

# FREE THINKER

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## PLANNED TAKING

"IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE THERE ARE MANY MANSIONS", we read in the Bible, and we can add, "on earth as it is in heaven", with the ungodly and godly alike paying for their upkeep. Anglicans are busy discovering that their cathedrals have been so badly neglected that the roofs and fabric are now in urgent need of repair. Appeals are being made to the faithful, and to the public at large, and many of us are being compelled to contribute through the rates. Take Chichester diocese as an example. Between 1954 and 1961 it spent over £450,000 on new churches and halls. The total cost of the building programme now in hand is £875,000. On top of this £289,000 has to be spent on repairing Chichester Cathedral. A Sussex Church Campaign to raise £1,289,000 (approximately £30,000 of which will come out of rates) has been launched by the Bishop, who writes,

I am sure that everyone, whether a member of the Church or not, will share our concern to see that the children and youth of the county shall have the opportunity of a Christian foundation to their lives . . .

He should not, I think, take so much for granted.

Many people, of course, even if they are not Anglicans, are in favour of preserving beautiful and historic buildings and churches. The people who are objecting to the compulsory levy (and there are Anglicans among them) are *not* vandals; indeed many belong to the National Trust or to similar organisations. The whole basis of their protest rests on the *enforcement* of the contributions to such funds, and on the fact that there is no clause by which anyone can "opt out" for reasons of conscience. They point out that no one can now be ignorant of the need and that **there is absolutely nothing to stop anyone who wishes to do so from contributing voluntarily.**

The legal position is this: the Local Authorities (Historic Buildings) Act 1962 empowered councils to contribute towards the repair or maintenance of a building which is situate in or in the vicinity of their area and which is included in a list of buildings of special historic or architectural interest. The crux of the matter may lie in the definition of *vicinity*. Certainly in Sussex this definition has been stretched beyond reasonable limits, and people who actually live nearer Guildford and in East Sussex are

having to contribute towards Chichester which is in West Sussex. The presence of a Diocesan House locally can constitute a powerful influence, and people who should know better talk about the diocesan boundaries as if they have some relevance outside the Anglican communion. Some ratepayers may even contribute twice; once through their local councils and again through the county councils. Councils plead that £1,000 for five years is only a mere £200 a year, but people living in cottages without WCs, or in roads that need mending, suggest that they know better ways to spend the money.

It is argued that this is "not a religious matter"; but can we really believe that if the Cathedrals were in the hands, say, of the Communists, or even the Humanists, or just less orthodox Christians or Mormons, councils would be so anxious to help rebuild them? Wouldn't they then suggest that the organisation which had the primary use of the building should pay for its upkeep? And although anyone who can get to a cathedral city can enjoy the view outside, very often weekend visitors are prevented from studying the interior because of the many services held there. As likely as not some gentleman in a long skirt will frown or "shush" you, even if you creep round the side to look at the windows while the congregation is carrying on in the middle. Nor can we ignore the fact that the main reason for the Anglicans wanting their churches preserved is not so that we can enjoy the architecture, but so that the buildings shall provide a magnet for their own particular anti-RC, anti-Jewish, and certainly anti-Secular Humanist sermons. And Anglicans have no objections at all to taking money from Roman Catholics, Jews and Secular Humanists in order to keep those sermons (as well as the Cathedral) going.

If Anglicans can persuade (or just force) others to help pay their housekeeping expenses, they will have all the more money to spend on increasing the benefits of the clergy (thereby attracting more men into the profession), or on the mission fields overseas. If only indirectly, then, many of us are being compelled to support the preservation, not just of historic and beautiful buildings, but of a monster institution whose teaching we deplore as false and unethical. Thanks, of course, will be given not to the ratepayers, but to the Christian God!

Money for such campaigns comes in from all directions. In shillings from OAPs, or in thousands from firms like Tamplins Breweries, W. H. Smith & Son and many charitable institutions. **In one year in our diocese, £23,146 of this money was spent on publicity alone.** Multiply that by similar campaigns all over the country and you get some idea of what is going on. And I mean all over the country. Exeter wants £300,000 before 1972, and Bristol the

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: STOP PRESS

same sum. Coventry Cathedral (which costs £100 a day to run) was hoping for £65,000 for a refectory and lecture hall, but has had to abandon the plan. Guildford is still hoping to be able to pay off its debts with £160,000 before 1968. And so on and on . . .

Well, what do we suggest if we don't actually want the cathedrals to collapse in a heap? (Mind you, if roofs are a luxury we cannot afford in a world where millions are starving, lawn-filled skeleton churches can be very attractive, and lose little architectural value.) But couldn't the tourists visiting cathedrals be expected to pay, as they are in many other countries? And what about suggesting to Anglicans that before planning to spend a million pounds on indoctrinating (sorry, "feeding") the minds of illiterate Africans and Asians with the bloodthirsty scriptures that have caused such havoc, they should first accept full responsibility for the commitments they already have on hand over here? Clergymen (like the Rev McIntyre, vicar of St Cuthbert's, Wells) deserve our sympathy when they meet opposition to their plans to sell their church valuables in order to pay their bills themselves. We wish there were more like him. And Anglicans who sign the petitions

against the iniquitous levy earn our respect. But what can Secular Humanists do now? Few people seem to realise it, but everyone who is on the electoral roll is entitled to go and examine the councils' accounts when the auditors are at work. They are free to object to expenditure if they wish, and, if they can afford it, they can take their objections as far as the High Court. However ratepayers who try to protest by withholding the shillings involved from their rate payments may find that the Rating Officer would rather pay the missing sum than go to the trouble of chasing it up. In Lincolnshire an engine driver protested about a local £500 donation to the Cathedral, withheld 8d from his rates, and, after 8 weeks, paid up with 3s court fees, 2s bailiff's expenses. Christians have suggested that "principle" is only involved if the sum of money to be paid to a bad cause is large; but then their idea of morality has often been hard to follow. The Christian press accuses the objectors of a "narrow sectarianism, which includes atheism at its lowest ebb". But you can't so easily dispose of the objections to this "PLANNED TAKING" by the Anglicans. As Florence Nightingale said, "It is the universal dishonesty in religion, as in trade, which is really dangerous".

THE EDITOR

## O YE OF TOO MUCH FAITH

Oswell Blakeston

STUART LAUDER, the author of *Disorderly House* (Longmans, 21s), describes his novel as "a serious fantasy of clericalism run wild". It is undeniably an extraordinary book, compulsively readable. There is a large, sinister convent with fourteen nuns—spastics and morons and dupes—who are completely under the domination of a formidable old Prioress. Some of the sisters, as penance, are starving themselves to death, and others survive on a diet of water and stinking fish and sprouting potatoes. In the cellars, the nuns say, the rats steal coal to feed the fires of hell.

### Logical Conclusion

The really awful thing is that a devout woman like Mrs Bates, who is sent to the convent as a spy by an intellectual priest, can argue that the nuns have a case. There is no sanitation in the convent, but who ever held that many of the saints were concerned with such matters and surely God can see under the dirtiest epidermis? And if one has to speak to many of the sisters like a backward mother who talks the same language to her children, who ever promised that all the saints have a high IQ? Can one not, if one is a Catholic, look on the cold comfort convent as a sanctified Belsen? The nuns have a right, if it is their rule, to reject neatness and charm and joy, and should one not, therefore, give the pest-ridden place the dignity of a mediaeval set-up for some stone-hearted film by Ingmar Bergman? Is it not conceivable, Mrs Bates asks herself, that in the timeless treadmill of the dreadful nunnery the inmates have simply carried their religion to its logical conclusion?

Mr Lauder presents this horror with maximum effect—the horror that all the filth may be permissible in the eyes of the faithful. But, without spoiling this impact, he adds other dimensions in order to give impetus to a gripping story

### Reason in Vain

At the outset Mrs Bates tries to reason with the nuns.

Are they sure that they are not starving themselves through spiritual arrogance? She finds that the sisters answer her with curiously disturbing improvised texts. Then why is it impossible to see a copy of the rules of the Order? Mrs Bates, in spite of considerable resistance, sneaks her way into the enclosure and finds evidence of banned cults of the Black Madonna and the Holy Feet. She learns that the nuns make their confessions to the Prioress and simply receive a general absolution from the bishop once a year. She also discovers to her horror that the Prioress has turned the Mother of God into a sort of Kali the Destroyer, and then, in the name of The Virgin, she promises many of the nuns eternal damnation.

### Rheum at the Top

When Mrs Bates reports to the higher authorities, she learns that the bishop, who loves his port and pheasant, is really only concerned with avoiding unpleasant publicity; and he mentions significantly that the Prioress is wealthy in her own right and that, although the altar cloths at the convent are green with mould, the Reverend Mother has given an altar to the cathedral. The intellectual priest, following the bishop's lead, now simply makes evasive jokes to prove the low basic metabolism of the priesthood.

Poor Mrs Bates begins to have nightmares about an enclosed community which incubates a hideous disease. It's all very well, she thinks, to say that misery answers the nuns' needs; but these wretched women, who see their guardian angels dressed as nuns ("except for the wings, of course"), are heretics and murderers. In fact Mrs Bates herself, when she decides that the top clerics are simply a plush Institute of Spiritual Directors and that she must act on her own, is nearly murdered in front of the Prioress.

The book gathers momentum, and is a real cliff-hanging thriller. But it is so much more, for Mr Lauder has a choice command of all macabre religious detail. He can even tell us about an Order in Genoa which prints religious toilet paper.

## SUNSHINE AND NO BREAD

Elizabeth Collins

BEHIND THE SMILING FACES of the organ-grinders, ice-cream sellers, and vendors of souvenir trinkets, there lies an aspect of Sicilian life that tourists rarely see. *Poverty in Sicily*, subtitled "A Study of the Province of Palermo", by Danilo Dolci (Penguin Books, 8/6) with an introduction by Aldous Huxley, contains 8 plates and is translated from the Italian by P. D. Cummins. In this book of absorbing interest the author presents a moving, human and almost terrifying account of the battle against unemployment, poverty and illiteracy in Sicily, once the flower of Greek civilisation. Gone are the days when enemy prisoners could win life and freedom by reciting the poems of Euripides to their Sicilian captors!

Aldous Huxley's introduction (originally written for the 1959 edition) gives a brief analysis of the whole wretched situation, as well as a summary of Dolci's struggle trying to solve the chronic unemployment question. He brings the man and his ideas vividly before us, paying tribute to his unselfish humanity and courage. As an architect Dolci first visited Sicily on holiday in 1952 to look at the ancient Grecian remains, but seeing the miserable plight of the people he felt impelled to try to do something about it. He therefore determined to settle in the island and make an attempt to alleviate their lot. To help him in this he had only his architectural and engineering degrees, and courage and vision. Those who read this book, and it is hoped that all who are interested in human affairs will do so, will realise how desperately the two last were needed.

### Charity doesn't begin

Dolci was absolutely against such stop-gap and degrading methods as charity and doles. He felt that the prime need was work to restore dignity and self-reliance in the people and to prevent further moral and mental deterioration; secondly, education to fit them to take their place in the modern world. Then there was the Mafia—still operating in spite of the Anti-Mafia Commission set up by the Italian Government. (After two years this Commission has just issued a critical Report implying that through political pressure by the Mafia on Sicilian Courts their crimes largely go unpunished.)

A preface by Dolci explains the object of the book:

An invitation to the reader to join in a discussion whose aim is to arrive at the root causes of all this unemployment.

For which purpose the book is divided into two parts.

*Part I* consists of personal stories related by the people themselves: of their day-to-day lives—how they manage to live when unemployed—what they feel about the state of affairs that obliges them to live as they do—where the blames lies. These stories are related in dialect and remain unaltered except for translation into our more familiar speech. A description of the Cortile Cascino district of Palermo some 200 yards from the Cathedral is typical of living conditions in the poorer areas. Damp overcrowded houses—dilapidated hovels—large families packed into one small room, no sanitation or water, floors of beaten earth or broken tiles and often alive with cockroaches. Health authorities do little to improve the situation in spite of the prevalence of disease and malnutrition. Owing to defective pipes 50 per cent of the city's water is contaminated, while some 15,000 families (approx. 60,000 persons) live in makeshift shacks.

*Part II* is really a statistical-sociological survey consisting of answers given to certain questions by a cross-section of unemployed persons in order to elicit their views and opinions. Over 500 landless agricultural workers between

the ages of 18 and 50 in Palermo Province were questioned. All were chance encounters in piazzas and village streets, waiting about in hope of jobs turning up. Days worked in a year by each man averaged 99.4. In the city of Palermo another 100 were picked at random from the crowd who daily stand outside the Labour Bureau. Working days averaged by them in a year: 121.7.

In simple words they were asked how they lived when unemployed? Did they think God willed unemployment? What ought the political parties in Italy to do about it? Is the ballot secret? And what should they themselves do to improve the situation? Care was taken never to interrogate them in the presence of another person as that might have prevented their true feelings being expressed. Recorded exactly as they were received, these replies give some insight into the lives and minds of those concerned. Many make repetitive and monotonous reading and might perhaps have been summarised. A picture of sheer despairing poverty emerges, with disease, illiteracy, organised crime and no proper work. Of de-forested and eroded hills, vanishing topsoil, little water and above all most emphatically, a crying need for birth control. These people can neither house, feed, nor clothe themselves, yet continually increase already large families. Superstitious practices and witchcraft are widespread. The problem of illiteracy will remain so long as employers prefer child labour at 400 lire a day to that of adults of 1,000 lire. Hence grown men stand idle while young children work long hours and have no schooling.

### Christian civilisation

In the clerico-feudal society operating in Sicily today life is cheap and of no account except as ballot-fodder. At election times, it is said, "priests and a few ladies and gentlemen go along and hand out packets of *pasta* to win votes for the Christian Democrats". "Monarchists give out tickets entitling the holder to a kilo of free *pasta*." People vote as they are told to through fear. Some of those questioned declared that Church and Mafia stick together, the former to secure votes, the latter for protection. One grievance is that after the war *Mafiosi* were installed in fiefs (estates) by landowners to stop the Peasants' Movement acquiring land. These are a primitive people with an intense land-hunger. Conversations with some of the small farmers are enlightening, and that with the shepherd boy Leonardo (p 248) is charming but pathetic, in contrast to the *cassetta* torture story (p 236) reminiscent of the Inquisition. The custom of blood-shedding to avenge an offence against "honour" results in more blood being shed—a vicious circle. Time, legislative change, Government goodwill, with co-operation on the part of Sicilians themselves, are needed if conditions are to be radically improved.

Italy is considered to be a highly civilised country and also headquarters of the wealthy Catholic Church, which claims to be the guardian of morals and to control education in that country. Reading this book with statistics so ably compiled by Danilo Dolci and his helpers, one cannot escape the conclusion that efforts on the part of authority to end this state of affairs are so half-hearted as to savour of complicity. Only a brave and dedicated man could persist in the task Dolci has undertaken in face of frustration and difficulties innumerable. *Poverty in Sicily* should be of interest to all Humanists and Freethinkers, and incidentally surely stands as an indictment of the much proclaimed benefits of Christian civilisation.

## NEWS AND NOTES

**Eminent Humanists** are again in the news: Lady Wootton of Abinger has been appointed Chairman of the National Parks Commission, and succeeds Lord Strang. And E. M. Forster, novelist, Companion of Honour doctor of Aberdeen, Cambridge, Hamilton College and Leyden (among other places) has been presented with Italy's highest award for literary or artistic merit, the *medaglia d'oro*.

NSS member Christopher Catlin is again exhibiting at the Royal Academy and has already sold one of his sketches.

### The Blackpool Grundies

A "BLACKPOOL POSTCARD PANEL" which has no official status or legal backing, is busy censoring designs for postcards sent in voluntarily by publishers. Mr Frank Holland, chairman for the last 8 years, says,

"We accept good, broad humour—the slapping of fat ladies and so on. But we object to anything pornographical or sexual or which ridicules the Church. Our decisions are favourably looked on by the police." (*Daily Mail*, 30/5/66.)

### Challenge to the BBC

JO GRIMOND wrote in the *Sun* recently, "Let us not be afraid of pressing discussion programmes to the point where they begin to bite. Let us have more experts as interviewers, and more committed Christians, pacifists and Marxists too . . ." And what about some committed Secularists, Mr Grimond, and some "biting" criticism of Christianity?

### And talking of Marxists . . .

DR GUSAV HEINEMANN in a Bundestag debate has said that "Jesus Christ did not die against Karl Marx, but for him". The Maltese *Faith* reports that the communist government of Czechoslovakia is allowing the RC Church to open two more seminaries as the result of private talks between Church and state officials. The *Catholic Herald* reports further Catholic successes in Yugoslavia, where the government has reached an agreement on the renewal of diplomatic relations with the Vatican. The government guarantees to "give full force" to existing laws which permit RCs to run seminaries, have a free press and freedom of worship. (There is no further news from the democratic British government as to when *our* children will be granted the freedom *not* to worship.) In his parish magazine, a Staffordshire rector, the Rev. Cartmel, has written,

"Communists are anti-God and anti-human, but despite this, by some strange powers, God is using them. It is quite clear from the Testaments that Communism is working by God's will. Communists are agents in God's hands."

So there . . .

### All right, no meat, but what about no veg. ?

A RECENT EDITION of BBC TV "Look" showed speeded-up films of plant growth which were really breathtaking and reminded us that "all life is one"; the tempo of plant life is just very much slower than that of animals. In the *Sunday Times* critic Maurice Wiggin wrote, "If I were a vegetarian this would have put me right off my feed. . . ."

### Second thoughts

HAVING BATTERED Henry Cooper into a facial pulp, Cassius Clay, the leader of the Black Muslims, said, "I'm going home to bed. I hate to spill blood, it's against my religion".

In Viet Nam two monks cut themselves with razor blades above the heart to write letters of protest in blood to President Johnson. At least it was their own blood.

### Keeping the pot boiling

IN A RECENT "Ten to Eight" BBC item, Beverley Nichols told us that he is all for "saying the Lord's Prayer as often as possible". So presumably he wouldn't suggest that it was his "Father in Heaven" who led him into the temptation to write a book "in defence" of Somerset Maugham's wife, Syrie. A book which, if she loved her husband, she would surely have hated, and which, if she did not has no purpose. Malcolm Muggeridge paid tribute to Somerset Maugham at a Foyles Literary lunch, which may be the nicest thing he has done recently in public. He seems at last to have climbed down off the fence from which he has been attacking most people—into the Christian camp, but not, it seems, into their entirely open arms. "Christian leaders were cheating", Mr Muggeridge said recently, "if they thought they could form an alliance with humanism, which only really means self-indulgence . . ." It is still not clear exactly who he expects to agree (or disagree) with him.

### Women! (and men!)

SOMEBODY HAS RECKONED that 70 per cent of Billy Graham's congregation are women, but at least there is no suggestion that Mrs Graham is going to say anything. The Italo-Peruvian Insurance Company is prepared "to exalt the virtues of Italian womanhood" and insure the virginity of an Italian girl for £570 (for a premium of 13s 5d a month) which he father is to pay. A report *Women in Medicine* (Office of Health Economics, 35s) reveals that more than 2,000 "housewife" doctors in Britain want to find part-time medical posts but cannot do so. Others have some work, but not enough. Meanwhile the nation is facing a serious staff shortage in medicine. When will our society begin to learn how to make the best use of its woman-power? The Church of Scotland has decided to admit women as elders on the same terms and conditions as men. There are at present 48,000 male elders serving the Church. Billy Graham (*Evening Standard* reports) has told men and women that he doesn't believe that there is "total sexual satisfaction outside Jesus Christ . . ." which I suppose settles everything.

### "Cashing in on death"

THIS WAS THE HEADLINE in the Stratford Express of May 20. Evidently some East London vicars have joined forces with undertakers to make hundreds of pounds on a funeral service racket. An Anglican vicar who is fighting the scandal said, "When the undertaker is informed of a death, he rushes around to the house and 'arranges' the funeral service with his own special vicar. The parish priest just doesn't get to hear of the matter . . ." Another vicar complained, "Since I came here last September I have buried only four people. At least 20 must have died . . ." But he didn't seem quite sure.

### Debate with the NSS refused

THE REV. ALAN JONES of St Catherine's Church, Leyton (*Independent* reports) has refused to take part in a public debate with the NSS on the subject of RI in schools. The C. of E. and the NSS (said Mr Jones) hold "entirely opposite points of view", and discussion "could add nothing further to either side". Perhaps not, but it would mean that both sides were heard.

### Uncivil attack

THE SIREN (monthly journal of the City of Leicester Division of the Civil Defence Corps) closes the first page of its June issue with (in italics as if a quotation) *Free-thinkers are generally those who never think at all*. No comment. KM.

## HOW FULL OF CANTUAR

F. H. Snow

HUMBUG is a very forthright colloquialism. My dictionary gives it as signifying imposition, pretence, sham. As I reflect upon the world about me and its works and ways, the word appears to characterise our most general predilection. As I see it, "leading up the garden" is regarded as an advantageous practice in most affairs, and honesty is less a matter of principle than of expediency.

### Everybody's doing it

Every trade has its tricks, and shopkeepers find artifice a valuable ally. Sales are very unethical, goods bought in for such occasions being sold without differentiation from genuine reductions. The aptitude of traders for showmanship is frequently to the public's detriment, alluring displays remaining intact and inferior goods served in their stead. Tailors' windows exhibit wonderful bargains from which the dummies may not be parted, glossy veneers hide furniture frailties, bogus panaceas beguile the unhealthy. The practice of misleading shoppers into conceiving false values by the marking of articles a unit less than target prices is widespread. The offering of a garment or pair of shoes at 99/11 or other penny-off figures is contemptible in intent to bamboozle. Agents for all kinds of business deem it important to keep snags "under the hat". Like priestly confessors, they don't disclose murky confidences—to the benefit of their bank accounts and the discomfiture of clients.

In the political sphere, dissimulation functions powerfully. Though we allow all opinions to be aired and all parties to stand for election, pledges go largely unredeemed and measures for urgent reforms are permitted to roost. The statesman who opposes party policy is obliged to conform with it or suffer political excommunication. Members consequently often hide their true views and tend to become legislative lackeys.

Socially, we excel at dissembling. Society would hardly hold together were candour to become general among friends. Lots of people would not want to know lots of other people if they could read their minds. To both congenial and uncongenial acquaintances one presents the smile and hand shake of ostensible amity, and returns insincere compliments for the like. A heavy discount is on expression of unconventional views, however honest. The virtual embargo on frankness finds few dissentients, and the normally unhypercritical connive at the maintenance of a hypocritical society.

### The sin game

It is in the religious field, however, that dissimulation—or, to use that forthright if unpleasant colloquialism, humbug—is most pertinacious. People go to church to get a "good" feeling. They don't know themselves and don't want to know themselves. It is much more comfortable to be mystically doped. Awkward questions such as those aroused by the utter inaction of a benevolent, all-knowing and all-powerful God, in face of atrocious happenings and appalling conditions here below, and atheisms's growing challenge to his dominion over the minds of men, are lulled in the narcotic atmosphere of religious devotion. The respectability associated with churchgoing conduces to humbug. In God's Houses it masquerades as righteousness with great success. People are sorrier for themselves than for their sins, and many who bow their heads and lift up their voices at divine service are prime dissimulators.

### Oldtime in new time

The Churches themselves, dedicated to the propagation of holy truth, are engaged in the dual job of presenting that "truth" differently and cozening believers into regarding it as unchanged. Driven to it by the progress of modern thought, they are attempting to align superstition with science by sheer chicanery. The Christianity of today is the Christianity of yore, they maintain. That God made everything in six days is as cardinal a truth as ever—only those days were many millions of years each. The faithful may therefore accept both the Darwinian theory of evolution and the biblical creation story.

That Christendom for nineteen centuries believed the creation days to be of ordinary duration, as indicated by the "evening and morning" ascribed to each in Genesis, is disregarded. Evolution has come to stay, God is in the sky, and the facts must be squared. That God might not be up there, or anywhere, because of the earth's vast evolutionary age gives the lie to his six days and therefore to the trustworthiness of Holy Writ and its testimony to His reality, can't be contemplated. The gullibility of the people had to be exploited, and the days stretched to embrace a thousand million years or more. The Churches judged that, having been well and truly indoctrinated when children, the great majority of believers would not see the absurdity and dishonesty of imputing great ages to periods bounded by sunset and sunrise, and realise that they were being humbugged by crafty theologians. How right they have proved themselves to be!

### Old Master

The Roman Catholic Church leaves the other Christian bodies cold in sophisticated effrontery. Her Enquiry Bureau is expert at mirage painting for adventurers in the land of make-believe, but has no time for objectively logical enquiries. Questions which, straightforwardly answered, would expose the weakness of her assumptions, are adroitly side-stepped. Some queries of this nature, insistently put by the present writer—necessarily *incognito*—have been consistently shelved. The Bureau aims to anaesthetise enquirers against sceptical pricks by omission and evasion, and plays heavily upon their assumed emotional credulity through the medium of booklets which affront intelligence. At Holy Communion, one is instructed, the priest places the body of Jesus on the tongue of each communicant. Apparently the Bureau doesn't credit its clientèle with a sense of humour. "God wrote the Bible", one is also blandly informed, even though men inscribed the ocean of words comprising it. That such bilge finds swallowers in this day and age is surely the greatest of all marvels.

### No hobnob with humbug

Can Secularism be entirely dissociated from the bunkum and artifice that is so general and which is so potent an ally of religion? Under its modern title of Humanism, it has developed a tendency to compromise with cant, and permit the ideals that inspired its foundation to be obscured. Congenial "dialogue" with the enemies of reason is outmoding direct challenge of superstitious belief, and tacitly condoning intellectual dishonesty. If the Best of all Causes is to deserve that designation, it must cease to hobnob with humbug.

## WINDOW ON THE WORLD

Otto Wolfgang

HENRI GUILLEMIN has just published a study on Jean Jaurès (*L'Arrière-Pensée de Jaurès*, Gallimard), the socialist pacifist, shot before the outbreak of the first World War. Guillemin, who had previously published a study on Flaubert, is mainly interested in the attitude of his heroes towards religion, and Jaurès who believed in a "miraculous fusion of religion and socialism" preached "the bifold nobility of Christianity and Revolution".

In the *Nouvel Observateur* the reviewer remarks that for millions of years "God" had not found it necessary to incarnate himself and tell us what is good for us, and men go on living without taking much notice of it all.

Should ever monsignor Spellman take it into his head to make a deal with the leaders of Europe's socialism they might together admire American policy in Vietnam and St Domingo or Latin America. Cardinal Spellman who thirty years ago blessed Franco would still remain true to form, whilst Messrs Wilson and Mollet would not.

Well, I'm not so sure. Wilson admits the "nobility of Christianity" but he hates Revolution. In Rhodesia where native opposition to White Supremacy has hardly started to be organised, he professes concern for the Negro; but in the Portuguese colonies where the armed struggle for liberation has begun, he feels no such compunction for the rights of the natives; their right of self-determination like that of the Vitenamese people is for Wilson and Stewart nothing else but "Communist subversion".

### Church and Politics

In his *Revue Internationale du Socialism* (June 65) the editor, Lelio Basso, the Italian Socialist, exposed the double character of religion as "a prop for the maintenance and defence of capitalist society" whilst trying to faster among the masses of the believing warkers continued confidence in the churches, married with a collaboration between Government and Church through their political exponents and, *in extenso*, Communist suport for a nebulous "dialogue" (*La Raison*, April).

In his "Introduction" Basso wrote:

A policy of compromises and concession will never lead to more progressive tendencies within the Church: the more the laity retreats and yields, the more the Church will proclaim her theocratic claims and demands.

However, modern church finds herself between the horns of a social dilemma with the lower clergy gradually carried away by the social necessities of the struggle of the masses, whilst the princes of the Church are sticking to the secular rulers of yesteryear with whose destiny theirs is intricately tied up. The most telling examples is Spain where priests have even joined demonstrations sharing the reward of broken skulls with other restive people.

"A clandestine fight is legal where the authorities abuse their power", declared a document signed by 62 Spanish chaplains and addressed to Msgr Guerra Campos, Secretary to the Episcopal Conference of Spain. "We consider the legal and political order that exists in Spain as in contradiction to the political doctrines of the Church and therefore declare that the common weal does not justify maintenance of this order."

And on March 16th, 150 priests submitted another petition to Msgr Gregorio Modrego, Archbishop of Barcelona, expressing "painful perplexity" at the continued silence of the Hierarchy in the face of police suppression of "the most elementary rights of the human individual such as the right of association, of assembly and information" (quoted from *Libertad para España* of April).

### How Far Can Believers Go ?

In view of the rising wave of revolt amongst Catholics, the champions of the Dialogue believe they have an argument in their favour. Lelio Basso, after his sober analysis of the position, comes to the somewhat astonishing conclusion that although the socialist movement cannot come to terms with the other side "on the basis of an impossible conciliation or an ideological synthesis, it is even more impossible through the open hostility of traditional anti-clericalism". Given the social reality, "contacts with Catholics offer themselves only social struggles on the same territory". Here we meet "restrained minorities" behind which there exist "immense possibilities".

This, therefore, is the justification for the dialogue and a policy of compromise which was declined at the beginning of the article. This policy would result in *de facto* support for the reactionary forces, that is permitted to hide behind a minority of sincere believers, who, it is hoped, will one day grow into a majority. There is no basis for this pious belief, since the majority of believers are brain-washed conformists, subdued by fear and superstition which we cannot remove from outside. The belief in the mystic development of the restrained minority and the mechanical emancipation from their religious obsession is a piece of unrealistic and wishful thinking. We must always remember that no reactionary movement—Fascism, Nazism, Franco and the Church—could get a mass basis without the claim of a social façade. *It is our social task to unmask the forces of reaction*, to show the real distortion behind the popular camouflage.

It is not we who are in a dilemma but they and we have to make the best use of their disarray by telling the restive believers that what they object to is in fact the essence of Religion and not the mistaken attitude of this or that individual.

Fear engenders hatred—as exemplified in communist-baiting and anti-semitism—and this erects a separating wall within the "popular front". Led by Garaud, the French Communists already had a dialogue with the Church; and yet, when it was shown that in the last presidential elections Mitterand, the candidate of the Left, had received the votes of the Communists too, this made him untenable in the eyes of the Catholic Left who previously had supported him.

The precondition to a united front with progressive Catholics is that first their confidence in the truth and righteousness of their religious doctrines and the good intention of the Vatican Council is shattered. Only then will it become possible to direct their opposition from individuals whom they consider merely misguided to the system as such—despite its claim of divine sanction.

### The Oberammergauntlet

The next staging of the traditional "Passion" play in Oberammergau is due in 1970. In order to comply with the Vatican Council ruling, protagonists of reform wish to amend the various anti-semitic references in the play. This however, is hotly opposed by the traditionalists who have always considered Jew-baiting part of their religion.

The rate of RC priests no longer living in celibacy grows. According to *Sued-deutsche Zeitung* (16.10.65) this resulted in the suspending of 4,000 priests in France, 15,000 in Italy and at least double that number in the rest  
(Continued foot of next page)

## FREETHINKER

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Telephone: HOP 0029

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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.

### OUTDOOR

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

- Humanist Housing Association, Sunday, July 10th, 3 p.m., Blackham House, 35 Worples Road, Wimbledon. Garden Party.  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, June 19th, 11 a.m.: Dr JOHN LEWIS, "Can Science Justify the Moral Law?"  
Unity Theatre, 1 Goldrington Street, London, NW1. "Inherit the Wind" by ROBERT E. LEE and JEROME LAWRENCE. Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 7.45 p.m. until July 17th. Tickets 3/6, 5/- and 7/6. Members only (membership 7/6 per year). Box office, EUSTon 5391.  
West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, E11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.  
World Union of Freethinkers, International Congress, Conway Hall, London, September 1st-5th. Interpreters and other helpers urgently required. Please contact Mr C. Bradlaugh Bonner, 23 Streathbourne Road, London, S.W.17. Telephone: BALham 3508.  
Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.e. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

### THEATRE NOTE

CHARLES LEWSEN is to present his entertainment *Red Noses for me* at the Cochrane Theatre Southampton Row, London, W.C.1. on June 17th and 24th at 12.45 p.m.

He sings a number of familiar Music-hall Songs, but this show is by no means a "send-up" of an institution which flourished in Victorian and Edwardian England. Mr Lewsen's commentary is obviously based on wide reading and research.

Readers who spend their lunch-time in central London should take advantage of the opportunity to see this show for a modest 2s. 6d.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

LUNCHEON - WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY AT  
THE BRADLAUGH STATUE - PUBLIC MEETING

## CENTENARY RALLY

### NORTHAMPTON

SUNDAY, JULY 17th

Speakers include:

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER      DAVID COLLIS  
REGINALD PAGET, QC, MP      DAVID TRIBE  
Dr DAVID KERR, MP      HECTOR HAWTON

Transport from—

BIRMINGHAM (Mr W. Miller, 62 Warwards Lane, Birmingham 29. Telephone: Selly Oak 1121)  
LONDON (Mr W. McIlroy, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone: HOP 2717)  
LEICESTER (Mrs Evans, 18 The Brianway, Leicester)

## REPORT OF THE THOMAS PAINE "RIGHTS OF MAN" EXHIBITION IN NOTTINGHAM

"WHY NOTTINGHAM?" asked the young local reporter, as Robert Morrell and Christopher Brunel (Secretary and Chairman respectively of the Thomas Paine Society), arranged the numerous exhibits from their own private collections for the first exhibition of the year, which commemorates the 175th anniversary of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. There were two answers: first, Robert Morrell lives in this lively Midlands town with its radical and free-thought traditions; the second reason reveals a little-known aspect of Paine's early life: while an exciseman in nearby Grantham, he wrote *A Letter Concerning the Nottingham Officers*, about the working conditions of his fellow Excise Officers. Regretably, no copy of what is doubtless Paine's first work has yet come to light.

Here was an important aspect of the exhibition—it not only aimed to tell visitors of Paine's life and his great work, *Rights of Man*, but also to stimulate research into his life and times. Opening the exhibition, Arthur J. Statham emphasised that *Rights of Man* had many lessons for today's world.

The exhibition started with background material to the period in which Paine wrote, the results of the activities of John Wilkes and the shattering reactions this side of the channel to the French Revolution. Valuable editions of *Rights of Man* lay alongside copies that had obviously been passed from hand to hand, their contents being absorbed by countless men and women, struggling to make Britain a democracy. A special display of token coins of the 1790s reflected the stormy strife between the radicals and the supporters of privilege. A final showcase displayed pictures and details, many on colourful jugs, of the iron bridge at Sunderland, which was built to Paine's design.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL

## WINDOW ON THE WORLD

(Continued from page 190)

of the RC world. This represents one twelfth of the French clergy and more than a quarter of all Italian priests; in America one Vatican source estimates that 5,000 priests (out of a total of 58,600) have exchanged their cassocks for wedding rings.

*Newsweek* (April 25) reports that a group of 33 Brazilian priests, claiming support from "hundreds of colleagues", petitioned in January for relief from celibacy vows, as did 30 Italian prelates a few weeks later. However, last October the Pope made it clear that it was his intention "not only to conserve with all our force this sacred and providential ancient law but also to re-inforce its observance". In fact, celibacy is a man-made law, based on dogma rather than Scripture. Priests of the Old Testament were married and as late as AD 867 Adrian II, a married man, became Pope; only at the First Lateran Council in 1123 was marriage unequivocally forbidden for Roman Catholic clergy. Since marriage automatically leads to excommunication, "fallen" priests have to look for a job outside the Church which is very difficult for men who are unskilled and have learned nothing useful.

### COSMO GROUP

THERE WILL BE A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE COSMO GROUP, which exists to resist restrictive pressures on television and radio, at 7.30 p.m. on Friday, 17th June, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1. Further information from Adele Paul, Miranda, 1 Strawberry Vale, Twickenham (POP 5538)

## NSS CONFERENCE AND DINNER

**DR CYRIL BIBBY**, Principal of Hull College of Education, was Guest of Honour at the National Secular Society's dinner at the Talbot Hotel, Bradford, on May 28. Dr Bibby compared the present conditions with those of 1866 and noted that most of the NSS aims are nearer achievement today. However he regretted that this was an age of conformism. Too many people in authority were mealy-mouthed, and not prepared to speak up for their principles. Consequently this is a time when the secularist stream of humanist thought is particularly necessary.

Replying, **David Tribe**, President of the NSS, referred to the 19th century as a period of great intellectual vitality. It is easy to be a secularist today, persecution and violence are rare. But Billy Graham will be speaking to immense audiences, with his grossly simplified philosophy of "God said it; I believe it; that settles it!" Our message is that life is not so simple; there is no short-cut to a knowledge of the truth. Graham's assertion that there is one thing wrong with the world—sin—is the sort of irrationality which prevents the search for a real solution to problems.

**Mr Alec South**, a local Quaker, proposed a toast to the Bradford branch of the NSS and reminded us that the North had been the industrial mainspring of Britain. As a Quaker he felt he was not in any way removed from rationalist ideas, and he believed with us that this world was our one certain experience and we should live as well as we can in it.

**Mr F. J. Corina** replying said he was touched by the fact that the society was holding its Centenary conference in Bradford. Charles Bradlaugh had spoken in Bradford before the founding of the NSS in 1866, and it was a town which always had a lively intellectual life. The aim of the society was to make ordinary people count in public affairs.

The Annual Conference was held next day, and the Executive Committee's annual report was unanimously accepted and will be published in due course. Presenting the financial report, Mr W. Griffiths referred to ever-rising costs and appealed for more gifts and legacies.

Mr D. Tribe was re-elected President and Mrs E. Venton Vice-President unopposed. Mr W. Collins (Manchester) was elected Vice-President for the first time. The Executive Committee was re-elected *en bloc*.

**A Resolution urging the Government to reconsider its announced intention to raise the subsidy to church schools from 75 per cent to 80 per cent was passed. The Conference also passed resolutions on censorship, Sunday observance, family planning and the disestablishment of the Church of England.**

## LETTERS

**The Vatican, Australia and the Common Market**  
**AS A FORMER MEMBER OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**, my personal experience has taught me to regard it as the arch-enemy of Freethought. It is sad but true that too many people (including Humanists) tend to under-estimate the power of the Vatican. It took me 10 long years finally to tear myself away from it. In my early years, as my doubts grew, I tried to fight them. I lived in a chronic nightmare of the devil, and many a night I awoke in the cold sweat of fear. I finally made the break in Australia, where I observed the insidious practices of the Catholics. In Sydney I saw the Catholic Action newspaper continually slinging mud at the Labour Party and accusing it of uniting with the Communists. Pulpit sermons urged Catholics to give their primary votes to the (so-called) Democratic Labour Party, and their preference votes to the Liberal Country Party coalition.

My experience has taught me to be suspicious of everything the Catholics do, and where there is no definite proof of their intent, I find that, by watching a pattern, that intent becomes obvious. After the election of the Liberals, the first part of the pattern took shape. There was a priestly advisor appointed by the government on Immigration. A few months later hundreds of thousands of mostly unskilled Italians from the illiterate south of Italy poured into Australia. They were, of course, all carefully screened. I spoke to quite a lot of these simple people and the pattern became complete when they told me they had all been recommended by, amongst other people, their local parish priest.

Although it is four years since I left Australia, I am sure that there must be nearly a million Italians (and quite a lot of Spaniards) there now. This figure (multiplied by their traditionally large families) will make the Catholic Church a very powerful body in a few years time. No wonder the Vatican is against birth control.

It is not only through the confessional that the Vatican is aware of both Catholic and non-Catholic activities; they have a world-wide network of under-cover, bigoted agents, some in high places. Another significant pattern is the sudden overtures of peace with the protestant churches; if there isn't a Papal Nuncio in this country now, there soon will be. This is only a theory of mine, of course, as it is only a theory that the Vatican is trying to lull the protestants into a false sense of security before Britain enters the Common Market. And when Britain is in, the Vatican, which is a powerful influence in the Market, will have a much stronger platform for launching their subversion.

It is with all this in view that I am applying for membership of your Society. I am already a member of the RPA.

JOHN F. SIMPSON

### Bullights

**THE BBC HAS MADE A FILM** of a bull fight, *Matador*, which may be shown on TV. One hears a great deal about "Clean Up" TV and the lowering of morals, so let us hope all those who have been complaining will protest if this is shown. The bullfight is a vile spectacle of cruelty and moral degradation. It must breed indifference to cruelty and suffering. I have never been able to understand how people who pay lip service to "Blessed are the merciful" can then go to a bullfight, and in some cases take children.

L. STARLEY

## STOP PRESS!

**THE SIGNATURES** of Bertrand Russell, Lord Chorley, Lord Boyd Orr, Sir Julian Huxley and Brigid Brophy were among the 108 eminent signatures from 16 countries on an open letter to President Johnson, urging him to hold an independent enquiry into the case of Dr Arthur Kraus. In 1932 Dr Kraus, a professor of philosophy in what was then the City College of New York, planned a demonstration march of students to call attention to the rise of Fascism in Poland and Germany and to protest against the isolationist policy of the USA. Dr Kraus was dismissed and has spent 34 years trying to clear his name. The press conference on June 9th was called by Mr Blackham, Chairman of the BHA (who had had the most to do with collecting the signatures). Archbishop T. D. Roberts, SJ, and Father Corbishley were unfortunately detained and unable to support Lord Chorley, QC, a former honorary secretary of the Association of University Teachers, and Mr Blackham who presented the case and introduced Dr Kraus to the conference. Bertrand Russell had tape-recorded a message, referring to "one of the greatest scandals of our time" and hoping that the press would do all it could "to put right this glaring injustice which is a reflection upon us all". The open letter was then taken to the American Embassy.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717.