

The Freethinker

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AS FREETHINKER READERS know, I hold Emmett McLoughlin in very high esteem for his fine and sincere autobiography, *People's Padre*, first published in America in 1954, which, although boycotted by the press (only two newspapers reviewed it in the first eighteen months after publication) has sold nearly a quarter of a million copies. An ex-Franciscan priest, Mr. McLoughlin has an intimate knowledge of Roman Catholic teaching methods, and he has now given us a fully documented study of *American Culture and Catholic Schools* (available from the publisher, Lyle Stuart, 225 Lafayette Street, New York 12, USA, \$4.95), the only one, he believes, that exists. That the book deals specifically with the United States

is no detraction. In general it is equally applicable to Britain and, with America more and more affecting our own destiny, it is vitally important to know the special features of Catholic influence there. That this influence is profound, the book makes painfully clear. Indeed, concentration on the possibility of a Catholic President has distracted us from the very dangerous situation that already exists there.

Since the middle of last year, for instance, all the Chiefs of Chaplains of the US Army, Navy and Air Force have been Roman Catholic priests. For the first time in American history, Roman Catholics constitute the largest religious bloc in Congress. And, according to Mrs. Pearl Mesta, former US Ambassador to Luxemburg (known as "the hostess with the mostest") the Roman Catholic Church virtually controls the US State Department "around the world". (When Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt was visiting Luxemburg, Mrs. Mesta "received orders" from the American Embassy in Rome that she was "to have Mrs. Roosevelt's picture taken with the abbot of a famous monastery and be interviewed with him by the press.") Roman Catholic control of big-city politics is, of course, notorious, while McLoughlin understands that "there are enough Catholics in the US Public Health Service (the agency administering the Hill-Burton funds [federal aid to hospitals]) to stop construction of anything the Catholic hierarchy objects to . . ."

The Roman Catholic Church, in fact, tries to function as a "super-government" in the US, as it does in countries like Spain and Portugal. And above all, it aims to control the public schools. This, as McLoughlin sees it, is the most immediate threat that has to be met.

Two Ways

There are two ways in which control can be gained and exercised: (1) By placing a majority of what he calls "shock-troopers" on school boards; and (2) By infiltrating the public schools with Roman Catholic teachers. The extent of the control already exercised is hard to assess, but it is certainly considerable. In Boston, for instance, the situation is "so flagrant that the school board has taken it upon itself to sell to the archbishop about a dozen public plants for a mere token sum . . . to be converted into

parochial schools". "Throughout New England . . . the great majority of boards were controlled by Catholics and most of the teachers were Catholics." In one New England city, the voice of Cardinal Cushing recited the Rosary in the morning over the loud speaker in a public school. "In Chicago I was told that seventy per cent of public school teachers are Catholics, while in New Orleans it is said to be ninety per cent."

Neglect

These figures are obviously imprecise, and McLoughlin recognises the need for a special study of the subject. But, he writes, "Even if some of these figures are exaggerated, the responsible Protestant leaders in all these cities

know that Catholic teachers are in the great majority. I did not receive this information from the man in the street, but from teachers and the leaders of the local ministerial associations". How has this school board control come about? Through organisation on the part of the Roman Catholic Church and apathy on the part of non-Catholics. Indeed, McLoughlin says, "Many non-Catholic Americans act as though freedom of thought, of speech and worship have been with us forever and will last forever". Contemporary history, he adds, should teach us otherwise. And his book should help to remedy some of the "disgraceful neglect"—as he rightly terms it—of democratic duties on the part of non-Catholics.

The trouble is that the average American knows little or nothing about Catholic schools. He probably thinks of them as like the public (or state) schools with just a special religious period added. This is quite wrong. "The aim of the Catholic school is to train Catholics. Everything else is subordinate to this primary goal." The parochial school that Emmett McLoughlin attended "was not an institution in which American children were drilled in reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, geography and a class a day in the Catholic religion".

It was [he tells us] a school in which we lived the Catholic Church. We lived within its aura and in its reflected light. We picked up as incidentals the subjects that Americans usually identify as the essence of an educational system. These subjects were important—but not primary.

Atmosphere

As readers of *People's Padre* will know, Mr. Loughlin is at his best in evoking the atmosphere of the Catholic home, Catholic school, Catholic group ("In belonging to this group we belonged to the vastest group in the universe") and Catholic religious order.

My home environment led right into the Catholic school. Crucifixes were on the wall, as were pictures of Christ, Mary and the saints . . . Most of my parents' friends were Irish Catholics and conversation frequently revolved about the Church and their children in the parochial school. They were in the American world, but certainly not of it. The atmosphere in which I moved as a pre-school child was thoroughly Roman Catholic. Any childish variation, doubt or question was impossible and unthinkable.

In early childhood he learnt that no lasting organisation existed but the Church, and was taught loyalty to nuns

VIEWS and OPINIONS

Catholicism in the U.S.A.

By COLIN McCALL

and priests which later became obedience and (in the seminary) blind obedience. The secret of Roman Catholic success, he thinks, "lies in its identification with God". And surely he is right. Like other Catholic children, he was taught that the Church was the voice of God, and this was the "constant emphasis".

Yet how successful is the parochial system? McLoughlin believes that its success is enormously exaggerated; that "It is probably generous to estimate that its system is lastingly effective as to doctrine and loyalty on only one-third of these children". What the system does, is to train this minority to make so much noise that "they create the illusion of numbers and power". It needs only a relatively small number of intensely dedicated devotees. "The real power of the American Catholic hierarchy is the fear in the minds of non-Catholics".

Playing upon this fear, the Church is able to exercise an amazing censorship. There is

less truth told and known about the Roman Catholic Church, its doctrines, its history, its contemporary world-wide manoeuvres than any other modern phenomenon. Its threats of and actual use of economic boycott backed up by the illusion of a purchasing bloc of some forty million devout Catholics (there are not more than twenty million in the United States—and only a fraction of them are devout) have cowed American editors and publishers and broadcasters who otherwise boast of "the freedom of the press".

People's Padre, for example, was never reviewed by the *New York Times*, though for five years it was a best-seller.

Censorship

The Church attempts, often with a good deal of success, to dictate what books shall be read, films and TV programmes seen, and even (absurdly enough) what music shall be heard, not only by Catholics, but by all Americans. *Church and State* (December 1958) reported that in Lake Placid, New York, the local priest, Fr. James T. Lyng, "ordered the non-Catholic manager of the Palace Theatre not to show a Brigitte Bardot film, *The Bride Is Much Too Beautiful*. The manager refused to obey the priest. The priest ordered a six months' boycott, regardless of the pictures. The theatre, the only one in the community, went broke". The WTOP Television Station, owned by the *Washington Post*, refused to show the film *Martin Luther*, because of Catholic pressure. The Holy Name Society is drilled and prepared for what it calls "an effective approach to the problem of indecent literature", and the Society's report on the situation in Pittsburg makes interesting, if alarming reading:

The number of stores handling literature in the diocese is estimated at 1,000. The surveys uncovered about 880 such stores, the majority of which are visited regularly. Reports received and tabulated to date show that about 70 per cent of the proprietors are co-operating, or promise to co-operate fully; about 15 per cent are co-operating partially; and about 15 per cent refused to co-operate.

Yet, as a Phoenix bookseller told McLoughlin, "there are so few literate devout Catholics who pay any attention to the fulminations of the clergy that their loss can't even be felt by the book store". And he should know, for he has sold more than five thousand copies of *People's Padre*.

Take Heart

We have, therefore, the tragi-comic situation of a Church which is losing its hold on the bulk of its own people, exerting more and more control, largely by bluff, over the rest of the American population. To the latter, Mr. McLoughlin says:

Protestants and politicians might take heart enough to be real Americans if they could only realise that the Catholic press in America is nothing but "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" and that Roman Catholic loyalty in America is confined to an unthinking minority and its alleged strength is purely a myth.

There is much more in this altogether valuable book, and I shall return to it again in these columns. For the moment I would recommend it wholeheartedly, not only to American readers, but to English ones also, for *American Culture and Catholic Schools* has much wider application than its title might suggest. And one very important lesson that other anti-Catholics might learn from Mr. McLoughlin is the habit of full documentation. Mr. McLoughlin knows who he is up against; knows how the opposition will wriggle; so he pins it down. Not every one can write with his knowledge and insight, but they can try to measure up to his systematic standards.

The Presidential Election

I must thank Mr. McCall for his article "The Presidential Election" in THE FREETHINKER (7/10/60) and confess that I had let Mr. Kennedy's Catholicism blind me to his liberalism. "Liberalism" is almost a dirty word in the USA but I am well aware that some Catholics are independent, even pacifist. I am also well aware of Mr. Nixon's shortcomings and agree that Mr. Kennedy is the only choice.

My point was, of course, that the American climate of opinion differs strongly from ours and when I wrote of pressure-groups I had in mind the powerful Madison Avenue set-up which can be used for this very purpose of lobbying via TV, the Press, etc. See Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*.

However, let us hope Mr. Kennedy's liberalism is strong enough to resist.

G. H. HEY.

Mr. McCall certainly made out a good case for Senator Kennedy (7/10/60), but I cannot help thinking that there would be rejoicing in the Vatican if he is successful. The claims of the Church are still the same. Do these advanced Catholics support them? The fact that Kennedy may be more enlightened than his rival in the political field does not allay my fears of Catholicism in power.

W. MAYBANK.

Even though Senator Kennedy may be as liberal-minded as Mr. McCall suggests, and may even mean what he says, it seems to me extremely unwise to support him so fervently in the pages of THE FREETHINKER. We do not have to do this and it may well cause confusion and dismay among some of our readers.

W. J. COLLINS.

What a surprising statement: "It is a mistake to equate politics with economics". Is Colin McCall trying to combine the innocence of a Saint with the ignorance of a Christian; or is it writ sarcastic?

Politics is governmental expression of the prevailing economic system. So USA is an oligarchy; a dictatorship of millionaires. President, Senate, House of Representatives, Press, Churches and Advertising are their tools. Thus the present Government of Britain carries out the policy of the F.B.I. and the Stock Exchange. The method of wealth production determines the community's morality. THE FREETHINKER not being a political paper, I cannot follow up the subject, but readers who have their economic foundations soundly placed will understand the above. It is elementary.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER, 12th, 1960: Present: Messrs. L. Ebury (Vice-President) in the Chair; Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Hornbrook, Johnson, McIlroy, Mills, Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apology from Mr. Ridley. New Members were admitted to Birmingham, Glasgow, Marble Arch, Nottingham and Sussex Branches which, with individual members made 14 in all. Correspondence from Hastings Young Socialists (to whom literature had been sent and an offer of a speaker made). Mr. G. C. Medina was dealt with. World Union of Freethinkers 1961 reunion had definitely been booked for Beatrice Webb House, Dorking, for September 8th, 9th, 10th: Lady Wootton had agreed to open the conference and Professor Lucia de Brouckère and Dr. Swinton had accepted invitations to speak. Various Branch matters were dealt with, and Mr. Ebury again handed over £5 to Building Fund on behalf of North London Branch, together with a further item on sales of a comic rhyme. Greetings cards suggestions were considered and two types approved. London members willing to visit sick members would be asked to contact the office. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, November 16th, 1960.

Two South American Theocracies

By F. A. RIDLEY

In 1912, an American archaeological expedition exploring the high Andes, discovered still in a fairly intact state, the fabled sacred city of the Incas of Peru, Machu Picchu, quite possibly the original of the fabled *El Dorado*; in the search for which, so many explorers of South America (including that many-sided Elizabethan genius, Sir Walter Raleigh) lost their way and often enough, their lives. Machu Picchu itself never appears to have been discovered, let alone conquered, by the Spaniards; though it was in this holy city that the Incas appear to have been crowned, and it was thence that the last of the Incas, Tupac Amaru, fled before the white invaders, only to be eventually captured and ignominiously executed in the public square of the former Inca capital, Cuzco, by the ruthless successors of Pizarro. Ironically, but not inappropriately, the Spanish expeditionary force which captured the unfortunate fugitive Inca, was led by a Basque nobleman, Captain Garcia de Loyola, the nephew of the most famous and influential of modern Catholic saints, Ignatius of Loyola, the Founder of the world-famous Jesuit Order.

This juxtaposition of a Loyola with an Inca was rather an ironical coincidence, for the Pagan despotism of the Incas of Peru and the later Christian despotism of the Jesuits in Paraguay represent two very similar theocracies, which both dominated absolutely for several centuries large areas in South America. The Incas ruled their vast empire (which at its zenith included not only Peru and Ecuador but parts of Bolivia, Chile, and the Argentine as well) from about 1200 to the Spanish Conquest (1533-40), whilst the Jesuits established their regime in what is now Paraguay about 1600, and retained both their religious and political supremacy there for about a century and a half until suppressed by the Spaniards and expelled from South America. Nor were these two theocracies—the solar Dynasty of the Pagan Incas and the Christian despotism of the clerical Jesuits—unconnected. It appears altogether probable that the worldly-wise Jesuits consciously modelled much of their collectivist policy upon the earlier “socialist empire of the Incas” as a modern Americanist, Louis Baudin, has described that remarkable social experiment which represents perhaps the most complete historical example of a pre-industrial socialist society.

Like their ancient prototypes, the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt, and their modern antitypes the Mikados of Japan, the Incas of Peru represented a solar dynasty, a theocracy sacred to the sun, presided over by the “Children of the Sun”, the Incas. Traditionally, the Incas originated in the Bolivian highlands about 1200 AD and later established themselves at Cuzco, in the modern Peru. Thence by a judicious admixture of imperialist war and diplomacy, they gradually extended their dominions until, by the end of the 15th century, they had built up a vast and—as their eventual Spanish conquerors themselves admitted—an extremely well-organised empire administered on such strictly collectivist lines as to deserve M. Baudin’s description—a collectivist regime that appears to have combined a huge centralised “Fabian” bureaucracy at the top, composed mainly of the Inca aristocracy, superimposed upon a probably much older clan system deriving from the immemorial antiquity of primitive communism. The Inca himself represented the mainspring that ran this huge and complex organism. When the invading Spaniards of Pizarro captured and subsequently murdered the Inca Atahualpa the whole over-centralised structure just went

to pieces, though several Inca rebellions eventuated—one as late as 1780—and an Inca dynasty maintained itself until 1572 in the secret mountain fastness of Machu Picchu.

Throughout the three centuries during which the Inca theocracy combined Church and State, the Peruvian Empire and the Solar Church, in an inseparable unity, one third of the land belonged to the sun; and the Inca Dynasties’ interminable wars were apparently “holy wars”, fought not only—perhaps not even principally—for such secular objectives as land and loot, but to extend the “one true faith” in the solar luminary, the divine ancestors of the Incas, as of the Pharaohs (whom the Incas much resembled) and of the modern Japanese emperors on the other side of the Pacific. The Incas appear to have regulated themselves as first and foremost children of the sun rather than as secular rulers. In this former capacity, they found themselves compelled to face certain difficulties of a combined geographical and theological nature. Upon the cool Bolivian Highlands, whence the Incas seem to have originated along with their solar cult, the hot sun represents a potent and useful ally in the terrestrial struggle for existence; but when the expanding solar empire was extended to include the tribes who lived near the scorching equatorial lowlands near the Pacific, the Incas found it difficult to impose their solar cult, since the tribes on the equatorial shores of the Pacific only knew the sun as a scorching destroyer and enemy—an interesting illustration of Buckle’s theory of the mutual interdependence of climate and religion.

Nor was it only rival anti-solar cults that the Incas had to face. Along with the expansion of their, in many ways impressive, civilisation, the serpent of scepticism appears to have penetrated into the very Holy of Holies of the solar theocracy, into the palace of the Divine Inca himself. For, one fine day, the great Inca conquerer, Yupanqui (c1450) is alleged to have asked his no doubt scandalised priests this pertinent (and impertinent) question: “Does the sun gallop daily round the Heavens of his own free will, or is he merely a tethered animal who runs round and round at the order of some celestial Inca?” History has not, unfortunately, recorded the answer of the Peruvian priests to that one! What a regime in which such questions were already asked might have ultimately done, is anyone’s guess. But as, unfortunately, Pizarro and Co. (aided by an opportune civil war amongst the Incas themselves) cut the Gordian knot and abruptly eliminated the Inca regime with startling speed, the possibilities inherent in this most interesting situation have to be relegated to the realm of might-have-been!

However, within a century of the exit of the solar cult, a new Theocracy—a socialist, or at least a collectivist one—also made its appearance on the South American scene. This time (as noted above) in the modern Paraguay. Here, the Jesuits, then at the height of their power in both Rome and Spain, “leased” from the Spanish crown an extensive territorial area. And here they established what was, in effect, an independent republic, administered solely and autocratically by themselves, establishing their own laws, army, administration and economic monopoly. This last may perhaps have imitated the defunct Inca regime but was more probably taken from the famous *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More (now a Catholic saint) whom the Jesuits greatly respected both as a writer and as an eventual martyr

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

The influx of West Indians has brought with it no doubt some variations of what is often described as "true Christianity", though the conjunction here of "truth" with "Christianity" sounds suspiciously like saying "a round square". However, some of the immigrants in Walworth have been having a regular religious beano spreading what they call "The Gospel of Light Church of God" to other pious brothers. According to *The People*, a neighbour has stoutly objected, complaining that this "Gospel" was responsible for a heck of a row. "The noise is worse than any party" he groaned, "they bang drums, and sometimes one of them plays a tin whistle". On the other hand, the minister of the church admitted that they made a noise, but only in praising the Lord happily and publicly, and they will continue to do so. The way of the Lord is always hard.

While it is true that the appointment (or should it be "translation"?) of the next Archbishop of Canterbury could never be such a world-shattering event as the election of a Pope, the *Sunday Express* recently had an article speculating on the chances of some of the more prominent bishops who might be the next lucky winner. Most of them appeared to fail in one thing or another—for example, one bishop was too "low" Church, another was too "high", others were "progressive", or "venerable", or had "doctrinal" opinions disliked by the laity, or were "extremely learned", and so on. It will be the job of Mr. Macmillan to appoint the new Archbishop, and we are assured whoever it is, it "will certainly be controversial". But why? Who in heaven's name cares two hoots?

Whatever the case may be in England, according to a forthcoming book entitled *The Scottish Churches* by Dr. John Highet who is a Lecturer on Sociology at the University of Glasgow, not only is Scotland a "Presbyterian Stronghold", but three out of every four adults there are members of a Church. This does not mean, we are hastily assured, that the remaining adults are "convinced atheists or agnostics", but only that many of them may only attend church for baptisms, marriages, funerals, etc.

In addition, it is noted that Roman Catholics are in relation to the population, much more numerous in Scotland than in England and Wales. In fact, there are more Catholics now in Scotland than there were in 1947 and 1951. "Leakages" are discounted by the fact that while the increase in the Church of Scotland is about 4.7, in the Church of Rome it is 12 per cent. So, at least in Scotland, where Rabbe Burns is still the favourite poet, the Churches have never had it so good. Is there now no Freethought among the "banks and the braes"?

All the same, the Scottish Episcopal Church is very worried because, invited to the celebrations of the fourth centenary of the Reformation in Scotland, this may mean some recognition of John Knox who had no love for bishops. The Rev. A. I. M. Haggart lamented, "It is not that we repudiate the Reformation . . . 'Three cheers for John Knox' would for us be insincere and unreal". In this, the S.E. and R.C. Churches would be in complete agreement—but in nothing else. Christians are still in complete disunity.

In the opinion of competent critics Somerset Maugham is easily the greatest of our living novelists—and most readers will heartily accept their verdict. We were pleased there-

fore to note that those journalists who interviewed him recently were not afraid to tell their newspapers—among them the *Daily Mail* the *Daily Express* and *News Chronicle*—that he was also a Rationalist. He was not an Agnostic, and he did not believe in any after life. The very idea of living on and on for millions of years "horrified him". It horrifies most intelligent human beings as well.

But Mr. Maugham still reads the Bible every day—and why not? He read it because "it was a good story", and "not because he believed it". The Bible can be read by all good Rationalists for many reasons, and there is no need to believe a word of it, any more than the *Arabian Nights*. Though written from different viewpoints, the one merely for entertainment, the other to give us some moral teachings, they both have a place in literature. The God of the Bible, El, is as mythical as the God of the *Arabian Nights*, Allah, but the tales describing both may still be worth reading.

Father Kenney, who is a Catholic priest in Sydney, wants to move with the times. He prefers modern representations of "our Lord" much more than "portrayals of Christ as a soft, simpering, young lady with a beard" which he calls "an insulting caricature". As for "our Lady", Fr. Kenney considered representations which made her look like a "fatuous doll" failed to "convey the slightest inkling that she was God's mother".

But what impression do we get from some or most of the portraits of Jesus and Mary from modern artists? Cubes, Triangles, Squares, and Haloes? What else? No one would credit either Jesus or his Mother with a scrap of humour—indeed we are clearly taught that "our Lord" was "despised and rejected of men", and modern artists have in the main emphasised this aspect of his Divinity with as much ugliness as possible. Poor Jesus! He seems still to be causing a rumpus—though this time the Jews are not to be blamed.

TWO SOUTH AMERICAN THEOCRACIES

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for the Church. Not only was their regime strictly collectivist, but it actually included many of the institutions recommended in *Utopia* e.g. the total prohibition of gold and silver, the suppression of all buying and selling within the Jesuit Republic, and the provision of common store-houses whence their Indian subjects could obtain all their needs in return for the compulsory labour obligatory on all able-bodied persons. All these socialistic practices are to be found in More's *Utopia*, and appear to have been faithfully put into practice by his Jesuit disciples in this most interesting clerical Utopia. At its height, the Jesuit state had a population of at least 150,000 divided among some forty settlements, each administered by two Jesuit fathers, and it excited much interest in current European literature. A modern (non-Catholic) explorer, Mr. Julian Duguid, has recorded the impression made on him by the still surviving remains of the Jesuit settlements now deep in the primeval forest. Like that of the Incas, though for rather different reasons, the Jesuit State was eventually annexed by the Spanish Empire (1768) though, rather curiously, Paraguay still remains the paradise of socialistic colonies, including religious ones like the German *Bruderhof* whom I described some time ago in this paper.

Elderly Birmingham N.S.S. member desires employment with scope for brains; pref. 5-day. Shorthand Typing and accounts. Commercial and Bank references. Reply to Box TDS 361.

THE FREETHINKER

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Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.; Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. MILLS and WOODCOCK. (Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria statue.)

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. TRIBE and J. P. MURACCIOLE.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street), Sunday, October 23rd, 6.45 p.m.: Miss G. FARNELL, M.Sc., "Behind the Iron Curtain". Colour Slides.

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Tuesday, October 25th (Large Hall, Film), 7.15 p.m.: R. DIXON, "Danilo Dolci, His Work in Sicily".

Dagenham Branch N.S.S. (214 Fitzstephen Road), Friday, October 21st, 7.45 p.m.: D. TRIBE, "Is Religion Reactionary?"

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 23rd, 6.30 p.m.: Film—"The Rival World".

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (The Carpenters' Arms, Scymour Place, Edgware Road, W.1), Sunday, October 23rd, 7.15 p.m.: D. TRIBE, "Are Science and Religion Compatible?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Sunday, October 23rd, 11 a.m.: Mrs. MARGARET KNIGHT, "How Europe Became Christian".

West Ham and District Branch N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre, The Green, E.11), Thursday, October 27th, 7.45 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Freethought and the World Situation".

Notes and News

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY, in conjunction with the Workers' Educational Association, is running a ten-meeting course entitled "Society, Sanity and the Future" on Tuesday evenings from 8-9.30 p.m. The tutor is Philip H. Taylor, B.A., M.Ed., Lecturer in Education in the University of Leicester. Further details may be obtained from the LSS Secretary, Mr. C. H. Hammersley at the Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester.

WHEN AUSTRALIAN Prime Minister Mr. Menzies boasts of the blessings of living in the "Free World", he no doubt includes his own country in the classification. He must forgive us, then, if we remind him that his Government's Customs Department has a list of 180 banned books. It is true that there has been a slight relaxation recently (Glasgow Evening Times, 7/10/60), whereby Australian universities are now permitted to import banned books, but, "the university would have to send the department

a list of the banned books held; keep the books in a separate section of the library; issue them only to students who produced an authority from a professor certifying that the books were required for study; and undertake not to dispose of the books". Not sufficient freedom to boast about, we would say.

EDITH M. WATSON has made a belated discovery that "In spite of all its churches of every denomination—except Unitarians—there are apparently no Christians in Worthing to carry out their Master's precept 'I was in prison and ye comforted me, sick and ye visited me'" (*Worthing Gazette*, 21/9/60). Mrs. (?) Watson hoped for volunteers to change library books for elderly people, but her letter to the *Gazette* brought only one reply.

WE ARE INCLINED at times to be so preoccupied with the large religious denominations that we overlook the incalculable amount of harm done by the myriad of mad little sects. One of these, the Close Brethren (an offshoot of the Plymouth Brethren) which has its headquarters in Springfield, Illinois, has gained considerable influence in the seaside strip between Peterhead and Macduff in Aberdeenshire and "emotions have blown white hot . . ." (*Daily Record*, 8/10/60). Members of the sect are ordered to "Shun all material things" and some fishermen and wives are trying to follow this teaching. They, of course, are old enough to know better but, as is usually the case, it is the children who suffer worst at the hands of religion. Those whose parents belong to the sect were banned from watching a school Punch and Judy show, telling their teacher that if they did, "the Devil would confront them".

MR. J. C. M. MBATA, Field Officer of the South African Institute of Race Relations, recently put a poser to the Interdenominational African Ministers' Federation. "The forces of African nationalism hold for the black man the promise of emancipation from the humiliation and degradation which he suffers because of his colour" he said (*Leicester Mercury*, 23/9/60). "Will those who call themselves Christians be able to match this challenge and turn this into a force of good?" he asked. "Can they convince the black man that the Church is not the handmaiden of white domination?" Can they indeed? Is it surprising that, in Mr. Mbata's words, "many young African men and women today felt that Christianity, especially the South African version, was a luxury they could ill afford"? We do not think so.

The *Catholic Times* (7/10/60) gave a few details of the activities of what Mr. Emmett McLoughlin calls the "shock troopers". "One or two letters have arrived from readers who keep an eye on public libraries", it said. One actually reported (imagine it!) "the presence of the *Daily Worker* and other Communist publications in the reading room at a seaside resort, but no religious papers" (our italics). Another (better news this time!) "has succeeded in getting the Catholic commentaries on Scripture acquired for the local reference library". "Anything you could do locally?" the paper asks.

WITHOUT COMMENT

Flood Town Peril: Families pray on rooftops.—*Daily Mirror* headline 8/10/60.

NEXT WEEK

THE CITY TEMPLE—
UNDER THE WEATHERHEAD
By WILLIAM KENT

Belfast in 1960

By S. J. YOUNG
(Concluded from page 334)

Social relations between Roman Catholic and Protestant teenagers seem to be almost nonexistent; neither group seeks, nor is desirous of the others' company. Compared with teenagers of earlier years, the present generation is not so readily provoked into active violence, but the spark still smoulders and with vigorous fanning might easily flare up. In isolated cases gangs are formed and deliberately seek out the opposing side, then violence does take place. But then, to be fair, these gangs, and the types who constitute them, don't necessarily need a religious issue to brutalise them. And the magistrates and police of both denominations take an equally serious view of both sides.

The adults of today may be classified into many groups. The ritual churchgoer is the relic of some home of respectability whose sole form of virtue consisted of the belief that church attendance in Sunday best was the noblest form of social distinction. But this form of snobbery having disappeared with the advent of the Welfare State, he perpetuates a policy without a cause or a reason. Then there is the strong man press-ganged into attendance by a (religiously) faithful spouse. Of the weaker sex (and in this respect they merit the description) some go to church because it's proper; some because the preacher is "such a nice wee man"; some because they don't like the preacher but must go to criticise him anyhow; some to see the fashions; some because "*she* goes and I wouldn't let her get away with that"; some for a nice sentimental hour; and some of the maiden ladies because "Jesus the Lover" is there.

Another group consists of the disciples of a religious-cum-political movement, though strenuous efforts are made to convey the impression it is religious only, entirely non-political, non-discriminating, no bias against any other sect (is that possible?) We have, in addition, the truly faithful, the "Saved", who automatically go to church with a large edition of the "Shield of Faith" carried prominently in the hand. In prayers, when the speaker is bewailing the folly of the "fallen" and urging, threatening and coaxing in turn, each of the redeemed forms his own cheer group and urges the Lord to do something—"Yes Lord", "Please God . . . a-a-ah!" They create their own emotional atmosphere and they imagine the Lord's presence to be very real. Hellfire, of course, has lost a good deal of its heat, and salvation a lot of its appeal. But the really marked change concerns the clergy. People still retain a certain caution in the presence of the clergy, but nothing like the awe of former days. It is encouraging, the number who think that this life is the only one, and life should be lived accordingly. These people exude a pleasant and cheery form of accepted inevitability. But others still suffer from a mild hangover from the past. They don't believe in hell but they bet each way, with "I believe there's a Man above".

The secular innovation, the Welfare State has greatly freed the people from the fears that possessed their parents. And with the ghoul of want gone, the promise of what you already have tends to pall. With a sufficiently-stocked larder and a reasonably-filled belly; with money to give to and spend on the children; with the family together at home and entertainment therein; there has come a sense of self-sufficiency which has told against religion.

Roman Catholic and Protestant adults can mix quite well socially provided the rules are kept regarding religion.

These are that one may tell jokes about oneself and against one's own faith, but not against the opposition. One does not criticise the other's Church.

Turning now to the Churches and the relations between them, there would seem to be a struggle between Rome on the one hand, and the "Presby", Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostals on the other. The Church of Ireland seems lacking in stamina and can no longer be considered a serious factor in the fight. Division is still emphasised in subtle or obvious ways. Subtle are the Roman Catholic advertisements claiming converts to the one true Church ("Why did So-and-So join the Catholic Church?") and the Protestant Churches claiming rescues from Rome. Obvious is the way the Protestant fundamentalists accuse the Papists for their worship of idols, and call their Church the "great Whore" described in Revelation. All Roman Catholics are assuredly hellbound.

The Roman Catholic Church now seems to be bending over backwards in trying to present itself as benign and tolerant; and when it adopts a conciliatory attitude to its opponents, I for one, am inclined to be suspicious. Its objective remains the same, the means to attaining it merely expediently altered. "One enemy at a time", and Communism represents a greater immediate danger than Protestantism. As for the politicians, they seek to magnify each petty religious incident. If the religious dispute were resolved, they would be out of work and their places might be filled by men of wisdom who had outgrown bigotry. There are on both sides, a few religionists, politicians and civilians to whom unity is anathema. They love to hate and hate to love.

But it is raining now in Belfast. The people are united in their desire for shelter, and the sloganed walls are being cleansed. Some time, it will rain and rain and rain.

THEATRE

The Mermaid Theatre, London, has followed its splendid and successful production of Brecht's *Life of Galileo* with something very different but again, I think, of interest to Freethinkers. *Mr. Burke, M.P.* is a new musical play, described by author Gerald Frow as "about the danger of falling for a gimmick; the dangers of gullibility": in this case the "selling" of "Rights for Apes".

The, titles of three musical numbers, "It's a Rat Race", "Marriage of Convenience", and "Get a Cause", show Mr. Frow's cynical attitude to "salesmanship", an attitude it is hard not to share. But his cynicism is tempered by his humour. To see an Archbishop calling for recognition of the Apes in a superlative sermon burlesque (by Daniel Thorndike) and leading the closing first act chorus of "When the Apes go marching in" is to laugh till it hurts. And if the second half doesn't quite maintain the standard of the first (the House of Commons scene is a little forced) it still contains a lot of good stuff, including the number, "It's all your's", and the perceptive remark that the traditional British way of dealing with dangerous people is to pretend they are eccentric.

In addition to primates (of the clerical kind), politicians, judges and newspapermen are subjects for Mr. Frow's satire. Freethinkers will be with him in dreading a world in which "I am documented therefore I am". A world in which the only criterion is "What shall I gain by it?"

Among many good performances, Peter Clegg's portrayal of Charlie Burke the chimpanzee deserves special mention. The revolving stage, too, is excellently utilised.

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C.McC.

A Message from Space

By D. H. TRIBE

I WAS PRIVILEGED the other day to attend part of the "first Flying Saucer Convention ever to be held in the United Kingdom", presented by the Aetherius Society.

On a Saturday morning early in May 1954, George King was given this command: "Prepare yourself! you are to become the voice of interplanetary parliament!"

"The plates that he was holding at the time crashed to the floor as the voice—musical in quality—made the pronouncement."

No crockery was ever sacrificed in a better cause, for that moment signalised the dawn of the Aquarian Age. The rest is History. Who today is unaware how eight days after the Voice, George King was "visited by a great Master of Yoga", who "walked through the locked door and sat down facing Mr. King, who recognised his Visitor at once": how the Yogi "gave Mr. King certain instructions in advanced Yogic practices, which enabled him to gain telepathic rapport with a Being from the Planet Venus, who was given the pseudonym of . . . *Aetherius*"; how Mr. King demonstrated this contact in Caxton Hall, London, started a duplicated news-sheet, then a small magazine called *Aetherius Speaks*, which "in some strange way . . . found its way abroad", and on August 2nd, 1956, founded The Aetherius Society! By this Year of Grace 1960, the "Message of the Space People, so vital to Earth, has appeared in the press in all languages from German to Japanese".

What of this benefactor so strangely and gloriously chosen as vehicle of the New Enlightenment? Who is there who really knows him? If I am correctly informed, Mr. King began his Ministry at a tender age, when, dressed in a night-gown, he would sermonise his infant sister. Later, I am told, he passed through a variety of jobs, where no doubt he was confronted with the lucid reasoning of the common man, his immunity to gullibility, his deep need for spiritual satisfaction. For a time Mr. King was professionally engaged in taking people for a ride, while in the ranks of London's cabbies. And for many years, I hear, he was on the staff of a well-known petroleum company, till he struck oil in other planets.

What are his present activities? Primarily he is concerned to pass on messages—Messages of Wisdom from certain Cosmic Masters. There is of course Aetherius. And of course Jesus, Who, if He be identical with the Phenomenon of Nazareth, will rather upset the history books by turning out to have descended, not from the Right Hand of God, but from the Planet Venus. Mars has contributed Mars Sector 6 and Mars Sector 8; and one or two Masters occasionally drop in from other planets, probably because these planets are either too hot or too cold to support life. Our own earth has contributed Saint Goo-Ling, a "Member of the White Brotherhood", who has occupied himself, somewhere in the Himalayas, with prayer and meditation for the last 2,000 years or so. None of these Personalities ever seems to intrude in person, not even at Committee Meetings, but each avails himself of the accommodating vocal apparatus of Mr. King. They do not themselves require Flying Saucers for locomotion, but use these vehicles solely for their instruments. Unfortunately they do not make them available to Mr. King and his assistants, and when these good people move about on their holy missions, they travel in the ordinary way. At present Mr. King is on "Operation Starlight" in America, where on behalf of the Cosmic Masters and with

the aid of "Spiritual Power, radiated by Satellite No. 3" while in Orbit of this Earth, he is charging sundry Holy Mountains. (Nine have already been charged in Great Britain: ordination survey maps available from FREE-THINKER office!) After his American mission, Mr. King will pass on to further peaks and plateaux in as yet undisclosed parts of the earth—which the Space Intelligences do not, understandably enough, call by its Anglo-Saxon name, curiously preferring the Latin tag Terra. In view of the expenditure incurred by these holy peripatetics, it is not surprising to learn that the society is "non-profit-making" as well as "non-political" and "non-sectarian".

Despite the missions, the Messages, and innumerable demonstrations of Spiritual Healing, the Establishment (a body known by reputation to readers of THE FREETHINKER) is declared to be hostile to the Society. Fortunately the "Day of Reckoning is nigh". Between May and July, 1963, it is darkly hinted, the earth may turn on its axis 79°, with unpleasant consequences for the unsanctified. Even within the Society there are occasional disagreements, and one prominent Committee Member has even told Mr. King that he feels Mars Sector 6's frequent references to "orbit", "zeta zeta 7", "nil 5", "interference factor", and similar jargon savours too much of science fiction. Clearly it is no use complaining to the Chairman, who is only a passive instrument.

Heresy is always a problem among religious and para-religious fraternities. Happily Mr. King is able to enlist in his holy task of suppression all the tools of modern science (or at any rate technology), proving us wrong in our fears that education would destroy the occult. Every public utterance from an Aetherius Society platform is tape-recorded and ultimately vetted by Mr. King, perhaps with the aid of the Cosmic Masters. For it is these Intelligences, and not the Chairman himself, who pass on special instructions to the faithful.

All those who, like me, feel that their Spirit Circle has lost touch with the realities of modern life are invited to join in the next "Spiritual Push" from their local Holy Mountain. Blessings from Goo-Ling, Aetherius, and Jesus.

CORRESPONDENCE

BIRTH CONTROL

The main weakness in the Catholic argument against birth control is the Church's approval of the "safe period" or rhythm method. The Church cannot claim to be consistently opposed to the principle of birth control while it approves this method. It claims to be mainly opposed to "artificial" birth control, i.e. to methods that involve medicine or some contraceptive device.

Arguments such as "enabling one to take the pleasure and deliberately frustrate the purpose" apply equally to the rhythm method as to the artificial ones, and so are of little use in condemning such methods. One might as well condemn the drinking of alcoholic beverages on the grounds that they are imbibed solely for pleasure, having little food value, and having generally harmful effects on the body tissues. This is the opposite of the alleged purpose of eating and drinking.

Hence the conflict is apparently not over the ends but over the means, and in this case it is like arguing over whether one should eat a meal with knife and fork or only use one's fingers. A huge proportion of human activity is artificial in the sense of using devices and drugs, and it is one of the features that distinguishes man from the beasts—his ability to make and use tools. Thus in this sense the rhythm method is more akin to the beasts than are the artificial methods. The rhythm method is also inefficient, but whereas anything giving man greater control over Nature in other spheres meets with little opposition, in this case it is strong. The real reason is obvious. The greatest

ally of the Catholic Church is Poverty and it is hoped that by the unrestricted growth of population the greater food-producing powers of industrialisation will eventually be overtaken and saturation point reached as in the less efficient agricultural past. In the meantime a differential Catholic birth-rate is not without its merits. R.C. could well stand for Rabbit Colony.

D. L. HUMPHRIES,
(Australia).

CHRIST A MYTH?

Mr. H. Cutner (September 2nd) referring to the myth theory of Christ in his article entitled, "On Controversial Questions", advises us to read works by Professor W. B. Smith, J. M. Robertson and Professor Arthur Drews. According to Mr. Cutner the above writers have treated the myth theory and the Tacitus question concerning the name of Jesus Christ exhaustively. It seems that after having read these works we have had the final and infallible judgment. I think that by applying Mr. Cutner's method, I could produce an equally impressive list of scholars and theologians who have proved quite the contrary, i.e. that Jesus actually existed and that the mythy theory is untenable.

To cite a few names, the following are of interest: Professor William F. Albright, C. B. Dodd, Professor Adolf Harnack, who successfully disputed Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Father Copleston, Johannes Weiss, Goodspeed, Maurice Goguel. These authors are all qualified, highly trained theologians, and at least they give us assurance with their background that they are competent in their fields to deal with these matters.

Now, let us look at Mr. Cutner's authorities. To cite one, Professor W. B. Smith, who is neither a theologian nor a recognised scholar in the theological field. In the Preface of his book, *The Birth of the Gospel*, we find that Professor Smith taught mathematics, physics geology, zoology, botany and philosophy. The last teaching position he held was at the University of New Orleans. He obtained his Ph.D. with highest honours in mathematics and physics but he never professionally dealt with theology. From this bibliographical sketch one can only surmise that he was an amateur theologian. Maybe he was a good one, maybe just as good as a professional theologian. The fact remains Professor Smith has never been taken seriously by other theologians, not so much for his extreme conclusions, but because he was just not qualified to debate with the various theological schools seriously and effectively.

Personally, I have serious doubts for the historicity of Jesus, but I would never regard *The Birth of the Gospel* a serious work of theology. The scholars I have mentioned have had and would have an easy task in refuting Professor Smith's theory.

I hope Mr. Cutner will let me read his comments in your journal.
PATRICK CORSARO (San Francisco).

CO-EXISTENCE

I was astonished at Robert I. Turney's letter criticising my remarks about co-existence. When one finds a Rationalist of Bertrand Russell's eminence offering odds of 3 to 1 against human survival, the position must surely be pretty desperate. In any case, even if mankind were to survive a nuclear war, reason, freedom, and all the other higher attributes of civilisation would certainly perish in such a totalitarian holocaust. What does Mr. Turney want us to advocate in place of co-existence? Mass suicide?

To drag in Communism (as he does) constitutes a ridiculous red-herring: actually the Communists appear to be divided on the subject, as is the Western World. The largest Communist nation, China, is alleged to be opposed to co-existence. It is utterly ridiculous also, to drag Bradlaugh, Cohen, etc., into the dispute. If Mr. Turney is an evolutionist, he must know that times change. Were these distinguished men still with us, they would no doubt be fighting for human survival along with us. *Primum vivere, deinde philosophare* (first keep alive and then philosophise). A dead Freethinker is not "free to think freely".

I suggest to Mr. Turney that he reconsiders his views on co-existence, which is currently the only viable alternative to wholesale genocide. Otherwise he will find himself aligned with the Vatican in demanding a speedy end to the human race—including the National Secular Society.
F. A. RIDLEY.

FOOD AND POPULATION

Readers of THE FREETHINKER will certainly be interested, and possibly amused, by a perusal of chapter 12 of *Man and Materialism* by Fred Hoyle, published by Allen and Unwin at 12s. 6d.
A. W. COLEMAN.

AMIDST THE CROWD

It is hardly surprising that Mr. Rusticus's countryman preferred the use of violence to persuasion to steer his horse through the narrow gate. Countrymen are notoriously inhumane with animals; the care and delight in animal welfare arose among the "madding crowd". Perhaps it does not stretch the truth to say that all

civic virtues arose amidst the crowds. Country folk are again notoriously reactionary, uncouth and superstitious, their very names signify their stagnant outlook, Rustic, Bumpkin, Boor, etc. Surely none but countryfolk would annually attend their harvest thanksgiving service, sing praises to God for their crops of rotten potatoes and then demand a government subsidy to preserve themselves from bankruptcy!

While Mr. Rusticus gazes at the birds and buttercups, can he not see the merciless struggle for survival under his nose, the inevitable horrors of nature, where specie prays upon specie? Truly, we in the town have our specific struggle for survival, but we have a compensation; we can attempt an alleviation of social injustice, and we see our successes in the gradual progress in human welfare.

Our City Gardener, a West countryman, may read your pleasant articles with nostalgia, but his small patches of tended flowers, set amongst the grey brick of London, bring joy to many more thousands than do the beauties of the broad acres of his home lands.

The superstition, ignorance and fecundity of the peasant is a pressing world problem; behind the Iron Curtain, India, Asia or the bogs of Eire, it is identical, and it may well be that civilisation will collapse before it.
EVA EBURY.

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