

# FREETHINKER

Registered at the  
G.P.O. as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,  
January 7, 1966

## SECULAR CENTENARY

The following message has been received from the President of the National Secular Society:

"This year marks the Centenary of the National Secular Society. It also sees a four-yearly Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, to be held again in London after almost thirty years.

"As we look back over the history of the society we see a living record of British social and political history of the last hundred years. Though never with a mass membership, the N.S.S. has acted as the focus of so much of the reforming movement in Great Britain which has traditionally operated through voluntary societies outside and usually ahead of the political parties.

"In the practical fields of law, penal and electoral reform; personal and colonial (notably Ireland and India) freedom; free speech, assembly and publication; social and family planning; and in the theoretical fields of biblical, historical, literary and ecclesiastical criticism; ethics and aesthetics; education, co-operation and integration; the society has played a notable, if unsung role. Throughout the years techniques and literary styles have changed and "image" altered, but the remarkable thing about this organisational creation of the early Freethinkers is that, in a world of rapidly changing fashions, "rethinking" and "modernisation" — to be found even in those bodies most held to be immune to change — the outlook, world view and practical policies of the N.S.S. 100 years ago are equally valid today (see Walter L. Arnstein's *The Bradlaugh Case*, 1965).

"Throughout the year there will be rallies, public meetings, lectures, recitals, dinners, conferences. Many of these will occur at the time of the W.U.F.T. Congress, the last London session of which was hailed as the invasion of these isles by "Antichrist." In 1966 he (?He) will be back. Back with Freethought, atheistic ethics, scientific Humanism. In some circles no more popular than before, but to most people, we believe today, a welcome guest."

### Surprising Editorial

In an editorial entitled "The Modern Pope" appear, *inter alia*, the following sentences: "Today, when the Father finds the language of understanding and sympathy and counsel, he achieves a new universality which soars over the barriers of Protestant prejudice and wider unbelief and speaks to the hearts of many whom authority cannot reach. Opinion polls show that people with little or no active religious belief still look for guidance from the churches on public issues . . . When Pope Paul humbly and majestically 'entered into conversation with the world' at the UN he seemed to be saying and doing a new thing." From the *Tablet*? No, from *International Humanism*, organ of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (October 1965).

### FREETHINKER MESSAGE

The Centenary of the National Secular Society is also the eighty-fifth birthday of the Freethinker.

You will notice some slight changes in the paper, and I hope you will see them not as the departure of old friends but as the coming together with old friends of new ones. You may rest assured that your paper will continue the same fearless policy of seeking the truth and censuring the obscurantist as it has pursued since the days of G. W. Foote. It will continue to print scholarly articles on Freethought and Humanism. It will continue to employ scathing satire where scathing satire is called for. But it will aim to add — within the harsh limitations of space — more comment on contemporary social and socio-political problems. Within the same limitations it will also aim to give more news of Freethought and Humanist activities and so become more fully "the paper of the movement."

I should like to pay a special tribute to my predecessor, Colin McCall, who so efficiently, yet unobtrusively, kept the paper alive during the very difficult time when the old problem of Freethought ostracism was aggravated by the new ones of steeply rising costs and changed social habits. I should also like to pay a special tribute to Mrs. Ruby Seibert, whose knowledge of the paper and its readership is unrivalled, and to Mr. Bill Griffiths, who has for so many years without publicity, remuneration or expenses, guided the present and planned for the future to keep the paper economically viable. The devoted services of both will continue.

Within the last year or so the whole climate of opinion has changed in most countries. Traditional superstitions are still strong, but are breaking down to the extent that Freethought is not the social or professional embarrassment it used to be. In these more favourable circumstances we look to you to do everything possible to increase the circulation and influence of your paper. Please, each of you, try to secure at least half a dozen more subscribers from sympathetic friends and acquaintances. Try to get the paper taken by your local library or college library and displayed by your local newsagent. If *every-one* assisted in this way the financial basis of the *Freethinker* would be assured. Why not order two or more copies? Keep one for reference and pass the others on to local newspaper editors for comment, to parish magazines to provoke local debate, to your local councillor, M.P., friends. In this way both finances and prestige would benefit.

Let me thank you for your sterling support in the past and wish you a prosperous and happy New Year.

David Tribe.

## MY CHRISTMAS—NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Reverent Humanist

THOSE of you who read *My Story* may not have expected any further words from me, but Father Adoramus O'Kelly, S.J., has, with his customary generosity and kindness, provided me with ample writing materials to occupy my remaining months. So it is that I am able to deliver you seasonable words of good cheer, albeit from the Humanist standpoint.

Though not myself a Christian — perhaps to my shame and eternal regret — I do feel, especially at Christmastide, what a beautiful thing the Christian message is, with its angels, babies, kings, shepherds, virgins and other simple and innocent things. How well it typifies the love of God given selflessly to men in the Person of Jesus Christ — that is, for those who believe in God and Jesus Christ. And how much the world needs today the “peace on earth, goodwill to men” promised in the angel chorus and re-presented in the Christchild Himself, if, of course, you accept Him in childlike and really rather wonderful faith.

Let us hope that in 1966 the Spirit of Christ may be in our midst soothing our troubled spirits and bringing the factions of a wartorn and divided world into closer harmony today just as in the past it has served to bind up the broken-hearted and bring the nations of the world together as brothers.

In particular, I hope all Humanists shall set a Christlike example of tolerance and understanding, and not be misled into thinking that what is natural to them either temperamentally or intellectually is likely to be suitable for the majority of people. Men, do not beguile yourselves into imagining women can do without a religious belief as they pursue their role of home-maker and child-rearer. Adults, do not forget the simple faith of children and remember that if anyone should wilfully take away that faith it were better for him (or her) that a millstone be hung around his (or her) neck and he (or she) be cast into the sea. Intellectuals (if any such should chance to pick up a paper like the *Freethinker*), remember your obligations to the weaker brethren, and do not lightly disturb them in their *homely* faith. I do not myself happen to know any little shop girls, office boys, factory or farm labourers, or commercial travellers, but those of you who do know such people will have noted how concerned they are about such matters as redemption, propitiation, mediation, atonement, expiation, justification and reconciliation, which you and I mayn't trouble ourselves too much about. Where *would* they be if they were unable to engage their leisure with speculation on the comforting theories of propitiation and expiation? I hope that all aggressive Rationalists, Atheists, Sceptics, Freethinkers, Secularists and the like will think carefully before they wreak unparalleled psychological havoc.

As we enter another year of grace — I speak as a Humanist — we all have our hopes and our fears. The thing I fear most is the spread of secularisation, which makes the world uglier, more materialistic, and more selfish. As I told the World Congress of Faiths, if ever there should be a showdown between the churches and the vindictive forces opposed to them, I should be on the side of our Christian brothers. I devoutly trust that every *true* Humanist would be there too.

What of my hopes? I look forward to the day when

Christian Unity can become Theist Unity and then Numinous Unity, where we can all worship *together* the great forces of Nature and the unknown. In this sublime act of worship we should not expect any one creed or group of creeds to have pre-eminence, though it would of course be reasonable to give precedence to great religious leaders with their vast experience in these matters, such as the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Dalai Lama, the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Chief Rabbi and the Aga Khan.

It is to the eternal credit of His Holiness Pope Paul VI that he should be giving us such a *magnificent* lead in fostering world brotherhood as he goes about the world on his humble pilgrimages.

My New Year suggestion for the Humanist movement in this country is that it makes some effort to match the vision and charity of the Pope not just by cheering him as he humbly passes by, but by taking the initiative and *inviting* him to visit England. If it were not that it would insult him by asking him to appear before so tiny a gathering I would suggest that he be Guest of Honour at the next B.H.A. Conference. Unfortunately, there is even a difficulty about persuading him to come to England at all. As a great *spiritual* leader His Holiness is most careful to avoid anything which might be construed as *political* or publicity-hunting. You will recall how reluctantly he has emerged from his traditional role as “the prisoner of the Vatican” and how careful he has been to emphasise the pilgrimage nature of his visits to the Holy Land and India. We must persuade him that it is possible to make a pilgrimage to the unpromising soil of England.

If it comes to relics, we can point out, this country is richly endowed. Many Catholic churches throughout the world have a relic of one or other of the disciples. But I cannot off-hand think of any church which equals the record of a parish in the Tonbridge area in having relics of all *twelve* of them. But perhaps even more suitable as a shrine which will justify the Pope's visit is Walsingham, where tradition states the *sancta case* of the Holy Family was transported by the angels from Nazareth when the infidel overran the town, or Glastonbury, with the Joseph of Arimathea holy thorn and associations with the holy grail. Not that I am suggesting that these curiosities are actually *real*, but I would emphatically repudiate any imputation that they are therefore *bogus*. I fear that people with unsubtle minds, such as Secularists, go about saying that if something which is not real is exhibited as if it were and if the attendant priests organise pilgrimages and collect money from pilgrims thereby, that the operation is somehow fraudulent. If His Holiness can be prevailed upon to visit England and they should make such allegations then, I trust they shall be prosecuted for blasphemy, insulting words and behaviour, or defamation. For these people wilfully refuse to understand the implications of *tradition*.

In the meantime, until such time as the Anglican and Catholic Hierarchies in Britain can merge to form a re-invigorated and, I hope, spiritually cleansed Establishment, I trust we shall all give the fullest support to our own Church of England. I do not say she has not made mis-

*Continued on page 5*

# LOOKING BACK ON CHRISTMAS

Phyllis K. Graham

Overheard (by me) in the Post Office.

Teenager: Only fourteen days to Christmas.

Mother: Oh, *don't*. I wish to goodness the whole thing was over.

In the Baker's.

Customer: Ah, well, one doesn't enjoy Christmas quite so much as one grows older . . . .

Assistant (with sudden startling passion): Oh, I hate it — I hate it — I *hate* it!

Yes, the Christmas glory does look a little tarnished nowadays. Even the magic is disappearing. Can't we do something about it? Wouldn't it be a good plan to bring the whole jollification up-to-date?

Take the Crib tableau. Couldn't Little Jesus be found in a miniature space-ship instead of a manger? Since his origin was miraculous he might just as well materialize from somewhere among the galaxies.

This settled, Joseph can now appear as an enraptured astronomer, clutching a symbolic telescope in lieu of a lily. "The Shepherds" are, of course, a Beat Group with appropriate records. The Ox and the Ass would look better slightly humanised, probably with mitres. Mary, having now no direct maternal function, should have far more appeal as a Visitor from Venus.

The Magi obviously represent the senior Primates: Chimpanzee, Gorilla, Orang-Outang, with Gibbon as page-boy, bringing the gifts of their superior wisdom — a compost-grown harvest festival.

Dot around and decor a few unbattered hens to give the natural touch. And let electronic carols from invisible Spangels (scientific term for Space-Angels) complete the Show.

So much for the symbols. And now for a New Look on the Christmas message.

Because it's not the hullabaloo that's driving us round the bend or up the wall, but what's behind it: this bogus proclamation of "glad tidings of great joy."

What's "glad" about this vengeful deity, who can be placated only by the death of his Son and the eternal damnation of millions of us? Where's the "great joy" in our permanent guilt-conviction and our crippled need for a saviour?

And what sort of saviour do we find ourselves stuck with? A man who claims to be human, yet has to be born of a virgin; who calls himself the son of man — and is sexless. The "Word" by whom all things are said to be created: yet he never says a word about our origins or gives us a hint about evolution. Instead of leading us to understanding of our nature, he infects us with a fatal quality that sets us against it. Civil war between "soul and body" poisons our relations with corporality, darkens our understanding, torments our conscience, splits our personality. "Peace be to you" is a mockery in his mouth.

Yes, he's good at mocking, this saviour. "Peace on earth to men of goodwill" was the promise at his birth. Yet he left us a legacy of strife and slaughter. And how indeed can there be peace in the world when individuals are at war within themselves? "I came not to bring peace, but a sword," was his open declaration. That at least was honest. But on the eve of his demise he tells his disciples, "My peace I leave with you . . . not as the world giveth . . ." What then is this cryptic peace, so obviously superior to anything our poor human efforts can produce? The bestial stupor of the credulous sunk in superstition? The diabolical calm of his higher "servants" as they wipe out their enemies? The massive crust of complacency that dogmatic faith forms around his fossil followers? Whatever it may be it has not much to do with men of goodwill, and everything to do with world misery.

For, apart from the hideous wars and persecutions it has engineered all down the centuries, it stamped its image from the first on the white races: a revolting seal of superiority over all others. It is this — let us honestly recognise it — which has "justified" every sort of abuse of human dignity and freedom: the savage extermination of "inferior" races, the ruthless exploitation of the slave-trades, the cruel suppression of all human aspirations in conquered peoples who had no membership in the Great White Cabal. And no one can pretend that the writing of this loathsome history is finished. Not even Christian hypocrisy can prevent the pages turning, though it can, and does, attempt to gloss over what is being written, inexorably written as the Writing on the Wall . . .

It is difficult to go deep into this Muck of Ages without nausea. But one need not go very far to be hit by the sheer stark craziness of wishing anyone a happy Christmas.

How "merry" ever came to be tacked on to "Christmas" is one of the mysteries of human weirdness. No wonder trying to be Jolly for Jesus has lunatic repercussions. Unfortunately Christmas as a commercial bug has got under our skins; people may groan about it but the irritant remains. Shall we ever get rid of it?

The only remedy that I can see is transmutation. The New Look away from the hoax-humanity of the Prince of Impostors to the humanness of the sons of men.

Traditionally Christmas is the time of giving, of drawing together in friendship, comradeship, family love, of sympathy and practical kindness: in short, of the down-to-earth human virtues. And somehow this homely human goodness has all along survived the sophisticated evil of organised magic. It still shows up today, resilient and beautiful as ever amid savage forces fighting to destroy human values. The heart of humanity seems to have a built-in resistance to the crackpot notions conceived in the brain.

So — let the feast of hospitality and friendship remain, and gradually transform itself into a Grand Festival of Pan-Humanity. And some day — some far-off golden age when the gods and their cruel magic are gone for ever — our descendants may speed their merry greetings from end to end of a hateless, humanised world.

## THIS WORLD

IT now seems certain that Churchill College, the recent Cambridge foundation with a bias to science, will have a chapel after all. Led by Nobel prizewinner Dr. Francis Crick, a number of young dons fiercely fought the original chapel proposals. The site near the entrance returned to turf. Flushed with seeming success, Dr. Crick turned to other colleges and, through the Cambridge Humanists, sponsored a £100 essay contest, "What Can Be Done with the College Chapels?" (won by P. J. Lewis and published in the *Humanist*, April 1964).

CHRISTIAN pressure groups are not, however, easily daunted. Short of a last-minute reversal, they have at last got their chapel — at the back, between a rugby field and an undergraduate block. The college chaplain, Canon John Duckworth, describes the proposed building as "neutral" or "hetero-denominational" or "of hetero-religious persuasion." It will be square, plain, and inside will have only a cross. Perhaps future archaeologists will mistake it for a sex symbol.

### New Body

CIRCULARS are being distributed on behalf of a body describing itself as the Secular League. It has no connection with the *Freethinker* or the National Secular Society.

### New Paper

YET another Catholic publication is on the market, *Catholic Pictorial*, described as the "Voice of London." The first issue, dated December 5, 1965, has on its front page a large full-colour picture of His Holiness and beneath it the caption:

IN the next few weeks, Cardinal Heenan, for the Hierarchy, will be inviting Pope Paul to visit Britain for the opening of Liverpool's Metropolitan Cathedral. What protocol would govern such a visit? If the history pundits took up the matter it could get complicated because . . . THE POPE OWNS ENGLAND. King John gave it to him.

THE article inside is impertinently entitled "THE POPE OWNS ENGLAND AND HE'S NOT GIVEN IT BACK." It is perfectly true that in 1213 John handed over England and Ireland nominally for "remission of sins" but practically to persuade Pope Innocent III to call off the French invasion army which the Pontiff had engineered and subsequently to claim release from his *Magna Carta* oath. There was a time, not all that long ago, when Catholics tended to stay very silent, publicly at least, about this squalid episode in British history. Now, admittedly with a show of jocularly, they are actually boasting of it. Doubtless a tribute to the ecumenical movement.

IN the same issue the faithful are reassured by a quotation from Cardinal Heenan's Pastoral Letter: "It is only the outlook, not the fundamental teaching of the Church which has undergone a change . . . We are on the threshold of a new and greater era in the Church."

ONE sign of this would seem to be the progress of Christian Unity. There is a picture of Father Luke Connaughton, Chaplain of London's Young Christian Workers, in fraternal dialogue with Anglican the Rev. J. Thorley Roe, Youth Secretary to the British Council of Churches, and Dr. A. R. Vine, General Secretary of the Free Church Federal Council. The object of the conference was "Practical Steps to Unity" in the field of family and social action. Similar co-operation is taking place, we are told, on the Churches Main Committee (law), Nine Com-

mittee (schools), Public Morality Council, Temperance Council, and the planning of joint chapels in all new hospitals and airports. Dr. Vine forecasts complete union "perhaps by the end of this century." It is to be hoped he is reading up on Catholic dogmatic theology.

### Dead Sea Scrolls

TILL January 29 the British Museum is showing a special exhibition of "Scrolls from the wilderness of the Dead Sea." To scholars this is of enormous interest in showing the evolution of the Hebrew language, early recensions of Old Testament, Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal writings, and the scientific preparation of ancient fragments. But the interest to the man in the street is the controversy that has broken out over the light the scrolls shed on Christian origins. The secular scholar John Allegro is in open conflict with his seven colleagues on the international editing team. There are four Catholics, notably editor-in-chief Dominican priest Roland de Vaux and American Jesuit scholar Patrick Skehan, one Lutheran and two Presbyterians. There have been complaints about the tardiness of release of documents, and concern that research of important — or, as Allegro puts it, vital — moment to Christians should be in the hands of a committee so obviously stacked with committed Christians.

THIS Christmas the faithful have been rudely shocked. Articles by or about Allegro have appeared in a wide range of publications, from *Sunday Times* ("The Scrolls and Christianity," November 21) to the *New Statesman* ("The Dead Sea Mystery," December 17). Even the readers of the *Evening News*, whose Saturday reflection is the greatest monument of Fundamentalism since the days of Spurgeon, were shaken to read "Miracles or Myths?" (December 16). According to Allegro, the gospel narratives are simply Essene embroidery of Old Testament myths somewhat along the lines of the Jewish *midrash* but under the influence of millenarist sectarianism about which little has hitherto been known. Even the names of the disciples, he suggests, may not be personal but the generic titles of office-holders. Perhaps we shall soon be singing, to the tune of *In Dulci Jubilo*, "Essene Myth is born today."

## FORUM

### RELIGION IN THE SCHOOL'

Alliance Hall, Caxton Street, London, S.W.1, Tuesday, January 18th, 1966 7.45 p.m. Speakers include Ernest Armstrong MP, R. Gresham Cooke MP, David Tribe. Written questions to the organisers: National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

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National Secular Society

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# 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 USA and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

London Branches—Marble Arch and North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

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

### INDOOR

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street), Sunday, January 9th, 2.45 p.m.: JOHN L. BROOM, "Zen Buddhism".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 9th, 6.30 p.m.: EDMUND TAYLOR, "Technology: The Precursor of Social Change".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, January 9th, 11 a.m.: CAMILLE HONIG, "Martin Buber and the New Psychoanalytic Humanism", Tuesday, January 11th, 7.30 p.m.: COLONEL P. MONTGOMERY, "Slavery in the Modern World".

South East London Technical College (Lewisham Way, London, S.E.4), Tuesday, January 11th, 2 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "Secular Education".

## THIS WORLD *Continued*

### Political Prisoners

WHILE shepherds watched their flocks — or more probably television — by night, members of Anti-Apartheid held a frigid vigil outside South Africa House, London, in support of Bram Fischer, Q.C., and other political prisoners in South Africa held, according to the demonstrators' leaflet, "in solitary confinement and incommunicado for up to 180 days . . . In addition there are 8,500 political prisoners in South African jails — men and women who have fought for equal human rights for all are in jail — they have become prisoners: some for life . . . At this time of the year in particular, when family ties are more strongly felt than at any other, thousands of children and even infants are without mothers and fathers, wives are without husbands, and husbands without wives." The public is invited to protest to the Minister of Justice, Union Buildings, Pretoria, South Africa, or to the South African Ambassador, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London, W.C.2.

### Christian Message from the Homeless

LAST Christmas every member of Kent County Council received a card: "We hope that you and your family are enjoying the FESTIVE SEASON. WE ARE NOT in Kent County Council's King Hill Hostel, West Malling. From the Homeless." Included was an illustration of a decomposing barracks square which made Victorian work-houses by comparison look like Buckingham Palace. This is the place where husbands have been arrested for visiting their wives and families outside the regulation few hours at the weekend.

WELL-KNOWN Secular Humanist, Jim Radford, has become Chairman of the THE FRIENDS OF KING HILL. He invites you to send money to the King Hill Fighting Fund, c/o Dr. Don Bannister, 27 Meadow Walk, Wilmington, Nr. Dartford, Kent, or to contact him at 5 Clock House Road, Beckenham, Kent (BEC 7517) for literature or offers of help or transport.

### Perpetual Calendar

THOSE interested in calendar reform are invited to write to Dr. Willard E. Edwards, 3038 Oahu Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii. He is the originator of the "Perpetual Calendar," which starts each week on a Monday, and rationalises length of month, dates and days, and quarters.

### Heathen Darkness

ACCORDING to the Newcastle Evening Chronicle (December 20), a Blyth vicar has found that of 252 adults and children confirmed with lifelong vows, only 17 still attend regularly. Some turned up only on the following Sunday. "Sometimes it makes me feel as if I am wasting my time."

## NO COMMENT

"There may well be a case for returning divorce cases to the church where there was a church marriage and the decree would then be judicial separation if the particular church did not accept re-marriage."—P. Ingress Bell, Q.C., a Roman Catholic County Court Judge, in the *Times*, December 14.

## MY CHRISTMAS—NEW YEAR MESSAGE

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takes in the past. But we must not forget that, with all her faults, she has been the pioneer in this country of orphanages, mother and baby homes, asylums, old people's retreats, art, schools, universities, adoption societies, and all the other things we most cherish in this green and pleasant land. Is there anyone who does not get a *thrill* as he passes through our immemorial villages and sees those lovely old churches with their spires pointing up to the heavens, and inside savours that rich fabric of music, oratory, art and fragrance that constitutes their services? I look forward to the time when all Humanists may feel themselves able to join in these services and even, at the vicar's invitation, read a lesson or two. They may not necessarily communicate, though some will in a purely *symbolic* sense, and will feel the nobler for the experience. Only by so foregathering shall we be able to restore community spirit and eliminate the indiscipline, unchastity, delinquency, vandalism, crime, irreverence, disbelief, doubt and dirt that are so melancholy a feature of our social scene.

I wish you all a very happy and Humanistic New Year.

## WINDOW ON THE WORLD

Otto Wolfgang

LAST YEAR *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, a low-budget Italian film acted by non-professionals, was shown to bishops and others connected with the Ecumenical Council. There was general agreement in the audience that the film was more impressive and moving than any of the star-studded, million-dollar biblical epics shown before. But the most interesting thing about it is that the film is almost entirely a Marxist product, with its young director, Pier Paolo Pasolini, even an "unabashed atheist," Joseph, the *New York Times* reported (August 1), is played by a Communist lawyer; the Spanish youth who plays Jesus describes himself as a Marxist. Judas is a Communist truck-driver. John the Baptist is a Communist university professor. Peter, the only non-Marxist among the principals, is "a Jewish rag-picker."

Certain Communist parties have opened the door to religion so wide that there is hardly any necessity for a "dialogue." In this connection the paper reminds us of a similar case a few years ago, when a "popular movie in which the central character was a nun received glowing reviews in the diocesan press. What the reviewers did not know was that its highly lauded script was written under a pseudonym by a blacklisted writer who had been officially eliminated from the industry for years because, in the late 1940s, he refused to tell the House Committee on Un-American Activities whether or not he was a Communist."

Grégoire Lemerrier, a Belgian, is the prior of the Mexican monastery of Guernavaca; at the same time he is a passionate follower of Freud, whom his Church has branded as a horned devil. Three years ago, according to the Paris *L'Express*, he started psycho-analysing his 60 inmates, with the result that 40 brethren — many of them with more than ten years' service in holy orders, became aware that their religious zeal was not untarnished and pure but that their sub-conscious tended towards marriage and the mercantile marine. So they left.

But the prior — whose case had been dragged before the Vatican Council for investigation — maintains that far from doing harm to religious conviction, psycho-analysis tends to mature and enhance it through addition of "human values."

In the May 14 issue of *Public Opinion* (Jamaica), the Rev. Horace Russell declares that the Church in independent Jamaica is still in its pre-emancipation missionary state. From a conference, in 1962, of missionary representatives from England, U.S.A. and Canada, it emerged that "the Churches don't know *how* to work together with each other because they refuse to *trust* each other. The Churches don't love each other, they are in *competition* for the souls of Jamaica — or is it for prestige — to justify the thousands of pounds being poured into each petty organisation?"

*New Christian* (London) is a new fortnightly devoted to the furtherance of Christian Unity. In an article titled "The Orthodox Church since Khrushchev" it is said that, if anything, "persecutions" have increased. In an appeal addressed, *inter alia*, to the United Nations, it is com-

plained that the Ukrainian authorities have tried to close the Pochaev Monastery. Christians "below the age of 50" were arrested and expelled from Pochaev. "On 1 December a pogrom was organised . . . Five monks were arrested . . . and others expelled from the precincts."

The closure of the seminary at Lootsk has reduced the number of seminaries in the U.S.S.R. from eight to three. However recent visitors to Kiev have reported that its two convents now contain over 300 nuns. And "it is certain that a new church was built at Balta, in the West Ukraine . . . just over a year ago . . . the removal in March of this year of Leonid Ilichov, Khrushchev's ideological flunky, indicated that the new men were not going to apply the screws too tightly. The leading international journal of Communist thought, *World Marxist Review*, has since carried a series of articles proposing a fundamental re-examination of relations with the Vatican . . ."

The German Evangelical Church, we learn from *Le Monde*, declared that the Oder-Neisse line was a political and economic necessity for Poland. In particular, Bishop Lilje (Hanover) rebuked the leaders of the German *irredenta* in these terms: "We are refuting collective responsibility but we recognize that the whole population is responsible for the misdeeds of rulers whom they have elected. This notion perfectly agrees with the Bible, and the Church has no right to remain silent."

As a result the President of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia received a great number of hate letters against both the Church of Poland, and Bishop Lilje concluded at Frankfurt, one must wonder at "the phenomenon of pathological hatred that can be kindled in our people."

According to *Newsweek* (U.S.A.), U.S. Jews celebrated their recent holidays in converted ballrooms and night-clubs. Many devout, practising Jews were appalled by the proliferation of bandstand synagogues with packaged recreation and quickie prayers. A Rabbi complained that the ladies were indignant when told they must not wear slacks on Rosh Hashanah.

The attitude of the unaffiliated Jew, who may be obliged to pay up to \$100 for a synagogue seat on the High Holy Days, is: "Why spend big money on a ticket . . . when I can get four days in the hills for the same price?"

In his third encyclical, "Mystery of the Faith," the Pope remonstrated against liberal tendencies regarding the sacrifice of the Mass. He reaffirmed the trans-substantiation formula promulgated by the 16th century Council of Trent, which holds that the "substance" both of bread and wine is changed to the body and blood of Jesus, while the "accidents" — the taste, smell and chemical structure — remain the same. He also announced the setting up of the Council of Bishops to aid in the government of the Church.

"The Pope has created a baby with no arms or legs or head," said one progressive U.S. bishop who is dismayed by the synod's limited authority. "He puts them on and then he takes them off when he wants. Only in Rome could we conceive such a freak." And the often

revised declaration on Religious Liberty (in the teeth of Italian and Spanish objections that "only the Catholic Church has the right to preach the Gospel" and that "truth and falsehood cannot be given equal value") is recognized, in essence, as a "compromise document affirming the right of individual conscience in the face of coercion from the State."

The now formally promulgated declaration absolving the Jews of collective guilt for the death of Jesus drew a sardonic reply from Harry Golden. In his syndicated column he suggested the Jews should now call a Jewish Ecumenical Council next year in Jerusalem to promulgate a "Jewish Schema on the Christians."

"I propose," he began, "that we forgive the Christians for the Inquisition, the Crusades, the ghettos and the expulsions." Some 25 anti-Semitic examples later, Golden concluded: "For all this terrifying history, let us clear those Christians living today."

The November issue of *Der Kirchenfreie* (Austria) reminds the world that without the many martyrs among the so-called heretics no Vatican Council would ever have thought of promulgating religious freedom. However, how literal can we take the declaration of the Standing Commission of Churches for International Affairs that "Religious Liberty includes the right to change one's religion without disadvantages or even to proclaim oneself an atheist"? And the same issue of the paper reports an example of religious terror in Germany, where an 18-year-old girl of religiously mixed parentage who had been baptized, became an outcast when she accepted as

her fiancé a Protestant. Eventually she was whisked away and imprisoned in the Monastery of "The Good Shepherd" at Bochold and kept *incommunicado* whilst being prepared for RC baptism and communion. She must not see her fiancé any more and even her mother can talk to her only in the presence of a nun. Should the girl resist her "re-education" she will be branded as "ineducable" and dealt with by the Juvenile Court, since she is not yet of age.

In Baden-Wurttemberg, however, a law gives pupils the right to decide, at the age of 14, without parental interference, whether or not to attend R.I. No wonder that the leaders of the CDU Party are perturbed about the flight of secondary school pupils from religious indoctrination; they are preparing Parliamentary action to counteract this district law.

And finally another example of what to expect from RC lip service to "religious" tolerance.

Several wellknown scientists and professors have founded a circle with the aim of bringing closer together Christians and Jews in order to fight anti-Semitism which is still being preached in churches and universities. This aim is heartily opposed by the Lutheran Church. According to *Der Spiegel*, Martin Niemöller, President of the Evangelical Church of Hesse-Nassau, declared that essentially he has always been "anything but a Philosemite (friend of Semites)."

If people still cannot see why it is necessary to fight religion, they must be shown that any religion breeds intolerance.

## SUBMISSIONS TO COMMITTEE ON AGE OF MAJORITY

David Tribe

I AM instructed by the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society to present some submissions on the question of the age of majority and to announce willingness to give oral evidence if desired.

It should be made clear that our society has no particular expertise in this matter, if expertise there be, but that in the hundred years of our history we have always put questions of civil liberty, law and electoral reform high in our order of priorities. Our founder, Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., was one of the first to speak in the House of Commons on the desirability of extending the franchise to women, then regarded as a revolutionary proposal.

Every suggestion to extend the franchise has been hailed in jeremiads as undermining the stability and security of the realm, and it must be admitted that there is no empiric evidence of what will happen until the proposal is actually implemented. But we have seen votes given in turn to the middle classes, urban workers, rural workers and women without precipitating any of the calamities which had been prophesied. In advocating votes for all from the age of eighteen we do not imagine that dire consequences are any more likely to ensue.

There is no doubt that some of the young people who would be given the vote if the age of majority were thus lowered would lack the sense of responsibility and sober political judgment to exercise their franchise wisely. The same can unfortunately be said of many who at present

exercise it. This is a dilemma which no democracy has been and perhaps will be able to resolve. As with so much else in our national life it is appropriate to preserve due balance between the theoretically ideal and practical realities. Just as there are those whose increase in years has not been accompanied by growth in wisdom there are young people below the age of eighteen with great political knowledge and acumen. A limit has however to be drawn somewhere. The age of twenty-one is itself arbitrary and accords with no physiological or psychological reality. We propose that the equally arbitrary age of eighteen be substituted for the following theoretical and practical reasons.

Over the years, and particularly since 1944, universal education has greatly expanded. The minimal school leaving age has risen to fifteen and may soon rise again. The concept of education has broken loose from the old ideas of imparting the 3 Rs and inculcating knowledge by rote. Social studies courses raise social and political issues from an early age, and the emphasis in child development has been towards understanding, thinking things out for oneself, and personal responsibility. Practical results may not always have been as gratifying as theory would suggest, but much progress has been made, as anyone with experience of Sixth Forms and of school leavers at any good secondary modern school can testify. Those who do not measure up to this standard of independent thought and responsibility are perhaps less likely to take the trouble to vote than elders of

similar deficiency, who often overestimate the advantages of age and experience of the world.

At the practical level there are many anomalies in the present situation. At the age of eighteen, young men may enter the armed services or (at such times when it operates) be conscripted for National Service; yet they are not able to vote for or against Governments that make the military decisions on which their lives may depend. They may drink in public houses; but not participate in elections of those who determine licensing laws. They may bet in a betting shop; but not send in football pools coupons. Young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one are among the leading participants and patrons of sporting and entertainments facilities; yet they have no control over successive Parliaments that keep alive Sunday observance legislation. They may set themselves up in business and be declared bankrupt; but they cannot bring legal proceedings, enter into hire purchase agreements or make a will. We do not in general advocate early marriages, as the statistics for subsequent divorce are on average higher than those involving later marriage. But the fact remains that some young people wish to marry early and there are still strong social pressures from their elders towards this event, in many cases where pregnancy occurs as a result of premarital sexual intercourse. In these circumstances they can marry without difficulty with their parents' consent. Even if this should be refused, it is still possible for them to marry with the consent of a magistrate or by setting up residential qualifications in Scotland. After marriage they find it impossible to take out a mortgage on a house or obtain furniture on hire purchase. Though these difficulties are unlikely to be the only or indeed the primary obstacles in the way of a satisfactory marriage, there can be little doubt that they may create tension during an important period of married life.

## LETTERS

### ANTI-MALE WOMEN

MRS. MACE MCCARTHY says that Kit Mouat is not anti-male, but pro-female. In that case why did Mrs. McCarthy say that Epicureanism sounded too masculine for her? What is too masculine about it? Perhaps the fact the Epicurus happened to be a man, not a woman. But even after knowing well that she had put her foot in it by making this statement, Mrs. Mouat still claimed to be an Epicurean.

What can you make of a woman like that?

Obviously she thinks her anti-male views should go unchallenged in *The Freethinker*. And it may be of interest to Mrs. McCarthy to know that a woman can be married with a family, yet still be anti-male.

No, Mrs. McCarthy, I am not taking up an attitude as a superior male, just a male who knows an anti-male complex when he sees it. And I must say that I have a desire to debate with Russell or any other philosophical man or woman philosophers for the simple reason that there are no women philosophers of any importance to debate on.

In my study of history I have never yet come across a woman genius in philosophy, music, poetry, or painting. The most outstanding woman I know of is Marie Curie. And she was a scientist.

However, she was an exception to the rule of women, as we know that otherwise all the great scientific discoveries have been brought about by man. Male mental superiority is a fact for all to see. Mrs. McCarthy thinks I should grow up, but in reality it is she who should grow up and resign herself to her womanhood.

R. SMITH

### SCIENCE AND MAN

MR. F. A. RIDLEY says in his article *Religion v The Scientific Revolution*; Religion exists to console man from his frustrations, which science will in time remove. I question the latter part of

this statement very much. By the way, drugs and drink exists also to console man from his frustrations, and even scientists look for consolations outside of science to console their own frustrations. Anyway the purpose of science is not to console man at all, we all know perfectly well in this scientific age millions die daily without any scientific consolation. Science tells you that you die and that is you finished. What consolation is there in that? However, human existence and human behaviour are not scientific, and therefore the language of science has no bearing at all on man's existential concrete daily experiences. Mr. Ridley's writings have therefore no real bearing on life at all, as none of his articles ever come down to the hard facts of daily experience.

I just wonder if Mr. Ridley believes that science could cure, or ever hope to cure, the vast amount of contradictions and tragedies which happen daily in the world. Obviously it can't. And only a damn fool would think otherwise. Science has no answer at all to man's most inward feelings. The poet and the philosopher and the artist are nearer to man's inwardness than the scientist.

Therefore science could never hope to solve the innumerable tragic aspects of human existence; in fact, such a task could be compared to the flask that Loki so cunningly set before Thor, and which he tried in vain to empty. He did not see that it was the ocean he had for a flask. Mr. Ridley, in my opinion, like all so-called scientific socialists is an impossibilist.

Science teaches no way of life, nor is there anything in it which motivates us to love our fellow man. The heart of man cannot be purified by science, and as Burns truly said

The heart aye's The part aye,  
That mak's us richt or wrong.

And in that respect all ethical teaching is a waste of time. No Mr. Ridley, science will never cure man of his frustrations, and assuming it ever did there would be no philosophy, religion, or art. One often wonders what the atheist would get to write about if there was no religion. It is the spirit of man that keeps him going, not science. Even Mr. Ridley must agree here.

R. SMITH  
Dundee

### WITHOUT GRACE

CIVIC CLUB MEETINGS are NOT religious services. They are for the purpose of increasing professional knowledge and ability, or for non-religious civic fellowship. A prayer at the beginning of such society or club meals is not only out of order; it may also be an imposition as well.

The Bible says: "When you pray, go into your room and shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret... for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Since God knows our needs, there is no need to ask him for anything. There is no more need to thank God for the meals we eat than for the clothes we wear, or the water we drink. They have all been made available through using our knowledge and our own industry.

There are also good reasons for not asking ANYTHING in prayer. Asking Jesus has proved fruitless. He said: "What you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith... and whatever you ask in my name, I will do it." His promise of the efficacy of prayer has proved as much a failure as his promise of the unlimited power of faith. Asking God for something in prayer is supremely egotistical. It seems absurd to ask him for favours.

A "grace" or an "invocation" at a public meal outside of a church or home is not only an imposition and in poor taste; it may also be only a form of religious propaganda, or simply hypocrisy.

If any civic club member feels compelled to pray, he has ample opportunity to do it elsewhere. Each member has the privilege and freedom to worship as he chooses. But no one has the right to impose his or her church's belief or worship on a captive audience in the form of a "grace".

WILLARD E. EDWARDS

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