

# The Freethinker

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This letter by the Superintendent of the Memorial Hospital, Phoenix, Arizona, the well known ex-priest, is reprinted from the American Freethought magazine *Progressive World*, which obtained special permission from the author. It is a slightly shortened version of a letter sent by Mr. McLoughlin to 54,000 Roman Catholic priests.

REVEREND AND DEAR FATHER:

You are what I once was—a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, I am what perhaps you, and certainly what thousands of your fellow priests, would like to be—a normal, free American citizen, earning his living in a normal way, and spending his days and years in a normal, happy and satisfying marriage. It is now twelve years since I broke with the Franciscan Order in Phoenix, Arizona after fifteen years in the priesthood. I still live in Phoenix and still am superintendent of Memorial Hospital, known during my clerical days as St. Monica's Hospital. If you are still contented with life in the priesthood, you will resent my words. If you are disturbed, disillusioned and discontented, these few pages may be welcome and may even help you.

The detailed story of why I made the "great step" and what followed is told in my first book *People's Padre*. My analysis of my education (and yours) is told in my second book *American Culture and Catholic Schools*. Of course, they have both been strongly condemned and forbidden. If not, I would have been a liar because I wrote extensively in them of Hierarchy's un-American attempts to suppress freedom of thought and freedom of writing.

### To Help Priests To Leave

I am writing this booklet to help sincere priests get out of the priesthood successfully, without fear and with dignity. It is wrong that they should slink or sneak out—as so very many are forced to do. Probably because my own break was so open and so successful, or because I have remained in the same city where I had served as a priest and can easily be reached, I have been contacted by hundreds of ex-priests and discouraged priests. Many have been helped and are now happily adjusted. Many have gone through hell in their strike for freedom. Some have failed because they could not or would not help themselves. This is an attempt to point out the "symptoms" of the desire to change, the discouraging hurdles an ex-priest must face and the encouraging future that beckons any priest who is a genuinely religious man and a determined American.

There are many reasons for discontentment in the priesthood. In the first place, and let's be honest, we were all sucked in before we were old enough to know what it was all about. We really did not know enough of the Church to donate our lives, our futures, our possibilities in this world, our chances in the next on a toss of the dice—the mere word of a priest counsellor that we "had a vocation". We knew practically nothing of the history of its dogma, its politics, its alleged ideal and practice of celibacy—

certainly not nearly enough to gamble our lives and our eternities on it. Be honest now. Examine yourself as ruthlessly as you are supposed to do in your normal retreat.

As the years since ordination have slipped by, perhaps you have developed honest intellectual misgivings about doctrine and history. Don't stupidly chase these thoughts away, like fanning a fly, as temptations of the devil. Study them. Analyse them. A system that cannot stand the

spotlight of intense intellectual investigation isn't worthy of your acceptance and sacrifice. Get books by Protestants and alleged agnostics—if they are reliable. Read the true history of your religion. your Church (they are dif-

ferent), and your Papacy. You can get the books. Read John McKnight's *The Papacy—a New Appraisal*, Henry Charles Lea's *History of the Inquisition*, Lowell Thomas's *On Top of This World* and a host of others. Study Protestant theology. All of its leaders were not ignorant fools or sex-hungry maniacs, even though we were taught that most of them were. Study the various sincere interpretations of the "rock" and realize that the word does not necessarily mean St. Peter.

### Read. Read. Read

Study the true shameful history of the Council of Trent. Read the former Paulist William Sullivan's account of the Vatican Council in *Under Orders* and realize that even your forebears in American Hierarchy couldn't stomach the unhistorical and unscriptural arrogance of Pius IX in ramming Papal infallibility down the bishops' throats. Read. Read. Read.

Perhaps you have surreptitiously read enough already so that you are convinced that the Papacy was a gradual opportunistic historical growth rather than a divine institution. Perhaps you have tried in vain to find a clear scriptural basis for auricular confession. Perhaps as you have heard thousands of good sincere struggling Catholics confess the practice of birth control you have searched your own soul and the Scripture for a basis for its sinfulness. You have long since realized that dragging poor old Onan out of the depths of Genesis and hanging the guilt on him is ludicrous.

Celibacy! You know you were tricked into it. You know now that all the pious proliferations as to your freedom in taking that vow sound more hollow as the years go by. You were about as mentally free after all those years of conditioning, lectures, spiritual readings, retreats and other indoctrinations as a trained Nazi or a Communist echoing the "party line". You have struggled against nature's second strongest urge. You have seen the behaviour of other priests. You have heard their confessions—perhaps those of bishops, too, as I had.

Perhaps you have found something your superiors or bishops would not want you to have—a true history of celibacy. If so, you have learned that throughout Catholic history it has been only sporadically enforced and never adequately observed. You have learned that the basis for

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

### A Letter to Roman Catholic Priests

By EMMETT McLOUGHLIN



celibacy and chastity is not the example of Jesus and the apostles or its spiritual preference by God at all. I came to my senses with a jolt when it dawned on me that eleven of the twelve apostles were married. I was also shocked to learn that prior to the Council of Trent the marriage of the clergy was generally accepted as valid even though by some illicit.

Henry C. Lea's authentic work *The History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church* has been republished by Russell & Russell, 80 E. 11th St., New York 3, N. Y. Get it, it will astound you. The only reason for celibacy is *money*. The Hierarchy did not want married priests bequeathing Church property to legitimate children. It really did not and does not care how many illegitimate children they have because bastards cannot legally inherit the Church's property. Perhaps you have fallen in love with some charming woman and the struggle between nature and the fear of the smiting arm of the Church is tearing your heart out . . .

Perhaps you don't believe that Catholicism is more important than Americanism. Perhaps you are old enough and experienced enough to believe in freedom of thought, freedom of reading, freedom of worship—the principles that have made your nation the greatest in the world and the denial of which by your Church has kept other nations dragging their feet for centuries. Maybe you have observed your bishops or your pastors institute boycotts against bookstores, drugstores, theatres and magazines and watched them herd the Catholic laity into line like "dumb driven cattle", instead of thinking, self-reliant, free Americans. Perhaps you feel a shiver of nauseating disgust at the bishops' un-Americanism because you, too, were an American before you became a Catholic priest.

So, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to swallow all these insults to your intelligence, all these wrenchings of your legitimate emotions, all these mental and financial exploitations of the sincere people who look to you as their leader and father? Are you going to go on stifling your intellect, sneaking the occasional hidden fruits of your clandestine desires, failing your devoted people and ending your life with a solemn requiem mass and the hypocritical burial eulogy, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of thy Lord"?

Or are you going to be a man and an American and face the issue? If you want to get out of the priesthood and atone for your sins of ignorance and hypocrisy and be happy, this booklet is intended to help you . . .

In the first place, our background has trained us for nothing useful. You know that all the laity's talk about priests' "marvellous education" is a carefully nurtured myth. Education for what? Take a prospectus of any reputable college or university and check for yourself the fields for which you are adequately prepared. And what skills have you been taught?

The only subject you know well is language. But Holy Mother Church has foreseen the possibility of your "taking your hand from the plough". In most cases here in the United States and around the world, lest you be tempted, seminaries do not issue the document proving you have earned a degree. Normally you can't get a job teaching even in a grammar school without at least a bachelor's degree. Frequently, too, if a seminary does issue a degree it is useless. I tried to help one ex-priest from Boston. He had a degree from St. John's Seminary, the pride and joy of Cardinal Cushing. The degree was worthless.

If you quit you will be persecuted by the Church. How this can be reconciled with the Hierarchy's boasted belief

in freedom of worship in the United States, I have never been able to understand. I have been out of the priesthood now for twelve years and they have not yet "called off the dogs". The clergy will do its best to ruin you. They will try to keep you from getting a job. If you get one anyway, they will try to get you fired. All too often they will succeed. They will malign you with the vilest of accusations. They will tell the laity, and sometimes put it in print, that you are a turncoat, an apostate, a traitor, a thief, a drunkard, a lecher, an adulterer, possibly a homosexual, but certainly physically diseased and mentally insane. They will hound you from job to job, and if they are able, they will boycott and try to ruin the firm that will employ you. This they have done to me in trying to ruin our hospital.

The blind devotees among the Catholic laity, whom I call the "Shock troopers", will trail along like the dumb sheep that they are. If they know where you are, they will deluge you with anonymous mail. Some will send wastebaskets full of medals, rosaries, scapulars and other superstitious trinkets. Others will damn you with the vilest excretions. If you should marry, they will pour such obscenity upon you as to make a pornographic newspaper look like a church vestibule's pamphlet rack. They will gossip viciously in spreading rumors about you and will aid the Hierarchy in trying to starve you to death or force you back to Jemes Springs or one of the other ecclesiastical "penitentiaries" to do penance for your scandal to God's chosen ones. If you have a phone, they will plague you day and night (especially when they are drunk) with insulting calls. "Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God a service". I know. They have tried it on me.

One of the serious obstacles you will have to cope with is your own laziness. Life in the priesthood is a parasitic existence at the expense of the laity. They have wined you and dined you and supported you like a drone in a beehive until you are physically and intellectually atrophied. You are on a pedestal. After all, aren't you an "alter Christus"? When you leave the priesthood, you are going to find it hard to adjust to a steady diet of working eight hours a day, or if you attain an executive position or take on two jobs maybe sixteen hours a day.

In spite of the seemingly unconquerable obstacles of theology (not the Scriptures), emotion, persecution and lack of educational equipment, thousands of American Roman Catholic priests have left the priesthood successfully and are living with satisfaction as free Americans. You can do it, too. In the first place, it is not true, as I was taught and presumably you were, that Protestants will be wary of you as one who has broken his vows and therefore cannot be trusted in business or in social intercourse. They will do their best to help you—not because they are vindictive against the Catholic Church but because they see you as an individual Christian who needs help. They wonder how you could ever have been so mentally indoctrinated and stupid as to have taken such silly vows at all. You will have unseen millions wishing you well . . .

If at all possible fortify yourself with your college degree. You have earned it through years of study and are entitled to it, regardless of your ruse to get it. If there was even an instance of justifiable "occult compensation", this is it. If you can't get your degree, at least try to get a transcript of your credits. I did by hiring two firms of lawyers in two states and threatening to sue the Franciscan Order. If you have trouble getting your credentials we and our attorneys can help you.

(Concluded on page 332)



# "In the Name of the Father . . ."

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN COUNTLESS CHURCHES and chapels throughout this land, innumerable priests, ministers, and clergymen of all denominations, preface their (usually) platitudinous discourses with the solemn adjuration: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (or in the more archaic liturgies, "the Holy Ghost"). So much a matter of custom and of mechanical ecclesiastical routine has this preliminary adjuration now become, that I have sometimes wondered whether, if some irreverent or absent-minded preacher were to alter his conventional introductory formula to, say, "In the name of the mother, and of the daughter, and of the maiden aunt", anyone in his congregation would even notice the difference or even so much as bat an eyelid! And yet if one pauses to reflect, what a strange formula it is; why only "the Father" and "the Son". Why not include the rest of the family—even the in-laws? For of all the recorded theological Trinities, the Christian one is surely the most illogical. The Egyptian one was better-balanced, including as it did the goddess Isis as representative of the feminine principle, and even the Hindu Trimurti, Brahma, Siva and Vishnu, if it did not actually include any goddesses, recognised the consorts of the Trinity as at least existing in the theological background. From which angle, the inclusion of the Virgin Mary as "the Fourth" [*sic*] Person of the Trinity, would perhaps introduce a more rational element. For if we are to use words in any relatively understandable sense, how can there be a "Father" and a "Son", without a "Mother" also? And, incidentally, why not a divine "Daughter" as well? Were the ideas of the Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus on family limitation already accepted in Heaven from time immemorial?

The distinguished Egyptologist, the late Dr. Arthur Weigall, wrote a most interesting and informative book on *The Paganism in Our Christianity*; a field already covered in some detail by Freethinking critics of Christianity as well as by anthropologists in the course of their professional researches. It has, for example, long been known to students in specialised fields, that historical Christianity is, in the apt expression of Grant Allen, "A mausoleum of dead religions". In this necropolis of deities and dogmas, the Christian Trinity ranks high; almost every word in the self-styled Athanasian Creed—which first declares the Trinity to be a mystery forever unfathomable to the human intellect, and then proceeds to tell us all about it!—can be found written long before on Egyptian scrolls and in Gnostic formulae devoted to the worship of other (and far older) gods.

Trinitarian Christianity, apparently unknown to the New Testament, is of obviously Pagan spiritual lineage. If one examines its historical origins in (or about) the 4th century of our present era, there does not appear to be any room for reasonable doubt that the Catholic Trinity was originally derived from older Egyptian Trinities and also partly probably, from current governmental practice in the contemporary Roman Empire, of which the theologians who compiled the Trinitarian formula were the subjects and allies. For it will not be forgotten, at least by students of this nowadays little-known, but actually extremely interesting and important period, that the Empire was actually ruled simultaneously by a Board or Committee of Emperors whose collective writ ran undisputed over the Roman world. Created originally by the great Pagan Emperor Diocletian (283-306 AD), it was a board in which "None was greater or less than another"

—the Athanasian definition of the Trinity—and in which, in the extravagant contemporary language of Byzantine countries, "Majesty was co-equal and co-eternal". Many Freethinking critics of the Trinity have occupied themselves mainly with analogies between the Christian Trinity and its older Egyptian Hindu and Gnostic Trinitarian prototypes, but in all probability the Christian Trinity was, at bottom, a mere celestial replica of the governmental practice in the Roman Empire here below (*c.f.* my book, *Julian the Apostate and the Rise of Christianity*).

Theologically speaking, the origin of the three Persons in this Trinity in which none is greater or less than another and in connection with which the lucid [*sic*] definition of the Athanasian Creed exhorts us neither to "confound the Persons nor divide the substance", can be traced with some approach to accuracy. For the Christian "Father" is a theological hybrid, partly metaphysical and partly physical (very much so) in origin. In the Christian creeds he is purely metaphysical for he "begets" his Divine Son (the second Person) in some unexplained but presumably spiritual fashion "before the words", *i.e.* before the creation of the physical Universe of Nicæan creeds. But his title of "Father" was derived from older Pagan gods such as Jupiter and Apollo, about whose human paternity there was nothing in any way metaphysical: in fact they physically begot sons (and daughters) all over the place, sometimes using most untheological means in order to satisfy their carnal ambitions. Again, in the case of the second Person, the Son, the accounts of his divine origin in the New Testament (*viz.* Matthew and Luke who alone record it) represent a hybrid. The actual method of his origin is clearly derived from the earlier cohabitation of Pagan gods with pure (and willing) virgins, but in the Christian narratives the physical mode of the Divine gestation is kept in the background, apparently deliberately.

This was no doubt due to the fact that Divine offspring were unknown to Judaism, where indeed any such idea actually ranked as the most unspeakable blasphemy. For Jehovah had got rid of his original feminine appendages at an early stage in the evolution of his cult and the authors of Matthew and Luke were probably Jews. (In Judaism the term, "Son of God", sometimes used of holy men was purely metaphysical). All this seems to be quite clear. Whereas, when we come to the genesis of the Third Person, we are confronted with a particularly intriguing mystery. For the Holy Spirit who apparently begat the Second on this terrestrial plane, seems himself to have been originally a *feminine* Deity. The Dove, "that best of birds" as medieval theology styled the Divine Dove, seems always to have always been used in connection with the cult of *goddesses*, never of gods, and at least one early Christian heresy (the Gnostic Carpocratians) adored the Holy Ghost as a *goddess*. Here is a pretty puzzle! Perhaps the alternative designation of "maiden aunt" suggested above, might not be so irrelevant after all.

Today, the weekly invocation of the old Egyptian Trinitarian symbol in the pulpits of our modern industrialised society can only be regarded as a conspicuous example of typical religious conservatism. If one pauses to analyse the words it must appear as an incredibly archaic piece of mumbo-jumbo. But how many modern congregations ever trouble to think about them, or about the doctrine behind them at all?

The Trinity ends where it began—as a mystery!



## This Believing World

Things have come to a pretty pass when a more or less unknown parson is allowed to write a "Penguin" book entitled *What's Wrong With The Church?* The Rev. N. Earle, its author, thinks quite a lot is wrong with the Church—it has opposed anaesthetics, hypnosis, contraceptives, Sunday recreation, and of course many other things—and all this is because "parsons are so sure of their jobs that they are out of touch with their fellow men". We often wonder whether this is really true? What many of them seem to be is not out of touch with other Christians, but out of touch with Freethinkers—unbelievers and the like. What about Mr. Earle himself? Has he ever met an unbeliever who knows more about Christianity than he does? We can assure him that there are crowds around.

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Mr. Earle thinks that there would soon be little wrong with the Church if "full-time church workers" were to take over "social and youthful activities and administration". We wonder whether he will ever realise that the decline of the Church is not so much in its social activities, but in the fact that people, even young ones, no longer believe in miracles and laugh at "places like Heaven and Hell. While they are ready to agree that Jesus *might* have made a good Sunday school teacher, they ridicule the "Saviour" business. Mr. Earle should write another "Penguin"—this time *after* he has met instructed Freethinkers.

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In any case, there are now some people who haven't much faith in books to spread the Gospel. One of these is a Mr. W. Capewell who believes we now have to put the Gospel "on film and tape". His "evangelism" bridges the gap "between the pavement and the pew"—whatever that means. He has made one film—"The God of Creation—Old and New", and is now producing another "Our Heritage". Another one "will be a challenge to the lack of Christian feeling in the country". Mr. Capewell is another Christian who appears never to have heard of Freethought. If ever he does, he will certainly get a shock!

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We are delighted to learn that a huge text with its letters measuring 6 feet high is "splitting" the city of Bath. The text comes straight from the Bible—"Prepare to Meet Thy God", and it is placed high on a Baptist church roof. Visitors will (we hope) hastily prepare for the glorious event, though we regret that there are some residents who think the text is an eyesore! It may even keep visitors away—which would be very bad for business.

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Incidentally, the text is not one emanating from "our Lord". It comes from Amos 4, 12 and Christians seem to forget the "O Israel" which follows the word "God". However wonderful it must be to meet God, we are pretty sure neither Jews nor Christians, nor even Baptists, want to do so—not yet, or while there's a chance to go on living. Trust a Biblical "prophet" to write twaddle.

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So the famous Cathedral in our diocese—that of Southwark—is going to have a "Brains Trust" on five evenings instead of the usual services. There will be a panel of "experts", and a question master, all ready to answer questions on "Christianity and its expression today". We think what they ought to do—it would be far more exciting and informative—is to try and answer a few numbers of THE FREETHINKER.

## Flies on Jesus

LET US SAY right away that the above is meant to be taken literally. We have never regarded the crucifixion as a healthy symbol at the best of times and, indeed, have argued that a good deal of Christian neurosis derives from contemplation of it. But Father Carl J. Breitfeller, chief Roman Catholic chaplain of the District of Columbia Reformatory (for men) at Lorton, Va., USA, seems to have carried repulsiveness to its upmost.

According to *Time* magazine (September 22nd), he is mainly responsible for a new interdenominational chapel at the Reformatory, and for a life-sized crucifix in it. The sculptor was Williston Knorr, a negro serving a ten year sentence for robbery, and when the figure was finished, another negro (a Muslim) who had acted as the model, painted it with "gruesome bruises, cuts, and trickles of blood". Extra touches of realism, said *Time*, include "dirty toenails (from walking barefoot through the dust) and a dozen or so flies, bought by Father Breitfeller at a novelty store".

"Some like that touch and some don't", the chaplain is reported as saying, and we don't. But apparently it appealed to Farmer C. Thomas. Serving 17 years for forgery, he helped to design the chapel, although he was, we are told, an atheist who had "never been in a church in his life" (*never?*). Under Father Breitfeller's instruction, Thomas became a Roman Catholic.

### A LETTER TO ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS

(Concluded from page 330)

A group of people, led by ex-priests, interested in helping Catholic priests back to normalcy is now working with certain colleges across the country for the evaluation of seminary credits and the issuance of degrees for ex-priests who wish to teach.

Teaching is by no means the only field open to those who leave the priesthood. But you must be willing to work—with your hands, if necessary, to get a start. Some "alteri Christi" think they are too good or too educated to start at the bottom. If you are one of these parasites on the unsuspecting Catholic laity you should stay in your monastery or rectory. You will be of no use to yourself or humanity in the modern world.

Many an ex-priest who is now successful has started working in a laundry, a service station, a factory or any other work that is honourable and decent. I know ex-priests who own service stations and automobile agencies. Others are in real estate, in agencies of the Government, in the construction industry, in personnel work, in tutoring, or like myself in the field of hospitals. The world of insurance, life and otherwise, is clamouring for good salesmen as are other sales fields. Priests are made to order for this work. After all, besides languages and a bit of distorted history, what else have we been trained in but the high-powered peddling of spiritual snake oil to our gullible parishioners?

But remember—if you are going to have any regrets don't leave the Church. You can never be free until you are free from your own fears.

If I can help you in any way, by advice or by placing you in contact with others who are anxious to help, please contact me.—Still, Your Brother, Emmett McLoughlin, Memorial Hospital, Phoenix 3, Arizona, USA.

NEXT WEEK

THE DRIFT FROM CATHOLICISM

By GREGORY S. SMELTERS



# THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1  
TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. (In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.00; half-year, \$2.50; three months, \$1.25).

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

London Branches (Marble Arch), Sundays, 12 noon: MESSRS. F. A. RIDLEY, D. H. TRIBE, C. H. CLEAVER and G. F. BOND. Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE and H. A. TIMMINS (Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S.. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue. (Platt Fields), Sundays, 3 p.m.: Messrs. G. H. MILLS and G. A. WOODCOCK.

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, Paradise Street), Sunday, October 22nd, 6.45 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "World Problems and Freethought".

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, October 24th, 7.30 p.m.: R. CLEMENTS, J.P., O.B.E., "Old Age in the New World".

Leicester Secular Society ((Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 22nd, 6.30 p.m.: A. MELTZER (Radio Freedom League), "Freedom of the Air".

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, October 22nd, 7.15 p.m.: E. HILLMAN, "Geology and the Rise of Materialism".

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, October 22nd, 2.30 p.m.: Mrs. RACHEL GILLIATT, "Ancient Enemies of Man—Can They Be Defeated?".

South Place Ethical Society ((Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, October 22nd, 11 a.m.: R. S. SCHENK, B.Sc., "Violence and the Intellectuals".

## Notes and News

FEW PEOPLE could have been unmoved by the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjold, and newspapers all over the world tried to put human feeling into appropriate words. Perhaps Mr. Hammarskjold's own family succeeded. On a wreath of daffodils and roses was the single word: "Why?"

C. H. HAMMERSLEY'S "Confessions of an Atheist" (issued by the National Secular Society as a leaflet, *How I Became an Atheist*) was reprinted in Lyle Stuart's paper, *The Independent*, in July, and has caused some useful controversy. Another FREETHINKER article recently reprinted in the USA, is Colin McCall's "Eight Religious Scientists" (*Progressive World*, September, 1961).

THE SEPTEMBER issue of *The Independent* reported that the campaign by Emmett McLoughlin to help Roman Catholic priests to leave the priesthood if they so desire, had brought an encouraging response. Mr. McLoughlin, an

ex-priest himself, has been sending a letter to priests all over the United States and we are happy to print the text of it as our Views & Opinions this week. Not surprisingly, some replies have been less friendly than others. One signed "A Catholic priest", read as follows: "You're just a dirty S.O.B.—a renegade [*sic*] on your way to hell and don't you try to pull others there. See a doctor about your twisted mind". *The Independent* also printed a longer, less savoury letter from "an ex-burglar now doing maintenance work", a pathological case who signed himself "Disrespectfully Yours, 'Big Dick' Hertz".

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IN THE LATEST of his fortnightly contributions to the *New Statesman* on "The Countryside" (6/10/61), Edward Hyams dealt in his usual stimulating way with the population problem. The last two world wars may have killed 50 million people, he said, but that is only "about one year's annual increment. Not nearly enough; and the wrong sex". "The malthusian wars", he continued, "will have to aim at killing women not men. And we must not, of course, do it with nuclear weapons, for that would involve killing the other species".

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DEALING EARLIER with a Scottish gamekeeper who killed a golden eagle and submitting that, "*sub specie aeternitatis*, it would be better if golden eagles were killing gamekeepers than gamekeepers golden eagles", Mr. Hyams wrote: "Christians and Communists take the view, borrowed from the Judaism of which they are both derivatives, that all the non-human species were specially created, whether by the Word or by evolution for *Homo sapiens* to do as he liked with; and that they must, therefore give way if he chooses to multiply himself at their expense". For Buddhists, killing animals must mean "a swifter turnover of the available supply of souls and serious interference with their whole system of earthly lives as a series of purgatories". So, "We are left with the rationalists, and they are slowly facing the fact that if we decide not to give absolute and unconditional priority to man, but to let the other species live too, we can do it only by limiting our own numbers". Rationalists are facing the fact all right—and limiting their own numbers—but they have to face another fact, too: Roman Catholic interference, in UNO, with the spreading of birth control knowledge in over-populated countries.

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LET US HOPE that the widespread belief in the curse on the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamen has been shattered for good by Mr. Keith Seele of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. The only "curse", said Mr. Seele, a noted Egyptologist, "was the writers who invented it. It's pure fiction" (*Evening Standard*, 5/10/61). And he explained that the alleged inscription, "Death shall come on swift wings to him that touches the tomb of a Pharaoh", would be "impossible to phrase . . . in ancient Egyptian. The Egyptians had no such concept as death with wings. It was not in their culture".

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THE PIONEER PRESS was recently approached to publish a 92,000-word book on *Common-Sense Occultism*, which the author visualised "selling as a paperback in the USA and eventually throughout the world". He described himself as an "independent occultist", and added: "I do not necessarily always see eye-to-eye with Thomas Paine . . . yet he would be pleased to find me a Deist". Judging by the chapter headings we are not so sure about that. Anyway, the offer to publish was declined with thanks.



# Humanist "Might Have Been"

By COLIN McCALL

"THIS BOOK IS AN ATTEMPT to present Humanism as a comprehensive system of ideas", says Sir Julian Huxley in his preface to *The Humanist Frame* (George Allen & Unwin, 37s. 6d.) which he edits. It is an attempt which fails, not so much because of its individual contributors but because of its editorial policy. Huxley's influence is felt continually throughout the book and, alas, that now also means the influence of the Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, with his noöspheres and what not. If only the editor had let his contributors say what they wanted to say, not what he wanted them to say; if only they hadn't been confined by his conception of evolution, *The Humanist Frame* would have been much better.

"The monistic view implies that mind is present from the beginning, inherent in the stuff of which the world is made." If that hadn't been in the essay by Sir Russell Brain, I should have sworn it had been written by Sir Julian. Modern neutral monism does not support this view. It recognises that mental processes are a comparatively recent evolutionary development, bound up with the development of the brain; while materialistic monism holds that there cannot be "mind" without "matter", but this isn't the same as saying that there can be no matter without mind. This last is Huxley's position: one that he shares with Teilhard de Chardin; and it isn't many lines after the sentence quoted that Teilhard makes his appearance in Sir Russell Brain's essay. "Some salient features in the evolution of mind have been reviewed in de Chardin's recent book, *The Phenomenon of Man*", we are told. And the end of the paragraph brings us to the "new 'layer' of evolution, which de Chardin in his pregnant phrase calls the noösphere, and which now extends over the whole earth". Without wishing to bore readers I must say again in these columns that this is complete rubbish. There is no noösphere extending "over the whole earth"—or even over part of it. This is the mystical conception of a Roman Catholic priest-palaeontologist, and it is sad to find a President of the Royal College of Physicians repeating it.

But Sir Russell Brain is not the only offender. A quotation from Teilhard makes a most unusual appearance in an essay on architecture by Sir William Holford (does the noösphere have a special attraction for Knights?) He is present somewhere in Dr. G. C. L. Bertram's essay, "What Are People For?", because he is number 1 in the index of references, but I don't know where, for number 1 completely eludes me in the text. Mind you, Dr. Bertram's order of references is somewhat haphazard. As far as I can see, in the text it goes: 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 7, 3, 4, 2. Numbers 10 and 11, like number 1, are missing—at least from my copy—lost perhaps in the noösphere. (Incidentally, Professor Patrick Meredith's references are also a little disordered.) Professor C. H. Waddington justifiably refers to Teilhard as a "bolder" mind "among those who adhere to traditional religions", but less justifiably lists him in a short bibliography on the ethical implications of evolution, while Dr. O. L. Reiser goes out of his way to express "harmony with the views of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin".

Sir Julian Huxley is obsessed with the idea of a "direction" in evolution (as he called it on TV recently) and he seems to have passed the idea on to Dr. J. Bronowski. In an otherwise good essay, Dr. Bronowski refers to the idea of evolution, "in whose light history appears not

as a random but as a directed process". This is bad writing: it is imprecise and misleading. If it only means that man has had something to do with the shaping of history, it is all right, but there is an implication of either an outside or an inherent "direction", and both are invalid. It is true that Huxley denies any supernatural implication behind his evolutionary "direction", but I don't think he can escape the teleological charge entirely. And his language is often loose. Bronowski's lapse is harder to understand, for he has previously made it clear that: "We do not find order in nature, we put it there; or better, we put a substratum or framework of order as a basis under those natural appearances which form our experience".

Some of the worst writing in *The Humanist Frame* comes from Sir Julian's son, Francis, who explores the "Marginal Lands of the Mind", and finds that ESP "occurs especially between people who enjoy close relationship together, such as those between parents and young children, between lovers, or—as is now being found—between psychiatrists and their patients". Mr. Huxley should explore a little more closely—and critically. He should also write more precisely than he does. "This analogue, being out of reach of the original impulse that gave it birth, becomes part of that which is known to us as 'mind'; and since it is separated from bodily satisfaction, it is a perennial source of anxiety which creates yet more 'mind' around it, to support its own loneliness", shows how bad he can be.

Stephen Spender seems to have adopted Sir Julian Huxley's extremely narrow view of evolution, for he tells us that, "Evolutionary Humanists hold that evolution . . . has ceased to occur on a large scale in the world of nature . . .". How limited this view is, becomes obvious when one thinks of man, one species on one planet in an apparently infinite universe. Indeed it is absurd to talk of evolution ceasing to occur on a large scale in the world of nature. But even if we confine ourselves to the earth, the statement is baseless. It is linked, of course, with the Huxleyan conception of man, the end-product of the process, emerged "from the earthly biosphere into the freedom of the noösphere". This, for Huxley, is the "direction" of evolution.

If man's evolution may be termed a "direction", it is certainly only one of many. In fact the word is a bad one. Man is simply one of the products of evolution, possessed, as it happens, of a more complex brain (and therefore greater reasoning capacities) than any other animal. He thus is able to direct evolution to some extent (but this is quite different from it having a "direction") and he may justifiably be regarded as the most highly developed creature on earth. Whether this will be true in, say, a million years, is another question altogether. In some ways insects have been more "successful" than mammals, and they are certainly more abundant. It is quite possible that some species of insects might survive man; they in turn might be survived by some marine animals, and plants might be the last forms of life to linger on on this planet. The point is that the Huxley-*Humanist Frame* view is extraordinarily anthropocentric.

This is not to say that *The Humanist Frame* doesn't contain good stuff. It does. Among the best contributions are those by Lionel Elvin, Morris Ginsberg, H. J. Muller, Sir Robert Platt and Barbara Wootton. But what seem



to be very good essays are often suddenly marred by ill-chosen words or phrases. Take as an example, one of the best in the book, "The Human Programme", by H. J. Blackham. It is notable for clarity and outspokenness, and because it emphasises an "alternative and contrary tradition" to that of Christianity, "derived from the Greeks" and "based on the materialism of Democritus". Mr. Blackham eschews Teilhard's noosphere (in which, it will be remembered, Huxley says man "exists and has his being . . . in the same sort of way that fish exist and

have their being in the material sea of water . . ."). We live and have our being in a material world. Unfortunately, Mr. Blackham calls it "a material *organised* world which is dependable and improvable because it is material and organised". I know Mr. Blackham doesn't believe in a divine organiser, but others might read it that way. It is, I repeat, unfortunate.

That, in fact, is my word for the whole book. It might have been a book to put beside Corliss Lamont's *Philosophy of Humanism*. Unfortunately it isn't.

## Some Stage Sceptics

By H. GEORGE FARMER

All the world's a stage—*Shakespeare*.

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN I often contributed articles on music, art, and literature to THE FREETHINKER, and had the honour to be closely acquainted with G. W. Foote, its founder and editor. I even sat on the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society, representing the Woolwich Branch, which I—with the valiant help of Andrew Allison and Stewart Wishart—formed somewhere about 1909. I even managed to persuade Foote to engage the Town Hall, Woolwich, for a series of Sunday evening lectures, when he himself, Chapman Cohen and J. T. Lloyd occupied the platform. The lectures were so well patronised that the Town Council forbade any further lecturing to us. And that was during a Labour and Socialist majority on the Town Council! In those days I was Musical Director of the Broadway Theatre, London, S.E., and I was able to induce some of my friends to form a small orchestra which played a programme of music for a half-hour before Foote's lectures at the Queen's Hall. I was naturally well acquainted with Miss Edith Vance—who was the NSS Secretary in those days—and with her constant companion Miss Alma Stanley. Both had begun their careers on the stage, the latter making her name as a *prima donna* in opera. Miss Stanley was a tall, handsome, well-figured and smartly dressed lady, whose presence at Foote's Queen's Hall lectures graced the proceedings.

Miss Stanley was a very "proper person"—as the saying goes — whilst Miss Vance was poles asunder in that respect. Calling one day at the NSS office I found both of these ladies present. After formal salutations Miss Vance suddenly said: "Look here Farmer, you're a sort of classical scholar. I have just been reading John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis on sexual inversion; do you believe that the Greeks practised sodomy?" I was simply flabbergasted at that question, but before I had recovered from my astonishment, Miss Stanley had interposed saying, "Edith, how dare you put that shocking question to Mr. Farmer?" Miss Vance replied, "Well, I like shocking him. He always seems to have the cherubic face of the angels we see in religious pictures". The tension was broken, and we all laughed hilariously. Incidentally, I mention both of those militant Freethinkers in my recent book *Bernard Shaw's Sister*, who was also a well-known light opera *prima donna* and a Freethinker.

In later years, when I was Musical Director at the Empire Theatre, Glasgow, I had another remarkable experience with a prominent music-hall artist who was "billed" as Ducallion. He made his debut in Glasgow after an unprecedented success in London. He was dressed as a spruce young navel officer, who carried on an entertaining "patter-act" whilst balancing on top of an un-

supported ladder which he wobbled to and fro so as to maintain his balance. During his first performance in Glasgow I was startled to hear him say—looking down at me—"By the way Dr. Farmer; have you read this week's 'Acid Drops'?" The latter—it may be remembered—was one of the topical features of THE FREETHINKER in those days. Needless to say, when the performance was finished, I walked up to his dressing room to know the reason why? He replied, "Well, Miss Vance asked me to convey her kind remembrances, and I thought that 'Acid Drops' was the best introduction in the circumstances".

Regarding actors on the "legitimate stage"—as that "profession" dubs itself in contradiction to the music-hall "artiste", I must mention Mark Melford (d. 1914), who was not only a first-rate actor of the "old school", but a brilliant writer, and one of the most active workers in the field of Freethought, even to contributing to THE FREETHINKER. I shook his hand for the first time at one of Foote's Queen's Hall lectures, when he was quite eloquent about the influence of music on thought, recalling some of my youthful articles on that subject. Mark assured me that many of our leading actors and actresses at that time were completely divorced from religion, mentioning Ellen Terry, Sir Henry Irving, and Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree in that category. Of Irving, I can certainly recall his speech at an Annual Dinner of Theatrical Fund, and it is worthy of repetition:

"Sympathy, tolerance, serene and sustaining wisdom are preached in the plays of Shakespeare as they never have been preached in the pulpit."

Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree was even more outspoken. Although I did not know him personally until 1915, when he "topped the bill" at the Empire Theatre, Glasgow, I knew his philosophic approach to all religions from his *Thoughts and After Thoughts*. It was because of that knowledge that I sought him out in his dressing room in 1915. We only had time for a fifteen minutes' discussion over his book, but the next night our arguments became so intense, that he invited me to his hotel to tea the following day, when we both put our cards on the table. He was a skilled debater and a convinced Freethinker.

Later I sent him an article of mine on "The Religion of Beethoven". In thanking me for it he wrote that he "could not conceive any great cerebral functioning coming from the mind of a person clouded by an embosomed orthodoxy". Sir Herbert's mind could not accept the "creed of the credulous"—as he termed it. His vision of a future humanity was transcendently sublime. That may be seen in a passage in his *Thoughts and After Thoughts*:

Is it not possible that the peoples of the earth will arise in the might of a new-born religion and will knock at the gates of the world's conscience, singing in unison the hymn of



humanity, and crying "Thou shalt do no murder—even for the divine right of kings"; when frontiers shall be swept away and there shall be one brotherhood of man, one flag, one language, and one religion, the religion of Humanity; when the people shall be generalised by the dreamers, the poets, the philosophers, the seers and singers, the artists of the world?

Yet I must return to Mark Melford for my *coda*. When he died in 1914, like many others who have worn the "motley and tinsel", poor Mark was in straightened circumstances. Yet his friends rallied to his succour. That grand old actor, Bransby Williams—now a nonogenarian—stepped into the breach and raised a fund so that Mark's last days would be peaceful. "Poor Mark", said Bransby Williams, "has taken his last call! . . . He worked till the pen dropped from his fingers . . . His brain was active to the last. I have never seen such a triumph of mind over matter".

## CORRESPONDENCE

### CHRISTIAN UNITY

In your issue of THE FREETHINKER of September 22nd, you take me to task for writing in my parish magazine on the matter of World Peace and Christian Unity.

I hope you do not imagine that "free thinking" in a wider sense is only to be found among those who think like you. Surely, I am entitled to think that Christian Unity would be a good thing without incurring your narrow retort about falling into the lap of the Roman Catholic Church, and you also should be aware that there is a good deal of free thinking among members of that body in these days.

I should imagine that even you would allow me to think that Christian Unity would make a vital contribution towards the peace of the world.

However, if you do wish to quote me, and I am honoured by your attention, I would be obliged if you would quote me correctly.

I venture, therefore, to send you a copy of what I said—for I cannot think you have seen it—in the hope that perhaps your second thoughts on this matter may be somewhat clearer than your first.

(Rev.) ARTHUR PERRY.

[Mr. H. Cutner will reply to this letter next week.—ED.]

### FROM HOSPITAL

I have made a few enemies since I became a Freethinker, but I am proud to be, as the National Secular Society motto declares a seeker for truth. I hope the Society and THE FREETHINKER will keep up the good work.

D. ADAMS

### FROM A TEENAGER

As a teenager, I am glad to say that at last I've found an organisation of people whose views and opinions are similar to my own concerning religion and the danger of the Roman Catholic Church.

As an ex-member of that organisation it's only now that I can appreciate free thinking, and I will try hard to preserve the right to do so. I have been taking THE FREETHINKER for the past few months, and it has helped me a great deal in my final stages of being de-Romanised. I hope many other young people who have been brainwashed by the various Churches will join the National Secular Society.

TERENCE COWLEY.

### NOT ALL THE SAME

Attacks upon the Roman Catholic Church should in my opinion not be exaggerated. Catholic Action is only one facet of Catholicism. Some of the greatest thinkers and revolutionaries have been Catholics, and we must give credit to them. At certain periods in history, fanatics have gained power in the Church, and it is those of the past, and those of the present, whether they be Pope, Cardinal, or Priest who should be attacked. Hitler was born a Roman Catholic, but millions of Roman Catholics fought against him, whilst the reactionaries in the Church aided him. What we should attack, is the treachery of certain Roman Catholics, and their superstitions. The Church as a whole, is subject to the conditions brought about by the development of science. This can be easily seen by the fact that an intelligent Roman Catholic of today, is so advanced in his ideas of life in general, and is so broadminded, that if he expressed his opinions on life in general to resurrected Catholics of the Middle Ages, they would be horrified and they would immediately offer him to be burned at the stake.

In general, religion today is a reflex of the discoveries made by science, and science is and must be, materialistic. All Catholic countries differ. A French or Italian Catholic would regard an Irish Catholic as a relic of the Middle Ages, just as a member of

the Church of England would regard a Welsh Nonconformist as an atavistic throw back.

PAUL VARNEY.

### FAMILY PLANNING POSTER IN LIBRARY

I think, when there is so much timidity on the subject, that Surbiton Public Library deserve congratulations for exhibiting a Birth Planning poster on their notice board. The clinic is in the Red Cross building on the opposite road to the library.

JOHN DOMAKIN.

## ABORTION LAW REFORM ASSOCIATION

### A Public Meeting

will be held in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn W.C.1, at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 1st, 1961

### Speakers:

MISS JOAN VICKERS, M.P.

Subject: The Status of Women Commission

MR. R. S. W. POLLARD, J.P.

Subject: Practical Problems of Getting the Law Amended

Questions and Discussion

Admission Free

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