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LOVE—SPELLED "G-O-D"

IT IS OFTEN SAID that there is no further need to attack orthodox Christian belief in the Jehovah-cum-Father God. Modernist theologians, we are told, have exterminated him. Christians no longer believe in miracles, a virgin birth, Father God or a divine Jesus: they are even getting ready to accept any proof that J. M. Allegro may produce that the historical Jesus never existed. Secularists had better get used to the idea that times (and theological 'truths') change. There are, of course, millions of Christians who have never heard of Tillich, Dr Robinson or the South Bank, and it is foolish to imagine that orthodox Christianity no longer wields a powerful grip over all our lives. Nevertheless the modernists do exist and, I suggest, may even be doing as much harm as their orthodox Brothers in Christ; for one thing, they give the impression that they have rid Christianity of everything that Secularists could possibly object to, and for another, they are making fashionable an intellectual and semantic jiggery-pokery that exceeds any absurdities ever thought up by the old-style theologians. They are, at the moment, riding on the crest of a wave which will engulf those agnostics and Humanists who confuse toleration with compromise if they do not watch very carefully indeed.

The Anglican cry today might be, "Jehovah is dead, long live Love!" Although the idea that "Love is God" is hardly original (many of us were brought up on it), it is sweeping the boards of what is left of the Anglican stage. And the Anglican Love à la Robinson, Furlong and Wren-Lewis is the best, or so they would have us believe. They may no longer claim that theirs is the only religion, church or sect worth bothering about, but with an equal assurance, they seem to claim that have a unique ability to give, receive, write and talk about "Love", which is "God", because they know "it" or "him" through whatever is left of their "Christ". It is suggested that the sort of atheists who don't believe in the old Christian God are really Anglicans in disguise, for Anglicans don't believe in Him either. Or, such atheists just

don't exist, because if God is Love (or "Ultimate Reality"), then no one could possibly *disbelieve* in her (or "him" if you insist). The new-style atheists are being created by these new-style apostles of the Love-God; they are in the mental homes, bed-sitting rooms, and borstals of England, "separated" from Lord Love-God of Woolwich through no fault of their own. They are not just (as we might suggest) emotionally "deprived", they are "spiritually" cut off from the only life worth living, because they cannot experience "Love" which is God. To Humanists this implication is a strange mixture of arrogance and condescension. We might claim that there is no Absolute Love, available for all. Love is a mixture of many ingredients; kindness, sympathy, generosity, understanding, respect, toleration, attraction, patience, joy, hope, pity . . . We may never be able to summon the whole lot at once, but this doesn't make us failures or outcasts, as atheists are outcasts among believers. We may agree that the need for love should be constantly stressed, but no one who has not received it can be *taught* to give it. We can, however, teach that without God and love there can still be common justice, decency and kindness, and most of us would be willing to settle for that. Love is a bonus. To boast about it is rather like boasting about a large bank account, and there is no reason why we should accept these new apostles' valuation of their own superiority in the realm of human relationships. The fact is that Christianity, Anglican or non-Anglican can offer nothing that cannot be experienced by non-Christians, no matter what the PROs are saying.

Such modernists have, of course, little respect for words. They practice a sort of verbal masturbation for the release of their pent-up doubts and confusion, and they want us to copy them. They feed on paradoxes: "the world is nearer to God just because it is godless", we read. There is "worship in an entire absence of religion", and so on. It is perhaps the only way that the heretics can stay within the undeniably comfortable bounds of the established church. If they turned their crucifixes upside down, their vestments inside out, and walked down the aisle on their hands, the situation could not be more absurd. But this of course would make them laughable, and they are desperate to convince us (and probably themselves) that they are as deep as depth psychology itself. If this were not so, we would not need to tease them.

The modernist mumbo-jumbo is not hard to imitate, try it: "it is the non-existence of Jesus that proves his reality", or "in the secularity of God is his divinity" (but be careful not to say "her"). Professors who might be Peter Sellers in a caricature mumble over the air or TV about "secular Christianity", "deeper dimensions" and "the presentness of the past". They admit that they are "a little unhappy about the traditional way of talking", and

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one is tempted to suggest that they should take a rest until they do feel happy again, for all our sakes. But behind it all there is still the Christian "Christ", preferably crucified and resurrected, symbolically if not historically. Even though the professor says that "the old classical theology is no longer viable", there is always the Love-God who "makes the world go round", as Jehovah did before it (or "him").

The need to believe that there is still an ever-present All-Purpose Answer to everyone's problems still flourishes. Christians still refer to some higher divine authority, claiming to know what its will is and to be doing it. Like the rest of us they do what they want, but they have the advantage of being able to claim that their actions are "guided by God" (or Love). They still refuse to take full human responsibility. Yet, while praising Love, the new apostles cling fast to one of the most materialistic, highly organised and financially endowed institutions, the C of E. And wealthy organisations are rarely good advertisements for any sort of "love".

Kindness, joy, generosity and so on, were not originated by Christians. They have no monopoly of them now.

WINDOW ON THE WORLD

BUDDHIST MONKS abhor violence; rather than use force, they prefer burning themselves to death in protest, thereby gaining—they believe—eternal bliss. Their spokesman, the Venerable Tam Chao, therefore accepted Ky's offer to take ten civilian stool-pigeons into his government.

There is, however, also a radical faction under the Venerable Tri Quang who argue in the form of a parable: when you hear the desperate shrieks of a woman who is being raped, and you kill the raper, you have done a good deed.

However, facts have shown that the erstwhile creed still prevails. Ky, the ambitious sticker—who in *Nouvel Observateur* (8/14th June) is characterised as a "Play-boy and vainglorious talker"—is a Buddhist whilst Gen. Thiö, the president, is a militant Catholic; and whilst the RCs represent hardly 15 per cent of the population, 55 per cent of the South Vietnamese army officers are Roman Catholics—which explains their fight against the Buddhists in Da Nang and elsewhere.

Unrequited love

The ranks of the Italian CP have been swelled by jobless immigrants from the South (particularly Sicily); in order to hold these primitive people from priest-ridden districts, the Italian CP has watered their wine and shown enthusiasm for Dialogue with the Church (if this can serve as an excuse in Italy, it does not in other countries, such as France, where the CP is no less bent on the "Dialogue").

Despite their wooing of the Church, the Pope remains adamant against genuine Marxist, and on the eve of the Italian Municipal Elections, Cardinal Ottaviani repeated that it was "forbidden to Catholics to vote for Marxists" (*Nice Matin*, June 13). In the Rome election the CP lost heavily, which goes to prove that it is better to stick to principles than to fall for the red herrings of the Vatican.

"We are the purest lambs!"

Wrote Karl Kraus, Austria's bitterest satirist, before the last war. "There is no antisemitism in Austria", pretended her Foreign Minister during the Austrian State visit to this country. But some time ago, one of their pro-

Imagination can be stimulated and understanding encouraged without any reference at all to revelation, Christs or resurrections. It doesn't much matter if you dislike someone, so long as you treat him with justice and humanity. And it doesn't matter a bit if Christians "love" Jews, negroes, Secularists, women, neighbours, their enemies or anyone else, if they do nothing about protecting the freedom of these people to reject Anglican beliefs, or refuse to share the privileges which, as Christians, they guard so jealously.

Let one agnostic sum up another: in an *Observer* book review Philip Toynbee wrote about John Wren-Lewis as "an atheist, which is as respectable a position as any other. Nothing but the most tiresome confusion can result from his pretending to be something else. Too much of the New Theology depends on releasing a smokescreen of metaphor to cover what might otherwise have been an honest declaration of disbelief."

But perhaps these apostles of the Love-God are genuinely afraid that outside the fairyland of Christ and Sacraments love is different and less valuable. We have somehow to prove that this is not so. Indeed *they* cannot prove otherwise, not even by "crucifying" the language . . .

Otto Wolfgang

fessors—a former Ukrainian—preached fascist theories and when leftwing students and Socialists demonstrated, they were beaten up, resulting in the death of one elderly man, a member of our Austrian League of Freethinkers. It took 18 months until the Minister of Education could be forced to withdraw his protection of the fascist professor and pension him off.

An American film group used this scandal for a film script, titled *An Austrian Affair*, which was shown in several countries and eventually also on the TV in Vienna. The result was an indignant outcry—not about the facts but that an Austrian had lent his hand in the production of the film. It was the same old attitude as they adopted after the downfall of Hitler. They, the Austrians, had been misled and innocently forced into Nazism.

At a symposium held in New York under the aegis of the Anti-Defamation League and attended by over 200 Christian religious leaders, the editor of a Catholic monthly said that 50 per cent of Catholics had still not rid themselves of anti-Jewish bias and prejudice. This was the finding of a recent survey of the University of California. (*Ex-Serviceman*, July.)

Restive Spain

Spain's biggest export is unemployed to countries where they enjoy democratic liberties, including the right to elect their trade union officials. Their reports have led the workers at home to demand similar rights. With an eye on the growing figure of holiday makers who come to Spain (including certain British trade union officials whose pleasure trip will be paid by the large funds of the fascist *Sindicatos* of the Falange), Franco wants to avoid ugly scenes of police brutality and shooting, if possible. Thus *Arriba* of May 25 printed a proclamation from the "Association of Ancient Members of the Youth Front", inviting all Spaniards of whatever political conviction for a Dialogue to find out the wish of the people for a future(!) democratic platform. Just another red herring, whilst the courts give political prisoners terror sentences. A certain

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CHRISTIANS CONSIDER SCHOOL RELIGION

Margaret McIlroy

IT IS NOT ONLY secularists and humanists who are giving serious thought to the influence of Christianity in the schools. In two recent books (*Religious Education*, 1944-1984, edited by the Rev Alexander Wedderspoon, 12/6, and *The Hibbert Lectures*, 1965, 18/-, both published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) we can examine the attitude of Christians as they discuss their objectives and doubts frankly among themselves. *The Hibbert Lectures* is a scholarly and liberal collection, in which four Christian educationalists try "to re-interpret and re-state the Christian concern for education in relation to contemporary educational thought and practice". *Religious Education*, 1944-1984 is the product of a study conference organised in 1965 by the religious education staff of the London University Institute of Education. This book consists of ten lectures given to the conference, with fifty pages of conclusions and recommendations added. It includes a lecture by Lionel Elvin—*The Standpoint of the Secular Humanist*—which puts our case with admirable clarity.

Dissatisfaction

What picture do we get from these books of what is actually happening in the schools? The Christians themselves are almost uniformly dissatisfied with the actual state and results of school religion. They see the same situation that we see, and they are well aware that it is bad. However, while we blame the nature of religion itself, the Christians blame the shortage of specialist teachers, the out-of-date Agreed Syllabuses, and irreverent assemblies, where worship co-exists uncomfortably with school notices, and teachers cuff children for not singing. Some of the defects of religious education are, it must be admitted, the defects of the education system as a whole. In answer to the facts about the lack of knowledge of the Bible shown by pupils who have allegedly been studying it for years, Christians can point to an equally startling ignorance of history in the same children. Children who are bored by religious instruction may be equally bored by a large part of the curriculum.

Some anti-Christians are inclined to take satisfaction in the deplorable state of school religion, which they say, does Christianity more harm than good by inculcating children against it. The assemblies tend to be unimpressive and boring, and in the religious knowledge classes primary school children are taught a concept of God so hopelessly naïve that they cannot but discard it as they grow older, usually without replacing it. In most schools the effect of the 1944 Act is to make religion a part of the school routine which the average child is delighted to leave behind him with other childish things. However, no one who is concerned about education can welcome inefficiency and disillusion in any part of school life. If every school day starts with something that most pupils consider a dull waste of time, it is not just the attitude to religion that is affected—it is the attitude to education as a whole. The children do not suffer merely from religion at assembly, for few head-teachers, seeing the school collected in front of them, can resist the urge to give another pep-talk or grumble. Moreover, in a large school the actual physical business of getting hundreds of pupils into and out of the hall is an irritating and time-consuming process. One suspects that most of the enthusiasts for the daily act of worship are ex-public school boys, brought up on services in an aesthetically pleasing school chapel. I can assure them that morning assembly in a large secondary modern or

comprehensive school is not the same thing at all. Some of the Christians would be quite happy to see the act of worship cease to be a daily event, and it would certainly be less objectionable from all points of view if it were less frequent.

Difference of Opinion

It is worth noting the enormous differences between the Christians themselves, which are extremely marked, even though there were apparently no Catholic representatives. There is, and must always be, a basic disagreement between secularists and all Christians, because they believe certain things are facts, whereas we are equally certain that they are nothing of the kind. According to the type of Christian the number of "facts" on which they insist varies, but the really important division among Christians is between those who do, and those who do not, insist that to hold a certain set of beliefs is a duty, and the failure to believe is an offence which God will punish. Christians who hold the liberal viewpoint here in practice have often more in common with Freethinkers than with their fellow Christians of the hell-fire-and-damnation school. Those who take the reactionary, authoritarian line here are usually reactionary and authoritarian in everything. They are the ones who insist that the duty of a religious education teacher is to turn out Christians, whereas the more liberal Christians merely wish children to be well-informed about Christianity, so that they can make up their own minds intelligently about it. Thus David Ayerst ("Religious Education in the Secondary School" in *Religious Education*, 1944-1984) says:

"I should not want to proselytize. There must certainly be a conscience clause for parents; but I should want my teaching to be such that, even if none existed, there could be no legitimate complaint about my teaching."

(All the speakers agreed that teachers should not try to convert children, but it is clear that the majority of religious instruction teachers do aim to make their pupils into Christians, and take the fact that few become active church members as a sign of failure.) Another liberal, Dennis Nineham ("Contemporary Movements in Psychology" in *Religious Education*, 1944-1984) complained that "far too much of the divinity teaching in our schools is fundamentalist, at any rate in its general implications and the impact it makes on the pupils". Probably the worst teaching is to the youngest children, who, the more sophisticated Christians complain, are presented with an idea of God so naïve that secondary school teachers find it an obstacle to their own teaching. Several speakers deplore the indiscriminate teaching of the Old Testament. Thus David Ayerst says: "Because a sense of historical development comes late, too much Old Testament is apt to give highly distorted ideas of the nature of God". Despite these enlightened religionists, many children are still being disturbed by Bible stories which are horrific as well as morally degrading, and this is likely to continue as long as school religious instruction does. Roy Lee ("Contemporary Movements in Psychology" in *Religious Education*, 1944-1984) says:

"Religious education must have a two-fold aim, to foster independence and to foster community . . . Morals should not be taught as absolute and authoritative, and there should be as little emphasis on negative morality

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REPORT FROM PARIS

THE 1966 CONFERENCE of the International Humanist and Ethical Union is being held at the Puteaux Town Hall in Paris, with representatives from 27 countries. The first two working days were devoted to *The Humanist Outlook*, with introductory and commentary papers from the platform and discussion from the "floor". *The Humanist Contribution* was not to be dealt with until the Thursday sessions. This separation of theory, philosophy, or (as one member suggested) "inlook" from the more practical aspects, was, in my view, positively unhumanist and reduced most of the first session to words—words—words.

An outsider might well have concluded, from the male-monopolised platform, that Humanist women have not yet won sexual equality in the Movement, and indeed by Thursday (and the time of posting this report) only four women had spoken at all. I asked an American Humanist woman why she thought this was, "Because we have nothing to say", she said; "nor have the men, of course, but they won't admit it . . ." And the general comment so far has centred on the fact that we weren't "getting anywhere", and it has "all been said before".

Hector Hawton (one of the 19 members of the all-male Board of Directors) made the most down-to-earth contribution, suggesting that we need to be able to define Humanism "on a postcard" for enquirers but no one has produced even the postcard.

A lot of time was taken up by those who (living in countries where atheism is "dangerous" and Unitarianism relatively co-operative and rational) want Humanism to be a religion. But Professor K. Horn (of Norway) pointed out that, in his country, the smallest shade of religiosity would hamper the work of the Humanists who could openly declare their atheism. One felt again that Great Britain stands between the progressive lands of Scandinavia, where religion can be ignored, and America (and of course the Catholic countries) where religion is still a pass-word to security. All the more reason, then, that we should look ahead, and wherever possible enjoy a Norwegian freedom rather than imitate those who have even less of it than we have.

There were clearly many Unitarians present; mention was made of "adoring the unknown", but Professor Horn suggested that it would be just as logical to detest it. The sympathy of the Conference does appear to be with religion rather than with the scepticism of Freethought and Secularism.

Internationalism in action

The contrast in Humanist outlook, however, was perhaps the most valuable aspect of the Conference. But equally it was tempting to wonder if we would not all have learned a great deal more merely by contacting national groups, and by being able to discover (from asking questions) the obstacles they face as Humanists and thus learning the reasons for their "outlook" and the direction of their "contribution".

Only one, the American Dr M. I. Spetter, pleaded for a respite from "philosophical bankruptcy", and for more humour and passion. And he, of course, was told to wait until the session on "Contribution" began. When it did we were back with the old platitudes and words. Only Dr Ogwurike (Ghana) dared to sketch an outline of actual,

factual problems as he knows them (in Africa), and to suggest what needs to be done. He also raised the first laugh (on Thursday) with the story of an African woman hospital patient who prayed that no one would steal her empty medicine bottles while she left them unguarded. They were stolen, and she wept. "But the Bible says", the Humanist doctor pointed out, "Watch and pray and you have only prayed . . . !" And we could see that the Bible can, in such cases, provide a means by which people steeped in religion can forsake their faith for self-help.

It was with relief that I heard younger Humanists announced. Mr T. Lambert (UHF) stressed not a moment to soon that youth is angry and impatient, and wants a positive commitment and a committed opposition to oppression. Our task, he said, is not just to observe or to create a common ideology, but to act. But nobody told us what for, against or how. Mr Kensis emphasised that it is hypocritical to deny the use of all compulsion when we obviously believe in "forcing" people to reform our laws. If Roman Catholics use force to prevent education in, say, birth control, then we must limit their freedom to impose their views.

The only serious contribution from a woman has come from Frau Professor E. Illig, who spoke against the Vatican/IHEU dialogues and outlined the efforts of Catholics in West Germany to win privileges for their segregated schools.

All very respectable and harmless

With a lot of mutual admiration, nobody's toes have yet been trodden on. I would by now like to see at least some of the interesting if not by any means fully interested audience hopping and grasping those toes. Life is more interesting once the official talk and stilted discussion is over, with magnificent "school" lunches, a free exchange of views with Americans who share all our own views about Vietnam and Germans who do not resent reference to Nazi persecutions. Valuable personal contacts and real friendships are being made, and in spite of all the speeches, we are learning something more about Humanism "abroad". And then outside it all is the sunlit, shining "city of screaming tyres", and we are glad we came. More next week.

KM.

WINDOW ON THE WORLD

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José Louis Calbide was recently sentenced to 20 years on a trumped-up charge, without a shred of evidence. In protest against this sentence the 13 political prisoners in Martutene declared a 48-hour hunger strike (*Libertad*, June).

After a tribute to the valour of the Soviet youth during the war years, *Christian Science Monitor* (May 23) quotes Soviet Youth leaders as complaining that everyday experiences are instilling in their youth a parasitical ideology coupled with disorderly drunkenness. At the same time, *Pravda* in an editorial excused the current rebellion amongst the younger generation. "Young people do not easily accept double-standards from their elders, catchphrases and slogans that seem hypocritical, or humbug of any kind in word or deed".

The June issue of the (Flemish) *Vrijdenker* carries a resumé of an address given in 1964 by an ex-priest, G. Las Vergnas, under the title "Does God really exist?". They also offer remaining copies of his reprint "Why I left the Church".

TWO NATIONS

David Collis (b. 1937) is a business man who reached Humanism from the Church of England during his late teens.

"All the heated arguments about comprehensive schools disregard the most fundamental educational and social cleavage of all in this country, the creation of two nations by religious division in State schooling."

With this trenchant observation Fyfe Robertson opened his contribution for a BBC Twenty-Four Hours programme last April.

We were shown film of a merry band of Irishmen on their way to Glasgow for the Scottish Cup Final between Celtic and Rangers and we saw them being accompanied and kept in order by stalwart, peace-preserving policemen. Mr Michelmores reminded us, and many of us needed no reminding, that a Celtic versus Rangers football match tears Glasgow into two violent religious factions. Just how violent on this occasion we were to learn when the Cup Final actually took place. The *Sunday Times* tersely recorded that

"six people were arrested, 40 were injured and three collapsed and died . . . The 40 injured spectators, some with head wounds caused by flying bottles, were taken to Glasgow Victoria Infirmary. One man, reported to have suffered a stab wound, was in a serious condition . . ."

Sad to note, in this Christian ecumenically-spirited year of 1966, that a religious war still flares on what is supposed to be a field of sport. However, as Mr Michelmores observed, "the division does not come just on the football field".

Standing outside a primary school in Dalkeith, near Edinburgh, Fyfe Robertson went on to tell his several million viewers what we Secularists have been trying to persuade them for many months. It is worth repeating.

"All the heated arguments about comprehensive schools disregard the most fundamental educational and social cleavage of all in this country, the creation of two nations by religious division in State schooling."

We saw some of the 600 pupils arriving at the school to start the day's work. We were told that 250 were Catholics and 380 Protestants. A fair representation of Scotland's 30 per cent Catholic population. Not only did we have the pleasure of seeing Catholic and Protestant children arrive together at the school, but we saw the ecumenical spirit prevail further when these innocent little adherents of two starkly different religions accompanied one another at their mid-day meal without any visible trace of animosity.

Marriage of Convenience

But here the welcome unity ends. "This is not one school," Mr Robertson told us, "as many gratified people outside think—but two." Two schools which come together on one site in a marriage of mere monetary convenience. Here are the two schools of St Luke and Mayfield Primary, each occupying one half of the school building. The former is Catholic with Cornelius Garivatt as Head and the latter is Protestant with John Trail for Headmaster. (I hope I have spelled their names correctly.)

The Catholic and Protestant children do not join each other for any lessons. As Mr Garivatt, the Catholic headmaster, pertinently pointed out, "In addition to the normal religious instruction, the Catholic ethic is constantly referred to during the day when and if the occasion arises." I leave it to my readers to interpret what this means in practice. If it is so important to Catholic parents that their children should continually assimilate this exclusively Catholic ethic in school, and important that constant reference should be made to this particular ethic throughout the day, why, you might ask, do these Catholic children

not attend an exclusively Catholic school? Why are they schooled in such dangerous proximity on the same premises as their Protestant antagonists?

An expensive scandal

Mr Garivatt gave us the answer, and it was heartening indeed to hear a Catholic headmaster proclaim publicly on television to millions that religiously segregated education is not cheaper than integrated education, as certain people ingenuously believe. It is, in fact, more expensive. "Normally," said Mr Garivatt, "a Catholic school would be distinct, a distant building, but for economic reasons the hierarchy allowed the siting of a Catholic and non-Catholic school together in order that *certain facilities* would be common to both and therefore they would not be *duplicated*" (my italics).

How often do we hear the cry that since the State contributes only 75 per cent of the cost of building a new denominational school (common sense forbids that this should be raised to 80 per cent!), Catholics therefore contribute 25 per cent of the cost in addition to their portion of the 75 per cent which has been raised in taxes and rates, *and thereby save the State money*. This cry is uttered either by those who are genuinely uninformed about the facts of the matter, or by those who have a vested interest in the continuation and increase of religiously segregated education. Mr Garivatt told us that the arrangement of the two schools in one is based purely on financial considerations. He does not consider it a social experiment. Indeed who, with the best will in the world, could consider it as such when told that the children do not even play together. The Catholics have their playground at one end of the building and the Protestants have theirs at the other end.

The extreme situation in this particular school highlights the dangerous absurdity of thrusting Religion into every State school and supporting it with the force of the Law. We saw in the film little Catholic children beginning their school day making solemn gestures of the hands to and fro across their chest, and utting "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen", all under the watchful eye of a Virgin Mary. Whilst the Protestant children segregated from them in the other half of the school, sang their hymn of devotion, "Praise Him, Praise Him all ye little children; He is Love, He is Love". But is this situation in fact peculiar to this one primary school in Dalkeith?

Act of God and Unreason

Of course it isn't. Every State school is obliged to start the school day with an act of Worship. Invariably, this means in practice an Act of Division. It is an Act of dividing the Protestant stamped children from the human bits of Catholic coveted property who are segregated to take part in their own Act of Division. It is an Act which may brand the Star of David on the ill-begotten Jew or make a pariah of the Moslem son of Ham. It is an Act of Hypocrisy, of Sham, Pretence and Double-Dealing. It is an Act of revoking the very reason which the is urged to use as soon as it leaves the Place of Worship. It is an Act of retaining a ghost-ridden, faction-torn piece of our supernaturalist past. It is an Act which mocks the present and jeopardises the future. It is an Act which should be removed from the Statute book and from the school.

Cardinal Heenan longs for the day when Britain will be

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David Collis

TWO NATIONS

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Catholic again. He is not the only ardent religionist who wishes to see his own particular Church wax in strength, proclaiming the glorious word of the Lord. The missions are still with us. The proselytisers still go forth armed with the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Notwithstanding the so-called move towards Christian unity, spiritual warmongering is still very much to be seen in 1966. And its effects will still be felt in 1967.

Threat to Internationalism

Let us face fairly and squarely those who say that "the public wants religion to stay in the schools". As long as the supernaturalist absurdity of a daily Act of Worship and the perpetuation of dishonesty through religious indoctrination is allowed to continue in our schools, for so long will human relations development in social living and progress towards world federalism suffer. It is fortunate that there are nationally prominent people who are prepared to do everything they can to make others realise the

serious implications and consequences of the legalised imposition of religion in schools. I hope more and more prominent people will realise this is one of the most important issues of the day, and that they too will use their influence to good effect.

That the special legal privilege of religionists to indoctrinate children should be abrogated is a matter of the utmost importance, both national and international. The Labour Party said repeatedly during its election campaign: "We are not afraid to govern. We are not afraid to take measures which, though they be unpopular, are in the national interest." Fair enough. Will the Government now hold the clock of progress back, and bow the knee in subservient obedience to the demands of prelates? Or will it acknowledge the gravity of the "Religion in the Schools" issue, and take the appropriate measures?

Without procrastinating, now is the time to revoke those provisions of the 1944 Education Act which are, in very large measure, responsible for "the most fundamental educational and social cleavage of all in this country, the creation of two nations by religious division in State schooling".

CHRISTIANS CONSIDER SCHOOL RELIGION

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as possible. . . . Each individual must become his own authority. This independence must hold even in relation to God. This is the only kind of God worth teaching."

One can only point out that this is not the kind of God Christians have been in the habit of teaching.

Denominationalism

Many speakers note, and welcome, the decline of denominationalism. (Today a Christian's denomination gives little indication of his actual views, and an Anglican may be either the most broad-minded liberal or a near-papist reactionary.) It is admitted by the Bishop of London ("Christian Education and Christian Unity" in *Religious Education*, 1944-1984) among others, that educational progress in England was severely hampered in the nineteenth century by denominational squabbles, as the established Church tried to control the whole national educational system, against strenuous pressure from the Nonconformists. The "Agreed Syllabus" clauses in the 1944 Act were carefully drawn up to provide a satisfactory compromise, and have proved so effective in so doing that the bitterness and the reasons for it are largely forgotten. The resulting syllabuses, however, are often unsatisfactory to teachers, as **acceptability to clergy of various denominations has been the criterion, rather than comprehensibility to the child.**

Liberal Christians themselves are clearly so delighted at the growth in brotherliness that they fail to realise the extreme illiberalism of some of those they are trying to make friends with. This is unfortunate, as while the Protestants are congratulating themselves on their broad-mindedness, the Catholic Church, almost as intolerant as ever, is taking advantage of the lack of opposition to expand its school system more and more at the public expense. Thus the result of the blurring of the denominational divisions between Protestants may well be that a larger and larger proportion of children are being taught Catholicism along narrow denominational lines. All these essays completely ignore the problem of Roman Catholic

schools, where masses of children are receiving teaching which must be highly distasteful to those who believe that "religious education must aim to foster independence", and that "morals should not be taught as absolute and authoritative, and there should be as little emphasis on negative morality as possible".

Some of the Christian speakers show a deep concern for human values in education, which we should all share. Such Christians tend to identify personal with religious values. Thus F. H. Hilliard ("Christianity in the County Schools" *Hibbert Lectures*) says that a fundamental Christian attitude is "to see work not as an end in itself, but as done towards furthering the kingdom of God on earth, and done all the time for the benefit of individuals who are not to be thought of only in terms of their IQ, but also as the objects of the love and concern of God himself". After removing God from this statement, one is left with something that should be a vital concern to all educationalists, for our highly selective education system has all too often been guilty precisely of thinking of children "only in terms of their IQ". Similarly, W. R. Niblett ("Higher Education—Personal and Impersonal", *Hibbert Lectures*) says: "A primary element in Christian teaching must always be the need for personally feeling into the situation of others and of responding to that situation". Such writers seem to see Christianity as the only defence against the impersonalisation and the "I'm all right, Jack" attitude which are such deplorable features of modern life. Fortunately many non-Christians are as disturbed as they about these trends.

It is a pity that so many Christians feel they must automatically support the present privileged status of religion in the schools, for the facts they themselves quote show that the 1944 Act does Christianity little service. School religion today seems to put as many off Christianity as it converts. If they start to think their position out afresh, they might well work out a system which would ensure that children were sufficiently informed about Christianity to be able to make up their minds about it—which Christians claim is all they are trying to do—without giving Christianity a status which makes non-Christian pupils and teachers second-class citizens in their own schools.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

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

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.: Messrs. COLLINS, DUIGNAN, MILLS and WOOD.

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

British Humanist Association. Fourth Annual Conference, City of Leicester College of Education, August 26th-29th. RICHARD HAUSER, MARGARET KNIGHT, JOE SANDERS, and MICHAEL NICHOLSON. Details: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8. South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, September 25th, 3 p.m., Annual Reunion. Guest of Honour: Professor A. J. AYER. West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, E11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

BOOK REVIEW

Ruth Samuel

Taboo by Armand Denis. (W. H. Allen, London, 1966, 30/-.)

IT WAS ALMOST INEVITABLE in this age of extreme sexual awareness that someone would write another book on the theme of sex and morality around the world. As M. Denis indicates, there has been a marked and rapid change in western attitudes towards sexual practice and education, and therefore it is interesting to compare these attitudes here, there, and everywhere.

The book is extremely entertaining throughout and only rarely flags. M. Denis goes from place to place, from animal to human and back again, comparing and contrasting their social habits. Fascinating snippets of information such as might enliven many an after-dinner conversation are provided; one that seemed particularly intriguing tells of a girl who confidently stuck a postage stamp over her navel, believing it to be a reliable contraceptive technique.

Taboo is not a text-book. It is episodic rather than comprehensive, the customs of large areas of the world are entirely omitted, information on the whole American continent is absent except for trivial comment, and a chapter on the Eskimo people, whose development has been entirely different from that of most others, is regrettably absent. On the other hand the book maintains a certain authority because the author writes only of places he knows personally. He comes to the conclusion that wherever he

has been western morality has already shown its influence, heavily in some places and only slightly in the more remote areas. Because all communities must adapt to meet their particular changing social and economic conditions, this has led to different solutions in different places. Japan, with its post-war licentiousness, has had great difficulty in marrying tradition to modern thought; India has swung almost to a Victorian primness.

It is always interesting to learn how primitive and isolated communities have organised their social structure, adapting themselves to geographic and economic circumstances without undue external influences. M. Denis gives some examples of these, reminding us of the need for primitive man to create the warrior and hunter rather than the peaceful man, simply in order to survive. Surely it is the complexity of man's life, wherever it is, plus the realisation of the need to survive, that makes it impossible for him to behave sexually as straightforwardly as animals usually do. Man alone adds a large and hazardous measure of emotional involvement, and part of the history of sexual taboo is bound up with his need to rationalise this with his need to survive. The added modern problem of over-population which is undoubtedly adding further taboos to an already complicated life, must not be forgotten.

This is an interesting, informative and fascinating book for the general reader, who will find it easy to read and adequately illustrated. It is certain to please most of the large number of people who have enjoyed Armand Denis' television programmes in recent years.

WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS

(in association with the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY)

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

LONDON—SEPTEMBER 1st—SEPTEMBER 5th, 1966
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, WC1
(by kind permission of the Committee)

Thursday, September 1st

- 2.30 p.m. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Private)
- 7.30 p.m. ORGANISING COMMITTEE (Private)

Friday, September 2nd

- 10.0 a.m. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL (Private)
- 7.30 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION

FREETHOUGHT IN THE FUTURE

HAROLD PINTER MARGARET KNIGHT
MICHAEL FOOT, MP PROFESSOR HYMAN LEVY
PROFESSOR POMEAU DAVID TRIBE

Saturday, September 3rd

- 9.30 p.m.—5 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION
- FREETHOUGHT IN THE PAST**
F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT
PROFESSOR WALTER ARNSTEIN DAVID TRIBE
PROFESSOR O. LUTAUD DR G. CONFORTO
H. FREISTUHLER PROFESSOR POMEAU

Saturday, September 3rd 7 p.m.

CONGRESS DINNER

THE HORSE SHOE HOTEL, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, WC1

Details to be announced soon

Sunday, September 4th

- 10 a.m.—5 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION
- FREETHOUGHT IN THE FUTURE**
- 7.30 p.m. CONCERT

Monday, September 5th

(Public)

- 9.30 a.m. CLOSING SESSION (RESOLUTIONS)
- 2.00 p.m. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL (Private)
- 3.00 p.m. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Private)

INTRODUCTION TO ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

(1788-1860)

John Sutherland

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER was born on February 22nd, 1788, in Danzig. His father, an intelligent man with a strong character and love of liberty, was a banker. In 1805, on an April day, he was found dead in a canal. The boy who had venerated him was distraught. A year later, his mother opened a salon for literary people; among her guests were Goethe and Grimm. Unfortunately the relationship between her and Arthur became strained. When Arthur came of age he inherited a yearly income of about £150, and in 1809 he went to the University of Göttingen as a student of medicine. It was during a holiday in the Harz mountains that he decided to become a philosopher. In the little town of Rudolfstadt he wrote his dissertation *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, which earned him a doctorate from the University of Jena. His mother remarked that the title of the book reminded her of a chemist's prescription!

The relationship between this talented woman (author of some 24 novels) and her brilliant son never improved, and cannot have helped Schopenhauer to feel kindly about women. He wrote that "They are big children all their life long . . ." but admitted that "without women, the beginning of our life would be helpless; the middle devoid of pleasure; and the end, of consolation." He believed that "the only business that really claims their earnest attention is love, making conquests, and everything connected with this—dress, dancing and so on . . ."; and who can blame him if he thought that "the fundamental fault of the female character is that it has no sense of justice"? Schopenhauer believed in polygamy and considered that it would be in the interest of women.

An atheistic essay, published at his own expense, was not a success. At Weimar he was introduced to Indian philosophy, and the greatest influences in his life were probably the works of Plato, Kant and the Upanishads.

His masterpiece *The World as Will and Idea* was published in 1819. No notice was taken of it. If he had addressed his manuscript to a country churchyard, the result could hardly have been less fruitful. Goethe, however, read the book in one hour—and praised it.

Schopenhauer withdrew into an even greater solitude. He was tormented by disappointment and neglect, while fame, riches and honours fell to the undeserving. On a trip to Italy he took with him an introduction to Byron from Goethe, but made no use of it, choosing always to be alone. On one occasion he so forcefully ejected a seamstress from his rooms (where she had intruded on his privacy), that he had to pay her £9 a year compensation.

In 1839 Schopenhauer was awarded the prize for the best essay on Free Will by the Norwegian Academy. He believed that Brahminism and Buddhism were both superior religions to Christianity; he condemned the inhumane treatment of animals and detested militarism, saying that he preferred to serve humanity with his pen rather than with his arm.

Fame came to Schopenhauer overnight with his publication in 1851 of his book *Parerga and Paralipomena*. Nine years later he died, as he had lived, alone. His tombstone was inscribed, as he would have wished, with nothing but his name . . . Arthur Schopenhauer.

LETTERS

Invitation to pillars of learning

IT IS OBVIOUS that there is a widespread request for simplicity and clarity in presenting the atheist case, in the FREETHINKER, nothing academic or high-brow, but well within the orbit of the artisan. This is Freethinking *par excellence*. You mention the Churches' resistance to the RSPCA, quite commendable and news to many readers, but there should be supporting evidence, who said what, and when? This criticism could be extended to the disgraceful rôle of the churches in seeking to suppress the use of anaesthetics, formation of trade unions, upholding slavery, and other anomalies of which they are manifestly guilty.

Which brings this reader to request you to "blow the gaff" more efficiently, particularly for new and young readers. I appeal to the "pillars of learning" to pass on their erudition *now*, for "they will not pass this way again".

H. FAIRHURST

The General Assembly

Mrs. M. Watson's letter (July 1st) contains one or two errors in fact which I should like to correct. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland meets for nine days each year (including one Sunday when no business is transacted) which is rather less than the "three weeks" mentioned by Mrs. Watson. Also, of the 1,300 Commissioners attending the Assembly only half are ministers. In Presbyterian Church government, the courts of the Church, i.e., Presbytery, Synod and Assembly, consist of equal numbers of ministers and laymen.

May I also point out that the military pageantry associated with the Assembly is accorded not to the Church as such, but to the Lord High Commissioner who represents the Sovereign at the Assembly; the Church of Scotland having the unique position of being both an "Established" yet "Free" Church.

BRUCE CANNON, *Press Officer*

Rights of Succession of Illegitimate Persons

HUMANISTS will welcome the recommendations of the Committee on the law of Succession in relation to illegitimate persons, which sat under the chairmanship of Lord Justice Russell, and whose report is now published by the SO (Cmd 3051) 2/6. To summarise: the Committee recommends the extension of the right of an illegitimate person and his legitimate issue if he predeceases—to a share of his mother's estate, on her dying intestate; to cases where the mother leaves legitimate issue, and on the basis of equality. Similar recommendations are made in the case of the father's intestacy, as the Courts are considered to have a well defined procedure for deciding questions of paternity which may arise.

A minority view is expressed by Sir Hugh Lucas-Tooth. While these recommendations do not remove all the disabilities at present imposed on the rights of succession of illegitimate persons (e.g., the illogical restriction in the second generation to legitimate issue only), it will be regarded as a step in the right direction. Perhaps the NSS may have more to say about this subject in due course.

W. BYNNER

"WITHOUT COMMENT"

"Jesus": A composite myth.—"A mythical approach to reality is quite out of the question for modern man. Talk which interweaves supernatural events with natural ones (e.g., takes miracles as both 'miracles', i.e., divinely caused, and 'events', i.e., ordinarily observed), or intersperses historical happenings with happenings with a supra- or extra-historical source (e.g., supposes that all historical personage 'comes down from Heaven', or is, in a literally descriptive sense, 'the Son of God') is always mythological . . . This means that practically the whole of the Bible is strictly non-sense today." (D. Jenkins, Chaplain, Queen's College, Oxford, in his *Guide to the Debate about God*, p. 58, London, 1966.)

Excerpted by G. S. SMELTERS