

FREETHINKER

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VOCATIONS

The Anglican Central Advisory Council for the Ministry today publishes a Report which shows that the number of candidates attending and passing selection conferences fell from 912 and 656 respectively in 1964 to 655 and 472 in 1965. The downward trend in vocations for 1964 "has been seriously accentuated in 1965".

"The encouragement of Ember Prayer continues", and three hours of prayer are held in St. Faith's Chapel every Ember Friday. In case this should not be enough a secular recruiting drive is being speeded up. Diocesan conferences, visits of the Recruitment Secretary to universities, schools and the annual convention for careers teachers sponsored by the National Union of Teachers (by whose permission?), sixth form conferences, recruitment committees, an enquiry stand at the *Daily Mail* Schoolboys and Schoolgirls' Exhibition, an open poster competition, invitations to Methodists and even to women—J. Walter Thompson has advised well. Everything has been tried but a torchlight procession by the Bishop of Southwark and a helicopter fly-past by the Bishop of Guildford.

The examination syllabuses are to be changed to show a "greater concern with the Church in the 20th Century . . . and modern liturgical developments", and even the Ethics paper is "in an experimental stage".

Similarly doleful news comes from Rome. In an 81-page study *Where Are The Priests?*, Father James Forrestall says that the Church is engaged "in a struggle for existence". Whereas the maximum number of Catholics any priest can serve adequately is 800, the world average is 1,344 per priest. How can vocations come from a non-Christian environment, and how can an environment be Christianised without priests? This problem was long ago recognised by Paul: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans, 10, 14). Intuition, spiritual forces, divine telepathy, sixth sense and other mystical phenomena seem strangely unable to effect evangelisation.

The Vatican Council wanted to discuss the possibility of priests' marrying doubtless with the aim of future vocations and not their present convenience in mind, but the Pope forbade it. In Brazil, however, a priestly member of the Lower House has recently been given a Vatican dispensation releasing him from his vows of chastity as a prelude to marriage. But the sad experience of the Church of England indicates that there are other obstacles in the path.

It is often suggested that a major factor is money. Figures are quoted to suggest that the average Anglican incumbent has a stipend less than the wages of a factory

worker. This may be so. But they do not take into account the free house and rates, marriage and burial fees, frequent provision of car, petrol allowance and gardening and domestic service, additional chaplaincies in local prisons and hospitals, etc., fees for training assistant curates, Easter offerings, harvest festival offerings and innumerable other fringe benefits. Furthermore there is the attraction of—especially in country areas—invitations to great houses. Those who still apply do not have the sinecures in the past afforded by absentee benefices, but they may look forward to a certain social status, varied work, and eventually one of the "many mansions" that most bishops and the Church Commissioners have up their sleeves for those who know how to "serve". But today the social status is not what it used to be, and other professions have rich prizes to offer too.

There are two major reasons for decline in vocations. By derivation the word indicates a "call" from God to labour in His vineyard. Alas, the slipstream of satellites and the echo of electronics have drowned whatever call might have winged through outer space, while modern theologians and bishops have suggested that there may not even be a vocal source at all. It is interesting to note that the great falling away in vocations parallels the sudden rapid rise in activity of the National Secular Society and of general publicity for humanist and secular ideas.

The second reason involves those with real dedication to humanity. Whatever their theological beliefs, there were till recently men who were prepared to prevaricate with their consciences to gain clerical status, not for a "cushy number" but because they believed that the profession offered them a platform, a status and premises to do valuable social work. Only gradually has it dawned on these people that there is no platform worth having without church attendance, little status in a world emancipating itself from superstition, and often unsuitable premises for effective work. They have further realised that a knowledge of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is a poor substitute for proper training in medical, psychological and sociological disciplines. In a survey published in *Women's Prison* (1965-6), 103 inmates of an American state penitentiary for women said that the work supervisor knew and understood them best; 66 opted for the cottage (cell block) supervisor; only 33 chose the chaplain.

The Rev. Nicolas Stacey gained some notoriety a year ago by urging all clergy to become worker-priests and in that way do something of real service to the community. Though he does not seem to have followed his own excellent advice, his message has perhaps filtered down to potential ordinands, who have taken the logical next step of omitting the holy orders.

VOICE OF THE ENEMY

E. G. Macfarlane

ALTHOUGH the voices of enemies of Humanism and Freethought are to be heard regularly in the columns of the *Scottish Educational Journal*, there is one recent voice (January 7) which is so anti-everything that I stand for that I think I ought to tell you about it.

Professor D. W. Trevor Jenkins is the Professor of Education in University College, North Wales, and he has been addressing the Congress of the Educational Institute of Scotland.

"The dominant fact of our time is that we are living in an unusually exciting but disturbing world . . . whose chief scientific discovery has been the secret of its own destruction. It is a world wearily habituated to crisis — its familiar word — and to tension — its familiar mood — the product in part of two world wars which broke up the apparently stable order our fathers knew. . . . We are succumbing not only to the pressures of a machine age but also to the pervasive influence of a rootless, synthetic, hybrid culture (if it merits the word!) mediated through, if not born of, those mass media, radio, TV, the cinema and the popular press, those great agencies which are potentially so educative, yet which bear insidiously on the minds of the people, demanding little more than a passive response. Its creation is the mass-mind, reflecting the same tastes, stimulated to the same responses, content with pre-digested opinions. It is the danger H. M. Tomlinson recognised a generation ago when he warned that 'our ways of life are shaping us into flocks with the same faces, the same wool, the same desires. We read the same newspapers, are prompted by the same loudspeakers and are stamped by decisions not our own. There may be more than we think in the myth of the Gorgon's Head, but instead of into stone its modern victims are changed into mutton'."

(I cannot desist from telling you that you are listening here to a man who is later going to urge the teachers of Scotland that they must return to the principles of making people into mutton for Christ's sake!)

"We have taken the impress of our highly industrialised and highly commercialised society and exalted out of all proportion the criteria of material reward as a standard of value and our assessment of worthwhileness. Having attained the affluent society, we have distilled from it our new philosophy, which turns out to be nothing more than the ancient hedonism of 'eat, drink, laugh, for tomorrow profiteth nothing' — perhaps proclaimed all the louder and acquiring a new significance just because — thanks to our scientific achievement — that tomorrow be never quite so uncertain."

(This ardent conformist apparently does not have the wit to see that those teachers who have the character to stand out against the mutton-headed veneration of religion and *have to forego the mercenary attractions of promotion* which hypocrites and believers receive, must surely be motivated by something more than "eat, drink, laugh".)

"Lord Samuel spoke of 'the physical sensation of vertigo' which afflicts the average man when confronted with the mammoth collectives of our complex society — modern industry and its dehumanised relationships, applied science and its terrifying discoveries, and the increasingly insistent claims and pressures of the secular state — all of which tend to leave him helpless and unsure, sometimes cynical, sometimes depressed and at best 'perplexed in the

extreme'. The old certitudes no longer seem sure, the old anchorages no longer hold and the old paths are increasingly obliterated, and with this sense of lost bearings he is tempted to echo the cry of the Archangel Gabriel in that great play *Green Pastures* when, looking down on this confused world, he sadly remarks — 'Everything nailed down is coming loose'."

(Clearly Christians are worried people. They see the writing all around them and they huddle together ecumenically as best they can. But until we can get enough people to see the inadequacy of their approach they will continue to hold top jobs in education as this spokesman does.)

"These are some of the disquieting features of the landscape today and must constitute the wider context of any educational thinking. . . . For whether we regard education in immediate and practical terms as a preparation for life, or whether we regard it more widely from the standpoint of society, as a regenerative force, it is with life and with this sort of world and with this kind of society we are concerned.

"The thesis I offer today is this, that whatever else education may be, it must be by its nature the custodian of the permanent, and should stand, particularly in times of rapid change, for those things which cannot be shaken."

(Talk about being mixed-up lambs of God!)

"The synoptic view, I suggest, is backward-looking as well as forward-looking and takes account of the way we have come as well as the way ahead — and may indeed get a bearing from the past."

(Even Julian Huxley would agree with that.)

"The danger is . . . the temptation of taking too secular a view of knowledge, secular in the literal sense of having to do with the present age only, and failing to see it in synoptic terms as something conceived *sub specie aeternitatis*. It is this, of course, which suggests the answer which is liberal, balanced, humane; in the sense that it recognises that the end of education is manhood, not manpower, and which places emphasis on the humaner things which get so easily overlaid in the kind of world we inherit today."

(Such as courageous freedom of thought and justice for men who are not afraid or "diplomatic" in their public statements.)

"It finds its common idiom, in the cosmic age, in our common humanity, in its concern for man *qua* man, not yet labelled technician, scientist or engineer, but still merely man. . . . In Wales it is this tradition which gives pride of place to bard and poet — each the eternal teacher and preacher who are still our chief export. Here — its ancience is for you to answer. We always assume that everything educationally goes back at least to John Knox, and what is certain is that, like the good Calvinist that he was, he placed the emphasis on human worth; which is simply another way of defining the humane tradition."

(What about ecumenism?)

"A similar recurrence to tradition is the answer to that cosmopolitanism so characteristic of 'this age of uprootedness'. It lies in its own obvious antithesis — in something as old and as distinctive as our native hills, in being self-consciously ourselves: Scots, Welsh, English, etc., and cherishing and exulting in those things in our cultural heritage — our traditions, our literature and (if possible)

our language — which makes us each a different people.”

(This is the “common humanity” of establishmentarians in practice. Wallowing in the past, accentuating ridiculous “national differences”, reviving dead and useless languages, perpetuating distinctions which have become foolish and reactionary.)

“All this is not to be anti-English or anti-anything, *other than the flabbiness of cosmopolitanism . . .*”

(My italics to show where the speaker’s common humanity lies — but he still maintains he is a Christian as we will yet see.)

“Finally, to turn to the plane of the moral and the spiritual, where another debility threatens.

“Any education worth the name is a recognition of right ends. Again we are recurring to something deep in our tradition. It was the belief of our forefathers that all knowledge, like all institutions, must serve some moral end and that by that end it must be judged.”

(Except of course the “knowledge of good and evil” which Bible accepters are specifically warned against tampering with!)

“Your First Book of Discipline puts it unequivocally — ‘Since men are born ignorant of godliness and have to be educated in virtue . . . then we need to acquire knowledge and erudition, etc.’ The end and function of the educational system which the book outlines is ‘godliness and virtue’. In Wales the story of modern education begins with the great religious awakening of the eighteenth century and its two greatest pioneers defined their purpose in equally unequivocal Christian terms.

“There is a sense in which nationally we have recognised this and recognised too that those ends cannot be defined in any other than Christian terms. That was one of the main achievements of our 1944 Education Act — and it is at least significant that its architect, Butler, speaking ten years later, claimed that ‘the best work of 1944 was to enshrine in English educational law the ancient and unalterable truth that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom’ — referring to the statutory obligation on all

state schools to begin the day with an act of worship and to teach religious knowledge. That is the enunciation of the ideal.”

So there you have it — plain as a pikestaff — and just as wooden. This is an example of the enemy of Humanism and Freethought at work in our midst. This man is the honoured guest of the Annual Congress of the E.I.S. in Scotland and he is chosen — rather than, say, some Humanist or Freethinker — to address the Congress simply because he is saying the orthodox rubbish of nationalism and supernaturalism which has been uncritically accepted by the vast majority of the teaching profession in Britain. Such miseducated and really rather pathetic people must not be allowed to rule the roost much longer. Their thoughtless adherence to principles of nationalism and religion will prove disastrous to humanity if they cannot be enlightened to the point of seeing that *cosmopolitanism* is the correct ideological concept for the modern world that they find so puzzling and frightening. The tragedy is that they have their stupid counterparts in positions of power and authority all over the world. Wherever we look — whether it is to the USA, with its short-sighted flag ceremony every morning in all American schools; or to China . . . — we see young minds being brainwashed into thinking more of their own little corner of the world than they do of the fate of mankind generally. This is the real madness from which all the great social problems of the human race spring, and the petty-minded university professors and the conformist directors of education all over the world are all doing their “best” (which is really damnable from an enlightened point of view!) to rivet their misguided convictions on the hapless youth of the world.

I know what I am talking about. I am a teacher who has suffered all the pains and penalties of unorthodoxy and I see the ridiculous process going on around me day by day, month by month and year by year.

We must overcome if the human race is to survive at all.

CONVERSATION IN AN AUTO

Oswell Blakeston

“COME OF it, father. You can’t say I forced you into it. When you saw my smile, you just hopped into this car like a jumping bean.”

“But . . . but it ought to take more than one thug to kidnap me. I feel small.”

“Never on your menaced life, father. This is the smartest little kidnapping job ever. Now I’m going to look after you properly—day and night.”

“Listen, mister, what’d you do if right now I started shouting murder at the next traffic hold-up? We aren’t out of the city yet; and it wouldn’t be hard for me to get away, if I put my lungs to it.”

“Why’d you want to do a thing like that to me, love? If you had to pay for this holiday, think what you’d fork out for a bit of fun with Dan. Yes, that’s my name, father, Dan. Think of the rising cost of love.”

“And maybe that’s where you’re making your mistake. Maybe the prize is too high. Maybe my Order will refuse to pay the ransom. Could be, you know, that they might be glad to be shot of me. When then of the night, you

big bully, you?”

“Oh, they’ll pay all right. They won’t want the scandal of the story of how you picked me up just because I smiled. It’ll sound better as a kidnapping. They’ll write it off as public relations.”

“My public! So, it’s nice to be popular. Know how it feels, Dan?”

“Look, I wasn’t conscripted for this job. I enlisted. I’ve seen your photos in the papers—the handsome young preacher who talks to the teenagers in their own lingo.”

“No kidding?”

“Lots of kidding. But just for the moment, play it cool, man.”

“Cool and shivering?”

“You choose the words, father. You’ve got the education. I’m only a smile; and you can keep it on my face, if you want to. Know that? The boss said: ‘Do everything you can to make the reverend comfortable.’ I’ll do just that. Now I may not be educated like you, father,

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THIS WORLD

Vietnam

STEPPING UP operations in Vietnam as an accompaniment to referring the question to the Security Council may be a shrewd political move by President Johnson with the American electorate in mind, but cannot help to resolve the crisis. The following press release was at once issued by the NSS: "The National Secular Society deplors the renewal of bombing of North Vietnam by American forces and the approval of these operations given by Her Majesty's Government". The same day, in a radio interview, Mr. James Cameron, distinguished journalist recently admitted to North Vietnam, scathingly commented on how Britain's military power has been eroded by history and moral power sacrificed by Mr. Wilson, and on the "vaudevilles" of Ambassador Goldberg's visit to the Pope instead of where it would do more good.

Humanist Teachers

ON Friday, February 11, at 7 p.m. the Humanist Teachers' Association will be addressed at 13 Prince of Wales Terrace by its President Lionel Elvin (who wrote the much-praised Foreword to *Religion and Ethics in Schools*). Also at the meeting will be Mm. Lamarque and Jengez of the *Ligue Française de l'Enseignement*. M. Lamarque is head of a European action group with objects similar to those of the NSS.

Sunday Freedom League

READERS are invited to send signatures on a petition and cuttings from local newspapers to John Shephard, Lyndon Vale, Paulton, Bristol, in support of his league's campaign to repeal the anachronistic Sunday observance laws.

Searchlight

THIS is the name of a recent publication "against fascism and racialism". Edited by Reginald Freeson, MP (Narod Press Ltd., 129-131 Cavell Street, London, E.1), it contains disturbing news of terrorism directed in certain areas of Britain against Jewish and coloured members of the community by Nazi, Ku Klux Klan and other extremist elements. The current issue (No. 2) eloquently appeals for a rational immigration policy, pointing out that "a study for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation concluded that all men belong to the same species and probably have the same ancestors". Dr. Adolf Arndt, Social Democratic Shadow Minister of Justice in the West German Parliament, is quoted as saying of Nazi atrocities, "We all knew, really" and censuring Western countries for "shutting their doors" to Jewish refugees. It points out that prejudice can have its origin when a child is taught that "the Jews killed Christ", and calls for "integrated" art forms like jazz ballet to bring the races closer together.

"Not stocked but obtainable"

W. H. SMITH has introduced this category for such works as those by Henry Miller and William Burroughs. Freethinkers will welcome it as a timid move in the right direction. Many NSS and Pioneer Press publications are in the same category, presumably for other reasons. Readers may like to ask their local agent what these reasons are.

War on Crime and Drugs

MOST Humanists will welcome the new Home Secretary's plans to strengthen regional crime squads and the Minister of Health's tighter controls on prescribing dangerous drugs. Humanists pleas for permissive legislation in the field of sex and liberal approaches to education and penology are not to be confused with any sentimental attitudes to crime or criminals, irresponsibility or delinquents. Harsh and repressive measures are censured on the dual counts that they produce the wrong emotions in the law-enforcer and a hardening effect on the criminal. To emphasize reform is not to overlook deterrence, but the best deterrent is the probability of being caught. No civilised society can be complacent about the high percentage of offences in our increasingly mobile community where the culprit is not found out. Nor does responsible permissiveness extend to supplying indefinite quantities of dope to registered addicts, who feed much of it into a black market to "hook" further victims. Addicts should be treated rather than registered.

Suicide

AT a day-course at Leicester University Department of Adult Education, Professor Erwin Stengel, head of the Department of Psychiatry at Sheffield University, estimated that at least half a million people attempt suicide at some time or other. An unusually large crowd heard him state that victims tended to be male, coming from a broken home, living alone in a large town, prosperous but living in a time of economic crisis, late 50s and drinking too much. Least likely was female, working class, married in a village or small town, living in a time of war, young and religious. The cynical answer is that religion and war are a high price to pay for life. Does religion make living happier or dying more frightening? Especially when, in Catholic theology, suicide is the only mortal sin beyond reach of the sacrament of penance or extreme unction. But this reflection does not absolve Humanists of responsibility for improving a world that so many people find intolerable.

Abortion

IN the *Observer* (January 30) appeared an interesting annotated conversation between Paul Ferris and Sir Dugald Baird, sometime Regius Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Aberdeen University. Sir Dugald made the important point that "improved contraception means less abortion". In his clinic under the existing law he was prepared to terminate a pregnancy for working class wives with big families, middle class wives with already one more child than they wanted, and unmarried women with a cloistered background or professional responsibilities, particularly where the baby would be halfcaste and difficult to find adopters for. "I can't," he said, "enter into theological discussions about the point at which life begins. I see people in front of me who are unhappy, who find life too difficult. How can one help them to be healthier and happier and create a good environment for children? I have quoted Julian Huxley's view, that the progress of medical science, besides accomplishing control of disease, must also improve the quality of life by providing greater fulfilment for human beings."

NORMALLY he would not act without reference from the woman's own doctor. It seems that this qualification is to be written into the Silkin Bill. If it is, all patients had better find out the religion of their panel doctor.

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LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

INDOOR

Cambridge Humanists (Mill Lane Lecture Rooms), Friday, February 11th, 8.30 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "A Centenary of Secularism."

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street), Sunday, February 13th, 2.45 p.m.: Debate, Rev. DAVID MILLAR and HARRY MCSHANE, "Is Religion Based on Myths and Supernaturalism?"

Havering Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane), Tuesday, February 15th, 8 p.m.: RALPH TAYLOR (Liberal Parliamentary Candidate), "The Political Scene."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, February 13th, 6.30 p.m.: DR. MARTIN COLE, "Abortion Law Reform."

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, February 13th, 7.30 p.m.: ERIC MAPLE, "Devils"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, February 13th, 11 a.m.: Professor T. H. PEAR, "Humanists, Psychologists and Sociologists."; Tuesday, February 15th, 7.30 p.m.: J. B. COATES, "Simone de Beauvoir—La Grande Sartense."

University of Keele (Keele, Staffordshire), Friday, February 18th, 8.30 p.m.: Debate, "This House Deplores Compulsory Religious Education in Schools." Speakers include DAVID TRIBE.

West Ham and District Branch NSS (Community Centre, St. Mary's Avenue, Wanstead, E.11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

THIS WORLD continued

Offenders and TV

FOR 13 weeks the Home Office, Leicester University and over 100 probation officers will combine in unique research into the TV habits of young offenders in the Midlands. If there is found to be any correlation, one suspects it will not involve programmes of "dirt, doubt and disbelief" but glamorised serials on crime, violence, espionage and acquisitiveness.

Postscripts on the Council

IN *Church and State* (January), Stanley Lowell points out that there is still "one true church" with concordats which infringe civil liberties, a vast diplomatic corps, ban on birth control and arrogant views on mixed marriages. He continues:

Some persons talk of the changes made by the Vatican Council as though they were all for the better. Actually some changes were for the worse. There was, for example, that section in the decree on Christian Education which proclaims that all governments of the world have a duty to provide support for Catholic education. This has been Catholic policy heretofore, of course. At least two Popes have stated that civil governments have such a duty. But now we are to have it as officially promulgated Catholic doctrine which is supposed to be believed and acted upon by all Catholic people. Will the Catholic clergy now seek to turn their constituents into a power bloc to force such a program upon the people?

IN Toronto recently, Dr Eliezer Berkovitz, professor of Jewish philosophy at the Jewish University of America, described the lifting of the charge of collective guilt from the Jewish people as impudent, cheap politics and an "insult to God". He described the ecumenical movement as a public relations stunt brought about by the decline of Christianity as a world force.

Possessing the Land

THIS is the title of an article in *Christian Heritage* (January), which claims that every American taxpayer had to pay \$33 more last year than if churches had paid tax. Some \$20 was attributed to Catholic real estate.

Advance News

- (1) Progressive League Conference on "Mental Health and the Community", Margate, March 18-20.
- (2) TULC History Exhibition commemorating the Centenary of the Reform Movement, London, July 4-8.
- (3) BHA Summer School to consider Humanism, Birmingham, August 6-13.
- (4) NSS Centenary Rally to commemorate Bradlaugh, Northampton, July 17.
- (5) IHEU Congress, Paris, July 25-30.
- (6) Combined WUFT Congress and NSS Centenary Celebrations, London, September 1-5.

REMEMBER when booking holidays.

International Humanism

THIS is the title of the quarterly published by the IHEU and apparently the name of a new phenomenon. The Editorial for January refers to the Catholic-IHEU dialogues: "More important than trying to find bridges of understanding is the effect on the humanist of compelling him to take *his own* concept of transcendence more seriously and the effect on the Christian of making him take his concept of the world more realistically." Dr. Gerald Wendt assumes that "a valid philosophy, an ideology, and perhaps a religion, are among the goals of humanism" and it is his "faith that somehow, some time, the present mysteries of the spiritual world will also be investigated and understood". Victor Morales Lezcano equates Russell, Ortega and Toynbee, and puts Schweitzer higher because of his "practical humanism". A report from Britain referred to the Christian-Humanist statement on *Religious and Moral Education*, and its discussion at a meeting of the Humanist Teachers' Association. It did not find space to say that they rejected it.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY CENTENARY DINNER

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BRIGID BROPHY MICHAEL FOOT, MP
LORD WILLIS DAVID TRIBE

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POETRY AND REASON

F. A. Ridley

IT HAS often been the fashion in Christian and/or theistic apologetics to contrast the rigid procedure and bold conclusions of scientific reasoning with the warm emotionalism inherent in great poetry. Religion, so runs the argument (or what passes for such), can find a place for the emotional side of mankind whilst rationalism, like the science upon which it leans, cannot: hence the essential superiority of religion.

Like a good many other "proofs" advanced by the protagonists of Theism, the above species of demonstrative reasoning will not stand up to any close empirical investigation. For actually, some of the greatest poetry in the world's literature has represented the expression—and how effective an expression—of scepticism, often indeed of militant unbelief. In such a connection one naturally thinks first and foremost of that prince of poetic sceptics, the great Lucretius who in his *magnum opus*, *On the Nature of the Universe (De Rerum Natura—c. 50 BC)* gave a magnificent expression to the scientific culture of Greek and Roman antiquity: *cognoscere causas rerum* (to know the causes of phenomena).

In the poetry of the modern age, in that of Goethe, Heine, Shelley, Byron, and in more recent years Thomas Hardy and A. E. Housman there is similarly expressed, often in language of extraordinary power, the impressive point of view of a sceptical philosophy derisive of supernatural claims and profoundly critical of traditional orthodoxy. Mr. A. A. H. Douglas, who has just issued a slim but stimulating volume of thought-provoking verse under the self-explanatory title of *Credo—The Faith of a Humanist*, is the latest of a long and eminent line of rationalist and humanist poets; his poetic muse treads faithfully and at times impressively in the authentic footsteps of such modern exponents of Humanism in verse as James Thomson, A. E. Housman, Swinburne and more recently our own Bayard Simmons.

In a brief but thoughtful preface, the eminent Cambridge novelist and Humanist, E. M. Forster, expresses his full concurrence with the viewpoint expressed in these twenty-five little poems by our North Country bard (for Mr. Douglas hails from the wilds of Northumbria, at one time, indeed, a prime stronghold of the Christian faith). For our poet, declares Mr. Forster, has written verse not only of poetic value, but of social and cultural significance. For these poems, so affirms the veteran Cambridge Humanist, "not only celebrate the private life, they indicate its profound importance to society". For "the sooner we stop supposing that we are in possession of supernatural truth, the likelier we are to stop abusing our fellow men". Mr. Douglas himself makes his philosophy clear in a thoughtful introduction; thus he tells us: "The civilised world has been passing through a long phase in which attitudes based on feelings and blind hopes, rather than knowledge and reason, have formed the foundations upon which systems of thought have been established. These systems have crystallised in a number of religions having immense power over men's thinking. They still dominate the minds of the majority of mankind". However he adds: "During the last two or three hundred years, our knowledge of the processes of the universe, and our understanding of ourselves and of our position in it, has increased so rapidly (and is increasing still more rapidly) that more and more men are driven by their own intelligence and knowledge to reject the former systems".

It is in this confident faith that Mr. Douglas addresses

his poetry to this, in his opinion (and ours), rapidly increasing potential audience. As befits a poet whose major appeal is perhaps rather to the head and to the intellect than to the heart (though this latter form of appeal is by no means altogether rejected), our author makes considerable demands upon the knowledge and still more upon the intelligence of his readers. We do not know whether, say, Billy Graham reads poetry, but if he does we hardly think that Mr. Douglas is ever likely to be his favourite poet!

Those ardent champions of the aesthetic school of "art for art's sake" will, we fear, find little to their taste in these poems; for the converse motto of art for thought's sake would surely more appropriately fit this poetic collection. For our (presumably) Scottish bard evidently agrees with his famous countryman, Thomas Carlyle, that if (we may so paraphrase Carlyle) "poetry is philosophy teaching by example". For these poems really represent so many sermons on the humanist philosophy in which precise respect our poet follows faithfully in the footsteps of his great classical predecessor, Lucretius. As such, their express purpose is tersely summarised in the eight line "Motto" prefixed to the poems themselves:

By science all Creation's plan
Is gradually unfurled.
The world of Nature teaches man
The nature of the World.

Our understanding will be slow,
Our thinking profitless,
Until we start from what we know
And not from what we guess.

Examples of this "guess" are freely scattered throughout the ensuing pages. For the supreme adversary of Reason is represented by unreasoning dogmas like that of the soul faithfully dealt with in several of these poems. For, pertinently demands our poet, at what precise point in his evolution did the soul enter man? Did the primitive ape man (*Pithecanthropos* or *homo habilis*), shed his tail and acquire his soul simultaneously? Our author indicts these dogmatic creeds as presumptuous claimants to a universal knowledge, though in actual fact, they are quite brief and ephemeral arrivals upon this human scene, for

Five thousand million years this earth has run
And yet may run as many years again.
If we conceive a line from Pole to Pole
To represent these aeons by its length,
The whole of man's recorded history
Would be included in some thirty yards,
And inches would contain the centuries.

Right at the end of such a polar line
The births of all the great religious faiths,
Of Buddhism, Islam, Christianity
And Hinduism, cover twenty feet,
The compass of some thirteen hundred years.

A second on the Universal clock!
A single tick in time's infinitude!
To think this stage is final is to mock
Man's hope of growing up to adulthood.

Nor is it any use to seek to convert the clerical traditionalists by reason from their outmoded creeds for

How many priests, beyond the age of youth,
Dare not pursue the ruthless road to truth?
Dare not deny the faith they have professed?
Religion is their vested interest.

"Man is not final", once noted that great pioneer of the critical reason in so many fields, H. G. Wells. Mr. Douglas whole-heartedly agrees with him and expresses his view of the relative nature of all creeds including Humanism itself, in one of the finest of these thought-provoking poems, XXII, whose concluding stanza runs as follows:

New, higher forms of life to be evolved
May see the sun where we see only fog,
And our insoluble may then be solved;
For they could be to man as man to dog.

Man represents the higher form of living matter, that we know: but how much do we actually know of the infinite galaxy-strewn universe disclosed by modern cosmogony?

In another notable contribution entitled "Nemo", our poet pronounces his own epitaph, the democratic epitaph of an authentic Humanist:

I crave no other world than this,
No life of everlasting bliss.
But when my time for death is near
I know that I shall feel no fear.

When comes the setting of my sun
Regrets I'll have but few,
And not for things that I have done
But things I feared to do.

I have not led in any strife,
Nor stilled the world's commotion.
I have but added by my life
One droplet to the ocean.

My droplet may be just a dream
Of what the world could be;
But many droplets make a stream
And streams become the sea.

I may be a nonentity,
My name for ever strange,
But multitudes of men like me
Can cause the world to change.

A man obscure can only mould
The thinking of a few,
But multiplied ten million-fold
Can shape the world anew.

The shape to which the future tends,
The course of history,
In part on leadership depends,
In part on you and me.

Though none may feel my influence
But family or friend
My mark remains; and in this sense
My life will never end.

Mr. Douglas is to be congratulated upon his considerable success in striking a new and difficult variant of the poetic muse. His verse combines wide scholarship with deep original thought expressed with remarkable clarity and often a fine turn of poetic phrase. I hope that these poems, informed throughout with the essential spirit of Humanism, will have the wide circulation which they deserve in critically-minded circles.

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CONVERSATION IN AN AUTO

Continued from page 43

but I do remember a story I read about a nut-case who stood in for a king and went off to marry a girl as the king's proxy. Marriage by proxy, umph? And there was this young knight simply rigid in his armour, and he scythed down all the page-boys as they bowed before him."

"Stop! Haven't you any sense of decency? Or . . . has reality to be reinvented to make it plausible?"

"That's over my head, father; but you wait till you get under the sheets."

"Damn it! I was taught a bedroom's a place where a man dies from the hour of his first cry. All right, I'll do the translation. Supposing my Order does give you hoods the ransom, and then suppose I don't want to leave your little hide-out?"

"That's nice of you, father, real nice; but after a bit you'll pine away for the soft life. There won't be much decoration in the hut, and we'll be living off fish, if we can catch them. That's what makes it so sweet, father. It can't go on too long, so it's bound to be good while it lasts. Not like your heaven stuff."

"While it lasts?"

"While it lasts."

"You're like Henry."

"Henry?"

"He called me his kitten in a cassock—for two whole days."

"I'll call you kitten, father."

"I knew a girl . . ."

"You don't say; but I've heard of them."

"She came and confessed to me. There was a man brought her baskets. In the basket would be a beautiful kitten. She had to put on those shoes with real high heels, and then she had to trample the little cat while the man watched. Dan . . .?"

"It's your lot, stinker. People can do what other people don't like, as far as I'm concerned; but I like cats."

"But, Dan . . ."

"You're in for a long walk home, father."

"You can't do it, Dan. Your boss'll carve you up if you let me go."

"The bleeders can do other things with their knives. I'll tell them. I'm tough. Oh, I knew you priests were kinky, but I didn't think . . . And then you pretend it was some other guy."

"Blast you, Dan."

"Cats! Aren't cats real?"

"Funny, isn't it? When you say something's real you instinctively mean its something outside yourself, so that to prove real's real you have to make yourself more unreal?"

"Keep that for your sermons."

"Man, you're hysterical. You haven't thought this over calmly. Why, when you marry your wife'll keep on waking up in the night to see if you're dead. Guess she wouldn't like the idea of sleeping with a dead man, Dan."

"Get."

"Oh well, perhaps it's for the best. If some search party had stumbled on your silly little shack, they'd have wanted to lynch you, I expect. Then it would have been my Christian duty to tell them that I love you, and they'd have lynched both of us."

"I'm not smiling now, father."

"You . . . you Pussy Lover from Swineville. Would you believe it? This has to happen to me when I'm kidnapped. And if I've got to get out of this filthy car and bloody well walk home, you can let me add that it'll be a . . . pleasure, Danny-boy, to smell your exhaust."

NO COMMENT

"A clergyman has abolished marriage fees for regular practising Christians . . . Father Spargo attacked non-churchgoing young couples . . . they arrive wanting hymns, organ and choir because 'It is nicer' and because 'There is no aisle in the chapel to walk down' or because 'You get a good do at the church'" *Sunday Sun*, January 30.

"In September, 1965, the Vatican Council passed the long-awaited Declaration on Religious Liberty . . . Maltese religious venom was illustrated in an incident on Friday, when a visiting Scottish clergyman, aged 83, collapsed in the street. A Maltese monk called to the scene declined to assist because, he said, he would get into trouble with his superiors. . . . Disappointingly for the Church, however, there is still complete silence from the Iron Curtain countries, at which the Declaration was primarily directed. Conceivably, the Communists are waiting to see how seriously the Catholics are taking their new philosophy on their own territory"—*Sunday Times*, January 30.

"The Italian Communist Party was pleased, he said, that the Roman Catholic Church in its Council had followed the same ideals which have guided the Communists in their struggles"—*Guardian*, January 27.

SHEEP

You are sensible.
You do not dwell for long
on unpleasing topics.
You shut your eyes
to the aimlessness
and futility of life.
Hiding behind
moral principles,
snug in secure hypocrisy
you condemn
those who transgress
your laws,
your commandments
which you yourselves
keep
because you have never
questioned.
Never having doubted
you have not come to terms
with yourselves
and your belief
is valueless
convention.
But I question
against my will:
thus I am lost
without the security
of conventional morality.
Do not condemn us,
you unthinking
conventional
sheep.

Helen Tolmen

LETTERS

Lie-Detectors

I NOTE that there is a current campaign to do away with lie-detectors. Opponents argue that the device can invade privacy and incriminate the innocent. *And it can.* But much of the trouble lies in the stubborn refusal of intellectuals to evaluate its usefulness.

Cross-reference situations in which clear and definite speech, or unmistakable overt actions, are concerned are precisely where the

lie-detector performs best, but is often avoided—indeed usually avoided. Why? The best way to test the lie-detector thoroughly would be to force its use in such situations and have college and graduate groups of trained observers note its effectiveness. Then other uses could be discussed and approved rationally.

For seven years now I have been advocating the cross-reference use of the lie-detector. I have found that if one brings up this subject one often kills conversation completely while everyone scurries for home. Or he may be ignored, or near extremely silly "quickie" arguments which bypass it as discussion moves merrily on. A few intelligent people may agree with him when safely away from the group. How can you effect social improvement in a society like that?

It may be that in our society the lie-detector does more harm than good, but if so that is the fault of the society rather than the machine.

One cannot tell what to do in the future until one has a clear and objective view of the present. And this seems to be precisely what our society is trying to avoid. It is useless to lecture on what to do in prisons, Vietnam, Selma, or anywhere else till one knows what is, in fact, going on now. Even prejudiced mendacious reports from opposing sides do not automatically bring truth as a result of conflict. And no realizable standards of conduct are possible without honest observation of facts.

Suppressing the lie-detector is no solution.

I am curious to know if this will be printed. It seems to require almost fabulous moral courage to present these particular ideas—though I have never heard a rational, sensible rejoinder to them.

FREDERICK W. SPIESS
(California)

Is It Worth It?

IN A RECENT B.B.C.1 Broadcast we were told about and shown the enormous wealth in houses, castles and huge estates owned by the Spanish family of the Albas, whose ancestry can be traced in Spanish history several centuries. The highlight of the programme at least to me was a shot of the Duchess of Alba herself, decorating a tawdry statue of the Virgin Mary with tiaras and necklaces of valuable stones that must have been worth a small fortune. These were later carried through the streets to the adoration or pious wonder of the populace in this stronghold of Roman Catholicism. A caption to the programme informs us that Spain is approaching the end of an era, but after witnessing this display of religious wealth and sheer stupidity one can hardly believe it. It seems to me that the Spanish people are as purblind today as when in conjunction with the Roman Catholic Church they drove out the Moors, the only people who ever brought to Spain a tincture of religious toleration and civilization. After years of argumentation with Catholics on these matters one begins to doubt if our efforts are of any avail—"what fools these mortals be"—to echo the words of an old time philosopher. If this is what they want then let them stew in their own juice. One wonders how many Freethinkers have thought the same.

E. MARKLEY
(Nice)

Constructive Love

I AM GLAD to inform you that 'my hierarchy' has shown enough constructive love towards the Maltese Labour Party. In fact, on the occasion of Malta Independence, as a show of good will, the Bishops withdrew the "Interdict"; and just a few days ago the leader of the MLP in a public meeting held here at Rabat, declared that THERE IS NOW PEACE with the Church. The hierarchy for their part declared that they would find no difficulty if the MLP were to publish the Vatican documents they claim they have in their possession and which are, they say, in their favour, if there were no difficulty on the part of the Vatican. This, evidently shows once more the good will of the hierarchy.

In my opinion the whole question lies in the fact that the MLP, being Socialist, is politically against the way of thinking of the Maltese nation, which is 99% Catholic. The former Maltese LP, under the leadership of the late Sir Paul Boffa, M.D., used to go hand in hand with the Church.

I am sure that there is not the least doubt about the good will of the Maltese Hierarchy; but "constructive love", in order to be really constructive, should be based on truth and justice.

G. M. PARIS, OP

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