

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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1. NEVER ACCEPT AUTHORITY: whether that of a jealous god, priest, prime minister, president, dictator, school teacher, social worker, parent, or of anyone else whatsoever, unless, in your own seriously considered view, there are good grounds for it.

You are quite right to reject orthodox religions; at present (as our clergymen insist) orthodox religions are a shambles.

Given the present state of knowledge, the only position of integrity you can hold is one of careful, honest, open-minded agnosticism. Follow a rigorous honesty in all your feeling, thinking and acting.

You may say: "But this, surely, is a position of arrogance? My knowledge about important questions is so little". But this is true of all of us. Those persons who are most authoritative in their subjects are the first to acknowledge the tentative nature of their knowledge and the large areas of their ignorance. It is empty men who are pretentious. Always be suspicious of "experts" and accept nothing they say without radical criticism. *You*, in the last analysis, are the only judge of what seems right and feasible to *you*; therefore question stubbornly until you are satisfied. Be self reliant. But remember: your position should rest upon your own *seriously considered* point of view. There is a big difference between honest obstinacy and silly insolence.

2. BASE YOUR CONDUCT UPON SIMPLE HUMANE PRINCIPLES:

● Try to increase the happiness and diminish the pain in the world.

● Always treat other individuals as persons, as ends in themselves. Never use them, manipulate them, exploit them, or in any way treat them only as a means to some end of your own.

● Practise reciprocity: behave towards others as you think it right that they should behave towards you.

● Recognize the importance of, and seek to preserve, certain fundamental human rights for example: **Liberty**—that all men should be free to pursue what, for them, is a good and enjoyable life, so long as they respect, and do not infringe upon, the same liberty of others; **Equality**—that, though men are by nature different, and in their particular abilities superior and inferior to each other, as whole persons they are not superior or inferior to each other, and are deserving of equal consideration.

● Seek also to preserve those other rights which these principles imply; such as full political citizenship, education, health, equality before the law and others of this kind. These rules provide a basis for the regulation not only of your own personal life and relationships, but also of the organization of society.

Some may ask: "But how can we accept these moral rules without divine authority? If we are unsure about the nature, even of the existence, of God—how do we know right and wrong?" The answer is very simple: God has nothing to do with the matter. These rules of

conduct are worked out in relation to our own human predicament and in order to resolve our own human disputes, and we decide that they are right and good simply because in human experience, after much heart-searching and reasoning, we find them to be so. They are not in any way weakened because you have no belief in, or have doubts about, any "ultimate authority" such as God. The confused state of present-day religion need not worry us; if we do what is—to the best of our knowledge—right, we are doing our whole duty.

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Ten Non-Commandments

By RONALD FLETCHER

3. STRIVE TO ELIMINATE WAR:

a variant upon "Thou shalt not kill", in which we agree

with Moses.

Sometimes, when things are allowed to go too far, and uncriticized for too long, war, for most people, seems to break out almost unexpectedly. Then millions of people who previously had no evil intentions towards each other are engaged in destroying and ruining each other because, in the circumstances, killing seems necessary and justifiable. But killing is always foul and repugnant. War is never glorious, though the qualities of character of individuals who endure it may well be. War is one of the most disgusting evils of mankind which now, in addition, has reached the stage of lunacy. You are right to protest against nuclear war. The time has come to do everything in our power to outlaw war completely.

4. STRIVE TO ELIMINATE POVERTY, AND WORK FOR GREATER MATERIAL PROSPERITY FOR ALL:

Poverty is one of the most crushing, deadening, humiliating experiences that can happen to men. If poverty and war could be eliminated, two of the worst scourges of mankind would be gone. Material prosperity is not a sufficient basis for human happiness and fulfilment, but it is a necessary one.

If we take this aim seriously, it means that it is our duty to work hard, efficiently, and in such a way as to contribute the greatest excellence of which we are capable to the community. **Work** is one of the most important things, and, strange though it sounds nowadays, one of the most satisfying things in human experience. To try to achieve the highest qualities of excellence of which you are capable both in what you like doing and in what you are committed to do—being a good nurse, a good carpenter, a good cook, a good driver, a good fitter, a good athlete, a good parent—is as good a basis as any for a satisfying personal life.

5. DO NOT BE A SNOB:

a variant upon "Thou shalt not covet", in which we also agree with Moses. Reject the growing poison of status consciousness and social emulation. Treat people as human beings, and not as competitors with jobs, incomes and material possessions against which you have to be perpetually measuring yourself. Use material possessions

for enjoyment and for enriching your own experience: not as an insignia of status for competitive snobbery. Instead of fastening upon some label which separates and distinguishes you from others ("middle class", "public school", "B.A.", "clerk", "foreman", "copy-typist-to-the-manager", "sociologist"), put your common humanity first and your label second. There is something pathetic about a society in which people have to make so much fuss about their labels; it can only be because they are so impoverished in their inner human resources.

Work for a society in which there is more human comradeship, and less pretence.

6. IN SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR—USE YOUR BRAINS AS WELL AS YOUR GENITALS, AND ALWAYS IN THAT ORDER.

But remember, too, that love involves more than both.

Sex is a natural impulse, an appetite for complete physical, emotional, and mental intimacy, including many sensual delights, and consummated finally in the act of intercourse. As such, there is nothing right or wrong about it, certainly nothing evil, it is an enjoyable experience which we all desire.

Sex is also a powerful appetite, and like other appetites, needs regulation both with reference to other aspects of our own nature, and with reference to our behaviour towards others. It is here that questions of sexual ethics arise; and it is clear that—far from being stuffy or old-fashioned—the ethics of sex are unavoidable and sensible.

The principles in the light of which we ought to regulate our sexual behaviour are exactly the same as those by which we regulate our other behaviour: to treat others as ends in themselves and not only as means to our own gratification; to practise reciprocity; to behave towards others as we think it right that they should behave towards us; to act with regard to our own and other people's happiness and to avoid causing pain. On the basis of these principles what specific rules of sexual behaviour for teenagers can we clarify? It is certain, first of all that:—

• Young men and women at and after puberty ought to exercise self-control over their sexual conduct.

At this stage of maturity, sexual need becomes an extremely intense and serious matter. Sex becomes a continuous and powerful appetite which is easily and almost indiscriminately stimulated. In a way different from our other impulses it seems to entail a more complete emotional commitment to another person. Also, sexual intercourse may now have the serious consequence of bringing children into being. At puberty sexual desires and motives have become more than a matter of play and excitement; they foreshadow a new kind of relationship, intruding upon the old, disrupting the old, more demanding than the old. Control is therefore necessary; carelessness in sex is a fool's game.

• Pre-marital sexual experience is not necessarily wrong.

If undertaken with mutual consent, full mutuality of regard, and responsibility, it is difficult to see why—whether in a short-lived relationship or in an affair of longer duration—the mutual enjoyment of sexual experience for its own sake between two unmarried people is wrong.

Much care should be exercised about this kind of sexual relationship, however. It is very doubtful whether many adolescents can enter easily into such casual sexual adventures. Sex is not a simple appetite which can be satisfied by the acquisition of an object (as, when one is hungry, one can eat a meal); it is a complex desire which carries with it profound emotions and the likelihood of profound emotional attachment which may involve people

far more deeply than they had expected. It needs the exercise of much forethought, lest something that begins lightly should end in suffering.

There is another kind of pre-marital sexual relationship which entails full, mutual commitment and responsible consideration. In the context of all the factors of contemporary society we have mentioned, there may be some young people who, ultimately intending to marry, may think it wiser to delay their marriage. They may, however, wish to enter into sexual intimacy meanwhile. This kind of pre-marital relationship is not wrong.

Many objections are likely to be made to this position. It will be said that promiscuity results in the continued spread of venereal disease and the large number of illegitimate births. Pre-marital sex as I have described it is by no means the same thing as indiscriminating promiscuity. Even so, the answer to this objection is clear. Young people (and others) should be given a thorough knowledge of venereal disease so that it can, as far as possible, be eradicated and avoided. Similarly, they should be given a thorough knowledge of contraceptive techniques so that they may avoid having children they do not want and for whom they cannot properly care.

It may also be said that, in the serious, fully committed kind of pre-marital relationship, no matter how sincere and convinced young people may be, they may have made a great mistake. They may find, in fact, that they are profoundly unhappy together, and may be led, therefore, to end their relationship. But what is wrong with this? If a mistake can be made in this kind of relationship—so can a genuine and profound mistake be made in marriage. And surely it is better to know this before, rather than after, the full obligations of the founding of a family have been entered into?

It may be said that the short or long-lived affair and even the supposedly serious pre-marital relationship are wrong because deception and irresponsibility can occur, and one partner may be treated as a means only, and exploited for the gratification of the other. There is a curious flaw in this objection. It is agreed that irresponsibility and calculated deception makes any such relationship wrong; but the objection seems glibly to assume that once you are married these moral evils somehow disappear. The lion of sex is safely locked in, and you can forget about him now. What a preposterous argument this is! The idea that all sexual experience within marriage is necessarily all right, simply because it is within marriage, and that all sexual experience outside marriage is all wrong, simply because it is outside marriage, is nonsense. It is just as possible to treat your wife, or husband, as a means to your own gratification; to deceive them and exploit them to your own ends—rather than giving them full consideration as a person—as it is to treat anyone else in this way. Indeed, it may well be easier. An important point arises from this:

• We should concern ourselves as much with the ethics of sexual relationships within marriage as with those outside it.

And it is a very odd thing, when you stop to consider it, that people should always be so anxious about the morality of pre-marital and extra-marital sex, but seldom raise seriously the question of sexual morality within marriage.

• Extra-marital sexual experience is not necessarily wrong.

Two possibilities, at least, can be stated:

(a) For some married couples, sexual fidelity is part of the shared ideality of their marital relationship; indeed,

(Concluded on page 166)

Frank Sinatra on Religion

(An Interview)

PLAYBOY: All right, let's start with the most basic question there is: Are you a religious man? Do you believe in God?

SINATRA: Well, that'll do for a start. I think I can sum up my religious feelings in a couple of paragraphs. First: I believe in you and me. I'm like Albert Schweitzer and Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein in that I have a respect for life—in any form. I believe in nature, in the birds, the sea, the sky, in everything I can see or that there is *real* evidence for. If these things are what you mean by God, then I believe in God. But I don't believe in a personal God to whom I look for comfort or for a natural on the next roll of the dice. I'm not unmindful of man's seeming need for faith; I'm for *anything* that gets you through the night, be it prayer, tranquilizers or a bottle of Jack Daniel's. But to me religion is a deeply personal thing in which man and God go it alone together, without the witch doctor in the middle. The witch doctor tries to convince us that we have to ask God for help, to spell out to him what we need, even to bribe him with prayer or cash on the line. Well, I believe that God *knows* what each of us wants and needs. It's not necessary for us to make it to church on Sunday to reach Him. You can find Him anyplace. And if that sounds heretical, my source is pretty good: Matthew, Five to Seven, The Mount.

PLAYBOY: You haven't found any answers for yourself in organized religion?

SINATRA: There are things about organized religion which I resent. Christ is revered as the Prince of Peace, but more blood has been shed in His name than any other figure in history. You show me one step forward in the name of religion and I'll show you a hundred retrogressions. Remember, they were men of God who destroyed the educational treasures at Alexandria, who perpetrated the Inquisition in Spain, who burned the witches at Salem. Over 25,000 organized religions flourish on this planet, but the followers of each think all the others are misguided and probably evil as well. In India they worship white cows, monkeys and a dip in the Ganges. The Moslems accept slavery and prepare for Allah, who promises wine and revirginated women. And witch doctors aren't just in Africa. If you look in the Los Angeles papers of a Sunday morning, you'll see the local variety advertising their wares like suits with two pairs of pants.

PLAYBOY: Hasn't religious faith just as often served as a civilizing influence?

SINATRA: Remember that leering, cursing lynch mob in Little Rock reviling a meek, innocent little 12-year-old Negro girl as she tried to enroll in public school? Weren't they—or most of them—devout churchgoers? I detest the two-faced who pretend liberality but are practiced bigots in their own mean little spheres. I didn't tell my daughter whom to marry, but I'd have broken her back if she had big eyes for a bigot. As I see it, man is a product of his conditioning, and the social forces which mold his morality and conduct—including racial prejudice—are influenced more by material things like food and economic necessities than by the fear and awe and bigotry generated by the high priests of commercialized superstition. Now don't get me wrong. I'm for decency —period. I'm for anything and everything that bodes love and consideration for my fellow man. But when lip

service to some mysterious deity permits bestiality on Wednesday and absolution on Sunday—cash me out.

PLAYBOY: But aren't such spiritual hypocrites in a minority? Aren't most Americans fairly consistent in their conduct within the precepts of religious doctrine?

SINATRA: I've got no quarrel with men of decency at any level. But I can't believe that decency stems only from religion. And I can't help wondering how many public figures make avowals of religious faith to maintain an aura of respectability. Our civilization, such as it is, was shaped by religion, and the men who aspire to public office anyplace in the free world must make obeisance to God or risk immediate opprobrium. Our press accurately reflects the religious nature of our society, but you'll notice that it also carries the articles and advertisements of astrology and hokey Elmer Gantry revivalists. We in America pride ourselves on freedom of the press, but every day I see, and so do you, this kind of dishonesty and distortion not only in this area but in reporting—about guys like me, for instance, which is of minor importance except to me; but also in reporting world news. How can a free people make decisions without facts? If the press reports world news as they report about me, we're in trouble.

PLAYBOY: Are you saying that . . .

SINATRA: No, wait, let me finish. Have you thought of the chance I'm taking by speaking out this way? Can you imagine the deluge of crank letters, curses, threats and obscenities I'll receive after these remarks gain general circulation? Worse, the boycott of my records, my films, maybe a picket line at my opening at the Sands. Why? Because I've dared to say that love and decency are not necessarily concomitants of religious fervor.

PLAYBOY: If you think you're stepping over the line, offending your public or perhaps risking economic suicide, shall we cut this off now, erase the tape and start over along antiseptic lines?

SINATRA: No, let it run. I've thought this way for years, ached to say these things. Whom have I harmed by what I've said? What moral defection have I suggested? No, I don't want to chicken out now. Come on, pal, the clock's running.

[The above interview first appeared in *Playboy* magazine, February, 1963, and was reprinted in *The Age of Reason* magazine, May-June, 1963.]

Debate at Southampton

ON THURSDAY, May 9th, at Southampton University, the General Secretary of the National Secular Society deputised for Dr. J. S. L. Gilmour of Cambridge (who was ill) in proposing the motion, "That this House believes that man created God". Mr. McCall was supported by the Secretary of the University Humanist Society, and was opposed by the Dean of Winchester (who travelled from the Convocation of Canterbury) and the Secretary of the University Student Christian Movement. The debate was conducted in a friendly manner and an interesting discussion ensued. The motion was lost—and then the debate was continued informally over coffee for another hour and a half by the speakers, a few members of staff and a group of students.

This Believing World

We always like to give credit when due even to a parson, and we heartily agree with the Rev. R. Duce, a Nottingham Congregational minister, who said a few days ago, "Whatever else we may complain about in the churches in these tough days, there is one thing we cannot grumble over—the publicity which religion is receiving". Of course, TV and radio have been veritable godsend to religion since Lord Reith took over in the early days of radio with his firm determination to put Christianity on the map, so to speak, on every possible occasion.

★

To be for religion was the ideal of course, but it was better to be attacked than ignored—especially if the attackers were carefully chosen. We wonder how many people remember before the war the then Bishop of Bristol bringing forward a working man with arguments against Christianity, who was "beaten" by another working man who was a fervent Christian. It transpired later that the worthy bishop had written both scripts. Lord Reith was taking no chances there!

★

At the Convocation of Canterbury "unity" won a resounding victory at last. No speaker, we are told (*Daily Express*, May 8th) "opposed the proposals for union of the Church of England and the Methodist Church". Naturally, many things had to be discussed—the "creation" of Methodist bishops, the unification of Anglican and Methodist ministries, and the joining of the two Churches. The leader of the Methodists Dr. Harold Roberts, was to preach in Winchester Cathedral on Whit Sunday as a start—the Dean of Winchester "surrendering" his statutory right there, but the Dean of Hastings made it clear that "there was no question of absorbing the Methodist Church".

★

In the end it was insisted that there was also no question of "reordination", but only of "reconciliation", and it was hoped that "unity" would be achieved in 1965. All that now remains for "Christian" unity is, either to give in to Rome in one fell swoop, or to do it by easy stages.

★

One of the chapters in Foote's "Bible Handbook" is headed "Bible Atrocities", and a pretty grim recital it is. About thirty pages of texts all culled from the Old Testament part of God's Precious Word are given, and on the New Testament, Foote shows it "sanctifies and upholds the innumerable atrocities of the Old". In fact, the New Testament "adds worse terrors and atrocities of its own in the shape of eternal torments". Naturally, few if any Christians took much notice of Foote's fearful exposure.

★

But here we have the Rev. Joseph Wansey speaking at the Convocation of Canterbury telling his fervent Christian hearers that there was "poison" in the Bible, though, if that were true, Mr. Wansey forgot to add that God must have put it there. It was, he said, "spiritual junk"—in fact, "poisonous and utterly contradictory to the Christian faith". But, thank God for the Rev. Arthur Goss who immediately championed everything in Holy Writ, deplored any attack upon it, and asked Mr. Wansey to withdraw the phrase about the "poison". Alas, Mr. Wansey didn't. But can "atrocities" in the Bible really be poison?

African Stories

African Songs, a collection of stories by a young South African coloured writer, Richard Rive (Seven Seas Publishers, 2s. 6d.), is well worth reading. The stories are interesting and readable for their own sake, and beyond their literary value they give a clearer impression of the realities of apartheid than one can gain from reading piles of official documents and statistics.

We see that convention requires that a European shopkeeper or publican, even when decent enough at heart, should not use common politeness when speaking to a non-European. We see the poison in South African society affecting life at every social level, and even penetrating into the family, where in families of mixed blood the exact shade of the individual's skin can determine his social relationships and divide him from his own brothers and sisters. We see coloured people reacting in widely different ways to their hideous environment—some brutalised by it, some accepting its degrading values, and others heroically defying it. The whites similarly range from the brutalised, through the uncertain, to the defiant.

Always the reader is conscious of a society suffering from a terrible sickness pervading every aspect of life. This consciousness must haunt every South African, whatever his colour and opinion, and Mr. Rive portrays, often very subtly, the reaction of character under such pressure.

Mr. Rive has now completed his first novel, and we look forward to seeing what he can do with the greater scope a full-length novel affords

MARGARET McILROY.

Crucifixion

UNUSUAL HOSPITAL TESTS

FURTHER DOUBTS on the scriptural accounts of the Crucifixion are raised by experiments recently conducted in Germany. Details were given in a series of articles published in the Hamburg weekly illustrated newspaper, *Der Stern*, under the heading "Gott in Deutschland".

In Cologne a student was hung—not nailed—on a cross, and minutes later his blood pressure had sunk by half and the pulse had increased. If he had been left hanging any longer he would have collapsed. Another well trained man lost consciousness after he had been suspended on a cross in a Cologne hospital for seven minutes because blood had got into a pocket in a lower part of the body, and his circulation had ceased.

Writing on the subject, Dr. Moedder stated that investigations showed the death of Jesus occurred through his collapsing; his brain and heart did not have sufficient blood. In a short while there would be little or no blood in the brain of a crucified person, and he would be unable to utter words.

The crucifixion, according to a Roman writer, was the cruellest of punishment. The excruciating agony suffered while nails were hammered through the bones of the hands and feet must quickly—probably immediately—render a victim unconscious. Nevertheless, St. Luke 23, verse 34, relates that Jesus said shortly after having been crucified, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". Verse 39 and 40 of the same chapter records statements made by the two malefactors, crucified with him, who were not heavenly super-men.

Although on the cross for several hours (according to St. Matthew, 27, verse 46) "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?"

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

Lecture Notices, Etc.**OUTDOOR**

Edinburgh Branch NSS (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. A. MILLAR.

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

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.

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

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Humanist Group (Arden Hotel, New Street), Wednesday, May 29th, 7.30 p.m.: DISCUSSION, "The Misfits".

Hornchurch Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, corner of Gubbin's Lane and Squirrels Heath Road), Tuesday, May 28th, 8 p.m.: MRS. CURRIE, "Modern Woman, Her Rights and Problems".

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, May 24th, 7.15 p.m.: A MEETING.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, May 26th, 11 a.m.: KATHLEEN NOTT, "Conventional Immorality".

Notes and News

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the National Secular Society will be held this year in the Conway Hall, London, on Whit Sunday, June 2nd, in two sessions: from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 2 to 4.30 p.m. It will as usual, be confined to members of the Society. On the previous evening, however (Saturday, June 1st), an open reception will be given by the Executive Committee of the Society in the library of the Conway Hall. And on Sunday evening there will be an open air meeting at Speakers' Corner, Marble Arch.

IN AN article on *The Guardian's* Women's page (13/5/63), Mrs. Lena Jeger rightly castigated Parliament for its hypocrisy in dealing with "matters even faintly connected with morality, especially sexual morality". Whilst one can make allowances for those who have deep convictions against divorce, she said—apropos Mr. Leo Abse's Matrimonial Causes and Reconciliation Bill—"no allowances can be made for public representatives who are too idle or too cowardly to turn up on a second reading to vote against a bill, but who later, by absence or by filibuster, destroy it". The House of Commons, Mrs. Jeger thought, has not caught up with the fact that the Ecclesiastical Courts ceased to have power over matrimonial affairs in 1857. Churchgoers represent only about 10 per cent of the population, so "What right have the theologians to

dominate the laws which must bind the other 90 per cent?" And why, Mrs. Jeger asked, "must MPs in a secular society behave as if they were legislating in a theocracy?"

*

WE WISH Mr. Harold Wilson had shown some of Mrs. Jeger's concern over the Churches' interference in secular matters when he was interviewed on the subject by Kenneth Harris on ITV (Sunday, May 12th). On the contrary, he welcomed it as "healthy". Asked about the bishops in the House of Lords, Mr. Wilson revealed a true prime minister's touch by diverting the question to hereditary peerages, which he was able to deplore with impunity. In fact, Mr. Wilson seems to confine his convictions to party issues alone; on matters of conscience (such as Mr. Abse's bill) he believed, he said, in voting according to the wishes of his constituents—as if those can be determined! This, we couldn't help thinking, was said with his large Roman Catholic vote in Huyton in mind.

*

MR. PATRICK HALLINAN, an attorney from San Francisco, and Mr. Ronald Waterhouse, a British lawyer, who attended the trial of Jose Bernardino, a Portuguese student leader in Lisbon, described how he was beaten up in court (*The Guardian*, 14/5/63). Bernardino admitted he was a member of the Communist Party, but was explaining that student demonstrations, which he was charged with inspiring, were spontaneous expressions of real grievances when, "at a signal from the president of the court, some ten men in civilian clothes who had been sitting in the front row, leapt upon Bernardino who was beaten unconscious with 'blackjacks' and fists, and carried from the court room". Mr. Elwyn Jones, QC, has said that the case will probably be investigated by the International Commission of Jurists. From our experience of Portuguese official "explanations", some eye witness will be found to deny the beating-up and to testify that Bernardino had to be forcibly restrained and removed from the courtroom because he had become violent. Let us hope that what Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper has called the "twilight of Dr. Salazar" will not last long.

*

DR. HANS KUNG, the young German-Swiss Roman Catholic priest, whose book, *The Council and Reunion* was reviewed by F. A. Ridley on November 23rd last year, and who was described by Archbishop Heenan as "a young man out to shock his readers", recently lectured at Cambridge to a packed Divinity School. Dr. Küng's subject was "The Church and Freedom", and he immediately questioned whether the "and" should be "or" (*The Sunday Times*, 12/5/63). Indeed, he asked whether Roman Catholic Christianity was compatible with freedom at all, and compared the Vatican with the Kremlin. The spirit of the Inquisition is not dead, said Dr. Küng: it was manifested today by the Index of Forbidden Books and the Holy Office, whose procedure of secret indictment, trial and condemnation without defence or appeal was an offence both against the Gospel and Natural Law. *The Sunday Times* reported that Dr. Küng's views are unlikely to get much sympathy from conservative Catholic opinion in Britain, but "his Cambridge audience felt that his lecture might well become historic".

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ACCORDING TO A LOS ANGELES psychiatrist, Dr. J. Kummer, "One in every five pregnancies in the United States ended in an illegal abortion" (*The Guardian*, 13/5/63). Dr. Kummer, who was speaking to the American Psychiatric Association in St. Louis said that more than a million illegal abortions were performed every year.

Ten Non-Commandments

(Concluded from page 162)

of their ideal of love. Sexual infidelity is therefore a deception, a breach of faith and confidence, a breaking of the relationship. What is wrong with this situation is quite clear: one thing is professed and another done.

I am not suggesting that this kind of infidelity is undertaken only in a mean, calculating kind of way; that it is always simple hypocrisy. There is such a thing as genuine conflict. We may still believe that there is no fault in our stars, though we find that we ourselves are underlings. Still, in large part, it is not, in such a case, the fact of having sexual desires for others that is wrong: it is the fact that we *lie* about it.

(b) For other couples, sexual fidelity is not part of the ideality of their marital relationship. For them, there can be an honest understanding on the part of both that (perhaps not always, but at certain periods, at certain ages, given certain circumstances, and so on) they desire wider sexual experience, and an open agreement that they should both enjoy it. This may not endanger the security of their relationship, but may be possible simply because their relationship is so secure. In this kind of relationship it is difficult to see that there is anything wrong. Again, curiously, it is not the fact of having sexual desire for others which makes the situation right: it is the fact that there is no *deception*.

Truthfulness and understanding seem to be the crux of the matter, and perhaps it is worth saying that truthfulness is not easily come by: we have to make an *effort* to sustain truthfulness in our relationships, and without it any worthwhile understanding is impossible. It is up to each married couple to work out their own attitude and their own conduct as honestly and satisfactorily as possible.

Having come to the end of these rules concerning sex—reject them, subject them to radical criticism, think again, and again, and again . . . No subject is more complex; for no other subject is it more difficult to lay down rules.

7. ENJOY FAMILY LIFE AND MARRIAGE:

Approach your own marriage very carefully; bearing in mind the many serious obligations into which you are entering, both with regard to your partner, and, particularly, with regard to the responsibility of having and rearing children. The family you make for yourself will be—for better, for worse—the group which will be far and away the most important in your life for determining your happiness or unhappiness and that of the people with whom you will be intimately connected. It is better for everyone concerned that it should be happiness.

The chief duties in the family are those of parents for their children; to see that they enjoy a secure and happy childhood and are given a good preparation for their own lives. Strictly speaking, children owe no duties to their parents, excepting of the kind engendered by reciprocal love, and parents should avoid dependence upon their children and should not impose obligations upon them. However, natural love and loyalty lead, in most families, to mutual understanding, mutual consideration, and, when necessary, mutual aid.

Go halfway to meet your parents in this attempt at understanding. Remember, when they are raging about your independence, that (a) they are worried and anxious about you, and (b) they may be, without being altogether aware of it, emotionally dependent upon you, emotionally attached to you—and you could be tactful in accomplish-

ing the new degree of disengagement. Tact is a good thing from both directions. Bear in mind that: if there is one thing that is more exasperating than being a suffering teenager, it is being the parent of a suffering teenager.

8. KEEP THE LAW:

Regard responsibly undertaken crime, delinquency, and hooliganism as—what it is—a mean, petty activity of the unintelligent and stupid. If there are those (which I still find difficult to believe) who really do believe that the whole of society is against them, who think that their parents and others are wanting to impose it upon them, who resent and reject it, and think it smart to register their disapproval by anti-social behaviour—then they should get rid of the idea. The law exists for positive reasons: to ensure the social order which is necessary for a maximum degree of liberty and personal fulfilment. If you find it sadly lacking in many ways (which it is), then try to improve it, and everyone will be on your side. But do not think it an assertion of independence or freedom or manhood, to steal, or to hit someone with a bicycle chain.

Only those who are ignorant and shortsighted can possibly persuade themselves that crime is smart.

9. COMMIT YOURSELF TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP.

It is important to realize that individualism and the achievement of a rich inward personal life, cannot be attained by escaping into isolated living.

By citizenship I mean the art of living, learning, judging and acting co-operatively in order to achieve and sustain a social order which makes possible the maximum opportunity for the fulfilment and enrichment of individual lives. Properly understood, the concern for the social order and the concern for individual values are two sides of the same coin of good human character.

10. HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE MODERN WORLD AND IN YOUR POWERS TO IMPROVE IT.

It is not true that the conflicts and perplexities of the modern world are an outcome of greater human evil. They are chiefly the outcome of the most rapid and complicated social change that mankind has ever experienced. Industrialization is inevitably bringing together societies of all levels of development. Science is producing a body of new knowledge and a critical attitude of mind which must inevitably disturb traditional beliefs and values. No wonder that our problems are great and that the political situation is dangerous. But the very factors which are producing the problems also give mankind the wherewithal to solve them.

We live in an age of realistic humanitarianism in which the effective improvement of the human condition is an intensely felt aim. Many of our perplexities are due, not to moral evil, but to insufficiently considered moral intensity. The ideals above have not been thoroughly tried and found wanting; we have moved some considerable way towards them, but not far enough. Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: these, with their implications, are still the best basis on which to organize society. We need a critical appraisal of what has been achieved in these directions and what has not, and then further effort to achieve an order of society approximating more closely to them. This needs hard thinking and hard work. It may not sound very inspiring, but, properly understood,

it is. The aim of improving the human condition and of attaining excellence in human endeavours and in the qualities of human character has been the most inspiring ideal of mankind since critical thought began. In the 20th century the very problems that crowd upon us, forcing us to give urgent realistic thought to their solution, mean that we now have it within our grasp actually to achieve in our social institutions, in our concrete day-to-day life, those ideals which, in the entire past of mankind, men and women have been able only to long for—as distant, unattainable goals.

Feel and believe—what is certainly true—that the present age is, in spite of its many gloomy aspects, full of the promise of great achievements in which each person can play a significant and important part.

See that the world does not end, either with a bang or a whimper, but lives a happier life.

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Challenge of "The Faith"

By COLIN McCALL

IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE of the Maltese Roman Catholic paper, *The Faith*, I was challenged (apropos my broadcast on Atheism) "to explain the *raison d'être* of the suffering and pain in this world without admitting the existence of an almighty, all-knowing, all-loving God." As I thought I had made my position pretty clear in the broadcast, I ignored the challenge, with the result that it was repeated in the April issue of *The Faith*. As this same issue also contained comments by the editor, G. M. Paris, OP, on THE FREETHINKER of February 15th, I can deal with both items at once.

First, what does Father Paris mean when he asks me to give a "reason" for the existence of pain and suffering? If he means do I consider pain to be naturally caused, then I do. If he wants a physiological explanation of the phenomena of pain in animals (including man) then it is possible to give him one. And if he asks me do I think that pain can serve a natural function, then the answer is yes. Some pain has survival value. For instance, we withdraw our fingers when we touch something hot, thereby limiting injury. By contrast, in certain cases of leprosy severe damage can be done to extremities because of the incapacity for feeling pain. If these are the kinds of "explanations" of pain that Father Paris seeks, then I can oblige him. But I suspect that he wants more. Why, though, come to me for it?

As a Catholic priest he believes that the world is divinely designed, divinely ordered. Pain, then, must be part of the supernatural plan. This, of course is the theistic dilemma: how is it possible to reconcile the terrible suffering in the world with the existence of an almighty, all-knowing, all-loving god? Quite simply, it isn't, and some Theists have frankly acknowledged this. The existence of suffering leads inevitably to the conclusion that, either there is no God or, if there is, he must be deficient in one or more of the absolute qualities attributed to him (e.g. he could be almighty but not all-loving, or vice-versa). And for all practical purposes the two conclusions are one, since a deficient deity is a contradiction in terms.

Free-will affords no solution. Pain is not confined to man, who allegedly "chose evil of his own free will". Animals also suffer, presumably without choice. Above all, though, free-will (even if a fact) doesn't shift responsibility from man to God. God must have made man imperfect, a prospective—indeed, an inevitable—

sinner. In truth, the Theist can only escape from his dilemma by abandoning his theism.

The problem, it should be stressed, is by no means purely academic. It has practical consequences. Believers in a divine plan will resent human interference in it, and it is no accident that theism has generally been a hindrance to medicine and social progress. That, for instance, the Churches opposed surgery and anaesthesia, and that some odd sects still do. To the Atheist, pain is natural, but not inevitable. If we can't abolish it, at least we can reduce it. And in fact we do reduce it. To take my earlier illustration, we warn a child that hot things will burn its fingers, not wait until they are burnt. We combat disease and suffering of all kinds; not sufficiently, but to a large extent. To this extent the atheistic view has triumphed, even if the success has not been generally acknowledged.

I turn now to what Father Paris suggests I might find "a better argument to deny the existence of God", evolution. If there is no God, he says, "there is no creation: there is only evolution, blind, eternal, materialistic". And although this doesn't necessarily follow logically, I am prepared to let it pass with the query: why only "blind", why not deaf and dumb, too? According to Father Paris, however, evolution, "if well studied", "far from concluding against the existence of God . . . confirms God's existence, and, indeed, enhances it to a higher degree". For evolution, "well considered and without prejudices against religion, shows God's *action* in nature and His 'eternal power' . . .".

It may be conceded that Father Paris approaches evolution "without prejudices against religion"; unfortunately it is nothing like so obvious that he has "well studied" or "well considered" it, unless "well" is given a very special meaning. He hasn't advanced beyond extolling "the majesty of a rising sun or its setting, the Moon, the Planets and the Stars, the Earth especially with all its movements . . . the wisdom displayed in the passing of seasons . . . the beauty of the Earth . . . and then MAN, the upright being, king and dominant of all visible surroundings, centre of the Universe"! How, he asks, "can we attribute all this order and beauty and perfection to a blind nature, unless we are blind ourselves?" Which prompts me to order a white stick.

But I am not too blind to notice a typical piece of Catholic duplicity. "The Church, as such," says Father Paris, "the Fathers of the Church, the Ecumenical Councils, and the Popes in their teaching have never denied the fact of evolution". What he neglects to mention is that they have never affirmed it either. As I pointed out in my article ("The Catholic View of Evolution") on February 15th, even Pius XII, as late as 1950, "leaves the doctrine of Evolution an open question, as long as it confines its speculations to the development from other living matter already in existence, of the human body" (Encyclical, *Humani Generis*, translated by Ronald Knox, CTS). Pius could infallibly declare that souls "are immediately created by God", that original sin was "committed in actual historical fact, by an individual named Adam", but couldn't make up his mind on what Father Paris calls the "fact" of evolution. In other ("Parisian") words, the late Pope failed to detect "God's *action* in nature". Blind, too, it seems.

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CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but asks that they be kept as brief and pertinent as possible.

AFFIRMATION

Commenting on a recent court case in which a Methodist minister was refused permission to give evidence on affirmation, the writer of "This Believing World" (3/5/63) stated that this was contrary to the provisions of the Oaths Act of 1888. One would certainly think so from the plain wording of the Act, but what matters is not so much what it says, but how it is interpreted.

Stone's *Justice's Manual* notes that "It is for the judge to satisfy himself that the witness comes within the conditions stated in the section as to religious belief". Presumably, if he is not satisfied, for any reason, he may refuse to allow a witness to affirm.

Head's *Essentials of Magisterial Law* says: "It is for the benefit of justice, and not a mere privilege of the witness that he take the oath according to his religious belief. He should not, therefore, be permitted to waive any part of the ceremony appropriate to the belief". From this it appears that a witness' religious beliefs are deemed to be the tenets of his sect, and not his private opinions. So far as I can discover, the only Christians specifically entitled to affirm are the Quakers, Moravians, and Separatists, the last named being an offshoot of the Puritans, and probably extinct.

The Oaths Act of 1961 relieved the courts of the ridiculous duty of providing cow's tails and other eccentric aids to veracity. It states that a person to whom it is not reasonably practicable to administer an oath in the manner appropriate to his religious belief, may be permitted to affirm, and may also be required to do so. Thus, while some religionists wish to affirm, but are not allowed to, others who wish to take the oath are obliged to affirm.

The present situation is clearly unsatisfactory. Witnesses who refuse to swear or affirm as directed are guilty of contempt of court, and risk imprisonment. Material evidence may go unheard, with consequent injustice. Eliciting a witness' religious beliefs, or lack of them, exposes him, and the person for whom he is testifying, to any bigotry the magistrate or jury may possess.

In these days of widespread and growing unbelief and indifference to religion, the oath is an anachronism. The various Oaths Acts now in force should be repealed, and replaced by a simple rule requiring witnesses to affirm, reserving the oath for the few people who are likely to insist on taking it.

R. J. CONDON.

ATHEISM AND MORALITY

I am very grateful to those readers who have taken the trouble to reply to my letter on atheism and morality. Your correspondents' letters, however, have confirmed on the whole my suspicions that freethinkers in general are confused about this problem, and have not fully thought out its implications.

Apart from Mr. Simons and Mr. Dyte, none of your correspondents seems to grasp the root of the atheist's dilemma in this matter—how can we say one action is better than another if we have no absolute standards from which to judge? Thus, Mr. Cobell says we must take the consequences of actions into account. But that is putting the cart before the horse, for how can we say whether the consequences of any action are good or bad until we have found a basis for distinguishing between these terms?

Mr. Bennett too completely misses the point. He talks gaily of "the higher public morality of the future" and "the infliction of pain for its own sake" without seeming to realise that the word "higher" and the phrase "for its own sake" both imply moral absolutes.

Mr. Trown is in exactly the same boat when he suggests "human decency" as the criterion of distinguishing between actions. This again is to argue in a circle for to talk of "human decency" means that one has a prior objective standard of judgment which is the very question at issue. I would also like to assure Mr. Trown that I thoroughly realise the complex nature of the problem—indeed that is precisely why I raised it! Moreover I did stress in my original letter that I believe Copleston's "solution" of supernatural sanctions begs the whole question.

Mr. Simons certainly understands the crux of the problem and acknowledges that for the atheist "morality is a matter of individual opinion or taste since its only ultimate reference is to feeling". When I said we have no more right to attack a man for preferring cruelty to kindness than for his preferring biscuits and cheese to ice cream, I should of course have used the word "reason" instead of "right". Mr. Simons's first objection to this statement then becomes irrelevant. Regarding his second ob-

jection, I cannot see how considerations of "the intensity of feeling involved and its social significance" make any difference to my argument. As Mr. Dyte points out, if someone really does prefer cruelty to kindness we cannot logically condemn him if personal feeling is our only criterion. He is as much entitled to his feeling on the matter as we are to ours. I suppose most people do in fact prefer kindness to cruelty (though even this is open to question), but I cannot see on what rational grounds we atheists can attack those who do not.

To sum up I could say that Mr. Dyte's letter is the only one with which I agree. But I do this reluctantly, for I would like to believe that something more than my own personal opinion is involved when I judge that Danilo Dolci is a better man than was the Commandant of Belsen.

Finally, regarding the question of Catholicism and the existence of God. I showed Mr. Simons's comments to a Jesuit priest with whom I have had two interesting public debates. He assured me that while the Catholic Church teaches that God's existence can be rationally demonstrated, it is not obligatory for every Catholic to believe this particular doctrine. If a Catholic is sincerely convinced that the Thomistic or any other rational proofs are invalid, he would not be committing mortal sin in rejecting them provided he believes in the existence of a personal God on grounds such as Kant's categorical imperative or personal religious experience. If Mr. Simons can produce evidence from some official Catholic source that this is not so, I shall be delighted to confront the priest with it!

JOHN L. BROOM.

OBITUARY

Frederick Charles Warner, who has died at the age of 89, had been a member of the National Secular Society since 1912, and was very active in the West Ham and District Branch for many years. He was also a keen trade unionist, being the oldest member of the Glass Bevelers Branch of the NUFTO, of which he had been Chairman for some years.

Mr. Warner, who read THE FREETHINKER regularly until his sight failed two years ago, was never afraid to affirm his principles, and to stand by them, no matter what the consequences. He leaves a widow and seven children (all Freethinkers, due to their parents' example, and two of them Secretaries of NSS branches), and would have celebrated his seventieth wedding anniversary in August.

The funeral took place at the City of London Crematorium on May 10th, when a service was conducted by Mrs. E. Venton (Vice-President of the NSS and President of the West Ham and District Branch), a personal friend of the deceased.

With the death in April of Thomas Laird at the age of 86, the North London Branch of the National Secular Society has lost one of its oldest and best known members, and the Society and THE FREETHINKER, a generous patron.

A Scot, "Auld Tom" had spent much of his life in India where, imbued with Owenite ideas, he had started a maternity hospital for the jute industry workers, and where he castigated religion as a primary cause of backwardness.

Indeed, Thomas Laird was always kindly and helpful, even to the undeserving, but then, he confided, "if I hadn't helped them I might have missed the genuine ones".

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