon of virtue either. True, he preached the doctrine of love in his Sermon of the Mount, but he did not practise it with his enemies, whom he condemned to eternal torture. It was not exactly a "gentle Jesus meek and mild" who ousted the traders from the temple—who were performing a perfectly lawful act—but an angry fanatic who used the whip as an instrument of love.

He died on the cross, but why? Because this was his prime object from the very beginning. It must not be forgotten that the mythical Jesus and his father who sent him to earth are one and the same person. Luckily it is not my task to explain how that can be, but this is the way Christian doctrine wants it. His bloodthirsty father was no longer satisfied with animal sacrifices but wanted something more dramatic. So he sent his son to earth to be sacrificed instead. I fail to see any merit in this sacrifice, which to me is a sadistic act of the father, or better, a masochistic act of father and son since they are one and the same person.

To people like Mr Smith, Jesus is just the preacher of the Sermon of the Mount. They fail to see the angry doctrinaire fanatic who demands blind acceptance of his teachings, who does not tolerate doubt, who furiously insults those who ask for some kind of proof—a reasonable thing to do considering the number of preachers of other beliefs—and who has no mercy for his doctrinal rivals.

G. WAPPENHANS (Barcelona)

(This correspondence is now closed—Ed.)

### Herr Lübke

WE TAKE the liberty of sending you material which draws your attention to Herr Lübke, present President of the West German Federal Republic. The recent publication of original documents proves that Herr Lübke was guilty of planning and building some of Hitler's concentration camps.

The Peace Council has been alarmed by the fact that a man who was responsible for such deeds is today allowed to be the highest representative of the West German Federal Republic. It seems to us that there is a close connection between the fact that numerous nazi and war criminals hold influential positions in the West German State and the fact that they make efforts to gain disposal over atomic weapons.

Herr Lübke still remains silent, although more and more people all over the world in the interests of justice and humanity urge him to answer the following questions:

Is it true, Herr Lübke, that you were responsible for planning and building the concentration camps of Leau, Neu-Stassfurt and Wolmirsleben?

Is it true, Herr Lübke, that you helped the Gestapo to establish those camps.

We are convinced that the pressure of an international public can force Herr Lübke to reply to these questions.

Your support would certainly be an important contribution to disclosing committed atrocities and preventing new crimes.

HEINZ SCHIENK and KURT HALKER  
(GDR Peace Council and Jewish  
Community of Greater Britain)

## OBITUARY

WE deeply regret to announce the tragic death on March 13 of Mr Jack Heslop, senior lecturer in mathematics at Inverness Technical College and a member of Inverness-shire branch of the National Secular Society. He was aged 54 and is survived by his wife and 13-year-old son.

Mr Heslop died from exposure after being found high on the slopes of Beinn-na-Cailleach. He was an experienced climber and had set out the previous day to walk across the Strathnairn Hills. When he failed to return a search-party was organised. Mr Heslop was alive and uninjured when found but was unconscious and suffering from exposure.

The funeral took place at Aberdeen Crematorium on March 16.

## ADVERTISEMENT

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