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THE FREETHINKER AND ITS READERS

Part Two: The Editor's Views

LAST week we looked at a sample of the conflicting views which have been expressed by some of the FREETHINKER'S readers and contributors. Since the editorial policy of this paper inevitably reflects the views of the current editor, though not always making them clear, it is only fair that readers and contributors should know exactly where the Editor stands with regard to the major issues with which this paper is concerned. Here, the present editor sets out his personal views which naturally influence the editorial policy of this paper during his term as Editor.

The Editor takes the purpose of the FREETHINKER to be:

- (1) To promote understanding of, and support for, Secularism and Humanism and to demonstrate the defects and inadequacies (which lead to cruelty, injustice, intolerance and dishonesty and which oppose man's material, social, intellectual and ethical progress) of *supernaturalism* to which both Secularism and Humanism are opposed;
- (2) To enable the free expression of relevant opinion, and the production of relevant information, to appear before the public without clerical—or other—hindrance or censorship, it being felt that free enquiry and open debate will inevitably demonstrate to the impartial the superiority of Secularism and Humanism over supernaturalism;
- (3) To take all proper steps to remain viable and to ensure financial stability and an unobstructed and increasing circulation.

What is this supernaturalism to which we are opposed? By supernaturalism is meant all dogma and teachings which essentially recognise forces, powers and beings not part of the natural universe and not subject to natural law. The influence of supernaturalist teachings is to be seen in primitive superstitions, in occult and mystical teachings, in the vast majority of religions, and in local and national education and legislation. The more powerful such institutions, the greater the influence they wield, and the greater the FREETHINKER is opposed to them.

What is meant by Secularism? By Secularism is meant a concern with *this life in this world* to the exclusion of any other life in any other worlds which may be postulated by supernaturalists; it is a concern with *improving* this life and the conditions of this life which is seen to necessitate

opposing the supernaturalist influences which have proved prejudicial to man's development and improvement.

What is meant by Humanism? By Humanism is meant modern, *naturalistic* Humanism which is *secular* in its concern for this life in this world and in its rejection of supernaturalist teachings and in its opposition to supernaturalist influences (hence: Secular-Humanism); which is *rational* in electing to rely on reason and empirical evidence and in preferring the scientific method of enquiry and the scientific picture of the world; which is *democratic* in its concern for the dignity, liberty and welfare of the individual, in its opposition to any form of totalitarianism, and in its striving for an Open Society; which is *ethical* in its concern for human behaviour to be guided by principles derived from up-to-date scientific knowledge framed to accord with individual freedom and well-being; which is *idealistic* in upholding certain values the adherence to which would implement man's search for co-operation, individual fulfilment and happiness; which is *reformist* in that it sees the world is not as it could be and is determined to do something about it.

Perhaps the concerns of Humanism are broader than the concerns of Secularism; even if this is so, Secularism would remain the basis and core of naturalistic Humanism. But if Secularism is equally concerned with all the issues with which Humanism is concerned, and if it takes a similar stand on each issue, then Secularism and (Secular-) Humanism are the same thing, and one term is superfluous to the other. Those who consider themselves Secularists and those who consider themselves Humanists, or as both, will decide this matter for themselves, but the Editor believes there is a difference and this difference rests on the breadth of concerns and the degree of emphasis given to opposing supernaturalism.

It is possible to be a Secularist without being a Humanist; there are those who support the opposition to supernaturalist influences to facilitate the promotion of systems quite different to Humanism. But it is impossible to be a Humanist without at least a degree of support for Secularism. *Humanists who disbelieve this are either not Humanists in the modern, naturalistic sense, or they are unrealistic in supposing they can forward campaigns which undermine the power and vested interests of the various churches and institutions without meeting supernaturalist opposition.* In practise, however, there are few Secularists who do not also support Humanism, and few Humanists who do not also support Secularism. The British Humanist

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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, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). 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 and McRAE.

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

Belfast Humanist Group, War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Belfast, Monday, February 12th, 8 p.m.: A talk by Mr FOSTER MURPHY of the Student Christian Movement.

Birmingham University Humanist Federation, The Union, University Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, Monday, February 12th, 5.15 p.m.: JEAN STRAKER, "Obscenity and Censorship".

Leicester Secular Society, The Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, February 11th, 6.30 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "The Advantages of Atheism".

Manchester Humanist Society, 36 George Street, Manchester, Wednesday, February 14th, 7.30 p.m.: MICHAEL FINLEY, "Ethics in Journalism".

The Progressive League, Weekend Conference at Eastbourne, February 23rd-25th. Subject: "Public Law and Private Morality". Speakers include LENA JEGER, MP, H. A. HAYDON, AVRIL FOX, AMBROSE APPEBE. Bookings and enquiries: Terry Gabriel, 9 Russell Gardens, London, NW11.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, February 11th, 11 a.m.: MAURICE CRANSTON, "David Hume and Ethics"; Tuesday, February 13th, 6.45 p.m.: "America Today—Education and Culture". Speaker from the US Information Service.

South Place Sunday Concerts, Conway Hall, London, WC1, Sunday, February 11th, 6.30 p.m.: London String Trio and Desmond Dupres. Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert. Admission 4/-.

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

West Kent Branch NSS, Public Library, The Drive, Sevenoaks. Public meetings on the first Wednesday of the month at 8 p.m.

LAWYERS RESPONSE TO NSS PAMPHLET ON OATHS

A VERY encouraging appraisal of *Universal Affirmation*, a pamphlet published recently by the National Secular Society, appeared in the *Law Guardian's* leader 'Law Guardian Notes' under the sub-title 'Oath-taking' (January 1968).

The *Law Guardian* is the journal of "The Judges, Barristers, Solicitors and Senior Articled Clerks of England and Wales".

To the pamphlet's recommendation that oath-taking be abolished and be replaced by universal affirmation in Courts, the writer says (on examining its "certain merits") ". . . it is difficult to believe that the administration of an oath to any witness will cause him to give true evidence if he could not otherwise have done so; either he will be honest and speaking the truth or dishonest and speaking falsely; and it is hard to believe that any witness, with religious beliefs or not, would be prepared to give false evidence merely because he was not bound by the relevant oath". The writer deals with a central issue when he goes on: ". . . the identification of a witness's religious belief or lack of it would no longer be necessary and the possibility that that admission by the witness would prejudice his evidence in the eyes of the Court or jury would be avoided; at the present there is always the danger that a person with strong religious beliefs will look askance at someone without any".

After dealing with the way the recommended affirmation would do away with the need for different oaths for different age groups, and noticing that it wouldn't undermine the religious position of the witness "who could, if he or she so desired, hold a copy of the Bible or other book of religion whilst the affirmation was being made", the writer ended his appraisal: "We think that the National Secular Society is correct in saying that truth and honesty would gain, hypocrisy and confusion would be ended". The writer, unlike your Editor, was apparently not concerned that one section may seem to defeat another; that if a religious witness is permitted to hold a Bible while affirming, this re-introduces a difference, and the atheist—who would not be holding a Bible—may be viewed askance by a jury with strong religious beliefs. But—I suppose it's only a small point.

The main point is that the pamphlet has been so well received by such an august body and, for this, we are gratified and they are to be warmly commended.

FREETHINKER FUND

Donations received: October 1—December 31, 1967

£105, Mrs A. Calderwood; £10 12s, R. J. Hale; £5 19s 6d; Mrs N. Henson; £4 2s 6d, J. G. Wilson; £1 13s 2d; F. Pearson; £1 8s, Mrs R. Hancock; £1 2s 6d, B. J. Edgecombe; £1, R. Brownlee; 12s 6d, D. Wright, Mrs M. Vaughan; 10s, A. D. Bogen, S. Ellis, G. Swan; 7s 6d, E. M. Hay; 6s, A. W. Coleman; 5s 6d, J. W. Robinson; 5s, J. G. Burdon, W. R. Grant; 4s 7d, P. Marsden; 2s 6d, W. Phillips, S. G. Merryfield, M. F. Gray; H. Alexander, G. E. Lesson, C. Ablethorpe; 2s, L. Hanger; 1s, F. J. Woolley, T. H. Nibloc, P. Crommelin.

Total: £136 6s 3d. (Total, previous quarter: £50 0s 6d.)

THE FREETHINKER AND ITS READERS

(Continued from front page)

Association clearly proclaims its Secularism and the National Secular Society (whose close association with the FREETHINKER is well-known) links Secularism and Humanism by lending Secular action to Humanist campaigns.

The Editor calls himself a Humanist, and intends this to mean that he is also a Secularist; when the situation arises for him to be explicit he is not slow in clearly declaring himself a Secularist. David Tribe, the NSS President, calls himself a Secular-Humanist to avoid any possible misunderstanding (there has been confusion about the term 'Humanist'); the only reason the Editor no longer does the same is because he wants to help make the term Humanism imply Secularism (and Rationalism, Ethicism, etc.) and put the onus for qualifying Humanism squarely upon the miniscule groups of Christian-Humanists and similar bodies. Although the Editor doesn't believe the terms Secular and Humanist are quite synonymous, he believes that when individuals call themselves by one or the other it doesn't often imply disinclination to support the other.

Where does militant atheism come in? Atheism is taken to mean simply an intellectual conclusion about the existence of God (i.e., that God doesn't exist). On its own, it doesn't imply active opposition to supernaturalist influences. 'Militant' is both a noun and an adjective and it is unfortunate that the former's definition is associated with the latter. A 'militant' (noun) means a pugnacious and quarrelsome person; but the adjective 'militant' means "pertaining to conflict with opposing powers or influences" (Funk & Wagnall's *New Practical Standard Dictionary*), hence, a militant atheist (or, better, a militant Secularist or Humanist) is one who actively opposes the "powers and influences" of supernaturalism; nothing more and nothing less. It doesn't mean a "coarse, aggressive, vulgar, abusive and quarrelsome individual" as some seem to believe, and there seems no reason why those who oppose the influence of supernaturalism, even indirectly, should be slow in recognising their own militancy.

Militancy, in fact, is essential and, unless we wish to see the influence of supernaturalism increase, we shouldn't hesitate to be militant.

What about agnosticism and atheism? This tireless and tiresome point of contention shows no sign of resolving itself, but to close the correspondence seems to the Editor unfair, and futile as an attempt to settle the issue. The point seems to be whether or not agnosticism, or atheism, is the more rational or superior position to adopt, and the Editor is not going to hesitate to abuse his position by repeating his own view. 'Agnosticism' is a rational approach to information; it contends that it is wrong to evince positive belief without sufficient evidence to support the belief; it doesn't necessarily imply uncertainty with respect to any conclusion (this notion probably derives from Christian influence). Through an agnostic approach to the 'God concept' the individual may conclude God doesn't exist—he then becomes *both* an atheist and an agnostic; since the 'agnostic-atheist' has arrived at his conclusion rationally, he is on firmer ground than the atheist who is such as a result of emotional processes. *It is meaningless to contend that agnosticism and atheism are necessarily opposite stands; as meaningless as it would be to contend that a migrant is the opposite to an Englishman.*

All the above constitute the personal views of the Editor

and are not necessarily the same as those of other Free-thinkers, Secularists and Humanists. They are, of course, subject to change and development. They are mentioned since they inevitably influence the future editorial policy, but this is not meant to imply that different and opposing views will be given less space and prominence in the FREETHINKER; far from it; part of the future policy is to encourage the airing of diverse views and controversy—where relevant to the broad issues of supernaturalism, Secularism and Humanism. But this is to anticipate. Next week, in the third and last part of this elongated editorial, we will examine the editorial policy itself.

CHRISTIANITY AND ANARCHY

With acknowledgements to *Peace News* from which journal we have reprinted a letter to the Editor (January 26) titled: Death of God.

I HAVE followed the correspondence on anarchists and Christians with great interest, but there is one point which divides them which has not yet been raised: the existence of God. The overwhelming consensus amongst anarchists is that atheism is fundamental to anarchism; the reverse is true for Christians.

We both say freedom is a supreme good, but can the belief in the possibility of freedom for mankind be reconciled with belief in the existence of God? For if God (as the word is generally used by Christians) means a power infinitely superior to mankind and independent of it, and against whose capacity for domination (however benign) it would be useless to struggle, then freedom for mankind—by which I mean total control, without the possibility of intervention, by mankind of its situation—is not a possibility; and Christians cannot be anarchists. Their only realistic position, then, is one of childlike dependence, which is, in fact, one which most Christians adopt.

This explains why the Christian Church, in spite of the exemplary humanism of its founder, is (with heroic exceptions) indifferent to mankind's sufferings. They are deprived of any real capacity for action because they regard themselves as children of God and not His heirs.

The problem was stated by Bakunin: "even if God exists, it is necessary to abolish Him", and it could not have been better put. Can Christians be atheists? Not can, but must, if the Church is to play her part in the progress of mankind; and the idea of the death of God upon the cross, because He saw that mankind could only reach its maturity without Him, must become the central theme of Christian doctrine. This would release the Church from its infantile fixation on a phantasy father-figure and divert its immense energies to the welfare (that is salvation) of mankind.

PETER LUMSDEN.

The *Glasgow Herald*, January 22, printed the following from its columns of 75 years ago.

"THE spirit of loyalty has been so much kept up in Wiltshire that in a little village not five miles from Devizes the fiddler was burned in effigy because he would not play 'God save the King' at the burning of Thomas Paine."

FREETHOUGHT: 1850 - 1950

David Tribe

THE world of scholarship lives its own life. It has its exits and its entrances to the general world of educated opinion. Its usually detached calm is sometimes broken by the clash of internecine strife among the opponents of rival theories. It has evolved a literature whose footnotes may be longer than the text and language divorced from modern English usage. In its reaction against the polyglot writings of the Renaissance-inspired man of letters, which it ridicules as an area with length and breadth but no depth, it plunges into specific local problems most of whose perimeters can be excavated. But its research projects can be more arbitrary and idiosyncratic than the polymath's generalisations, and its results range from the debunking of all existing theories in the light of a more esoteric one to the tedious catalogue of everything about nothing.

Past and Present (Corpus Christi College, Oxford, subscription) is a specialist historical journal whose virtues far outweigh its defects. Number 36, April 1967, reviewed here, has interesting material on ancient Rome's incidental curb on Mediterranean democracy, Leonardo Bruni as a civic humanist, the relationship between religion and politics in oligarchic Nuremberg, French bureaucracy during the Directory, radical middle-class influence on Chartism, the impact of theories of history on nineteenth century thought, the loss of faith in the last hundred-odd years, French education and politics in the second half of the Third Republic, the causes of the first world war. Of particular interest, though far from the best of the essays, is Susan Budd's *The Loss of Faith—Reasons for Unbelief among Members of the Secular Movement in England, 1850-1950*. It is "based on one hundred and fifty biographical accounts of Secularists, mainly written as obituaries between 1850 and 1965, with supporting detail from nearly two hundred briefer biographies". Much sociological material of the period is also referred to, the paper is well put together and lucidly written, and I regret I cannot be more enthusiastic about its value.

We are given no details about the source material other than the names of seven secularist journals from all or some of which it comes, and a breakdown of 105 stated religious origins. Clearly 150 is just a fraction of the total obituaries given over so long a period, but there is no indication of the method of selection. Many of the statements are simple assertion which could not come from such an analysis even if statistically valid. The picture that emerges is very different from the secular movement I know, and the thesis as stated, "The loss of faith for Free-thinkers was not an intellectual but a moral matter", is untrue.

Let me say at once that the essay makes many points which, if not new, are often overlooked; intellectual beliefs do not live in a void but are related to society and personality; *activities* depend more on emotion than on belief, though this may be unconscious; the nineteenth century was more interested in eschatology than today because it thought more about death; the secular movement was influenced to some extent in the past by the prudery around it; many adherents drifted off into politics. But this is a far cry from a lot of the paper's conclusions. In our cynical age we know that all social workers are drop-outs who have stopped short of drugs, all psychiatrists neurotic, all teachers power-crazed and all libertarians paranoid. But

observers who sit on the sidelines overlook the fact that there is a psychological explanation for them too. People lose beliefs because they no longer *believe* them, though moral considerations largely determine whether they proselytise. Mrs Budd often seems to confuse secularisation with secularism, and NSS audiences with members of the Society. There is nothing surprising about the fact that the rise of science, helped by freethought propaganda, led many devout Christians into scepticism, that some of these who felt that secularism was not only more satisfying for themselves but more conducive to general happiness and morality than Christianity became active secularists, while others and a proportion of the former after a time thought a philosophy of "this world" best served by political parties, usually socialist. Though their work for the movement may fluctuate according to personal circumstances or the changing threat from outside, secularists with few exceptions have been noted for the steadfastness of their beliefs once they have thrown off childhood indoctrination in religion, and it is a grave injustice to regard the change from Christianity to atheism as a token of "unstable activism" of the sort found in fanatics who skip from one extremist organisation to another.

In matters of interpretation the writer is entitled to her own beliefs, though it is disturbing when she suggests the evidence is stronger than it is. But there are a number of matters of stated fact where my own researches and personal observations are in flat contradiction. In many of them it doesn't matter one way or the other, but if there is no confidence in the realm of fact, what can there be in the realm of theory? Among the assertions I question are: in the NSS "until the 1930s the coal-miners were the largest occupational group"; the Society "became more anti-Catholic as its proportion of ex-Catholic members rose"; "the movement's members were almost entirely men, and first generation converts"; there are "proportionally large numbers of immigrant Irish Secularists and even immigrant Secularists from Italy and Malta"; freethought views "were based on moral and not intellectual considerations, and were independent of any knowledge of existing Biblical criticism, nor could they have been much affected by the impact of theories of evolution"; freethought-secularism "was and is a mainly working-class movement"; "much evidence suggests that religious adherence, especially among the ill-educated, is to some extent traditional and conventional, so that migrants are likely to stop church-going". There is space to give only the baldest reasons for my challenge, though some of them can be read in other portions of the original essay. There are, for example, in answer to the "moral not intellectual" assertion, at least four references to ideological concern, two of them suggesting it was excessive! In the nineteenth century the biggest occupational group was, I suggest, artisan; and among new members over the last few years, teachers; Mrs Budd herself speaks of occupations "where religious compliance was socially enforced" and these are largely professional; there was in Bradlaugh's day a big mining following in Northumberland and Durham, but Tom Mosley is the only miner I can think of ever prominent in the organisation as distinct from its political involvements. The NSS became more anti-Catholic as the power and demands of the Catholic Church rose; members with a Catholic background have become famous propagandist writers like Joseph McCabe and

Avro Manhattan, but have played little part in policy-planning; the more active Irish secularists have had an Orange background. Men have always been in a majority in the movement, as in most other reformist bodies, but a surprisingly large number of influential women can be cited: Mrs Law, Mrs Charles Watts, Mrs Besant, Miss Bradlaugh, Mrs Bonner, Miss Vance, Mrs Venton, Mrs Knight, Mrs Mouat, Miss Brophy, Baroness Wootton. There is no more tendency for offspring "backsliding" in the secularist than in any other movement, and against the Footes and Cohens must be set the Bradlaugh Bonners and Wattses. The NSS has always played a notable role in popularising biblical criticism and evolutionary teaching. What evidence I know suggests that devout migrants are under- rather than over-educated and in settled communities "traditional and conventional" churchgoers are likely to be Oxbridge dons, headmasters, politicians, judges, magistrates, councillors and shopkeepers.

A special word must be said about the "working-class" label, for in this and other of her writings I have seen, Mrs Budd seems to be obsessed with the class interpretation of freethought. This wouldn't matter if she gave signs of having thought seriously about it. From the 1850s to the 1880s the secular movement was the main focus of the intelligent, vocal section of the working-class, often self-educated themselves but many of whose grandchildren were to go to universities and technical colleges. The NSS has always represented a good cross-section of the population, most of which was "working-class" till the *embourgeoisement* of modern life—a development which is, unfortunately, particularly marked in its radical reformist sector. The Society was never working-class in a marxist sense, though it has been the authentic champion of working people, whether with hand or brain, and not speculators, gamblers and other parasites. This it has done without appealing to class hatred and prejudice, or indeed to class at all. Besides supporting penal reform and social justice, where class implications may arise, it has been busily engaged at all times in ideological debate and law reform without these connotations. If nineteenth-century membership is the criterion, one should describe the Catholic Church as working-class. It would hardly be necessary to say all this if Susan Budd did not suggest that to be working-class was to be unintelligent/unintellectual and probably coarse.

HUMANIST HOLIDAYS

A SUITABLE helper of either sex and of any age over sixteen is being sought to care for a few children at the Humanist Holiday Centre for the period: August 17-31.

The Centre is being held in a hotel on the seafront at Portrush in Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland. About forty to fifty Humanists including "a few" children are expected to attend. The helper will be accommodated in the hotel and will be able to take part in most of the adult activities, but will only be required to pay half the rate, i.e. about £7 a week. So far, three-quarters of the vacancies have been booked, and the only children are three little boys and, possibly, a tiny girl.

Any interested in further details, or wishing further information about the several Humanist Holiday enterprises, should contact Mrs Marjorie Mephram, Secretary, Humanist Holidays, 28 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey.

Dr ROSE P. RIZAL, Atheist?

Gonzalo Quiogue

IN Dr Rizal's letter to Father Pastells (*Rizal and Cosmic Evolution* by Guillermo B. Guevara, Philippines Free Press, December 30, 1967) the martyr made a bit of ironic defence for Christianity by writing the first paragraph thus:

"I believe that God exists. How can I doubt His existence when I am convinced of my own? To recognise the effect is to admit the cause. To doubt the existence of God is to doubt one's conscience, and to doubt one's conscience is to doubt everything. In such a case, what would be the purpose of life?"

But the patriot also wanted to tell Father Pastells that the best defence for religion was no match against a truth sincerely expressed as shown by the third paragraph thus:

"I do not believe Revelation impossible. Rather, I believe in it. Not, however, in the Revelation which each and every religion claims to possess. If we examine, compare and scrutinise such Revelations impartially, we shall detect in all of them human claws and the stamp of the age in which they were written. No; man makes his God in his own image, and then ascribes to Him his own works in the same manner that the Polish magnates used to choose their kings, and then impose their will on him."

In the above paragraph Dr Rizal expressed his conviction that every man made his God in his own image, and that in all so-called "divine Revelations" we could detect human claws and the stamp of the age in which they were written.

In the last part of the second paragraph the patriot said: ". . . the God I am aware of is far greater and far better."

Dr Rizal was apparently a God-believer, although he rejected the Christian God. I have tried to argue out the hero from "odious" atheism. But mere arguments cannot change a truth. At face value among Christians, the patriot was an infidel or a heretic, for he did not believe in their God, but in his greater and better God. To secular rationalists and Humanists, Dr Rizal was an atheist. In the realm of Gods, one God cannot be much better than any other; for they are all man-made as the martyr said in his third paragraph: ". . . man makes his God in his own image . . ." A man-made God is a God to the God-maker; but what kind of God, really? A figment of the imagination projected to the heavens above!

If Dr Rizal was an atheist, what is "odious" in atheism? We see "ugliness" in it, because we have been raised as God-believers by our elders and mentors. Our well-meaning parents and grandparents and the clergy made our minds for us when we were yet children! And as we grew up to adulthood our minds hardened with God-belief and with an equally hard-boiled faith in the "truth" of our beloved religion!

100 YEARS OF FREETHOUGHT

By DAVID TRIBE

"David Tribe has compiled a comprehensive survey of the movement."—*Belfast Telegraph*.

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CATHOLIC INFILTRATION: Great Britain

Joe Naseby

SPEAKING at the annual meeting of the Knights of St Columba at Lytham St Anne's, during September 1967, Lord Longford, Roman Catholic, had this to say of Mr Harold Wilson: "It is well known that Mr Wilson has a lot of Catholics in his constituency. What is not so well known is that never in the history of Great Britain has there been a Prime Minister so knowledgeable about Catholicism and so much interested in Catholic problems".

It is a pity, a very great pity that this aspect (shall we call it?) of Comrade Wilson is not more widely known to rank and file members of the Labour Party. It is thanks to Mr Wilson that Lord Longford, * Lord Privy Seal is (a) Leader of the Labour Party in the House of Lords, and (b) a member of the Cabinet. It is thanks to Mr Wilson that another Roman Catholic, Lord Carron, ex-boss of the A.E.U., is a Director of the Bank of England. Longford and Carron between them are in the position to get to know just about all that needs to be known about what's going on in Britain politically and financially.

It is no exaggeration to say that Western Germany was created by three men, McCloy, Longford (then Lord Pakenham) and Adenauer, all Roman Catholics—interesting, isn't it? McCloy was the US High Commissioner, he was related to Herr Adenauer through marriage, and he was a member of the Johnson-selected Warren Commission. Herr Adenauer, who never lifted a finger against Nazism, has a son a Roman Catholic priest.

It could also be proved that Mr Wilson, educated at Oxford—where Macmillan made a friend of Father Ronald Knox—has done more for Roman Catholicism than he has ever done for Socialism. No sooner was Wilson made Prime Minister than he popped off to see the Pope. Why? He has since paid another visit to the Pope. Then he sent Casement's body to Dublin. He recently increased the State grant to Roman Catholic schools in England. He made the Longford and Carron appointments already referred to. He also appointed Mrs Shirley Williams, Roman Catholic, to her education post (commented upon at the time in the FREETHINKER), and he also appointed Mulley, another Roman Catholic, to his Common Market post.

With regard to the Gibraltar question, could Messrs. Wilson and Brown have soft-pedalled it more?

Roman Catholics opposed the Abortion Bill, but don't forget that Roman Catholicism got millions of pounds worth of publicity out of it, here and abroad, and the

campaign enabled Roman Catholics to pose to the masses as the "champions" of the "sanctity" of "human life!" Shades of Torquemada, the Duke of Alva, the murderers of the Huguenots, St. Dominic (the Albigensian massacres), the Teutonic Knights, Ferdinand the Bloody, the murderers of hundreds of Italian Liberals, Pavelic (the butcher of thousands of Serbians, Jews and Gypsies), Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels & Co. and Franco, all in alliance with the Pope, or blessed by the Pope, or decorated by the Pope.

Not forgetting the Pope-decorated bullfrog (thuggery, castor-oil, prison camps and assassinations) Benito Mussolini.

If Wilson aided the passing of the Abortion Bill, it could be (we repeat) that the Roman Catholic Church in Britain calculates that it gained more than it lost by its campaign against this Parliamentary measure. Strange (is it not?) that it raised no similar campaign against the homosexual Bill?

The Knights of St Columba at whose annual meeting Lord Longford was speaking, is an important cog in the Catholic Action machine. To capture political power—and without political power the Roman Catholic Church would have no power—Roman Catholics are organised to infiltrate political parties, trade unions, co-operative boards and local authorities, etc. Considering how few people vote, or take the trouble to join a political party, it isn't tremendously difficult for an organised minority to capture power. By "Guilds" in the trade union field and by bodies like the Knights of St Columba in every field, Roman Catholic power in Britain is advancing by leaps and bounds.

Naturally, since none are organised to combat Catholic Action infiltration.

And this increase in Roman Catholic power is a threat and a deadly menace to Democracy, to Socialism, to Protestantism, to Rationalism, to Secularism, to Humanism, to Jewry, to everything which must be destroyed or dominated in Britain before the Papacy's goal is reached here: "spiritual" and "temporal" sovereignty.

Not only must these things be destroyed but our national sovereignty must be destroyed also.

* Resigned since this article was written.

GLASGOW HUMANISTS

GLASGOW Humanist Group are anticipating a crowded meeting when Margaret Knight, a tireless Humanist campaigner and speaker, will be addressing the Group and visitors from the general public at 2.30 p.m. at Glasgow's McLellan Galleries on Sunday, March 17. Humanists within fifty (and more, why not?) miles of Glasgow should make a careful note of this event.

Glaswegians should also notice that the Glasgow Students' Humanist Society will shortly be holding a meeting addressed by Miss Brigid Brophy. The exact date is not yet known and as it may be earlier than the meeting above, no time should be lost in getting information about this event from either Glasgow Students Federation, Glasgow Humanist Group or the BHA in London.

The GHG and GSHF have been holding some excellent meetings recently (including debates with the clergy on such notions as: That this World Needs Jesus Christ) and they deserve all the attention you can spare them.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

HUMAN RIGHTS YEAR DINNER

Speakers include:

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RENEE SHORT, MP

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SATURDAY, APRIL 6th, 6.30 p.m.

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LATTERDAY RELIGION IN FIGURES

P. G. Roy

WHEN travelling through Bulgaria, I asked a local member of the Communist Party what their attitude was in regard to the 'dialogue' with the Church. The proud reply was, "It doesn't affect us—religion no longer exists in Bulgaria".

Unfortunately, an official enquiry made last year belies this glowing assertion. It was conducted in two ways: by an official enquiry and then by an anonymous poll. These were the results:

	Believers	Unbelievers
Open poll	35.51%	66.44%
Unsigned	33.06%	52.12%

Considering that in the anonymous poll not all questionnaires had to be returned, the outcome does not seem to differ greatly. 17.39% (or 52.59% of the unbelievers) still have devotional corners at home, including some 5-6% even of those who asserted to be unbelievers. Of the believers, 4.79% attend service regularly; 16.78% only occasionally. The figures are 60.77% for religious festivals and 61.56% to celebrate funeral mass.

A similar enquiry among Polish youths showed:

	Deeply religious	Unbelievers
1958	7.5%	26%
1961	5%	34%

Similarly, 5.76% are still deeply religious in Bulgaria. Poland is 90% Roman Catholic; Bulgaria has 0.46% Roman Catholic, 26.72% Greek Orthodox, 6.46% Mohammedans, 0.47% various sects and 0.20% 'others'. A poll among Polish students showed that 60% of the university students were religious and 40% atheists or 'apatheists' (apathetic), of whom 33% were at technical high-schools, 39% agricultural, and 20-25% studied sundry sciences (mathematics, chemistry, medicine, etc.).

Bulgaria gave some breakdown figures:

	Believers (%)	Unbelievers (%)
White collar workers ...	13.29	86.61
Collective farmers ...	46.66	53.30
Peasants	72.44	27.36
Youngsters (18-23 years) ...	12.12	87.88
Illiterate	81.06	18.94
Post Graduates	7.75	92.25
Women	44.75	43.21 (7.73 in 1945)
Men	25.88	74.12

Even among the Party officials there are still 30.97% believers, and 14.96% among the leaders of the official Fatherland Front.

In Poland, 67% of the believers admitted that they remain religious from tradition, 21% have emotional reasons and 11% maintain that their reason dictates them to believe in God. All this goes to prove that *reason in itself is not a guiding argument and that scientific knowledge does not exclude so-called "religious experience"*.

However, even amongst the believers, 15% of the Poles do not want to have a church wedding, 9% no longer want their children to be educated in scriptures and 15% no longer believe in 'creation' as described in the Bible (57% in Warsaw).

These are the figures from so-called Socialist countries. In the capitalist West, religion of course fares far better.

The *World Almanac* for 1967 gives 274 different religious organisations for America where there are 69,088,183 Protestants against 46,246,175 members of the Roman Catholic Church. The *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 15, 1967) conducted a poll about the question whether or not the influence of religions is in the ascendancy. These were the results:

	1967 (%)	1957 (%)
Diminishing	57	14
Growing	23	69
Equal	14	10
Don't know	6	7
	100	100

As there are 124,682,422 church members in the USA (or 64.3% of the total population), there remains a residue of 35.7% of people who in one way or another consider themselves free of religious obligations.

DIVORCE LAW REFORM

A Statement issued on behalf of the National Secular Society by David Tribe, President.

MR LEO ABSE was quite right to accuse the Archbishop of Canterbury of 'a sad breach of faith' in repudiating at this late date an agreement reached last June between the Law Commissioners and his own group and for which he was then happy to take credit and much publicity for wise statesmanship and benevolence. Some five years ago the major Christian Churches combined to sabotage much of Mr Abse's very moderate Matrimonial Causes and Reconciliation Bill, and when this got a bad press in many quarters the plea was—with some justification—that not enough thought had then been given to the financial position of a divorced wife. And so, with liberal protestations, the Archbishop announced the setting up of his committee under the Bishop of Exeter. This reached a 'breakdown of marriage' formula which was subsequently reconciled with that of the Law Commissioners. On this basis Mr William Wilson, as he tells us himself in the current *Tribune*, sponsored a new Bill for second reading on February 9. Its central provisions make the not unreasonable assumption that a marriage has broken down when the partners have been living apart for two or five years, according to whether both or one wants a divorce. Now the Archbishop with clerical logic proclaims that he is anxious for divorce law reform so long as it does not 'retain and enlarge existing grounds'; i.e., if it will simply obstruct the present functioning of the divorce courts and perhaps provide more opportunity for officious clergymen to sermonise on the enormity of a couple's renouncing their marriage vows.

But in 1968 does it matter very much what the Archbishop of Canterbury thinks one way or the other? He may be a grandee of the realm, ranking in precedence just below the royal dukes, and have a peculiar right to transmit the divine will in this sceptred isle. For the great majority of people in the country, especially the thousands at present denied a divorce and the 200,000 children of stable but illicit unions that are thus denied 'legitimacy', he is just a

stately survivor of a bygone age. As the spokesman of an important minority he will always be listened to with respect, but the majority will know how much notice to take when his petulant words are not in the interests of the general public. As with so much reformist legislation it is necessary to state the obvious, that there will be no obligation on a couple, whether separated or not, to get divorced if neither of them wants it. The Bill is intended to get rid of the humbug of the 'matrimonial offence', which is so often arranged today, and of the 'innocent party', who may have been deserted for excellent reasons or allege adultery and claim discretion. The waiting period means that there is no 'divorce by consent' on demand—for which, subject to dependency rights, a good case can be made out—and unless the courts are realistic in the shortage of social workers obtaining, delays in hearing petitions will increase. But there is real reform here and we are hopeful MPs will embrace it.

Letters to the Editor

Richard Wagner

HOW garrulous can people become? I see that a certain I. S. Low (he must be a greenhorn if he never before saw my name) is angry with me because I am unable to find any trace of a humanist in Wagner. Nor am I impressed by Wagner's record as a revolutionist who, as Low thinks, could have foiled Hitler. In fact, one of Wagner's intimate friends was Hitler's spiritual father, Houston Stewart Chamberlain.

In Bachrach's *Lives of the Great Composers* none less than Gerald Abraham, the well-known musicologist, deals with Wagner in a way that contradicts our eager Atheist-makers: Wagner (he writes) "levied 'loans' in the spirit of a Plantagenet monarch" but was continuously in financial difficulties. Because of this he grew "more and more disgruntled, surer ever that there was something fundamentally wrong with the existing order of things . . . in which he . . . could have neither full leisure . . . nor the luxuries without which life was intolerable. . . . In this state of profound personal discontent, it was only natural that Wagner should sympathise with any movement that promised a change in the general status quo".

The whole plot misfired but Wagner was "still allowed to retain his post" (p. 607) whilst Low pretends he was "losing an excellent

However, even had Wagner's conviction been more sincere and genuine, we know of quite a number of reactionaries—e.g., Mosley and Mussolini—who had started from the extreme left.

Wagner, the Christian mystic and racialist, would heartily have endorsed America's intervention in Vietnam, so Low's further remarks on this score are a boomerang to say the least.

That despite being a dihard Wagner was also a great composer is beside the point.

Arrogance, Mr Low, cannot make up for ignorance.

"A certain P. G. Roy."

Diminished opposition

THANKS are due to you for your willingness to publish material of mine "in complete opposition" to your own views.

Nonetheless it would be my desire to diminish as far as possible the unintended opposition. You have selected two passages in my article to which you are in opposition. In the first of these I write "It may be truly said that there are as many humanisms as there are human individuals". Now I am quite willing to re-write this offending passage as follows: "Every human individual of normal intelligence is potentially a humanist unless prevented from becoming one by some irrational prejudice probably derived from some early indoctrination". That is what I really intended to say.

The other offending passage is "Any project that makes no contribution to the relief of poverty must from the humanist point of view be regarded as a wasted effort". In view of your objection to this statement, I now offer the following explanation of its meaning: "Any project that can of its very nature bring material

benefit to only a tiny minority of the human population stands in opposition to humanist notions of philanthropy", and to this I would add the qualification: "unless the tiny minority is demonstrably in need of some very special care and attention". What I am really against are immensely expensive projects that must seem to all poverty-stricken people a complete waste of time and money. I imagine the opposition between us may be less than it seems.

PETER CROMMELIN.

[Thank you; I much prefer your amendments. Your first amendment seems to me to make a very different point. Regarding your penultimate sentence, I assume you mean you are against any project which is a waste of time and money, rather than being against a project because it seems to poverty-stricken people a waste of time and money. What it is (rather than what it may seem to anyone) is important.—Ed.]

Authority for "lies"

THERE is no indication in my letter (December 22) that it was from 'Mrs' S. G. Knott as mentioned in John D. Stewart's letter (January 26); that was his muddle-headedness.

He denies the truth of my statement that ten men attack the bull at once. My authority for this is an article in *El Toro*, the organ of the International Council Against Bullfighting, one of whose patrons is Earl Russell. In this journal also is confirmation from a correspondent who wrote "At a bullfight I attended on holiday in Spain . . . in each 'fight' one bull was pitted against at least ten human beings . . ."

In another article the writer states "Horses cannot scream because they have their vocal chords cut . . ."

In the first article the writer states "Sir John Fraser did attend a bullfight" and "described . . . goring and disembowelling of some horses by the pain-maddened bull".

Years ago the champion jockey in Britain, Steve Donoghue, wrote about his having witnessed the disembowelling of bullfight-horses. He, for one, was not a "curious individual".

S. G. KNOTT.

Schopenhauer

IF any readers are interested in obtaining the best translations of the works of the great philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, would they please write to the following address: Lieutenant Colonel E. F. J. Payne, General Secretary, Schopenhauer Society, The Beacon South, Beacon Road, Crowborough, Sussex.

Lt. Col. Payne will be pleased to supply information, brochures, and any other help he can give. Most of his translations have been published in America, but some are now available in England.

JOHN SUTHERLAND.

Editorial Censorship

R. SMITH'S repeated allegations of censorship by Humanist editors cannot continue to go unchallenged. Hector Hawton, Colin McCall and David Tribe have certainly been 'more than fair' to Mr Smith as some of his letters were very close to libel. When editor of the FREETHINKER myself I welcomed non- and anti-Humanist views, and published them if the standard were high enough. I do not, however, give way to threats and personal abuse, and Mr Smith's letters are filed away for reference to my solicitor if it ever becomes necessary. On the subject of death, Isobel Graham gave him the only possible answer!

KIT MOUNT.

OBITUARY

IT is with very great regret that we have to give notice of the death of Victor Murray of the Edinburgh NSS Branch.

Vic, as he was affectionately known locally, died on January 4. He had a most attractive personality, and was a good debater with a profound knowledge of the Bible. His presence added gaiety, fun and knowledge to the meetings at the Mound. The Edinburgh Branch of the NSS have suffered a very great loss.

J. JOHNSTONE ROUGH.

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