

# The Freethinker

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LAST YEAR (as I mentioned here at the time), I paid a brief but highly instructive visit to the Bruderhof Community at Upper Bromdon Farm in the Cotswolds. As I said then, the Bruderhof (House of Brothers), claim spiritual descent from the 16th century German Anabaptists, whose theory (and practice in their short-lived "Kingdom" of Munster, 1532-5) of community of goods, brought upon their heads—besides much temporal affliction—a sharp denunciation in the capitalistic Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England. When I commented on this to a member of the Shropshire community, he replied that the official Churches of today, are simply part and parcel of the normal working of the capitalist system, adding that the original Communistic principles of early Christianity were today only to be found in a few isolated communities, similar to those which the German (and other) Bruderhofs have managed to establish in this country and in other countries. For example in Paraguay, where, it will be recalled, their international headquarters are now established.

## Christian Communism

What truth, if any, is there in this assertion? We are, of course, given details in the Acts of the Apostles, including the sinister episode of the untimely fate which overtook Ananias and Sapphira, the first (but far from the last) Christian capitalists. But how far can Luke's Acts, any more than his Gospel, of which it forms the sequel, be relied upon to provide authentic history? Did (what might be called today) primitive Communism ever really exist amongst the early Christians? In any case Acts, as we have them today, was probably written down long after the time of the Apostles. It is now almost a commonplace of critical scholarship that the Gospels, including both volumes ascribed to Luke (i.e. the Gospel and Acts), rank amongst the latest books, in order of composition, in the New Testament. Revelation and/or Hebrews, are probably the earliest in chronological order, but most of the Epistles ascribed to Paul, are older than the Gospels on which their teaching has left obvious traces. The Acts of the Apostles probably assumed its present form between about 150 and 200 AD. It has also long been a commonplace of New Testament criticism that the chief historical value of the Gospels is not what they actually add to our knowledge about the events which they describe as historical facts, but in the information that they give about the current mentality of their authors and of the Churches amidst which they originated. When accordingly, Acts tells us that the earliest Christians "had all things in common", this assertion, whether literally true or not, at least indicates that round about the time of composition (c. 150?) there must have been a species of primitive Communism practised in at least some contemporary Churches. Is there any external evidence, preferably from non-Christian sources, in support of this contention?

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

### Early Christian Economics

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

## Lucian on Peregrinus

In, or soon after the year 169 (of our present era), the famous Syrian satirist, Lucian of Samosata, wrote (in Greek, then the *Lingua Franca* of the East) a highly diverting account of a *cause célèbre* of the day, the sensational suicide of the Cynic philosopher, Peregrinus, who cast himself alive into the flames of his own funeral pyre at the Olympic Games in 169. Lucian claims to have been present when this spectacular suicide eventuated, which naturally made a huge sensation. The Pagan author soon after wrote an account of Peregrinus, in which connection he delved into the murky past of this peripatetic charlatan and shady adventurer, who put such a spectacular end

to his disreputable life at Olympia in 169. In the course of his narrative (the authenticity of which has not, I think, ever been seriously disputed—he was the most famous man of letters of his day) Lucian describes Peregrinus's dealings with the Christians, whom, apparently, Peregrinus swindled right and left after having been initiated as a member of the sect—about which, incidentally, our Pagan author evidently did not know very much. What Lucian does tell us, incidental to Peregrinus, is of very great interest, not only because of it being probably the first mention of the Christians in popular Pagan literature, but also from what we learn about the Christian Churches of the Levant round about the year 170. Peregrinus evidently found the Christians a bunch of greenhorns, whom he swindled to his heart's content, apparently for a long time before being finally detected and expelled. What however, is interesting, is the reason Lucian gives for Christian gullibility. He represents them as running a kind of sectarian "Welfare State", if not actual Communism in which everyone made free with everyone else's goods: a situation of which the artful Peregrinus evidently took full advantage. Here, however, we have some light on early Christian economics from a non-Christian source in Asia Minor, at about the same time that the Acts of the Apostles describes the very similar Communism of the early Christians. This surely goes far to establish the Bruderhof claim that the earliest Christian Churches were Communistic and that, accordingly, the Bruderhof (and their Anabaptist predecessors) are rather more in line with the genuine economic tradition of early Christianity than the more "orthodox" Churches.

## Interimsethik

In his well-known book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, the liberal—very liberal—Christian, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, advanced his famous theory of the *Interimsethik*, according to which, Jesus and his immediate followers were first and foremost, revivalists, who believed and preached that the end of all things was at hand; the end of the world was, so to speak, just round the corner! This being so, the ethics preached by Jesus *et al*, were not intended for normal life or for normal people; their only concern was with the few weeks (or days?) between

then and the end of the world. Assuming this theory to be true—and I must say that it appears to me to be as likely as any, for the New Testament is full of predictions of Doomsday—it would obviously be sheer folly to work to get money when there would be no opportunity to spend it. The obvious thing to do was to pool resources for the very short time left. Accordingly, I think it extremely probable that the earliest Christians did actually practise this form of common property, as also that they probably went on doing it until belief in the imminent

Second Coming faded away into the distant future. As beliefs of this kind die hard, the Christians of Lucian's day may still have retained their early Communistic tradition—to the temporal advantage of crooks like Peregrinus. Why did this state of things ever end? A witty French critic has neatly answered this query: "the end of their [i.e. the early Christians'] money came before the end of the world". Since when, the Christians have proved more adept than Jesus. They have learned to serve God and Mammon with equal facility.

## "The Plain View"

EDUCATION IS THE THEME of the latest (Winter) issue of *The Plain View* (The Ethical Union, 2s. 6d.) and the treatment of the subject is in keeping with the magazine's admirable motto, "What the plain view perceives is neither obvious nor obscure". Take as an illustration:

Although subjects and activities may be age-old, they are new to the child, and it is their stimulus to an ever developing experience that is their educational value. Unless they, or some of them, have an immediacy which stimulates the child to take a hand in the creation, evaluation, and development of his own experience in terms of enjoyment, experiment, sharing, and considerate response to others, he cannot be helped to become intelligently responsible and vitally happy.

That comes from a theory of general education put forward by H. J. Blackham, James Britton and E. J. Burton, a theory comprising six fundamental propositions, and starting from, I think, two basic assumptions:

1. All developed human activities have the same general pattern. Formally elaborated, this common pattern is a repeated sequence of three phases: an informed initiative (resulting from previous experience)—the experience it creates—a re-formed initiative resulting from an evaluation of the experience.
2. All human activities, not least solo performances, are social, unthinkable apart from social resources, references, and contexts.

Most readers will agree with these assumptions. And with special reference to the latter, we may turn to Edward Blishen's very necessary reminder of the importance of English-teaching in this concept of general education. "What our command of language is—what our experience of language is—can be so closely equated to what we are", Mr. Blishen says. Indeed, "if this idea of *general education* is to have any meaning at all", he adds, "not only must the teaching of English have an enormous contribution to make to it, but also very little if anything that is done *in* the teaching of English can be seen to fall outside it".

Then, of particular interest, is the report of the Ethical Union working party (Lady Flemming, Dr. Ronald Fletcher, M. L. Burnet and H. J. Blackham) on the question of religion in schools, with its conclusion that "the secular school, although it may not be politically realistic at the moment, is the only educationally realistic answer to the question". Dr. Fletcher, it is stated, "dissents from this conclusion to the extent that he thinks comparative religion offers the best answer", but the others consider that "religion cannot be brought in without grave embarrassments which cannot be got rid of, and to leave it out is not only a relief from these embarrassments but also a positive moral and spiritual advantage, in that the single-minded dedication of the whole community to its ideals is not confused or side-tracked by a built-in commitment in the name of the community in which all cannot share". The secular school, in fact, is "a necessary condition of a healthy and realistic education", and "irresistible" on educational grounds.

D. H. Tribe also contributes tellingly to the argument

for secular education in a review of *The Religious Issue in the State Schools of England and Wales 1902-1914*, by an American writer, Benjamin Sacks. The period 1902-10, during which the Secular Education League was founded with an impressive general council, was the period when secular education enjoyed the support of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress. But by 1911-12, they had dropped the item from their agendas. "The ideological rot was setting in", says Mr. Tribe, "as the working-class movement, having gained the right to education, was beginning to lose interest in what was taught". And, "Today in England few may care about the issue". But, as Mr. Tribe notes, "In America many do already".

C.McC.

## Register Office Marriages

IN ORDER through local initiative to improve where necessary the conditions and practices relating to marriages in Register Offices, the Humanist Council asks members and groups in the Ethical Union, National Secular Society and Rationalist Press Association to report on the situation in their own locality. In this way it should be possible to sample the better and worse conditions and practices and then try to improve the worse in the light of the better.

To put the information on a comparable footing, answers are required to the following questions:

1. Where is your local Register Office situated, in the Town Hall or Municipal Offices or elsewhere? If elsewhere, and if marriages are conducted there, are the premises satisfactory for this purpose or are they inaccessible, mean, or shabby?

2. Is a room set apart solely for the conduct of marriages? If not, where are they conducted? If there is a special room, are the decorations clean and fresh? Are flowers provided for the occasions?

3. How many people can be accommodated in the room, in addition to the bride and bridegroom, the Registrar, and the two witnesses?

4. What words does the Registrar use in addition to those legally required?

The solemn declaration which is to be made in the presence of an authorised person and two or more witnesses is:

"I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I, A.B., may not be joined in matrimony to C.D."

And the contracting words are:

"I, A.B., do take thee, C.D., to be my wedded wife/or husband."

No other statement of any kind is required by law. The speaking of the above declaration and contracting words by both parties completes the marriage, which then has to be registered.

Please send your reports to the Secretary of The Humanist Council at 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8.

# The Roman Catholic Index of Forbidden Books

By EMMETT McLOUGHLIN

VERY MUCH CONFUSION prevails in the minds of both Protestants and Catholics regarding the *Index of Forbidden Books*. Some Catholics deny its existence because they have not studied the Catholic religion for themselves, and nuns when teaching catechism say nothing about it because they know practically nothing about it. Priests as a rule do not teach their people about it because, in a Democracy which is supposed to guarantee freedom of thought, they cannot explain the inconsistencies of American freedom of thought and the restrictive legislation of the Church that will not let its people think. Catholic bookstores routinely will say there is no such thing because they have never had a copy of it for sale.

The *Index* is based on ancient laws of the Church which forbid the reading of anything at all that might disturb the Catholic, be he priest or layman, in the smug confidence of the divine origin of his religion. This rather vague prohibition of earlier centuries has been codified in the Code of Canon Law, which is now used to govern the Roman Catholic Church. The moral theology textbooks point out the guilt, as far as sin is concerned, in violating these laws; and the Code of Canon Law itself prescribes the ecclesiastical penalties for this violation.

The *Index* may be divided into two parts. They are, first the part that condemns books by title and by author; second, and, by far the most important, the section that condemns books by type or category. The listing of books condemned specifically by title and author comprises the lesser group of forbidden books. It is obvious that even an efficient Vatican "Congregation" or department could not possibly keep up with the volume of books being published around the world. If the slowness of the Roman Catholic "congregations" is also taken into consideration it can be realized that this specific list of books would be antiquated by the time it were published.

Some books are being routinely condemned by title and author, and their listing appears in current issues of *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the official periodical of the Vatican. They are also listed in the *Commentary on Canon Law* published by Bouscaren. These books are usually of Italian, and French and German authors, because the members of the "Congregation" in Rome do not seem to be too familiar with the books published in the English language; or, if so, they are published in such profusion that the Hierarchy cannot keep up with them. If a recompilation of books condemned by title and author is routinely published, it is not widely circulated, at least in the English-speaking world. It is certain that the average Catholic priest does not have such a list available, nor does the average Catholic family.

Most books that are condemned are forbidden by category. The following summary is taken from the Roman Catholic textbook *Moral Theology* by Reverend Heribert Jone, published by the Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland 1952, p. 269 seq. All Roman Catholic textbooks, whether written in English, or, as is more common, in Latin, teach exactly the same to the finest detail, because the censorship of books is contained in the Code of Canon Law which is obligatory on all Roman Catholics in the world. And wherever it appears below, "C" refers to "Canon".

## Ecclesiastical Legislation on Books

The Church's laws concerning books are divided into

those that treat of censorship, and those that deal with the prohibition of books.

What is said of "books" in the two following chapters applies also to newspapers, magazines and other publications, unless it is evident that "books" are to be understood in the strict sense (C. 1384). Pamphlets and leaflets, too, come under these regulations; but duplicated and mimeographed material is not included (unless it is published in this form), e.g., the duplicated lectures of a professor for the convenience of his students.

## Chapter I: THE CENSORSHIP OF BOOKS

I. *Books to be submitted* to the Church's censorship, whether written by the clergy or the laity, are the following: 1. the books of Sacred Scripture as well as annotations and commentaries thereon; 2. books that treat of Holy Writ, Theology, Church History, Canon Law, natural theology, ethics and other cognate sciences; prayer books and books of devotion; books that contain religious, moral, ascetical, mystical or similar teaching, and other such books that are of special interest to religion and morality, even though their purpose is to foster piety; 3. sacred pictures, no matter by what process they are to be printed, and whether to be published with prayers or not (C. 1385).

Permission for publication must be given in writing. The *nihil obstat* (nothing prevents it) of the censor should precede the *Imprimatur* (let it be printed) of the Bishop. Generally the name of the censor is also to be added (C. 1393). In the printed book itself the name of the censor need not be published; but the *Imprimatur* (let it be printed) and the name of him who granted it must be indicated, as well as the time and place of the granting. This may be placed at the beginning or at the end of the book. (C. 1394.)

Translations and new editions (not mere reprints), require a new approbation. This is not required for the separate publication of articles that have appeared in periodicals (C. 1392).

II. *Permission without censorship* is required for the publication of a work by:

1. *The laity* when writing for newspapers or magazines that are hostile for the Catholic religion or good morals (C. 1386).

This permission is granted by the local Ordinary. In as far as this entails co-operation in the sins of others, confer 150.

2. *The diocesan clergy* even when they write books on secular subjects or when they contribute to, or edit, periodical literature or daily papers. (C. 1386).

3. *Religious* who must first obtain the permission of their major superiors and then that of the local Ordinary when they publish a book, or write for daily papers or periodical magazines or edit the same (C. 1385, 1386).

The "Local Ordinary" is either the bishop of the diocese wherein the convent is situated or the bishop of the printer or the publisher.

III. *The violation* of these laws is usually a grave (mortal) sin.

In less important matters there is only a venial sin, more so in case permission alone is required than when the work must also be submitted to ecclesiastical censorship.

(Concluded on page 390)

## This Believing World

That distinguished diplomat and writer, Sir Harold Nicolson, whose reviews these days are so popular a feature in *The Observer* was asked recently in an interview by Mr. Kenneth Harris if he could not have been a poet, who would he have liked to be, answered *Voltaire*—not at all a surprising choice. We rarely or ever find people who are asked a similar question answer — the Pope or even an Archbishop of Canterbury.

★

"Today" has discovered in Holland, "the man with an X-Ray brain", he is Mr. Peter Hurkos whose "baffling experiences" are the result of a "science" known as "psychometry". These baffling experiences are (so unknown scientists have told him) a "psychic" gift, and that Mr. Hurkos is "the most highly developed brain in the world". As an example, Mr. Hurkos tells us that he only has to shake hands with a stranger to know immediately "a good deal about him, his private life, even the house he lives in". It is all done by his X-Ray Brain.

★

One of Mr. Hurkos's specialities is discovering murderers who cannot be found by the police; and (so we are told) he has solved "many murder cases" and has even "assisted Scotland Yard". It seems a pity that here at least Mr. Hurkos has not given specific cases, with dates, etc., including successes and failures. There are literally dozens of unsolved murder cases in England, to say nothing of hundreds of bank and wages robbers. If Mr. Hurkos had a tenth part of the psychic gifts he boasts of, he could make a fortune by helping our banks to get back some or all of their losses.

★

It is of course hardly necessary to add that the many stories given us by Mr. Hurkos are not supported by "testimonials" from Dutch police, or indeed by anything but a few names quite impossible to check. Perhaps an X-Ray Brain doesn't require any evidence.

★

We knew it would come. A Russian lady Spiritualist told the Communist Party Congress at Moscow that she had been in touch with Lenin — that is, the *spirit* of Lenin — who told her that he found it "unpleasant to lie beside Stalin who had done such great harm to the party".

★

Not to be outdone, Mr. Hannen Swaffer continuing his "Greatest Story" in *Psychic News* now tells us that Winston Churchill is "psychic". Proof — if you need it — is the fact that Sir Winston used to consult a planchette, and it was being "psychic" which "guided" him in his famous escape from the Boers during the Boer War. As far as it is possible to judge from his story, there was nothing "psychic" whatever about the escape — but does that matter? Not in the least. Mr. Swaffer's list of contemporary Spiritualists is now so long that it has required several numbers of *Psychic News* to contain it in full. The real problem is now — who in modern life is not "psychic" or, not even a Spiritualist?

★

Apart from being sure that as a spiritualist you are going to live again after death for ever and ever, the other great advantage is that you can believe in "absent healing" which means that, if you are suffering from some incurable disease, "healers" can waft "healing rays" of some sort over to you and you may be cured. For 3s. 6d., that great champion of all healers, Mr. Harry Edwards, in his book, *The Way of Absent Healing* tells how it is done.

There is no doubt that he can do it, for he says so himself; and in proof, claims that he gets "half a million healing letters annually".

## Humanism as a Philosophy

THERE ARE SOME OF US who have never liked the word *humanist* as it is now used, and Mr. F. A. Ridley is one of our number. I see the term to be unsatisfactory for precisely the same reason as Mr. Ridley: that it has no necessary connection with disbelief in the supernatural, although many who call themselves humanists use it as if it were a preferred synonym of *secularist*. Yet it isn't *Humanist* implies one who is concerned with human interests and welfare—nothing more. It should so be used. *Secularist*, on the other hand, means one who is concerned only with this material world in which we live and have our being. To him, this world and this life are all we have any knowledge of. Naturally, he wants it to be as good a world and as good a life as can be.

Actually, the word *humanist* is not very satisfactory for one or two other reasons. If a man is a freethinker or rationalist, he should so describe himself. It amounts almost to indictable timidity to call himself a humanist if what he really wishes to say is that he doesn't believe in God. And if a man is a humanitarian, to say he is a humanist is to under-state his convictions. For, while a humanitarian may indeed seek the welfare of humanity, this is but the expression of an attitude to life that is deeper and wider-ranging. In truth, he has sympathy for suffering in all its forms. He wants to dispel unhappiness and eliminate preventable pain wherever he finds it, and to promote the well-being of the animal kingdom as well as of humankind. But the humanitarian is not inevitably an agnostic or atheist. Nobody would think of suggesting it. Why, then, humanism should have this heretical admixture, I do not know.

Now I have been interested in the ethical movement since I was an adolescent. The reason is that I became an atheist in my 'teens. One result of this was that I, now free of the restraints arbitrarily imposed by Christianity, came to realise how important it was to maintain high standards of personal and social behaviour. And so the ethical movement attracted me. But I have been arguing for years that humanism is no legitimate heir of ethicism. Ethicism relates to applying right principles to life, to acting with decency and honour in the manifold relationships of life. Once again, there is here no necessary linkage with unbelief, although those who are ethicists do feel that the good life needs no buttress from theology to make it self-compelling.

The trouble with humanism is its amorphousness. It can be made to mean anything and everything that its adherents want it to mean. And that is why I think it so unfortunate a philosophy. Because in vigorous, precise language humanism means so *vitaly* little, it means nothing at all to most people. A word, when it is the name for a movement, is important. There can be no argument about that. We should use such a word to imply a definite personal position, an attitude of mind and heart, an unequivocal self-commitment. *The word itself should suggest its meaning.* The need for repeated definition or re-statement is symptomatic of a forced or artificial usage. As it is employed today, humanism is a word without momentum. And to a word like that you can't give an effective fillip, no matter how impressive a list of great names you adduce to show what support humanism has got. As a movement, I do not predict for it any very notable future.

G. I. BENNETT.

# THE FREETHINKER

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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).

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1  
Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours. 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 Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m. MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE. (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.
- 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: L. EBURY.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

- Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, December 12th, 7.30 p.m.: FREDERICK JACKSON, F.R.A.M., "The Development of Christmas Music", with illustrations.
- Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, December 10th, 6.30 p.m.: PAUL BRODETSKY, M.A., "The House of Lords".
- Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, December 10th, 7.15 p.m.: J. W. BARKER, "The New English Bible".
- North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, December 8th, 7.15 p.m.: A MEETING.
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, December 10th, 2.30 p.m.: L. POLLOCK, "Civic News".
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, December 10th, 11 a.m.: REGINALD W. SORENSEN, M.P., "Morality—Relative and Absolute".

## Notes and News

WE ARE PRIVILEGED to print in this issue, an article on "The Roman Catholic Index of Forbidden Books" by the well-known ex-Roman Catholic priest, Emmett McLoughlin, author of *People's Padre*, *American Culture and Catholic Schools*, and the soon to be published, *Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church*. As readers of *People's Padre* will know, Mr. McLoughlin is Superintendent of the Memorial Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona, and he recently addressed a letter to 54,000 Roman Catholic priests in the USA. Printed on our front page on October 20th, this letter is now to be issued in pamphlet form by special permission of the author.

NOTTINGHAM READERS should make a note that on Sunday December 15th, Mr. F. A. Ridley will be speaking to the local Branch of the National Secular Society, on the subject that has caused much interest in our columns, "The Vatican and the Common Market". The meeting will be in the Co-operative Education Centre, Heathcote Street entrance, at 6.30 p.m.

OLIN MATHIESON CHEMICAL CORPORATION OF AMERICA hope to have a chemical on the market in 1964 that will eventually eliminate "the biggest single transmitter of disease", the common housefly (*Newsweek*, 6/11/61). The chemical is called Apholate, and "when eaten—or even walked on—by the *Musca domestica* (the housefly), renders the insect sterile". It is still in the experimental stage, but preliminary field tests have been remarkably successful.

A UNITED STATES lawyer, Vincent Hallinan, has filed what promises to be an interesting suit in San Francisco against the Roman Catholic Church. It "contests the £71,000 will of Mr. David Supple of San Francisco, who left most of his estate to Roman Catholic schools and charities" (*Daily Telegraph*, 27/10/61), and it is contended that Mr. Supple was "in fear" when he made the will. Indeed Mr. Hallinan maintains that Mr. Supple "entertained a constant and morbid fear that, upon his death, his soul might be consigned to Hell", because of representations of Church officials. By teaching these beliefs, Mr. Hallinan considers that the Church was "guilty of fraud". Many will agree with him. It remains to be seen whether the judges will.

FATHER F. L. FILAS, Jesuit chairman of the theology department at Loyola University, Chicago, leads the campaign to do justice to St. Joseph, "Jesus's father in every way except generation", yet only fleetingly celebrated as "a good carpenter and notably understanding husband" (*Time*, 17/11/61). To the Roman Catholic Church's shame, St. Joseph isn't even named in the liturgy of the Mass, though 27 other saints are. However, Father Filas reports a "very encouraging" ecclesiastical response to the campaign. Of the Church's 420 cardinals and archbishops with dioceses, we are told, "more than 200 have already let it be known that they favour St. Joseph's inclusion in the Mass". Not to be undone. THE FREETHINKER intends to pay its tribute to the "notably understanding husband", through an article by Eva Ebury.

WE SHOULD LIKE to remind readers of the reissue of Chapman Cohen's recorded talk, "The Meaning and Value of Freethought" on a one-sided 7-inch disc, 33 rpm. A limited number have been made and are now available from the Pioneer Press at 18s. 6d., including postage and packing. Please order now and ensure your copy of this justly-praised speech.

ON NOVEMBER 22ND, the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society passed a resolution urging the Government to withdraw the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill (THE FREETHINKER, 1/12/61). On November 25th, *The Times* printed the following letter from T. A. Hamilton Baynes of Birmingham: "We clearly benefit from the large number of hard working immigrants who contribute to the industrial life of our city and to its public services. It is a pity that a minority should become a nuisance and swell the statistics of crime".

"In court on Monday my colleague and I dealt with 47 men and women of whom none was from the West Indies, two were from Wales, three from Scotland, 10 from England, and 32 from Ireland."

NEXT WEEK

**FREEDOM FROM HUNGER**

By D. H. TRIBE

## The Roman Catholic Index of Forbidden Books

(Concluded from page 387)

### Chapter 2: THE PROHIBITION OF BOOKS

I. *The Extent of the Prohibition.* A forbidden book is one which, without due permission, may not be published, read, retained, sold, translated, or in any manner whatsoever communicated to others (C. 1398).

II. *Books forbidden* by the common law of the Church are:

1. Editions of the original text of the Sacred Scriptures published by non-Catholics; likewise, translations of the same made or published by them.

2. Books that in any way defend heresy or schism or that tend to undermine the foundations of religion.

3. Books which, of set purpose, attack religion or morals.

4. Books of non-Catholics which professedly treat of religion unless it is clear that they contain nothing contrary to Catholic faith.

5. Books published without due ecclesiastical approval which treat of Sacred Scripture, or contain annotations and commentaries thereon or translations thereof into the vernacular; books containing new apparitions, revelations, visions, prophecies or miracles or which seek to introduce new devotions.

6. Books which attack or ridicule any Catholic dogma or defend errors proscribed by the Holy See; books which disparage divine worship, or seek to undermine ecclesiastical discipline, or avowedly defame the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the clerical or religious state.

Therefore, a book is forbidden which contains a collection of defamatory accounts concerning various popes or of the priestly or religious states, not, however, if the person of one individual pope or a certain religious Order is disparaged.

7. Books which teach or approve of superstition, fortune telling, divination, magic, spiritism and other such practices.

8. Books which declare duels, suicide and divorce to be lawful; furthermore, books that treat of freemasonry and similar secret societies, maintaining that they are useful or that they are harmless to the Church and civil society.

9. Books which, with avowed intention, treat of, describe or teach, lewd or obscene matters, such as the methods of birth control.

10. Liturgical books containing unauthorised changes so that they no longer agree with the authentic editions approved by the Holy See.

11. Books which contain apocryphal indulgences, or such as have been condemned or revoked by the Holy See.

12. Also forbidden are all images, however reproduced, of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, the Angels, Saints, or other Servants of God that are not in keeping with the sentiment and decrees of the Church.

N.B.—Besides those named there are other books proscribed by the special decrees of competent authorities (Cf. C1395).

IV. *The violation* of the laws on the prohibition of books is in itself a grave (mortal) sin; but in matters of lesser moment there is only a venial sin.

To retain forbidden books is a mortal sin if one keeps them for more than a month. It is not sinful to keep a book for a short time either because one intends to surrender it to the authorities or because one is awaiting permission to read it.

## Censures "Latae Sententiae"

### Article 1: INDIVIDUAL EXCOMMUNICATIONS

An excommunication *Speciali modo* (in a special way) reserved to the Holy See is incurred by:

Those who *publish, defend*, or who *knowingly read or retain* without the requisite permission books of apostates, heretics or schismatics, or books *nominally proscribed* by Apostolic Letters, provided such books have actually been published (C. 2318).

N.B.—Excommunication deprives a Catholic of the Sacraments of his Church. He cannot go to confession, receive communion, be married, or receive the Last Rites. He cannot even be buried in a Catholic cemetery even if he owns a plot and his wife is already buried there. (C. 2260, 2261).

Average Catholics and most Protestants do not realise the extreme implications of the above regulations. A grave or mortal sin means hell fire for Catholics for all eternity if they die without repentance, which usually involves going to confession to a priest.

This means eternal hell fire for a Catholic layman who writes an article for the *Christian Science Monitor*, or *Church and State*, or the *Christian Century* without permission. (C. 1386).

This means eternal hell fire for a priest who writes regularly for the *New York Times*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, or the *National Geographic Magazine* without permission. (C. 1386).

This means that your Catholic neighbour is excommunicated and condemned to hell forever if he reads your copy of the Authorised or Revised Version of the Bible (C. 1399).

This means excommunication and hell forever if he merely reads the *Book of Mormon* of the Latter Day Saints, *Science and Health* of the Christian Scientists, the *Great Controversy* of the Seventh Day Adventists, or any writings of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli or any other Protestant theologian or historian. (C. 1399).

A Catholic hangs over the pit of hell with a mortal sin on his soul if he reads a book defending American freedom of thought, American freedom of worship, American separation of Church and State, because all of these "errors" have been "proscribed by the Holy See". (C. 1399-6).

In the light of the above it is difficult to understand how Roman Catholics and their priests can reconcile their acceptance of the *Index* and its ramifications with the principles and freedoms of American Democracy.

An intelligent, sincere American cannot be an intelligent sincere Roman Catholic, for a sincere Catholic must accept and live up to *everything* his Church teaches, not merely the doctrines or laws that he agrees with.

## PAPERBACKS

*Common Sense and The Crisis* by Thomas Paine (double vol.) 8s.  
*Miss Lonelyhearts and A Cool Million* by Nathanael West (double vol.) 2s. 6d.

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# A Letter to Mr. Cutner

Dear Mr. Cutner,

Finally after so many interruptions and so many months—almost a year, I believe—I have found the time and some facts which will permit me to give my controversy with you another try.

I have read your book and I was, and still am, thoroughly impressed with the amount of scholarship that you poured into it. But like many similar writers, I think you have overlooked one or two essential points which are vital for the understanding of the issue in question. To be more specific: (a) In your book, as well as in all your articles written for THE FREETHINKER, you have neglected the oral tradition, which is essential to appreciate and evaluate historical facts of ancient times. As for the understanding of classical literature and philosophy, oral tradition is an important instrument that most scholars use to formulate theories or to arrange chronological facts, and, if this is valid for secular literature, why could we not accept oral tradition in religious literature with the same seriousness, without, of course, overlooking possible reservations?

You insist in all your arguments, particularly in your book, that the canonical gospels are officially dated in the fourth century—and are therefore unreliable, because four centuries away from the facts that they try to relate. And this is where the oral tradition comes in. This does not, of course, mean that the stories transmitted orally from one generation to another were not altered. That is why scholarship must ever be vigilant in order to detect fantasies and eccentricities. But it helps us to detect the core of the events which are being transmitted with a fair amount of accuracy. In indirect connection with this, I would like to quote a brief passage from an interesting book called *Jesus and His Times* by Daniel-Rops. On page 35 we read:

In the main the books of the New Testament may be dated during the years 50 and 100, but three centuries elapsed between the setting down of these texts and the first complete manuscripts in our possession. This seems an enormous stretch of time but it may be pointed out that it is nothing by comparison with the interval between the unknown originals of the classics of antiquity and the oldest copy known to us today. This is as much as 1400 years in the case of the tragedies of Sophocles and for the works of Aeschylus, Aristophanes and Thucydides, 1600 years for Euripides and Catullus, 1300 for Plato, 1200 for Demosthenes. Terence and Virgil may be counted fortunate in that the gap in their cases is only 7 and 4 centuries respectively. In the light of these comparisons, the interval between the originals of the books of the New Testament and the first-known copies is not very remarkable.

(b) You are determined to confuse contradictory statements of an author with the very existence of the author. You point out over and over again in the chapter "The Witness of Paul" in your book (*Jesus: God, Man or Myth?*) that Paul contradicts himself and, in turn, he is contradicted by Luke in the Acts. Now, Mr. Cutner, supposing in your very book, between the first and the fourth chapter you contradicted yourself, would that prove you never existed, or that your existence is questionable? I quite agree with you that Paul's Epistles contain interpolations and require a great deal of patience to find some sense in some of them. But these aspects of the Epistles do not necessarily rule out the author as being Paul. You seem to forget that most of the contents of Paul's Epistles are theology, morals and trivia and very little about Jesus's death and its details—the reason being that about the last, the audience of Paul knew already, since these letters were addressed to people who were

already Christians and therefore knew something about Jesus and his death which had occurred approximately 35 years earlier. To conclude, I do not think that Paul's Epistles were meant to acquaint the brethren with the life of Jesus, but rather, to build a theology about Jesus the Christ.

I would like to make one more observation even at the risk of trying your patience. I am afraid you rely too much on outdated scholars like Professor Van Manon and Thomas Whittaker. The worthy Professor Van Manon wrote for the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, I believe, in 1903 and since then his opinion, as well as yours (or maybe you have doubts) that Paul's Epistles are pseudographia is accepted by nobody. It is true that only Catholic scholars regard eleven of Paul's Epistles authentic, whereas most of the outstanding contemporary scholars agree that at least eight of Paul's Epistles are genuine beyond any doubts—that is to say, were written by Paul.

I hope you will find the time to offer me some comments on what I have just written, and perhaps in the future I will try to bring to your attention other weaknesses of your daring theory.

Sincerely and gratefully yours,

PATRICK CORSARO (U.S.A.).

## Religion and Crime in the U.S.A.

FROM THE UNITED STATES by way of Canada (*The Montreal Star*, 20/11/61) we heard that 228 Roman Catholic bishops had expressed alarm at the deepening moral decay in American society. And, though we had read repeatedly of a great return to religion in the United States, we now learn from the bishops that the growth of immorality is unique because it is accompanied by increased questioning and denial of God. "In the past there have always been men who for various reasons have denied the existence of God. But the present atheism is different. Now not only do many act and live as if there were no God to whom they are responsible, but a steadily increasing number—some individuals of great influence—proclaim the non-existence of God to be a scientifically established fact". Apparently *The Sunday Telegraph* (19/11/61) also printed the report, and it prompted a letter from F. W. Ursell of Ross-on-Wye. The Roman Catholic bishops "appear to assume that more religion means better morals and less crime", said Mr. Ursell (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 26/11/61). "But this is not the case". He quoted from the *American Parents' Magazine*, that "Nearly all of the 761 delinquents examined in Passaic N.J. by sociologist Wm. C. Kvaracuas of Boston University were affiliated with some church, and three-quarters of them attended church regularly or occasionally". "Churchgoing in the USA has increased greatly in the last decade", Mr. Ursell added, "and is about eight times higher proportionately than in this country, which suggests, on the American model, that crime and morals should be at least eight times worse in Great Britain than America!" "These are facts," he concluded, "and one can only assume that both Protestant and Catholic organisations have failed to make good use of the wonderful opportunities they have had to influence their flocks both young and old alike. Facts speak for themselves. With the increase of Church membership has come increased crime".

## CORRESPONDENCE

## UNION OF MILITANT ATHEISTS

Mr. F. A. Ridley invites me to tell what I know of the entry of the "Russian Union" into the World Union of Freethinkers in 1936. No Russian Union qua Russian entered the World Union. In 1935 the International League of Proletarian Freethinkers based on Paris but financed by the Union of Militant Atheists of Moscow approached us with the view of some sort of alliance. This was discussed at some length at the international congress of Freethinkers held in Prague in April 1936 to which the Proletarian Freethinkers were invited to send representatives. Among whom were three Russians: Professor Lukachevsky, Academician Zavadovsky and a working man Dubovoi whose fine white beard made a considerable impression. Only the first spoke any language other than Russian. Other representatives included Dr. Galperin of Paris, De Ronde of Amsterdam and a man known as Jansen, whose real name I never knew. The Proletarians agreed to our requirement of political neutrality, i.e. that our Union should not be used as a political platform, or for political purposes. If this condition is accepted we are ready to receive Conservatives, Anarchists or what-you-will, provided that they hold our principles of Freethinking as set out in our declaration. Galperin, Jansen and De Ronde were elected members of the International Council; the first two attended one meeting; De Ronde remained a member until 1957. We never saw the three Russians again; Lukachevsky and Dubovoi disappeared in the 1938 purges; Zavadovsky sent a scientific paper (pp. 39-42 of the Report) devoid of communist propaganda; Jansen fought, I understand, in the Spanish Civil war and died there. The Proletarians kept to the agreement and behaved with complete correctness. I had some correspondence with the Union of Militant Atheists of Moscow up to 1942, at which time they complained that they were no longer receiving our literature. After the war, in 1947, Mlle. Pardon, Secretary of the World Union of Freethinkers, was informed by the Russian Embassy in Brussels we must communicate through the Embassy; we were told by our Czech members that the UMA still existed. The Russian Embassy also declared that they were not satisfied with the membership of the General Committee and that a representative would meet me on the point; I never saw him, nor have we heard anything further. The Czech Freethinkers who had been allowed to function under the title of a Society for Science and Culture by the Nazis were suppressed by the Communists after the religious bodies had been converted into state institutions, on the ground that they no longer served a useful purpose.

This, I think, provides the information Mr. Ridley desired.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER,

(President, World Union of Freethinkers).

## CHURCH AND STATE

The National Secular Society advocates (quite naturally) a Secular State—which would mean state schools having no religious instruction. And to bring this about, separation of Church and State is the clarion call. But surely after such a sweeping endeavour, Catholicism would be twice as determined in its effort to attain complete domination. Christian unity would no longer interest Catholics because, without Government assistance, the Church of England—and other Protestant Churches for that matter—wouldn't last very long. And it would be considered undemocratic to abolish all Catholic instruction from their own Catholic schools.

J. BOYLE.

## "A RATIONALIST ENCYCLOPEDIA"

In your issue of November 24th, a letter from Mr. C. H. Norman refers an inquirer to Joseph McCabe's *A Rationalist Encyclopedia*. I have been trying to purchase a copy for three years without success. Can either you or one of your readers tell me where a copy could be obtained?

G. S. GEE.

[A Rationalist Encyclopedia is, unfortunately, out of print and therefore would have to be purchased secondhand, but it should be available through public libraries.—ED.]

## FREETHOUGHT ANTHOLOGY

Readers of F. A. Ridley's review of Mrs. Margaret Knight's *Humanist Anthology* should be reminded that in 1948 William Kent, an occasional contributor to THE FREETHINKER, published an anthology for Freethinkers under the title, *Life Up Your Heads*. There are over 300 quotations from more than 150 authors. To mention omissions from *A Humanist Anthology* which Mr. Ridley animadverted, Mr. Kent included five quotations from J. M. Robertson and three from Joseph McCabe. I don't know whether the book is still available, but no doubt the Editor will tell us.

P. CORP.

[Yes, *Lift Up Your Heads* is available in paperback for 3s. 6d. plus 6d. postage.—ED.]

## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

There was the case of . . . James Naylor, who was sentenced by one of Cromwell's Parliaments to be pilloried for two hours and then whipped from Westminster to the New Exchange, where he was to stand in the pillory for a further two hours, a couple of days later to be whipped from Newgate to the Old Exchange, there to be branded on the forehead and to have his tongue bored through, then to be sent to Bristol and whipped again, and finally to be confined in Bridewell and kept at hard labour during the pleasure of parliament. This sentence was inflicted for Blasphemy.

—Titus Oates by John Lane, Part 4, p. 319.

## OBITUARY

The death of Albert Edward Arthur at the age of 61, came as a terrible shock to his colleagues on the Executive Committee and in Marble Arch Branch of the National Secular Society. No man was better liked or more respected than Bert Arthur, and his temperate and reasonable presence will be sadly missed on the platform and in council.

At a meeting of Marble Arch Branch on Sunday, November 26th, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook paid tribute to the deceased and those present expressed their deep regret and sent a message of sympathy to Mrs. Arthur and her daughter.

The funeral took place at Golders Green Crematorium on Wednesday, November 29th, when, in the presence of Mrs. and Miss Arthur, and representatives of the Executive Committee and Marble Arch and North London Branches, a secular service was conducted by the General Secretary of the National Secular Society.

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