

FREE THINKER

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

FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,
September 8, 1967

THE FLOWER CHILDREN AT WOBURN ABBEY

IT WAS Saturday morning of the Bank Holiday weekend. In a fit of irrationalism I tossed a coin. Heads I was off to Woburn Abbey, the stately home of the Duke of Bedford, off to a 'three-day non-stop happening', off to the Festival of the Flower Children. Tails I was off to Bangor, to sit at the feet of the Himalayan mystic, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, listen to his words of spiritual wisdom and see if they would send me up in the clouds with the Beatles. I watched dispassionately as the battered George V penny spun in the air and zoomed swiftly to the floor. I picked it up. It was heads.

Off I drove, considering along the way impressions I had formed of the flower children from reading so much about them. I had read that they were uninhibited, drug-crazed, sex-mad youngsters. I was apprehensive that my bourgeois morals were in danger of corruption. I was prepared for the worst.

Unhippily garbed in black jeans, tee shirt and sandals, I arrived at the scene of activity. I bowed to flower power by donning two badges of friendship, a string of brown beads and an indispensable tinkling bell. Over a thousand of the lovely children were already there, although not all of them were what are conventionally known as children. Most of them were in their twenties. More than a few were in their thirties, some even in their forties. Several little toddlers helped to keep the age range a wide one. Real hippies or not, all counted as flower children for the duration of the festival. The scene was a splash of colour. The children had flowers in their hair; some had them painted on face, hands and even legs. Outfits were as garish and way out as the music. A group was on stage playing in the paroxysm of flower passion. More were to follow.

Most had names as strange as the sounds they made—Marmalade, Tomorrow, The Gass, Tangerine Peel, The Dream. Some of the acts were bizarre but not the less well performed.

Looking no doubt like a poorly disguised policeman on the hunt for drugtakers I wandered about among the beautiful children, my eyes sharply in search of happenings. They were few and far between. The children lay idly on the grass or strolled about admiring the flamboyant gear of others and being admired in return. It was all rather orderly, even familiar in parts. Around the scene were the tea bars, hot dog stands, ice cream vans, a mini Las Vegas with fruit machines. The children were taking it easy. Out of the thousands present less than a hundred were sufficiently lively or disposed even to dance. It was a Gaze-In and Relax-In as much as Love-In. It was all good clean fun as far as it went, but the spontaneity evoked by some continental carnivals was clearly lacking. Many of the children struck me as being inhibited rather than uninhibited, self-conscious rather than self-assured.

On the Saturday evening two priests, prominent in their dog collars, walked purposefully about the colour and noise talking to flower children here and there. The following day they were not to be spotted. Perhaps they had exchanged dog collar for beads, hanging cross for tinkling bell, sombre suit for hippy gear. Perhaps they had been converted to love.

It is a pity the festival was rather dull. Nevertheless, I thought it had the makings of a wonderful weekend. I can well understand the Duke and Duchess of Bedford saying, as each did on more than one occasion to press and television, "I think they're the nicest bunch of people I've ever seen in my life". When I think of the Mods and Rockers of a couple of years ago and more, and the Teddyboys before that, and the frequent outbreaks of violence that occurred when just a few of them came together, violence that often involved not only them but others who happened to be around at the time, I think to myself, give me rather the flower children any day. Despite the fact that thousands of youngsters from different occupations and social background attended the festival I never saw, in all the time I was there, any violence or even sign of impending violence.

Incidentally I got as hippy as I could in the same way as most of the children, on just a couple of shandies, an ice cream, a hot dog, and a sense of fun. I'm thinking of next year inviting Sir Cyril Black and Mrs Mary Whitehouse to join me. We should make quite a trio.

INSIDE

PECULIAR SECTS *Harry Lamont Speaking Personally*

FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH II: The Survival of Society
A. C. Thompson

TRUTH *Bernard T. Rocca, Sr.*

THE HUMANIST REVOLUTION *Peter Crommelin*

ANNOUNCEMENTS : BOOKS OF INTEREST

Harry Lamont

PEGULIAR SECTS**Speaking Personally**

THE DINGY SHED with its rusty tin roof stands in a quiet lane reached by a mean side street of forlorn terrace houses. On a board outside the chapel we read GOSPEL MISSION, with the details of services.

The preacher is a retired grocer, grim, taciturn, gaunt and determined. The fight against sin does not allow any relaxation. I attend a service on a cold, wet, dismal winter's evening. The heating is inadequate, so I keep my overcoat on. The lighting is poor, and I have difficulty in reading the small print in the hymn book. I sit in a far corner, hoping to remain unobserved. When the Reverend Phineas Bodkin is ready to start I count a congregation of fifteen, of whom seven are wizened crones, five children, one melancholy man and two very plain young women. I make bold to ask Phineas if he is ordained. He shoots a suspicious glance at me as he explains that in his case Reverend is a courtesy title.

Proceedings begin by a hymn that there will be glory when we look on the face of the Lord. A prayer follows, a long rambling tirade about the wickedness of the world and urgent need of redemption. We sing another hymn about rejoicing while bringing in the sheaves, but our lugubrious expressions denote more misery than joy.

Another prayer follows, all about the Second Coming. At any moment Gabriel will blow a trumpet in the sky to summon us to judgment, when the sheep shall be separated from the goats. The good will go to heaven and the bad to hell. We then intone a hymn about our anchor holding in the storms of life, after which Brother Bill Blogg goes out to testify, He was once the chief of sinners. He used to drink, gamble, swear, fornicate and bear false witness, but now he is saved, glory, alleluia, amen! When he has finished we stand and wail about the need of fighting the good fight with all our might.

"Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally."

The normal service lasts for an hour and forty minutes. I long to escape, but a prayer meeting follows, and I lack the moral courage to do a bunk.

In the north of England I heard of a sect called the Holy Rollers who met in a certain hall every Sunday

evening. I resolved to attend one of their meetings, but unfortunately arrived late. Six groups of ten persons stood in circles, holding hands and singing:

"Oh we are saved and sure of bliss,
All Satan's snares are sure to miss;
In heaven for all eternity
We'll play our harps with ecstasy."

On the platform stood a master of ceremonies who called out to me: "Are you saved, brother?" "No," I replied, whereupon a group leader led me to his circle where I joined hands and warbled the hymn.

For the prayer that followed we had to lie on the floor. When the spirit prompted them my companions rolled about. Some of them were buxom young women. It was hard to tell how much of the love was terrestrial and how much divine. I had to struggle hard to retain my chastity. When the first part of the service ended we moved to seats near the platform for the testimony. Everyone (except me) ascended the platform to testify that he or she had been very bad until salvation came and brought unspeakable bliss. As I tried to sneak out of the door a suave, smiling official stopped me and asked me to accompany him to his private room. Not wishing to hurt his feelings, I agreed and there he flopped to his knees to pray for me. I remained standing, feeling most embarrassed, but finally I too sought a kneeling posture. He prayed for an hour and then asked me soulfully if I were saved. "Yes," I lied, to end the torment, whereupon he called out "Praise the Lord" and other expressions of joy. I gave a false name and address and never went near the place again, but it remains on record that John Splurge was saved on a certain evening in November, 1935.

In Arizona I attended a service held in a snake pit. I stood on the edge watching the zealots who indulged in all sorts of wild antics, prancing and gesticulating as if demented. I heard occasionally a performer was bitten and even died, but that did not shake their faith that true belief rendered one immune.

Negroes are very fond of shouting out joyful exclamations during a service. Worked up to great fervour they will repeat hymns and prayers with terrific enthusiasm.

In London I came across a queer sect whose leader pretended to be Christ. He had about 50 adherents who contributed a weekly sum to keep him in comfortable idleness. He was an astute rogue who could preach a very convincing sermon. His chapel was a forlorn edifice in his back garden. The house stood at the end of a cul-de-sac and was very private. A board bore this notice: THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY REDEEMER. One evening in his study the Reverend Simon Shibboleth had imbibed freely. I ventured to ask him if he were really the Lord. "Thou hast spoken," he replied gravely. At that moment a poor woman came to the door to ask Simon to lay hands on her child who was very ill. He departed with alacrity.

In Madagascar there is a peculiar sect who place cups, saucers, plates, tea-pots and other articles on graves so that the spirits of the departed can come at night and enjoy a meal. It was my opinion that the food was consumed by wild animals, but the credulous were firmly convinced that the spirits had enjoyed a beano.

To those who say that the universal belief of primitive people in life after death proves the validity of such a concept, I reply that practically all children believe in fairies, but lose the belief when they grow up.

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, WC1
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19th, 8 p.m.

PUBLIC MEETING**THE DECLINE AND FALL OF
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Speaker: EMMETT McLOUGHLIN
Famous American ex-Priest and Author

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE
President, National Secular Society

Organised by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1
Telephone: 01-407 2717

FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH: II

A. C. Thompson

The Survival of Society

WHY does religion exist?

The thesis to be defended here is that religion functions as an instrumentality for the survival of society. The real basis of human morality is not the will of an unseen spirit, as theologians assert, but instead, the necessity for preserving the social structure in which each individual can interact with others and can enjoy a guarantee of his own rights in return for duty to respect the rights of others. This has been the actual principle of ethics which has guided all moral conceptions and conduct as long as humanity has existed, but it has never until recently been explicitly recognised and put into words. It is a principle which all people have necessarily practiced as long as they have inhabited the earth, whether they were able to verbalise it or not, however clearly or dimly they may have recognised it, because it is a logical necessity, logically imperative, logically inescapable. If any people at any time permitted the behaviour they approved to depart from this principle, they would have faced the breakdown of their society, and would have modified such approval with alarm and haste. Any race of people who persisted in ignoring this principle, if such a thing is conceivable, is now extinct.

One line of argument that religion is merely a tribalism practiced for achieving cohesiveness and solidarity of society may be stated as follows. Let us assume that some one of the world's many religions is true. Then it follows that all the others are false, or at least contain false doctrines. For the different religions contradict one another. It is common knowledge that there exist hundreds of religions and sects which proclaim conflicting doctrines and which cannot all be true. Christianity, for example, declares that God is in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Buddhism does not recognise this, and consequently if the doctrine of the Trinity is the truth, if that is the way God actually is, then Buddhism is false or at least lacks truth. Buddhists believe in Karma and rebirth. This doctrine is not accepted by Christians. Now if it is actually true that reincarnation does occur, then the Buddhist religion has the truth and Christianity is false. Christianity declares that Jesus Christ was or is God. Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism all deny this. Now either Jesus was or is God, or he was or is not; either Christianity is true and the other religions are false, or if some one of the other religions is true, Christianity is necessarily false. There is no other way about this. Hence, one religion may be true and the others false, or they may all be false, but they cannot all be true. No attempt is being made here to identify the one true religion; we are merely assuming that there is one. Then all the rest are false. Thus it can be proved that there do exist false religions. Then instead of asking why religion exists, we can ask why false religions exist; the latter question will serve our purpose as well as the former.

Now this question, why false religions exist, cannot be answered by Supernaturalism, for a valid theology can explain only the existence of the true supernatural belief, whichever one it is. The Social-Survival theory alone is the only ethical theory that has ever been proposed, in the whole history of philosophy, which can explain the existence of false religions. Intuitionism surely does not justify false religious belief and if it does lead to any false belief it is not to be trusted. Egoism or Hedonism cannot

supply a motive for accepting false beliefs. Utilitarianism offers no explanation why people should believe what is false, except possibly that the greatest number can be made happy with hymn-singing, festivals, feast-days and similar religious practices; but people could be made happy thus without connecting their celebrations and festivities with false doctrines. Pragmatism has no practical end for false belief. Kant would not wish to universalise falsehood.

In the scientific method of inquiry, it is recognised that a hypothesis is acceptable only if it can explain all the known relevant facts and is not contradicted by any known fact. Hypotheses which do not explain the facts are rejected. Hence the Social-Survival theory, as the only hypothesis ever offered in the history of the world which can explain this class of facts, alone deserves consideration. Of course, the Social-Survival principle explains human moral behaviours of many other classes than this, which other ethical doctrines fail to explain: among these are war, racial and national prejudice, tribalisms, indoctrination, censorship, crime and punishment, government, law, sexual standards, education, social welfare and customs of all sorts. In fact, the Social-Survival hypothesis can explain and can provide logical imperatives for all human moral conduct of every sort without exception; it is the only ethical theory which is completely universal in its application. From the standpoint of scientific methodology, this capacity for explaining the whole of social behaviour recommends the principle as at least an attractive working hypothesis and justifies the basic law of all social sciences, that all human social behaviour is directed towards the survival of the agent's society.

Of course, it is easiest to say that believers in false religions are simply mistaken. But this explanation will not do. There are too many variations of essentially similar religious doctrines, and it would be rather too much of a coincidence that so many different people have postulated the same sort of unreality in so many different ways. No, there must be a reason, a motive, why different people all over the earth have upheld what must be falsehoods, have compelled assent, have severely punished the unbeliever, have indeed based almost the whole of their culture on such falsehoods. No, this is not simply an error; and no other theory of ethics than the Social-Survival theory can explain why people are fanatics over falsehoods.

The Social-Survival theory sees these beliefs, whether true or false, as a powerful integrating force in society. Religion contributes strongly to the cohesiveness of a social group. Doctrines, rituals, ceremonies, services, worshipping together, communal singing, holidays, fiestas, celebrations, the rituals of marriage, childbirth, sickness, death and burial, resplendent ecclesiastical architecture, the offices of priests, a hierarchy, religious indoctrination of children, all tend to unite a people more solidly in common feeling. Their religion has united the Jews into a single society through century after century however widely the adherents of that religion have been dispersed over the earth. It was the religion of Mohammed which united the Arab nomads, previously securing a scanty existence from arid lands and preying upon passing caravans, into a mighty people who later conquered the world from Spain to India. Their respective religions unite the Israelis and Arabs, and also the peoples of India and Pakistan, in war against each other. In many cases throughout history, society has been

more or less synonymous with the prevailing religion. For archaeologists investigating ancient civilisations, the most conspicuous objects, art, buildings, and other artifacts are religious. The church has seen it as a duty to condemn and to burn to death the heretics who disagreed with its doctrines, for fear that schism would divide the faithful and injure the unity of the society.

Here we may digress, briefly, into the general subject of tribalisms. These are markings and practices which distinguish members of the tribe from all other human beings. They have taken the form of ceremonies, rituals, dances, indoctrination in folklore, face- and body-markings, tattoos, rings in noses or ears, deformations of lips or other body parts, all visible signs which mark a person forever as a member of one particular tribe even if he puts on the dress and learns the language of a different tribe. Wherever he goes, the member of the tribe may be identified, and the alien will be recognised by his lack of the tribalisms which he cannot adopt quickly. Among primitive people such tribalisms often receive greater moral enforcement than many other acts which the European observer considers to be more properly of moral significance, such as those involving honesty, courage and truthfulness. It is more immoral, for example, to be unable to perform the ritualistic dance than to fear combat, or to beg an enemy for mercy, or to be caught stealing; and for this failure the penalty may be expulsion from the tribe, reduction to the status of a slave, or even death. The individual must identify himself with the tribe, for he can understand how meager would be his chance for survival against the hostility of nature and of other men if he were separated from the tribe.

In modern advanced countries, great precautions are exerted by governments to identify their own citizens or subjects. No human being today may freely choose the society to which he will belong without a naturalisation procedure, and no person may elect to belong to no society—to be a citizen of the world. People are continually alert to listen closely to a person's speech to discover the alien among them by his accent and to classify him correctly in the society of his origin. Here is a striking difference between America and England. In America, which is a composite of people of various descent, it is considered impolite to remark to someone that he has an Italian accent, or a Jewish accent, or an English accent, or some other foreign accent, for it is realised that one who keeps his ears tuned to accents can have no other possible motive, even if a subconscious one, than to classify people for the sake of prejudice—to decide whether the stranger is likeable or unacceptable. In England, on the other hand, with its "pure" stock, it is not considered rude in the least to question another about his accent and origin. Tribalisms, with their strict observance for no other reason than holding members, preventing them from joining other tribes, excluding aliens, and keeping separate people with different ties, are compatible with the theory that the moral purpose implicitly followed is that of the survival of a society. Such behaviour does not seem to have implications for any other theory of the nature of the ethical principle. The queer customs found round the world which so amuse onlookers who are not members of the tribe have found no other explanation in anthropology, any more than in ethics.

Religion is a chief tribalism. People are inescapably faced with the simple logical necessity for preserving a society in which they can continue to interact with one another, even though they may not have located and recognised this necessity and defined it in words, and hence they invent, elaborate and enforce religions to provide

sanctions for behaviour conducive to social integration. Religions are tribal; each tribe has its own god, and the gods of all other tribes are either strange or false gods. An insight into a primitive religion is afforded by the Bible, which provides a written description of the religious beliefs and practices of a people in the age of barbarism. The god of the Hebrews was a tribal god. His name was not "God" with a capital G, as is the ecclesiastical practice of naming this god; his name was spelled with the Hebrew letters Yhwh, but since the Hebrew alphabet contained no vowels, the pronunciation of this name is lost, and is variously given as Jehovah, Yahweh, Jehu, Yaho, etc. It is being said today that all men worship the same god, but historically this is not true. The Hebrews do not worship the same god as the Hindus, nor even of the Moslems, even though Islam followed on from Judaism and Christianity.

The practice of religion involves: (a) faith, and (b) worship. Faith means belief without evidence, or more precisely, belief without asking for evidence—belief on the ground that if others in the society or the sect believe, good reason must exist somewhere, or simply on the ground that others believe and form a society of believers. It may appear at first sight that having "faith" and being "faithful" are of different meaning, but they are much the same. If, in our primitive tribe, this man Bonzo has faith, he will be faithful. If he accepts the common beliefs without question, acknowledges our god, joins in our rituals, then he is one who will observe the customs we have found roughly practical for our survival, he will fight for us in war and will not go over to the enemy. His faith makes him one of us. The question is not whether he has logical or philosophical proofs for our faith, but rather, is he with us or against us? Believing what we do is evidence that he is with us. Having the same god, we can together beseech him to help us fight the enemy. We need doers and soldiers rather than philosophers. Even today, many people care not a whit for the logical basis of religion, they want religion taken on faith, for social reasons.

Worship by his creatures can add nothing to a god, not even pleasure. The real motive for worship is not the tribal god's requirement but the display of faith. Worshipping together promotes solidarity of the society practicing the common religion. Worshipping privately confirms the individual in his allegiance to the society which practices the religion. In either case, worship subjugates the mind of the worshipper to the authority of the religion and of its priests and leaders. There is no other reason for worship. The joy that one often experiences in worship is the satisfaction of knowing that one is doing what is socially approved. Common worship gives one a sense of belonging with the group—it makes one part of a society. Sitting, standing, kneeling according to a prescribed programme is visible demonstration of one's subjection to religious authority and conformity to religiously-sanctioned custom.

Those who say that religion is necessary base their assertion ultimately on the principle of Social-Survival, on Securiticism. Religion supplies egoistic motives for altruistic actions. The continual preaching of religious egoism frustrates to a large extent the advocacy and adoption of altruism as the true basis of moral conduct, as Securiticism proposes. Since the human race began, people have of necessity sought by their moral acts to preserve their societies, even though they have never before now been able to express their motive in words, and have resorted to spiritual pleas instead. Religion is society-oriented.

(Continued on page 287)

TRUTH

Bernard T. Rocca, Sr.

THROUGHOUT the ages man's search for truth and knowledge has been insatiable. Legend has it that this led to his downfall in the Garden of Eden, but in our search for truth and knowledge let us forget legend and add to "truth and knowledge"—"common sense and honesty" and scan the world of today as well as the past through the eyes of the scientists, astronomers, physicists, geologists, palentologists and the historians. The latter can only piece together the last few thousand years, while the scientists take us back billions of years, so let us first look at what they can tell us of the world and the vastness of the universe.

The speed of light has been accurately determined and this is used as a measuring stick. It is 186,000 miles per second, equal to over seven times around the world in one second! Light from the moon reaches us in a little over one second and from the sun in a little less than nine minutes.

To the astronomer our sun is just an ordinary star, the stars appearing so small due to their great distance from the earth. The nearest other star is an immense distance from us and light from it takes over four years to reach us, or is four light years distant from us. Therefore one must multiply the speed per second, 186,000 by 60 seconds in a minute, by 60 minutes in an hour, by 24 hours in a day, by 365 days in a year and then by four (4) to reach the enormous figure of miles as 23,564,244,000,000.

But . . . this is the nearest star, not counting the sun.

The enormous 200-inch telescopes of the astronomer now look out upon stars a billion times as distant, so to the above figure add nine (9) zeros to find the distance in miles. It is so great as to be far beyond human conception.

Looking out at these distant stars and galaxies, the astronomer sees them not as they are today, but as they were several billions of years ago. Many of these have undoubtedly long ceased to exist, as all suns (stars) give off of their energy and mass at prodigious rates. We thus know that our universe has existed for billions of years.

Now, what about the age of our earth? Uranium minerals give off radiation at a certain known never-changing rate, so the physicists have found an accurate time scale to determine the age of rocks. The oldest rock yet discovered in North America is about three billion years old and, of course, a long time no doubt passed before this rock crystallised from the molten magma of Mother Earth, so the age of the earth is now estimated at four and one-half billion years.

The geologists have studied and mapped the great sedimentary deposits of the earth which were originally laid down in the ocean, lakes and inland seas. These deposits have, in many cases, been uplifted into mountains and exposed to erosion. The Grand Canyon of the Colorado is but one example, but an outstanding one. From a correlation of these ages and deposition and a study of their strata, the geologist can roughly check the age of the earth as determined by the physicists.

How it all started is, of course, unknown, but what is most important is that it DID start, and what has happened since, which is amazingly well known.

The oldest underlying sediments show no signs of any life forms having existed for hundreds of millions of years. Then evidence of primitive life, both plant and animal, is found. Again, how this life first started is not known and it is not important. That it did start is important and what has occurred since is the story of life. The generally accepted

theory is that in an atmosphere surrounding the earth, totally different from today, the right combination of chemicals, water, heat and perhaps electric discharge, started forms which developed the power of replicating themselves. The scientists of today have made much progress along this line and promise that life will be created in the laboratory in the not distant future.

The sedimentary deposits throughout the world have been examined with the greatest care by our geologists and palentologists and have yielded up an inconceivable number of skeletal remains or fossils of animals that existed in the past. Similarly, plant remains from delicate leaf forms to tree trunks tell their story. Our coal beds were derived from lush plant growth which became buried and under pressure was converted to coal, which, course, required eons of time.

From the first primitive unicellular animals the palentologists have pieced together the story of life on this planet. It is an amazing story of life forms developing ever more complex animals in the never-ending upward climb to ultimately reach the fauna of today. Often times too much specialisation and inability to adjust to changing conditions eliminated many species, such as the giant reptiles or dinosaurs that ruled the world for perhaps 75 million years. In general, however the pattern is a gradual change or evolution from simple crustacean to complex crustacean, to fish, to amphibian, to reptile, to warm blooded mammal.

Volumes have been written on this fascinating history read by geologists and palentologists from the strata of the sedimentary rocks—very much as we read the leaves of a book today. And the story is incontrovertible as the evidence is there to see today—the fossils of past ages.

A little over a century ago Charles Darwin published his world-shaking treatise on evolution, pointing out with unbelievable clarity the upward evolutionary development of all life forms, influenced by environment, natural selection and the survival of the fittest. The great work of our scientists throughout the world in the intervening time has proved his theory beyond any doubt. And, of course, this brings us to Man. His nearest relatives are the great apes and it was thought for a long time that there was too great a gap between the two and everyone looked for the so-called "Missing Link". In the past few years tremendous work has been done in Asia and Africa and the chain has been completed. The greatest success came to Professor Leakey, who found fossil remains in the Olduvai Gorge of South Africa, of "protomen"—intermediate between anthropoid and homo sapiens. So . . . the story is complete and we find Man of today, in the words of the noted anthropologist of Duke University, Weston LeBarre, the "most mammalian of the animals and related to all of them". We are, of course, more closely related to the vertebrate animals and our homologous bone structure to that of the others from seal, and turtle, to bat, is strong evidence, in the words of Sir Gavin de Beers of the British Society of Natural History, that we all came from the same ancestors aeons ago.

From this background it is easy to see how primitive Man, with his fears, ignorance of the world about him, developed beliefs in supernatural spirits, both good and evil, to explain what he could not fathom. From this, and fear of death, many religions of course developed, but now in modern times when we know what causes earthquakes, tornadoes, lightning, eclipses, changing seasons, life and

death, how can otherwise intelligent humans still believe in the myths and legends of old? Let us look at the religions with the greatest influence on our so-called Western world. These are Judaism and Christianity. The latter is divided into Catholicism and Protestantism, which, while it has many, many subdivisions, we will only discuss as a group.

Now we must turn to the historians. Since Judaism is inextricably tied into the history of the Jews we must see what we know definitely of this race and also the start of the Jewish religion.

According to this religion, God appeared before Abraham as head of a family, telling him that he (Abraham) was to head a race chosen by God to spread the religion of only one God, and at the same time all of his descendants would become the "Chosen Race"—God's special "family" in the whole human race. Later God appeared before Moses, renewing the Covenant and giving Moses the Ten Commandments.

Now, what can historians tell us about this in the way of substantiation? The most that they can tell us is that the story of Abraham appears to date back from 35 centuries and is, therefore, prehistory and can in no way be substantiated.

Moses is supposed to have come along a couple of centuries later, but again there just is no historical record and cannot be given credence today. The same applies to the Creation Story of the Bible, the Tower of Babel, the sun standing still (which of course it always does, as it is we who are turning). And from what we know of the geography of the world and the impossibility of a flood to drown ALL living things, makes the story of Noah utter nonsense, and of course it would be impossible to get two of all living things on an Ark!

The Jews, through their belief in being the "Chosen Race", have held themselves apart even until today, and have suffered great persecution throughout the ages. Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, recently here in San Francisco, made a plea for continuing the purity of the race instead of becoming assimilated into the melting pot, which is America. Could one make a greater mistake? And he spoke as head of one million Jews in the eastern United States.

Now let us proceed with the historians to Christianity. Christianity has Judaism as its base, and in the words of Bishop James Pike every Christian must first be a Jew! Few there are who have ever given this the full consideration it deserves.

Now let us ask the historians what they can tell us of the start of Christianity. Unfortunately the first mention of Christ in secular history is in the Annals of Tacitus, written about the year 112 AD. Even the ecclesiastical writers such as Ricciotti, Daniel-Rops, Le Jolie and Jean Guitton, admit that the Gospels, which are the only source of information we have of Christ, could not have been written by the men whose names they bear. The New Testament was compiled at the Conference of Nicaea in the fourth century; so again the historian can give us no substantiation for there ever having been a supernatural being called Jesus Christ. When Albert Schweitzer realised this, it was a great shock to him, as was the further fact that one could not reconcile truth and honesty with Christianity. He then adopted his "Reverence for Life" as his philosophy of life.

With this background how have the Catholics built up such a world organisation stemming from the Vatican at Rome? Their leader has assumed infallibility; their bishops and priests the power to forgive sins and to pass out divine

blessings, or, conversely, to excommunicate recalcitrant members, condemning them to eternal punishment. They have ruled by fear and have led their followers to believe that by generous giving to the church eternal life in heaven would come to them. The wealth of the church is fabulous, even in impoverished countries, and this wealth is secured by promises that will never be fulfilled.

It is often said that the religious get much comfort from their religion, but little is ever said of the fear in the hearts of their members of eternal punishment of themselves and their loved ones. Fortunes are spent by the credulous for Masses to get loved ones out of so-called "Purgatory". Surely if there were such a place those using the fear of Purgatory to extract money from the fearful and credulous should be the first ones to go there! Justice could ask nothing less.

The Protestants do not go as far as the Catholics, but they still teach the divinity of man, a heaven and hell, the power of prayer and the need to build magnificent churches and cathedrals to honour their God, a God who has never been seen or heard in historical times and whose existence is most unlikely. The evils afflicting mankind from the black plague and smallpox to Genghis Khan and Hitler would not have been tolerated by a loving God depicted by the Jews, Catholics or Protestants. One must remember that all the prayers of Christendom did not stop the above scourges, but medical science did.

The Humanist is often asked what he has to give in place of religion. The answer is "honest truth"—not false promises which will never be fulfilled. What could be worse than to promise that a loving God would always answer one's prayers and protect him if he were to bow before God and worship him above all else! What reason has one to believe this?

We have followed life up the evolutionary trail and we have found no trace of a Supernatural Power interfering with this in any way. Surely if there were a God he would really create man, instead of letting him come up from the primordial sea, through many, many living forms, for hundreds of millions of years!

The answer of the Humanist is exactly what Sir Winston Churchill told the British people in their greatest hour of travail: "blood, sweat and tears" He was realistic and so should we be. We must, through human effort, conquer all fears and forget forever all false prophets. Let us make the most of beautiful human relationships and doing for others. To this is added the joy of accomplishment. Before these, the thoughts of resurrection or an illusory heaven would fade as surely as the mirage in the desert before the eyes of one dying from thirst!

Judaism has existed for perhaps three millenia and Christianity for almost two. During this time we have seen bitter wars, often times Christian against Christian. We have seen the terrors of the Inquisition; we have seen great intolerance and the human family often times torn apart by differences in religion. Certainly neither Judaism or Christianity has proven the answer to banishing forever man's inhumanity to man.

We thus see that the building of great churches, cathedrals and temples, and the establishment of great religious organisations has been for naught. The worthwhile human characteristics of bravery, loyalty, compassion and love do not depend upon belief in a mythical God on high, but on the intelligence, the consideration, the love we have in our hearts for all those about us. Better human understanding for one and all is the only answer.

THE HUMANIST REVOLUTION

Peter Crommelin

THE HUMANIST revolution here in England, during the past hundred years, has been so successful, that it has almost ceased to be a revolutionary movement. The British Humanist Association has become very nearly as respectable as the Church of England and almost as futile as a cause of revolutionary movement or change. The FREETHINKER retains the revolutionary spirit which originated the humanist movement. The FREETHINKER breathes revolutionary fire on almost every page. But is it doing any good? Is it really getting anyone anywhere? I do know one unacknowledged group of individuals to whom the FREETHINKER and the National Secular Society might be able to bring quite a lot of human comfort.

I refer to those unrecognised religionists, who would very much like to break away from their religious allegiance, but are deterred from doing so by the terrible nature of the economic consequences which might follow upon such action. England is rightly called a Welfare State, but it still contains much poverty and unemployment, and many of its citizens are without a home. Many individuals, both male and female, embrace a 'religious' life in order to escape from the harsh realities of the secular world. It would be insincere for freethinkers to blame them for so doing, until the freethinkers have made the secular world a better, safer and happier place in which to live. You have taken on responsibility for the secular world. So far you have not done very much to achieve fulfilment of that responsibility. It is certainly no easy task to create a better world. It is not something that can be done in a day or a year. The important thing is to be sure that it can be done, and to have at least a confused idea of *how* it can be done.

Something could and should be done by freethinkers to assist the breakaway of priests, monks and nuns from the Church that grips them so tightly, and all too frequently against their inner will. I take a special interest in this matter, because of my own past as a Roman Catholic priest. For every one priest or monk or nun who returns to the secular world, there must be fifty who would gladly do so if they had the courage or the audacity to face the economic consequences of such an action.

The situation is specially difficult at a time when increasing unemployment is causing embarrassment not only to many individuals but even to the Government. At such a difficult period of social change many professional religionists may feel that they ought to stay where they are, even if it does involve a certain amount of purely intellectual dishonesty. A small amount of genuine social service is attached to nearly all religious ministries. Very few clergymen in the modern world are able to persuade themselves that their work is indispensable. But most of them think it better than any alternative employment that could or would be offered to them.

Speaking for myself, I know that having been deceived from childhood by the overwhelming claims of the Roman Catholic Church, I permitted myself to be 'called' to the priesthood. Having got that far, I found it exceedingly difficult later on in life, to get out or to get back to normal humanity and to the actualities of the secular world. Two things worked very gradually to produce a personal crisis that resulted in my final departure from the Church. The first was a growing passion for truth itself, in so far as it can be grasped by the unaided mind of man. The second

thing was a growing desire to enter the state of marriage, from which the Roman clergy are excluded by a primitive superstitious dread of the sexual act, resulting in a totally irrational veneration for the virtue of celibacy.

Since my departure from the Church more than ten years ago, I have suffered much from poverty and unemployment. My wife and I have managed to keep alive only by the most rigid economy, and a more than Christian asceticism. I am not complaining. Having achieved freedom of mind and conscience, no material reward would induce me to return to the subjection and servitude of my former life. But I have no doubt whatsoever that my capacity for earning a living in the secular world was damaged beyond repair by the long period of dogmatic slumber as a priest. At that time I could have profited much by some practical assistance from some secular humanist organisation. I did not discover any such organisation or any such help.

I am suggesting, therefore, that something should be done about this defect in secular humanist social service. Nothing can be done for priests, monks or nuns until they have broken away from the hypnotic domination of ecclesiastical authority. But once they have, as it were, come out of prison, secular humanists should be there to welcome them back to the real, the secular mundane world, with all its comedy and all its pathos.

I would, if I could, establish a secular humanist employment agency, that would specialise in finding suitable jobs for ex-priests and ex-nuns who may often find it more difficult than an ex-convict to find a job.

I am always hopeful of the future, and I never permit myself to despair. But up to the present moment I have not discovered that atheists are any better than Christians, or that humanist philanthropy is any more liberal than Christian charity.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH

(Continued from page 284)

We are a chosen people, and "he leads his people on, to the place where he is gone". Salvation is for our people only, or for members of our faith only, or for those we convert. Religion has added to the division of humanity into minor societies and has thus caused hatred, prejudice and war. Christianity was the first religion to seek to extend itself into a world society. But Christians fight against each other—Catholics against Protestants, even Catholics against Catholics, as when Napoleon invaded Italy—even though they all worship the same Jesus. The Christian society has persecuted the Jewish society for nearly twenty centuries.

To recognise candidly that the actual moral principle that all men live by is the survival of their society, is a first step towards mutual understanding, brotherhood, world society and peace.

(To be continued)

FREETHINKERPublished by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.
(Pioneer Press)103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1
Telephone: HOP 0029

Editor: DAVID COLLIS

THE FREETHINKER ORDER FORM

To: The FREETHINKER, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1
I enclose cheque/PO (made payable to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.)
£1 17s 6d (12 months); 19s (6 months); 9s 6d (3 months).
(USA and Canada \$5.25 (12 months); \$2.75 (6 months); \$1.40
(3 months)).

Please send me the FREETHINKER starting.....

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE: plain paper may be used as order form
if you wish.)*The FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent.*

Orders for literature from THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP; FREE-
THINKER subscriptions, and all business correspondence should be
sent to the BUSINESS MANAGER, G. W. FOOTE & CO. LTD., 103
BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1, and not to the Editor.

Cheques, etc., should be made payable to G. W. FOOTE & CO. LTD.
Editorial matter should be addressed to: THE EDITOR,
THE FREETHINKER, 103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

National Secular Society. Details of membership 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. Cheques, etc., should be made
payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal
Book Service. For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to
Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.;
Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

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

Havering Humanist Society (The Social Centre, Gubbins Lane,
Harold Wood), Tuesday, September 12th, 8 p.m.: Rita Sangar,
"The BHA's Working Party for Social Action."

West Ham Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community
Centre, Wanstead, London, E11) Meetings at 8 p.m. on the
fourth Thursday of every month.

BOOKS OF INTEREST

- Objections to Christian Belief *Various* 3s. 6d. postage 7d.
Objections to Humanism *Various* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.
Objections to Roman Catholicism *Ed. Michael de la Bedoyere*
4s. 6d. p. 7d.
An Inquiry into Humanism (Six interviews from the BBC Home
Service) 4s. p. 5d.
Lift Up Your Heads (An Anthology for Freethinkers)
William Kent 3s. 6d. p. 8d.
The Thinker's Handbook (A Guide to Religious Controversy)
Hector Hawton 5s. p. 8d.
I Believe (19 Personal Philosophies) 7s. 6d. p. 9d.
Comparative Religion *A. C. Bouquet* 5s. p. 8d.
The World's Living Religions *Geoffrey Parrinder* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.
Man and his Gods *Homer Smith* 14s. p. 1s.
Middle Eastern Mythology *S. H. Hooke* 5s. p. 8d.
Gods and Myths of Northern Europe *H. R. Ellis Davidson*
4s. 6d. p. 8d.
The Origins of Religion *Lord Raglan* 2s. 6d. p. 8d.
The Dead Sea Scrolls—A Re-appraisal *John Allegro* 5s. p. 8d.
An Analysis of Christian Origins *Georges Ory* 2s. 6d. p. 5d.
The Life of Jesus *Ernest Renan* 2s. 6d. p. 8d.
The Death of Jesus *Joel Carmichael* 5s. p. 8d.
The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ *Gerald Massey*
1s. p. 5d.
What Humanism is About *Kit Mouat* 10s. 6d. p. 1s.
Essays of a Humanist *Julian Huxley* 6s. p. 8d.
The Humanist Revolution *Hector Hawton* 10s. 6d. p. 8d.
Humanist Essays *Gilbert Murray* 7s. 6d. p. 8d.
Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare *David Tribe* 2s. p. 5d.
Sceptical Essays *Bertrand Russell* 6s. p. 8d.
Men without Gods *Hector Hawton* 2s. 6d. p. 8d.
Ten Non-Commandments (A Humanist's Decalogue)
Ronald Fletcher 2s. 6d. p. 5d.
Morals without Religion *Margaret Knight* 12s. 6d. p. 8d.
Ethics *P. H. Nowell-Smith* 6s. p. 8d.
Religion and Ethics in Schools *David Tribe* 1s. 6d. p. 5d.
Lucretius: The Nature of the Universe 6s. p. 1s.
Materialism Restated *Chapman Cohen* 5s. 6d. p. 9d.
The Nature of the Universe *Fred Hoyle* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.
Uses and Abuses of Psychology *H. J. Eysenck* 6s. p. 8d.
Error and Eccentricity in Human Belief *Joseph Jastrow*
15s. p. 1s. 6d.
Italian Women Confess *Ed. Gabriella Parca* 5s. p. 8d.
Elites and Society *T. B. Bottomore* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.
Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire *Edward Gibbon*
16s. p. 1s.
What Happened in History *V. Gordon Childe* 5s. p. 8d.
Birth Control in the Modern World *Elizabeth Draper* 5s. p. 8d.
The Crown and the Establishment *Kingsley Martin* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.
The Bible Handbook *Ed. G. W. Foote & W. P. Ball* 5s. p. 8d.
The True Believer *Eric Hoffer* 5s. p. 7d.
The Golden Bough (A Study in Magic and Religion) *J. G. Frazer*
Abridged, in one volume 12s. 6d. p. 1s. 3d.
Sex in History *G. Rattray Taylor* 7s. 6d. p. 10d.
Rights of Man *Thomas Paine* 9s. 6d. p. 1s.
Age of Reason *Thomas Paine* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.
Poverty in Sicily *Danilo Dolci* 8s. 6d. p. 8d.
The Family and Marriage in Britain *Ronald Fletcher* 5s. p. 7d.
Roads to Freedom *Bertrand Russell* 6s. p. 7d.
Freedom of Communication *Derrick Sington* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.
Human Rights Today *Maurice Cranston* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.
The Science of Science *Ed. Maurice Goldsmith & Alan Mackay*
6s. p. 8d.
The Domain of Devils *Eric Maple* 25s. p. 1s. 6d.
The Bradlaugh Case *Walter L. Arnstein* 50s. p. 1s. 6d.
103 . History of a House *Elizabeth Collins* 1s. p. 3d.
The Nun Who Lived Again *Phyllis K. Graham* 6d. p. 3d.
The Vatican versus Mankind *Adrian Pigott* 4s. p. 6d.
Fact and Fiction in Psychology *H. J. Eysenck* 5s. p. 8d.
Battle for the Mind *William Sargant* 3s. 6d. p. 8d.
Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science *Martin Gardner*
14s. p. 1s. 6d.
Illusions and Delusions of the Supernatural and the Occult
D. H. Rawcliffe 18s. p. 1s. 6d.

All obtainable from

THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP
103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1