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YOUR WITNESS — RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

ON BBC 1 at 10.25 p.m., Friday, September 15th, Mr Louis Blom-Cooper opened the case for the proposition 'that there should be no religious observance or instruction in State schools'. Sixty-five minutes later the debate had been concluded, the vote taken, and the motion lost by 10 votes to 20.

Neither Mr Blom-Cooper nor Mr. Patrick Jenkin, the Conservative MP who opposed, conducted their case very well. Mr Blom-Cooper treated the opposition's witnesses with scant respect, tried to discredit and browbeat them rather than answer the points they made. Mr Jenkin made a hash of his case almost from start to finish. He was never very confident at the outset and as the debate wore on, Mr Jenkin became more confused by what he was struggling to say and even less confident about his effectiveness in saying it, stumbling and mumbling in a most uninspired way. Mr Blom-Cooper certainly had his shortcomings as proposer, but I thought he made the better case and deserved to win.

One of the witnesses called by Mr Blom-Cooper should have gone home a wiser man. I refer to Dr James Hemming. Dr Hemming answered the questions put to him in an admirable manner. He gave vigorous support to the proposition and his debating performance was faultless. However, Mr Jenkin managed to weaken Dr Hemming's otherwise strong argument with the virile help of Dr Hemming himself.

Two years ago Dr Hemming was a member of a group of Christians and Humanists who met to draw up proposals for *Religious and Moral Education* in county (i.e., State) schools. The group agreed: "We recognise that if our recommendations were carried out, the Christian faith would remain in a privileged position in our county schools and we think this educationally desirable against the background of opinion in this country". Mr Jenkin was curious

to know why Dr Hemming could, on the one hand, claim so forcibly that he wanted no religious instruction and observance in State schools when, on the other hand, he had been a signatory to a report which contended it was educationally desirable that the Christian faith should remain in a privileged position in our schools. Dr Hemming had been signatory to this above-mentioned report prepared by a group which, in its own words, found themselves 'united by a desire for positive action, rejecting the equally negative attitudes of a full defence or rejection of the religious clauses of the 1944 Act affecting county schools'. Small wonder that Mr Jenkin, looking at the list of Humanist signatories to the group report, should have claimed that there were even Humanist educationists who supported retention of religious observance and instruction. Even the fragile Mr Jenkin could not fail to score a few points on this. It is not inconceivable that some members of the voting panel should have thus concluded that, not only are Humanists in a minority but by no means all of this minority want the religious provisions of the 1944 Act to be abolished.

I do not wish to belittle Dr Hemming, whom I personally hold in high regard. I simply wish to stress the moral, that there should be no half-measures on this issue. We must improve our weapons, augment our forces and outmanoeuvre the opposition. We must make an uncompromising, relentless and unceasing attack on those who defend and seek retention of the religious provisions of the 1944 Act. Concessions to those in the 'enemy camp' will simply weaken our position, not strengthen it, will delay the abolition of compulsory religious observance and instruction, not hasten it.

One unfortunate feature of this television debate was the partisanship of the Chairman, Ludovic Kennedy. On three occasions, twice with questions and once with comment, he interposed in favour of the proposition and never to the benefit of the opposition. I would have liked to have seen the motion carried as I am sure Ludovic Kennedy, a fellow Humanist, would have done. I can also understand the great temptation impelling Mr Kennedy to interpose, albeit in a relatively mild way, on the proposition's behalf. The secular humanist voice has been virtually banned from radio and television until quite recently, and even now is heard most reluctantly by those religionists who still have something of a *carte blanche* on propaganda facilities and know next to nothing of polemical fairness. Moreover, Mr Kennedy was doing no more, indeed less, than religious chairmen have done and continue to do. However, it would have been better had the temptation been resisted.

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Harry Lamont

DO THE DEAD SPEAK?**Speaking Personally**

FROM TIME immemorial various persons have claimed to be able to communicate with the departed. It is natural that we should wish to find out what happens in the life after death. That is why so many rogues have made easy money trading on the credulity of the bereaved.

During and immediately after a war there is a vast resurgence of interest in spiritualism. So-called mediums spring up like mushrooms on a manure heap.

But it has never been proved that there is any life after death. I don't think there is, but am prepared to admit the possibility. Nevertheless all the cases of alleged communications that I investigated seemed to me fraudulent.

Sometimes we are told that spiritualism must be true because a famous scientist believes in it. But away from his special subject (chemistry, physics, astronomy or geology), the famous scientist can be as credulous as a child. A famous scientist whom I knew used a celebrated medium who was subsequently jailed as a rogue and a vagabond.

The credulity of the real believer in communications beyond the grave is proof against all demonstrations of trickery. Many years ago a big fat woman whom I shall call Mrs Pumpkin, travelled all over the British Isles pretending to converse with spirits. In a darkened room, dimly lit by a feeble red light, she spoke with the voices of a little girl, a Red Indian Chief and various famous personages. She used to stuff her mouth with cheese-cloth impregnated with luminous paint which she regurgitated and pretended it was ectoplasm, the substance by which spirits are supposed to manifest themselves. Twice she was jailed for fraud, but many of her dupes continued to believe in her.

When the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle came out to South Africa to lecture on spiritualism a friend of mine, a keen photographer, faked a picture that appeared to depict the heads of spirits in the branches of a fruit tree in bright sunlight. The lecturer identified the snap as a true spirit photograph, but nobody had the sense to ask how the ectoplasm could persist in bright sunlight. This substance is supposed to be soluble in a strong light, hence the need of a dim red light or even complete darkness, at seances.

In Henry IV, Part I, the following conversation takes place:

Glendower: "I can call spirits from the vasty deep."

Hotspur: "Why, so can I, or so can any man. But will they come when you do call for them?"

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Shakespeare says in Hamlet:

"The dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of."

Despite all the false claims of bogus mediums, nobody has ever come back or spoken to us about life in the hereafter. We don't know and those who pretend they do delude themselves.

Half a century ago I read a book that depicted spirits in celestial realms eating fine food, enjoying choice wines and smoking the finest cigars. To me such a picture seemed ridiculous nonsense, but doubtless gave great comfort to many whose sons had been killed in battle.

We postulate a hereafter peopled by spirits because we fear death. We shrink from the idea of extinction. So we kid ourselves that it is possible to communicate with the departed.

When I read that a ghost appeared and even spoke to people, rattled chains or threw objects across the room, I feel sceptical. A ghost is supposed to be non-material, therefore can't be seen; has no speech organs, therefore can't be heard. But one can't get away from the fact that quite intelligent people do believe in ghosts.

When I lived in Jamaica I found that my servants were very unwilling to go out after dark. If I asked one to take a message to a house in the neighbourhood in the evening, he invariably pleaded that he was sick. They stuffed with paper or rags all the cracks to prevent the spirits (called *duppies*) from getting in. A belief in such creatures is inherent in primitive man, but we shall (I hope) gradually lose it as we become more civilised.

When I was a child I was terrified by a mythical person called a boggy man who came in the night and could do much harm. It seems to me that adults should never threaten children with the visitations of evil spirits. Throughout the whole of my childhood I was scared of going to bed alone in the dark. How many dreary hours I spent sitting at the top of the stairs, waiting for my brother to come up!

When I reached manhood I frequently entered a cemetery at midnight and stretched out on a flat tombstone, hoping a ghost would come, but I invariably drew blank.

From time to time one reads of a parson exorcizing a house that is supposed to be haunted. Such a belief in demonology seems to me absurd and reduces the holy man to the level of an African witch doctor.

At intervals popular newspapers run a feature that discusses communications with the dead. The result is overwhelming. Countless credulous simpletons who have been spoofed by bogus mediums rush to testify that they have received messages from the departed. It is very simple to hoax the earnest enquirer, desperate for news from a departed loved one. I know a wealthy woman who has spent a fortune consulting charlatans, all of whom have a vested interest in relieving her of her money.

In this connection here is one of my favourite quotations (from Swinburne):

"We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever god may be
That no man lives for ever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

THE GREAT SENSE OF STRAIN

Eve King

The text of the talk given at the Freedom of Vision Teach-in on Censorship in the Arts at Hampstead Old Town Hall on October 2nd, 1966.

THE QUESTION, I think, of censorship in the historical place in the visual arts is probably rather different from the others because censorship has certainly been the normal rather than the exception.

Art, until the nineteenth century at least, was always in service—and it was in the service, first of all, of kings who were also gods; and then, when the division came, it was in the service of religion or in the service of absolutism. This is going to imply different types of censorship at different periods—and I think we can best see this when we look at the question of censorship, voluntary or otherwise, in Christianity, compared, for instance, with censorship in Buddhism or Hinduism.

Any treatment of the nude on a Hindu temple is very different from the treatment of St Sebastian or a Pieta in a medieval Christian facade.

The problem, I think, really starts in the Renaissance, where one had a classical heritage—though, of course, it isn't from Greek direct, for the Renaissance is always Roman; they know nothing of Greece at all—and a tiny moment of time when, it seems possible—I should think less than a quarter of a century between 1505 and the sack of Rome in 1527—when you can equate Christianity and the Classical (Raphael is, I think, the case in point) and where one doesn't have to be conscious of prudery, one doesn't have to X anything through, either, in one's mind: there is no kind of tension or strain between what you're saying and how you're saying it.

Now this is a moment Michelangelo lives through—but we are soon faced with Reformation galore—and with Counter Reformation in Italy—and Michelangelo has the irony of finding in the fifteen-forties that they are employing an artist—poor man, he's ever after got the name of the breeches-maker, which sticks to him for life—to paint clothes on the nudes in his Last Judgment on the Sistine ceiling; as someone said:—

"If you can't be nude at the last judgment, when can you?"

The Counter-Reformation sets up—not only for the artist—an enormously limited range of what one can say—and, toeing the party line, how one can say things: Veronese is hauled up before the Inquisition because of a Last Supper where he not only had a bleeding nose and a large leg of lamb, but, in fact, a dog where a magdalen should have been—and he defended this saying something that I think we would have a strong parallel for today:—

"I defend my right as an artist to place something where I feel it would be most fitting; and I didn't think the magdalen would look very well there."

He had powerful friends at court and nothing more was said.

About two centuries later Goya is hauled up before the Inquisition to account for his having painted two pictures I'm sure you know, because they were in London only a couple of years ago, the clothed and the nude 'maja'—they had nothing to do with the Duchess of Alva, she was already dead by then—and the clothed 'maja' was essentially far more erotic than the nude one; we might have known something very interesting if he'd bothered to turn up, but he didn't.

By the eighteenth century there was a significant change: what had been censored in one generation was becoming

acceptable in the next. I think one can see this today: in *The Listener* someone was saying that if D. H. Lawrence had an exhibition now of those nudes that, in fact, were seized in 1929 they would arouse no stir of any kind.

The wheel keeps on coming full cycle: what would have been acceptable for the seventeenth century in the shape of a good rumbustious Rubens' nude would certainly not have been collected in the eighteenth century, when one was specialising in Boucher's.

We, ourselves, particularly in this country, I think, have such a strong puritan heritage: how many of us still in our heart of hearts don't feel there is something a little bit wrong about Bernini's use of marble in quite that sensuous way? It is probably that the very word 'BAROQUE' tends to get equated with popery in the eighteenth century; even in the introduction to the catalogue of BAVARIAN ROCOCO ART at the 'Victoria and Albert', no more than half-a-dozen years ago, Professor Pevsner said, almost having to be on the defensive:—

"I do hope that this small exhibition may reconcile you a little bit to Bavarian rococo art";

—one of the most magnificent outbursts of a completely spontaneous kind; and yet even then, if they are torn out of context, some of us feel slightly uncomfortable about riotous 'putti'; even to the extent of thinking that the Mozart masses were too secular—but if you've heard any of them in Salzburg Cathedral I think you realise the whole thing comes together.

With the French Revolution the Bouchers were being condemned and burnt, and someone like the Marquis of Hertford was able to buy for a song all the French rococo art which is now in the Wallace Collection in Manchester Square.

In the nineteenth century you have the most rigid censorship very often not so much coming from the top as, in fact, from the people themselves. In 1863 there was a very famous 'Salon des Refusés' in Paris: this was because a small matter of three thousand paintings had been refused from what was then the equivalent of, say, our Royal Academy—and so they were all exhibited together—and the one that caused the greatest distress was Manet's 'Déjeuner sur l'herbe'. If you know that today it is almost an old-master presentation of a picnic on the grass—but the really shocking thing was that the gentlemen had clothes on and the women didn't. If, in fact, the gentlemen had been dressed up in fancy clothes it would have been all right—but they were contemporary clothes.

Yet at the same time Giorgione's 'Fête Champêtre' was in the Louvre, and here you had exactly the same staffage—the gentlemen were far more interested in themselves, actually, than the ladies, in that picture—but there was, of course, the accepted status of an Old Master.

In England you had a very similar situation: a glimpse of an ankle was something you would pay to go and see—and yet you would take your whole family to the Crystal Palace at weekends, where there was a forest of marble nudes; and yet, of course, they were all so de-sexed and so superbly finished on the surface that they couldn't raise a tremor even in your five-year-old.

It is really not until the twentieth century when, I suggest, you break this very small circle: it's a circle which from the Renaissance until about 1905 has been almost entirely geared to an inherited classical ideal. Then with a greater impact from African negro sculpture, from, for instance, Mexican art, from something where there is an

entirely different ideal of beauty, or power, or expressiveness, one got, probably in Paris, two decades of the most explosive turning point in the visual arts.

Then, slowly, the wheel begins to tighten up again: after the attempt by Gropius at the Bauhaus in Germany to produce for the first time a unified school of design, you get artists forced into exile when Hitler just brands all the advanced art—whether it's the Brucke, the Breueriter, the Bauhaus—as decadent art—and this was irrespective really of what they were saying but because of the whole style and content of how they were saying it.

Possibly we may have moved a little bit since then when we come back to look at the visual arts today and I link up with what is happening: what we find most of all is an enormous inconsistency, not only from one place to another, but also from one year to another.

Art, on the whole, has been so much in service: it hasn't been a question of self-expression—of a man being an artist—of painting as a fine art; until the Renaissance it was a craft, and, therefore, the element of compromise was extremely strong; not only that, of course, but the artist tended also to be deeply convinced that what he was saying was the universal Christendom way of saying it; and, therefore, for instance, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries there was no dichotomy—this only appears when Michelangelo in the fifteen-thirties and -forties is wrestling with the Medici Chapel and his own Pietas—finally having to let the spirit win over the material.

There, I think, is that great sense of strain.

As far as the visual arts, and specifically painting, are concerned now, I think the whole attitude is different, because, outside Russia and the 'iron curtain' countries—where the artist is still in service and where you are projecting an image; and if some of you saw the Russian Art exhibition at the Royal Academy, you will have a very good idea of what that image is—here, in Europe and in America, the artist is, in a sense, in an ivory tower, out on a limb, painting first, possibly selling later, and his language is almost entirely, at the moment, an abstract one. This means that, of course, it may have a permissive interpretation.

It is, I think, much more difficult to interpret anything permissive into an Anthony Caro, where you have large portions of steel scaffolding bolted together, than it is with some of Paolozzi's, where one has large tubes which may, possibly, have certain intestinal interpretations in one's mind.

There are just two specific cases I will mention to show in this field, also, how uncertain the working of the law may be.

The first is the exhibition of Jim Dine's—they were mostly collages and pastels—at the Robert Fraser Gallery. I don't know if any of you happened to see them before the police ceremoniously removed twenty-one of these paintings.

Jim Dine had, in fact, done a whole series of themes of London based upon his experiences of last summer, and the director of the Robert Fraser Gallery is quoted as saying that among these experiences

"the day-to-day facts which came under examination were drawn from many departments of life, and among them were the anonymous drawings which are found in those informal and unintended galleries of folk art for which one penny is the price of admission".

Now, there was not only a series of male drawings, but also a series, in which he collaborated with Paolozzi, on

the female; and, although I didn't see them myself, every responsible art critic who's written about them has thought that although they are necessarily scatological, they are in no normal sense either indecent or obscene. Surely, here, subjectivity comes in.

In this instance it is the starting off point of the material which has caused the trouble; if Jim Dine had abstracted just that little bit more—making it more private—it would have been left to your own personal interpretation.

The second case was when the Aubrey Beardsley exhibition at the 'Victoria and Albert' was on and the police seized the whole of a set of reproductions of the works being exhibited from a shop in Regent Street, because they included some of the illustrations to *Lysistrata*.

The irony was that not only could you go and see the originals in the 'V and A', but you could also buy the very good illustrated catalogue at eight-and-six which included just those reproductions they had seized—and here you are, of course, going back to the eighteen-nineties.

NEWS AND NOTES

Meeting

THE library of Conway Hall, London, was packed to capacity on September 19th for a meeting organised by the National Secular Society, at which Emmett McLoughlin, the American ex-priest and author, was to have spoken on *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Catholic Church*. Substitute speakers had to be found at short notice, as the organisers were informed the previous day that Mr McLoughlin was ill and could not appear.

Mr David Tribe who presided, commented on the title of the talk which should have been given. While the Roman Catholic church was declining there was little evidence that its fall was imminent. The first speaker was Mr Peter Crommelin a former Roman Catholic priest who said that it was a sense of duty that had kept him in and eventually brought him out of the church. He had never regretted his decision, even when told that it had put him in a state of mortal sin. Mr Crommelin added that the good life must begin with intellectual honesty, and although he felt that man must have a faith to live by this did not mean that he should give blind obedience. For centuries religion had divided mankind; what is needed now is a new humanism that will end human divisions. "The human race will outlive the Roman Catholic church. It is our duty to contribute to the decline of the church."

Professor Hyman Levy attacked the hypocrisy of the Roman Catholic Church when it posed as a champion of the sanctity of human life. The hierarchy spoke out strongly against birth control and abortion law reform but are strangely silent about the immorality of mass destruction of human life in war. Scientists realise that supposed knowledge has to be modified in the light of new discoveries, but the Roman Catholic church claims to possess a truth that is fixed for all time, and refuses to alter its basic thinking in the light of new knowledge of human nature and of social necessity.

The next NSS event at Conway Hall takes place on Wednesday, October 11th, when Leo Abse, MP, Brigid Brophy, Canon Edward Carpenter, Father T. Corbishley, SJ, and David Tribe participate in a discussion on *Humanism, Christianity and Sex*.

E.A.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES: I

A. C. Thompson

The Problem

THE WORD 'right' is applied to two different ethical concepts: the right and a right. The right means what is morally good or correct. A right is a claim, a concession or a privilege which one expects to have accorded to him by other persons and by society generally. A duty is conceived as an obligation which binds a person to perform or to refrain from performing certain acts. A right implies something that a person wants—something, generally, which is conducive to his survival, pleasure or benefit. Duty implies something a person does not want and would rather avoid. The child who wants an education has a right to receive it, the child who does not want it has a duty to accept it. The citizen has a duty to refrain from killing his enemies, however much he may wish them dead. The soldier has a duty to kill the enemy, however averse he may be to doing so. A right means what is morally permissible; a duty, what is morally obligatory; both are thought morally desirable. It has long been recognised that rights and duties are reciprocal—that one is linked with the other. I obtain a right to ride on the bus for performing my duty of paying the fare. It has been often said that there are no rights without obligations, no obligations without rights.

Some traditional ethical theories have exhibited inadequate concern for the subject of rights and duties. The gravest deficiency of the doctrine of Utilitarianism, the doctrine of universal Hedonism rather than of egoistic Hedonism, is that it ignores the rights of individuals and minorities. If the supreme ethical principle is to be the greatest happiness of the greatest number, then it is right for the Greeks in Cyprus to deprive the Turks there of their civil rights, to take over their businesses and professions, to expropriate their property, to enrich themselves at the Turks' expense, for the Greeks are a majority there and the Turks are a minority, and such action would produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Similarly it would have been right for the Nazis in Germany under Hitler not only to drive millions of Jews from their businesses and to turn the businesses over to Germans, but even to exterminate millions of Jews, for the Jews were a minority and the Germans a majority; and the greater number could increase their welfare by preying on the lesser number. If we should secure the greatest good of the greatest number, we should put to death all the orphans, the aged, the incurable, the disabled, the blind, destitute, the feeble-minded, the insane and the criminal, for these people are minorities which consume taxes paid by the majority; the greatest number pay to build institutions, to employ medical and social workers, and to purchase all sorts of necessary food and supplies to support these people, and hence, if they were put to death, the greatest number would benefit. Most people might say, intuitively perhaps, that all persons have a right to live, and that their right is inviolable, whether their existence contributes to the general happiness or not. But injustices of all kinds could be perpetrated against minorities or against individuals by majorities if the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number were to be seriously accepted and practiced. Indeed, the principle of democracy is conceived by many people, rightly or wrongly, to be that the majority has always the right to coerce a minority. One may argue that oppression of a minority would not 'really' make a majority happy 'in the long run'. Whether this is

true or not does not matter; the utilitarian principle does not attempt to discern what does actually make people happy, and it does grant to majorities a right to oppress minorities and individuals. It ignores the rights of human beings.

John Stuart Mill declared that "When we call anything a person's right, we mean that he has a valid claim on society to protect him in the possession of it, either by the force of law or by that of education and opinion. To have a right is to have something which society ought to defend me in the possession of. If I am asked why it ought, I can give no other reason than general utility". But general utility does not explain the nature or origin of rights; indeed it may explain or justify the denial or deprivation of rights. With Utilitarianism, a man would have the sole right to demand that no pleasure of his should be sacrificed to a smaller amount of other people's, and the sole duty of increasing the sum of human happiness; and consequently there are no individual rights against the pleasure of the majority.

The ethical theory of Immanuel Kant tended to overcome this grave defect of Utilitarianism. The categorical imperative, "Act only on that maxim which you can at the same time will to become a universal law", could indeed extend to all men the rights which individuals desire for themselves. But the categorical imperative lacks logical justification and it fails to provide a principle by which specific rights may be positively identified, save that of personal desire or self-interest.

Many moralists have asserted that the general good is the basis of rights. Some, such as T. H. Green, have declared that a right against society is a contradiction. This cannot be true with the common acceptance of what a right is. A right is commonly conceived as a claim of an individual against other persons or against society. Rights are directed not at the general good, but at the individual good, even if this individual good requires other persons, or society generally, to perform some act, or to refrain from performing some act, when it would be more comfortable or more profitable to others or to society to ignore the individual's claim and to act otherwise. A duty is what an individual owes to society, but a right is what society owes to an individual. Although a right is not conferred by the common good, it may indeed be limited by the common good.

Egoism or Hedonism does not advocate the existence of rights and duties, nor does either of these theories assist in identifying particular rights and duties. Getting my rights may give me pleasure, truly enough, but this is not to say that Hedonism requires anyone else to respect my rights. Hence, with Hedonism as an ethical principle, I can desire certain rights, for the sake of my own benefit, but that is as far as I can go—I can not claim such rights. If the hedonist puts forward the trading argument that in order to obtain desired rights from others, one accords to others rights similar to those he desires from them in return, one may ask whether there is some reasonable basis both for the need for rights at all, and also for the particular things one desires to be regarded as his rights? If there is no such reasonable basis, then one is not justified in declaring that human rights, or any specific rights, should exist. If the reasonable basis for the existence of rights and of specific rights is the pleasure which one obtains or expects to ob-

tain from securing them, then it may be asked, does or may one, in securing such rights against others, obtain this pleasure at others' displeasure? If one asks others to suffer displeasure or pain in according to him what he thinks is his right, he is asking others to act contrary to the principle of Hedonism. If the reasonable basis for rights or specific rights is something other than pleasure, then Hedonism does not provide the ultimate source of rights in general or of specific rights.

The doctrine of Thomas Hobbes maintained that a citizen has no rights except those which the ruler sees fit to grant. Hence all rights are conferred; none are natural. Therefore, the ruler is bound by no law in granting or withholding rights, and the entire subject becomes a matter of the monarch's personal whim. If man had originally any so-called 'inalienable' rights, he has alienated them to his king.

A most significant contribution of Supernaturalism to moral theory is found in its doctrine of rights. Indeed, one of the strongest motives for adherence to religious morality rather than to a natural theory like Utilitarianism is the respect which religions have demanded for the rights of individuals. Supernaturalism insists that rights are conferred upon man by God—each man is endowed by his creator with certain rights, of which he is not to be deprived. Such human rights are natural rights, not concessions from civil states. Their existence conforms to the natural law, which is the mundane application of the divine will and of the eternal law. It is because God endows a person with life that he has a right to life. It is because God has ordained that one needs material things in order to live that he has a right to possess property. But it may be objected that the argument that it is the eternal law of God which gives a human being his right to life can also be applied to any other living thing. A rat or a mosquito is endowed with life by God and thereby, if the argument is sound, should acquire an inviolable right to life, according to eternal, divine law. Buddhists indeed do hold this doctrine and maintain that it is morally wrong for man to kill any animal. If the source of rights is the eternal law, then everything subject to the eternal law is entitled to right. The raindrop has a right to fall on you, fire has a right to consume your house, for these also exist in accordance with the eternal law. Supernaturalists are often inconsistent in the application of their doctrine of rights even to human beings. It should be also that because God has given man reason and intelligence, one has a right to intellectual freedom, to liberty of conscience, to belief motivated by evidence, and that it is for this reason wrong for an individual, a group, or a society to attempt to coerce someone into believing something for which he sees insufficient evidence.

Many political writers have concerned themselves with human rights. A most celebrated statement on this subject was the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* first issued in 1789 by the Constituent Assembly of the French Revolution to serve as a basis for a French Constitution. It was first proposed and drafted by the Marquis de Lafayette who had participated in the American Revolution. The Declaration, subscribed to by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and Condorcet, declared that "All men are born free and equal; all have equal right to enjoy life and liberty; all have equal right for the development of their natural powers and abilities; all have a right to religious freedom and freedom of conscience". It provided for participation of people in making laws, guaranteed freedom of speech and provided for equitable taxation. The Constitution,

completed in 1791, abolished nobility and established a legislature. The Declaration has been said to have laid down the foundation of modern governments because, beyond the borders of France, it led to expansion of democracy everywhere. Thomas Paine, in *The Rights of Man*, declared that all persons have rights to such 'elements of security' as old-age pensions, employment, family allowances, marriage portions, funeral provisions.

The United Nations have proclaimed a *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which was adopted by their General Assembly, December 10, 1948. This Declaration specifies 30 classes of fundamental rights. But it simply states that there are, or ought to be, such rights; it does not discuss or even mention the nature, origin or necessity of human rights, other than to say that "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". It speaks also of "faith in fundamental human rights" as if they are to be accepted on faith. Its first article declares that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights". Among other rights which it specifies are: that of free movement within a state; that of a person to leave any country including his own and to return to his country; the right to a nationality, without being arbitrarily deprived of or denied the right to change his nationality; the right to marry; and the right to own property. The Declaration was followed by a draft of two international covenants on human rights, one on civil and political rights, the other on economic, social and cultural rights.

Different kinds of rights have been recognised. Natural rights are conceived as bestowed by nature rather than by men, whatever nature is. They are natural, it is believed, in the sense that they are not invented or agreed to by men, like the right to capture the opponent's piece in a game of chess. A contingent right is one stipulated and agreed to by men. A legal right is a contingent right conferred by governmental enactment. A contractual right results from agreement or promise, like the right to occupy a purchased or rented house. A right may be a conferred right such as that granted by a licence to drive a car or to practice dentistry. A natural right is generally thought of as one that cannot be conferred, such as the right to live, which others may acknowledge and respect but cannot actually grant. Society cannot give life, but only the conditions for life. Rights may be dependent or independent; some rights are dependent on the rights of others, as the right to bridge a river is dependent on the rights of others to sail up and down it; other rights, such as one's right to secure the necessities of life, are independent of the rights of others.

The problem of rights is central to any theory or system of ethics. What are rights? Whence do they come, and why do we have them or think we have them? Can we justify logically our claims to have what we regard as our rights? It is one thing to do as the United Nations has done, to compose a long list of alleged human rights with no reason except intuitive recognition and acceptance, and quite another to explain the natural and logical justifiability of rights in general and of specific rights. If someone, or some group, the United Nations for example, declares that everyone has a right to marry, can it be proved, beyond dispute, that everyone has a right to marry, or is this simply a doctrine to be accepted on the authority of that group of people? What if someone were to dispute the statement and assert, for instance, that criminals or imbeciles should

(Continued at foot of next page)

CHRISTIAN ATHEISM

Gregory S. Smelters

THE modernist-liberal theologians who for the past hundred years have rejected, re-interpreted, reconciled, adapted, or explained away almost all Christian dogmas, effect only mental confusion in the laymen and intellectual dishonesty among the parsons. They have already over-stretched the notion "Christian" to round up all decent mankind. Now they even misappropriate the opposite title, "atheist" (see *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* by Dr T. J. J. Altizer, Professor of Bible and Religion, Atlanta, Georgia, USA).

In the name of honest thinking and truth, we must strongly protest against this humbug.

Actually, both biblical Christianity and scientific atheism are perfectly unmistakable notions.

The Bible states thousandfold that Christianity is the worship of the god Yahweh of Western Semites: "Yahweh is our god, Yahweh alone" (Deuteronomy 6, 4; Mark 12, 29). Yahweh was further supposed to have embodied (incarnated) himself into a Jew, named Yehoshuah (i.e., "Yahweh is salvation") or Jesus, who was also called Yahweh's son, or the Word of Yahweh (Logos). Christianity is thus an unmistakable Yahwistic mythology. But the plain myth is made *unrecognisable* by the parson's misuse of "God" *without the definite article* and by the *suppression of the proper name* "the god Yahweh". This obscurantist trick is regrettably, but universally aped by Freethought writers, thus unconsciously sabotaging an otherwise prompt and easy replacement of Christianity by atheism.

The scientific atheism, in its classical sense since the

Greek philosopher and poet, Diagoras the Atheist (5th century BC), means the denial of the existence of *all* gods whatsoever—including, of course, Yahweh, his breath-soul (Holy Ghost), and his incarnation/son/word, Jesus the Messiah (Christ). So Christianity and atheism can never be logically joined together as the theologian Altizer does now. They are, of course, absolute opposites: Christianity is false both factually and logically, whereas scientific atheism is true. This is the correct statement of the vital issue, which is to be sharply distinguished from Prof. Ayer's harmful muddle, namely, that "the atheist's assertion that there is no god (note the small initial!) is as nonsensical as the assertion that there is a god" (see *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 75, by H. D. Lewis, for more such muddles by Profs. Findlay, Smart, Flew and Lewis himself, all of them totally disregarding biblical semantics).

Since Prof. Ayer has never recanted his bizarre muddle over "a god" and the "God" of the Bible, I urgently plead for the attention of all atheists concerned to my present correction of this provocatively false and utterly silly misrepresentation of scientific atheism.

Now, the theologian Altizer is in a similar muddle. His "Christian Atheism" is not an atheism at all, but the old Yahwism.

His main argument is only a rejection of the one theological view that Yahweh is beyond the world (*transcendent*; literally "climbing beyond"), a distant alien and judging god. He favours the other theological view that Yahweh is present in the world (*immanent*; literally "staying within"), in his own incarnation, Jesus the Christ.

But both these terms 'transcendent' and 'immanent' have absolutely no sense (are self-contradictions) in pure logic (since "beyond *all* the space that is the universe" is plain fallacy) as well as in pure theology (since "spirits" are fancied to have no space-relations and are, therefore, absolutely nowhere at all).

The disproof of Christianity as Semitic mythology and as fallacy, and of its prayerful rituals as primitive magic is, then, both apodictic and compulsory. If so, why must we go on aping the theologian's mistranslation "God" (instead of "the god Yahweh") and thus spoil our own chances of irrefutably demonstrating scientific atheism to the vast multitudes of indifferent or confused nominal Christians?

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

(Continued from previous page)

be denied the right to marry? Without reason, the Declaration is worthless. Is the Universal Declaration's assertion that recognition of rights is the foundation of peace to be taken on faith, or can the connection be actually demonstrated? If everyone on earth were accorded the list of rights specified in the UN Declaration, would world peace automatically follow? Before these questions can be answered, it is first necessary to understand the nature of rights. The next article of this series will offer the solution suggested by the new Social-Survival theory of ethics. Later articles will consider what specific rights human beings have or ought to have, whether those, for example, in the UN Declaration, or others.

(To be continued)

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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) and Humanist Postal Book Service. For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.; Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

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

Bristol Humanist Group (Kelmescott, 4 Portland Street, Clifton), Sunday, October 1st, 7.30 p.m.: J. WILLIAMS, "Why I am a Humanist".

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Margaret Street), Sunday, October 1st, 6.45 p.m.: R. OSBORNE, "The Rationalist Approach to Ethics".

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental Place, Brighton), Sunday, October 1st, 5.30 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "Humanism's Answer to Modern Problems".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 1st, 6.30 p.m.: F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT, "Secularism in the 20th Century".

National Secular Society. First public meeting of the new West Kent Branch, Public Library, The Drive, Sevenoaks, Friday, September 29th, 8 p.m. Speaker: WILLIAM MCILROY.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, October 1st, 11 a.m.: MAURICE CRANSTON, "Voltaire and Religion".

South Place Sunday Concerts (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, October 1st, 6.30 p.m. London String Quartet. Beethoven programme. Admission 4s.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Tuesday, October 3rd, 7.30 p.m. Conway Memorial Lecture: MARGHANITA LASKI, "The Secular Responsibility". Chairman: Sir Peter Medawar. Admission 2/6d.

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

LETTERS

Patriotism and religion

A. C. THOMPSON'S thesis in his article (8-9-67) that "religion functions as an instrumentality for the survival of society" misses the most important point of all in the relation of personal beliefs to social affairs.

The point I have in mind is that *in practice* all forms of personal belief have to take second place to various forms of patriotism as ideologies of social identification. (This applies equally to groups of atheists, agnostics, humanists, communists, anarchists, etc., as it does to Christians and Holy Rollers, etc.)

Now this explains why 'Christians' in 'Britain' pray for 'British' victory in a war with, say, 'German' 'Christians', and of course here we could equally well use 'Atheists' in place of 'Christians' in that sentence (apart from deposing the religious meaning of 'pray').

The point is that "patriotism" is the real basis for giving effect to the demand for social survival—and *not* kinds of belief. Even if we re-define the word 'religion' to include atheists, etc. (i.e., we could put emphasis on the notion of 'binding ideas') it will be found that, except in the case of *very* exceptional individuals, all 'religions' take second place to 'patriotism'.

The choice of a 'patriotism' is therefore very much more important than the choice of a 'religion' (in the general sense defined above) and, although he does not say this explicitly, I suspect that A. C. Thompson's ideology for an 'ideal patriotism' is concerned with the world rather than with a British or other section of the world. To some people of course 'world patriotism' will be a contradiction in terms—but a scientific approach, to matters of identification of the self with a group, will show that a man can identify himself with Scotland, Britain, Europe or the World (if he happens to be domiciled in Scotland, as I am).

May I therefore ask Mr Thompson whether it is his hope that his theorising will give rise to a movement of world patriotism which will supersede the many sectional patriotisms which produce anarchy at the international level and thus stand condemned as the effective source of world wars? E. G. MACFARLANE.

PRIVATE ADOPTION

BABY (due September 27) will be available for adoption by suitable Freethinking parents. Mr F. J. Corina will act as confidential intermediary. Inquiries to—

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