

PRINCIPLES

The Rationalist and Ethical principles for which the Society stands are described by three writers as follows:—

I

SECULARISM relates to the present existence of man, and to action, the issues of which can be tested by the experience of this life. Its object is the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest perceivable point, as the immediate duty of society. Secularism accepts no authority but that of Nature, adopts no methods but those of science and philosophy, and respects in practice no rule but that of the conscience, illustrated by the common sense of mankind. It values the lessons of the past and looks to tradition as presenting a storehouse of materials for thought, and in many cases results of high wisdom for reverence; but it utterly disowns tradition as a ground of belief, whether miracles and supernaturalism be claimed or not claimed on its side. No sacred scripture can be made a basis of belief, for the obvious reason that its claim always needs to be proved. Individual members yield whatever respect their own good sense judges to be due to the opinions of great men, living or dead, spoken or written, as also to the practice of ancient communities, national or ecclesiastical. But they disown all appeal to such authorities as final tests of truth.

G. J. Holyoake.

II

SECULARISM is the practical expression of the conviction that the theological or supernaturalist account of the world and the process of life is untrue and misleading. Holding that this has been proved by the study of nature, by reason, and by historical research, the Secularist rejects all supernaturalist accounts of life alike on the scientific and on the moral side. He does not profess to explain the universe as a whole; on the contrary, he seeks to expose the failure of all such explanations. Rejecting the pretence that an infinite universe can be comprehended by the human intelligence, he regards human happiness as the end of human life, and seeks guidance in reason and experience on all human problems. Regarding all character as a result

of organization, training and environment, he disclaims the idea of retribution, human or divine, and substitutes for that principle those of reclamation and mutual protection. Secularism is thus capable of co-operation with all non-theological institutions and undertakings aiming sincerely at human betterment.

Beyond insisting on the supremacy of reason, and rejecting all theological dogmas and sanctions, it does not prescribe any political theory, save on the score of its expressing the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number. But, as an organised movement, Secularism proceeds upon the common consent of Secularist thinkers that (1) the government of the people, by consent of the people, and for the people, is the only political system that can promote their well-being; that (2) all expression of opinion as such ought to have free course; that (3) the interests of the human race being clearly solidary, international peace and co-operation should be among the first objects of statesmanship; and that (4) it is the duty of all men to seek the happiness of all. In seeking these ends, Secularists may differ as to means; they are united by their philosophy of life, and by their philanthropic ideal.

J. M. Robertson.

III

SECULARISM is that theory and that practice of life which aim at developing man's physical, mental, and moral powers, without dependence on the doctrines of God and a spiritual world. It is a *theory* because it seeks to give a man clear ideas of what he ought to do in the world, and why he ought to do it. It teaches him to think for himself, and in co-operation with other people, about his place and duty. It is also a *practice*. It asks a man to act as well as to think. Mere change of opinion cannot make a man a Secularist. He must have some definite purpose in his own moral and intellectual life. He must show a readiness to work with others for the common welfare.

Secularism regards reason as the supreme judge of human conduct. Reason will not try to take the place of the affections which are essential to the existence of the human race, but it should control and guide their action and so make them more useful and more dignified. By the aid of reason we can reflect on our experience

and apply its lessons.

Secularism declines to receive the Bible or any other so-called sacred book as a divine revelation. It freely criticizes the creed of persons who accept the Bible as an infallible authority on science, history, or morals.

Secularism considers that free discussion is essential to intellectual and moral progress. It maintains the freedom of the platform and the press, while counselling moderation of language and mutual respect among disputants.

Secularism demands adhesion to no political party or programme, but it is, by its very nature, progressive and liberal.

Every consistent Secularist takes a practical interest in what is known as the social problem. This problem covers such serious subjects as poverty, over-crowding, disputes between capital and labour, the drink question, the gambling evil, the lowering effects of certain classes of literature and amusements, etc. Members of a Secular society may be Socialists or Individualists, or they may hold other forms of political opinion. But it is fair to expect that, in some way or other, they should show their active interest in the solution of the social problem, and not be content with mere ideas.

Secularists, having set aside the doctrine of an over-ruling providence, are bound to concentrate their attention on the natural causes of pain and social disorder, and should therefore encourage the careful and systematic (*i.e.*, scientific) study of nature in general, and of human nature in particular.

Secularism is necessarily democratic in its sympathies. Its first principle - that Reason should be the supreme judge of human conduct - strikes at the principle of government by caste or class, either in the ordinary life of society, or in matters intellectual, or in the sphere of religion.

On the principle of democracy, the equality of the sexes must be admitted, and this equality will carry with it a willingness to open to women all occupations in which experience proves their usefulness, and to bestow upon them all such legal rights as the welfare of society demands.

In no direction should Secularism make its influence felt more than in that of education in all grades. It should strive to release education from all

connection with supernaturalism and theology, and to make moral and civic training its leading aim.

Secularism, both by its freedom from theological bias, and its sympathy with democracy, is peculiarly fitted for the advocacy of international peace.

F. J. Gould.

RULES

Of the Leicester Secular Society.

1. The object of the "Leicester Secular Society" shall be the advancement of Rationalist and Ethical principles by means of lectures, discussions, classes for adults and children, library, publication and distribution of literature, social meetings, etc.
2. Any person over the age of 18 may become a *member* through election by the Committee, if proposed and nominated by members of the Society, and after giving such assent to the Society's principles and rules as shall satisfy the Committee of the candidate's sincerity.

Minimum subscription: Ladies, 6d. monthly; gentlemen, 9d. monthly; payable in advance, unless otherwise arranged by the Committee.

3. An *associate* shall be elected in the same way as a member, but need only express general friendliness towards the Society's object, without complete assent to its Secular principles. Associates can use the premises and attend the socials, but shall have no power to vote or attend business meetings, or to introduce visitors. Subscription: Ladies, 3/- per year; gentlemen, 3/-per half-year; payable in advance.
4. Persons living more than two miles from the borough boundary may become Out-of-town Associates for 2/- yearly, payable in advance.
5. Old members may be elected as *free members* by a General Meeting, as a mark of the Society's esteem. Free members may attend business meetings

- and vote.
6. Persons who have done, or are doing, important service to the cause of Secularism may be elected by the Committee as *honorary members*, and shall have full use of the premises, but no voting power.
 7. The Committee may expel any member or associate.
 8. Complaints as to bad behaviour on the Society's premises shall be laid before a Committee consisting of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and (if desired) one person nominated by the complainant, and another by the accused, these representatives to be members of the Society. This Committee shall have power to suspend any members involved for any time they think right; to expel any such person from membership; to forbid the introduction of specified persons as visitors, or to require reparation. There shall be no appeal from their decision. A majority can give a decision, but the President shall have no casting-vote.
 9. The unpaid officers shall be a President, Vice-President, and a Committee of ten, all elected annually; five of the Committee at the July General Meeting, and the rest at the January General Meeting. Also four Trustees, who shall hold the Society's property, who must be members of the Society, and who shall be *ex-officio* members of the Committee. The Trustees shall remain in office until resignation or death, or until the members at a General Meeting think proper to elect others.
 10. The Committee shall choose their own Secretary and Treasurer.
 11. Committee meetings shall be held at least once a fortnight. Two or more members of the Committee may request the Secretary in writing to summon a meeting, for a specified object, and the Secretary shall issue the necessary notices. Five shall form a quorum.
 12. Committee members absent more than three times running, without satisfactory reasons, may be removed from office by a vote of the Committee, and their places shall be filled by co-option. This rule does not apply to Trustees.
 13. The Society's accounts, certified by an auditor or auditors elected at each

January General Meeting, shall be presented in a half-yearly balance-sheet in July, and a complete balance-sheet for the past year in January; the January balance-sheet to be printed.

14. Persons who have been members less than six-months, or whose subscriptions are in arrear may not vote; and no person may serve on the Committee who has not been a member for a year preceding the election. Associates and honorary members have no vote.
15. The President shall take the chair at all meetings, and have an extra casting-vote. In his absence the Vice-President assumes his duties.
16. So long as the Society is able to provide a sufficient salary, the principal paid officer shall be the Organizing Secretary (Organizer). He shall be elected at a General Meeting, and shall be paid by and responsible to the Committee. He will attend the Committee meetings, be *ex-officio* member of all Sub-Committees, and may take part in any discussion, but will never vote.
17. A list of the attendances of the retiring members of Committee shall be posted up 14 days before a half-yearly General Meeting; also a nomination paper, which shall be taken down three clear days before the meeting.
18. Fifteen members may call a General Meeting by giving the Secretary a written requisition.
19. Except by consent of the members present, no motion shall be made at a General Meeting unless 14 days notice has been given, or unless the motion is made on behalf of the Committee.
20. These rules can only be altered or added to by a General Meeting called for the purpose; and a vote for alteration or addition can only be carried by a majority of members present, such majority to be not less than one-third of the whole list of members eligible to vote.

REGULATIONS AS TO PREMISES.

1. The Manager or Caretaker, having charge of the Society's premises, will be paid by and responsible to the Committee.
2. The premises shall open not later than 10a.m. Sundays, and 4 p.m. week-days, except on public holidays, and except Friday, when the opening time shall be 6 p.m., and on Saturday, when the opening time shall be 1 p.m.
3. The premises shall close not later than 11 p.m. each week-day; Sunday, not later than 10.15 p.m.
4. Extension of hours can only be arranged by the Committee.
5. The Reading-room shall be free to the public on Sundays, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. No refreshments may be served, nor any games played, before 4 p.m. on Sundays.
6. No games shall be played while the Society's Sunday evening meetings are proceeding.
7. The serving of refreshments shall cease five minutes before the closing-time of the premises.
8. A member's or associate's ticket must be produced at the request of the Secretary, Caretaker, or any member of the Committee.
9. All forms of gambling and offensive language and conduct are strictly forbidden.
10. The Caretaker may have any disorderly person expelled from the premises.
11. No periodical or newspaper may be taken away. Books may be taken away by members or associates in accordance with the Library rules.
12. A member may bring with him his wife, and children under the age of 18. It is hoped that parents will take their children home not later than 10 p.m., except on special occasions interesting to children. Cases of continued neglect of the desire here expressed will be reported to the Committee.
13. Members' children, aged 16 to 18, may use the premises in the same manner as associates on payment (in advance) of 1/- per half-year, if approved by the

Committee.

14. A member may introduce visitors, and no visitor may come more than once in four weeks; but this restriction does not apply to socials, classes and debates. Associates cannot introduce visitors. Persons visiting Leicester may be admitted by the Committee (acting through the President or Organizer) free for one week.
15. Parents whose attention is drawn by the Organizer or Caretaker to their children's misbehaviour, and who do not remedy the annoyance, shall be reported to the next meeting of the Committee, and the children complained of may be forbidden to enter the premises.
16. No expelled or suspended member may be introduced as a visitor.
17. The Committee has power to make by-laws which are not contrary to the foregoing Rules and Regulations, or to any instruction from a General Meeting.
18. The President or Organizer has authority to act in any emergency not provided for by the Rules, Regulations or By-laws, but must in all cases report such action to the next Committee.
19. Alterations in the "Regulations as to Premises" can be made by a majority of members present at a General Meeting.

ANY person desirous of bequeathing a legacy to the Leicester Secular Society, is respectfully requested to make use of the following :—

FORM OF BEQUEST

I give and bequeath to the Treasurer for the time being, of the Leicester Secular Society, the sum of £ to be raised and paid by and out of such ready money, goods, and personal effects, as I may or can by law charge with the payment of the same; which said sum I desire may be applied towards carrying on the designs of the said Secular Society.