

## The Humanist World Weekly

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### GITTINS REPORT REJECTS COMPULSORY R

**RELIGIOUS** education should no longer be compulsory in state primary schools and some attempts at reform are urgently needed according to a report on Primary Education in Wales published this January by the Central Advisory Council for Education (Wales).

The Council was appointed in 1964 with the same brief as England's Plowden Committee under the chairmanship of Charles Gittins, Professor of Education at University College, Swansea. The Council feels that religious education has an 'essential place in the primary school' for 'through it our children can be helped to become aware of the contributions made by men and women to human progress'. It criticises the morning act of worship as often losing its main purpose in a rash of school notices, birthday announcements and threats to wrongdoers and says that compulsion weakens rather than fortifies attitudes towards religion in schools. It stresses the necessity for safeguarding the beliefs of minority groups and for respecting the wishes of atheist and agnostic teachers.

#### REVEREND SECULARISTS

WILLARD E. EDWARDS, creator of the Perpetual Calendar and frequent contributor to these pages, has written informing us he has "accepted ordination as a minister in a California church organisation, and along with many other Rationalist, Freethinker and Secularist USA ministers" he hopes to "change the public's sacrosanct attitude towards professors of the clergy profession". Mr Edwards, or, more correctly, the Reverend Dr Edwards, writes: "We hope to do all we can to mentally emancipate people from orthodoxy, superstition and belief in supernaturalism".

In the event that your Editor would "like to be ordained and be a 'Reverend'" the addresses of two church organisations were enclosed.

"Some of us intend to list our names in the Telephone Directory Yellow Pages under 'Clergymen', and other-

wise 'bug hell' out of the phony ones (faith healers, damnation prophets, etc.) on occasion".

Both church organisations "hope and trust their ministers will lead humane lives and 'bear fruit'".

Would a few raspberries do?

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#### LORD'S DAY OBSERVANCE

'WHO is behind the movement to secularise the Lord's Day?' asks the leader writer of the Lord's Day Observance Society's journal *Joy and Light*. 'Where lies the motive power, the driving force?'

'We feel it is not without some significance that the main promoters of measures to further break down the defences of the Sabbath in Parliament have been, almost without exception, secularists or unbelievers and that they have been whole-heartedly backed by the National Secular Society which, often under the cloak of championship of liberty, is basically anti-God'.

The writer continues: 'That organisation knows (better than some Christians!) that Sunday as the Lord's Day is a great bulwark of the Christian Faith. It aims to overturn this bastion as a large step towards "making Britain a truly secular society" (1967 Annual Report, NSS). "The NSS believes that people will generally be happier and freer without religion" (*Id.*)'.

'Lord Willis who sponsored the Sunday Entertainments Bill in the House of Lords is a prominent member of the NSS and an agnostic'.

'The MP who is now promoting the Bill in the House of Commons—William Hamling (Lab., Woolwich West)—has shown his sympathy with the National Secular Society and sent them greetings on their Centenary'.

'Why little opposition to the Bill?

The Secular Society gives us a clue; it says, in its Centenary Brochure: "Free-thought has had considerable influence inside the churches in stultifying dogmata and slackening the bonds of authoritarianism".

*Qual erat demonstrandum.*

\* \* \*

#### HUMANIST HOUSING

BUILDING work on the Humanist Housing Association's flat scheme has been proceeding apace and is expected to become ready for occupation in August.

Following a custom of commemorating living personalities, the Association has decided to name the flats "Rose Bush Court". Rose Bush, chairman of the HHA, has been actively associated with the movement for nearly a lifetime. She has served as Vice-Chairman of the Council of the Ethical Union, Chairman of the Council of the Progressive League and is current chairman of South Place Ethical Society's General Committee.

Funds are still required to furnish the communal parts of the building: passages, the visitors' bedroom and the communal lounge. Contributions to these costs would be greatly appreciated and should be addressed to the Treasurer: Miss K. M. McKeen, 24 Dulverton Mansions, Grays Inn Road, London, WC1.

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#### BHA DEPUTATION TO ITA

THE British Humanist Association made a deputation to Lord Aylestone, Chairman of the Independent Television Authority, on Tuesday, February 13. The deputation comprised Lord Chorley, Lionel Elvin, Michael Lines, Kingsley Martin and Tom Vernon.

The deputation discussed with Lord Aylestone the possibilities of there being further opportunity for the expression of humanist viewpoints on ITV.

Lord Aylestone, with other members of ITA, said they would further discuss the points made with programme companies.

# FREETHINKER

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## 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, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). 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 and MCRAE.

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

Cambridge Humanists, Mill Lane Lecture Rooms, Cambridge, Thursday, February 29, 8.30 p.m.: Dr GEORGE STEINER, "Pornography".

Crawley Humanist Group, AEU Hall, Robinson Road, Crawley, Sunday, February 25, 3 p.m.: Inaugural Meeting; Organiser, ROY BUTT, 8 Goodwood Close, Furnace Green, Crawley.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, February 25, 6.30 p.m.: Mr VED SINGH (General Secretary, India League), "Integration of Commonwealth Immigrants".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, February 25, 11 a.m.: STEWART COOK, "The Role of the Ethical Society"; Tuesday, February 27, 6.45 p.m.: Panel discussion, "America Today and Tomorrow".

South Place Sunday Concerts, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, February 25, 6.30 p.m.: Amici String Quartet. Haydn, Stravinsky, Beethoven. Admission 4/-.

Worthing Humanist Group, Morelands Hotel, opposite pier, Worthing, Sunday, February 25, 5.30 p.m.: ROY BREWER (journalist and Buddhist), "Buddhism".

## BOOSTING THE "FIRST CAUSE"

Gonzalo Quiogue

### A Reply to Peter Crommelin

THE reply of Mr Peter Crommelin (December 1) to my article, *Boosting Superstition with Freethought* (November 10), is fairly satisfactory, except for some points that need clarification. In the second paragraph Mr Crommelin said among other things:

"But it does not involve any logical absurdity to acknowledge the existence of God as a First Cause without acknowledging any obligation to subject oneself to the dogmas or disciplines of any particular religion."

It is very natural for Mr Crommelin, as a former RC priest, to love and advocate the so-called First Cause of Scholastic or Thomistic philosophy. RC priests are well-indoctrinated in the tailored arguments of Thomism, arguments tailored to fit belief in a God, and to defend Roman Catholicism. In the theory of causality, every effect must have a cause. But this cause is also the effect of another cause behind it, and so on *ad infinitum*. . . . If we are to apply this argument without cutting it, God will have an infinite number of ancestral Gods who created one another in regress. This argument was cut after reaching the Christian God, the so-called First Cause, Who had been given three personalities by the first Christians: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Today, what knowledgeable Freethinker is giving serious thought to the masterpiece of St Thomas Aquinas called Scholastic Philosophy? Let me repeat, theologians tailor arguments to fit belief in a God. On the other hand, Freethinkers' arguments are as empirical as scientific arguments!

In the fifth paragraph Mr Crommelin said:

"It is not the word (God) that matters, but the concept of a First Cause that is non-physical and non-human in character."

This, in effect, is saying that God is neither matter nor energy. And if this is true, God is then a vacuum. Other theologians, who also feel safe in metaphysics, have favourite terms for the nature of God. "Pure Spirit" and "Pure Being". Only theologians try to describe or define the nature of a metaphysical entity like God. Only nonsense can define another nonsense. In the term "Pure Being", "being" is used either to mean existence or a personal entity known as "Supreme Being". It is useless to claim the existence of a "Pure Being" when theologians are already claiming the existence of a "Perfect Being". Because a "Perfect Being" is necessarily pure. But if "Pure Being" is intended to mean "Pure Existence", it is a good example of a metaphysical term in two words; it is poetic nonsense. Likewise there is no such thing as "impure existence". It is as nonsensical as its opposite, "pure existence" or "Pure Being" and all so-called metaphysical "propositions".

The ninth paragraph of Mr Crommelin said:

"But if secular Humanism will permit metaphysical speculation on the nature of existence, I can see no reason why secular Humanism should not provide an extremely rational alternative to religion."

Secular Humanism will provide an extremely rational alternative to religion, if secular Humanism *will not permit* the use of metaphysical speculations on the nature of existence. Religious metaphysics is nonsensical poetic prose which is neither true nor false. It is the favourite refuge of

most theologians, because they cannot defend a metaphysical term like 'God' in empirical language. Scientific empiricists and logical positivists condemn all kinds of metaphysics as tools of obscurants, people who fight enlightenment for selfish *economic* reasons!

In the sixth paragraph Mr Crommelin said:

"Mr Quiogue thinks it 'wrong and superstitious' to talk of 'creation by a God', but perfectly right and rational to talk of 'continuous creation by nature'. I simply do not follow the logic of this. What does Mr Quiogue mean by 'nature'? Is it something less than God, or more than God? What is it that performs the unceasing miracle of 'continuous creation'? I should have thought that such a marvellous force and power might at least be given the honorary title of 'God'."

The continuous creation of matter in the universe, as postulated by modern cosmology, is a logical necessity deduced from the foundation of physics. Matter cannot come from nothing, nor can it be reduced to nothing. I do not expect a theologian to be able to follow an empirical logic, because he is well-indoctrinated in "metaphysical logic". Nature is the material universe. Comparing or contrasting the size of nature with that of God is big fun. Because everybody knows that nature exists as a physical

reality around us. On the other hand, God as a metaphysical idea does not belong to the realm of the physical, but to metaphysics, the mumbo-jumbo refuge and defender of traditional religion. Something wonderful in nature carries on the work of "continuous creation". Someday we may be able to know this wonderful thing. From time to time we push back the boundary of the known to the unknown to enlarge our known world. Let us be honest by just saying we do not yet know this wonderful thing. But to label it with the "honorary title of God" is to boost the superstition about a God! Nature should be *called* nature, and an aspect of nature, an *aspect of nature*. What is the use of using the word 'God', when we know it is sheer foolishness to pray to it? The God idea, indeed, lives as barnacles in the neurons of many people!

In the second paragraph Mr Crommelin said:

"If I am prepared to defend the thesis that God is a possible existence, it is simply and solely to stimulate rational argument, an exercise of the intellect fundamental to all would-be Freethinkers."

Correct, Mr Crommelin. Thank you.

## HUMANISM AND COMMUNISM

Michael Cregan

MUCH Humanist energy is devoted to recounting the history of blood which lies behind the Christian Church, and the Catholic Church in particular. Every Humanist seems to feel a recurrent urge to remind us, in a voice not to be ignored, that the Church is really only a sleeping dragon, and behind the facade of liberalism constrained upon it by the higher moral standards of secularism, the old desire for faith by fire still lurks. We are constantly reminded that when the Church was dominant, "bloody crusades and centuries of burnings and tortures" were the outcome, that "intolerance became a virtue and persecution a habit", in "the vilest system the world has ever known", where "the number of faithful Catholics faithfully committing to the flames faithful Protestants was equalled only by the number of the latter faithfully returning the compliment". And the implication is often that, if it were free to do so, the Churches would dearly like to revert to the old happy regimen.

While not disputing the value of reminding Christians of the sad and disappointing history of Christianity as an antidote to their frequent tendency to assume that it is only Christians who ever have been, or will be, the *real* men of morality, the fact remains that the era of the *auto-da-fe* has vanished several centuries since, and that the resistance on behalf of freedom of conscience and speech, which the Church forced into motion by its own actions, has, in this country at least, conquered most of that which it has attacked. And in the enthusiasm of successive victories, humanists seem to forget that there are other organised systems of repression in the world; and the most powerful of these is established Communism. The iniquities which have been perpetrated in countries living under this system never seem to reach the pages of humanist literature, or to arouse the same fury as the excesses of Catholicism. Humanists seem to be so preoccupied with attacking the

monolith of the priest that they seem to ignore the monolith of the Marxist.

Much has been made, for example, of Aquinas' famous statement that heretics must be "shut off from the world by death". This basic declaration of intent to exterminate those who do not submit to the official faith has been held up as the fundamental Catholic attitude towards opposition. Yet in *Pravda* (1931) Stalin wrote of the Kulaks: "The Kulak is an enemy of the Soviet government. There is not and cannot be peace between him and us. Our policy towards the Kulaks is to eliminate them as a class". Is there a great deal of difference between the two examples of attitudes towards those who do not conform to the established ideology? The history of Soviet Russia under Stalin is one of terror, purge and persecution, a regime of the silencing of any dissident voice.

If it be objected that all this occurred years ago, and that Communism has now 'softened', I would ask that the Catholic Church be allowed the same defence for its own history. But would humanists allow me this?

True, established Communism has softened; but has it softened sufficiently to merit the title of a humane system, a respecter of the dignity of man? It is only 15 years since the East German uprising, and 11 years since Hungary. We continue to witness the constraint of East Germans by the infamous Wall, and in recent months have seen the stifling of the voices of Soviet writers.

Hardly an unkind word about these continual affronts to humanity comes from the humanist movement; yet there is always ample denunciation available for the lamentable aspects of Christian behaviour.

Or is the censure and opposition of humanists reserved for Christianity, while a blind eye is turned to the practices of this modern repressive ideology?

## GOD'S TRUTH

F. H. SNOW

THE truth, I have heard said, has many facets. As I see it, the truth has but one facet, and there is only one truth—the objective truth that permits of no ambiguity. A rose is nothing else, by whatever name one calls it. A great number of people, however, believe in what they call God's Truth, which, though absolute verity, reflects itself through various lenses.

The Christian, for instance, declares he has God's Truth; there is a special kind of it called Catholic Truth; amongst numerous other kinds, there is a Jewish Truth, a Mormon Truth, a Mohammedan Truth, each with a capital 'T'. These truths have been communicated by a deity whose diffidence is such that he never lets those he has graciously favoured, catch a glimpse of himself or a sound of the angelic choir that sings, harps and trumpets his praises. Even his TRUTH was so surreptitiously conveyed to its claimants that if they hadn't told the world they got it from God, the world wouldn't have known. It was a clever idea, getting human beings to write down that truth, even though they had to do it on leaves and skins, with awful implements. That way, God completely screened his supernatural power, by which he could have jotted the whole thing on respectable material, and sent it down ready bound, by one of his angels. His hoary scribes had really little to go on. They saw and heard him only in dreams, which, after all, are often nonsensical. It was a clever concealment of his almightiness, though he slipped up in making Adam's only living offspring find a wife in the Land of Nod. The God's Truth people haven't found a way to explain how Cain got himself a spouse when there was no one else on earth, but his Adam and Eve parents. God couldn't have noticed the bloomer he'd made in getting that put down, nor the piece where he told Cain he'd destroy any of the (non-existent) people who killed him.

The various truth-possessing bodies are in no way perplexed that the Lord has given them all a different truth. In fact, they don't believe he has. Each has the real truth, because it alone has read God's message rightly. The Jewish Church claims that Jehovah entrusted his full truth to her, and the others perverted it. The Roman Catholic Church insists that every community worshipping her god should believe that when his son told Peter "On thee will I build my church", he had in mind the church now known as Roman Catholic—that she holds the keys of heaven, is the sole repository of God's Truth, and has the right to give it the look she thinks fit, and impose it on all humanity. Protestants think Catholicism has got it wrong, and that God gave them the power to see that. The Mormon and Mohammedan have their exclusively sacred books, though venerating the same god as Jew, Catholic and Protestant. These sacred books or scripts were given them by that god through the agency of gentlemen named respectively Joseph Smith and Mohammed or Mahomet, in equally surreptitious manner to that in which he presented the Holy Writ treasured as his word by Jews and Christians. He didn't intend being 'found out' by personal presentation to either, although he hardly needed to hide the plates inscribed with his Mormon message, for fourteen hundred years, to escape identification with anything miraculous.

It does seem strange that these worshippers of a god they believe to be all-knowing and all-powerful, haven't thought it strange that he has done nothing to rectify the delusions of others. It doesn't disturb their arrogant faith in his reality, that he has been content to let mistaken bodies exist for many centuries, murdering each other over credal differences. Each and all appear to think nothing of his ignoring distortions of his sacred word. Mormons can go on gloating with impunity over their possession of the real Holy Writ, though only disclosed in the eighteenth century; Moslems may continue glorying in their Koran, vouchsafed through God's true prophet, Mahomet; Jews, Catholics and Protestants may exult in their diverse versions of biblical truth. God couldn't care less, apparently. These fervent believers in the Lord of All turn no hair at his inertia, whilst the world reeks with wrong conceptions of his truth, though, to many minds, he must appear a whimsical deity playing a funny game with mortal pawns.

The devout expostulate that God is not unconcerned with the right comprehension of his truth, which, they aver, is not fully expressed in Scripture, but is constantly being revealed. The Roman Church makes great play upon revelation. All down the centuries, she claims, God has disclosed, through her, truths he did not see fit to show in his written word. He has divulged them, from time to time, to councils of her dignitaries. The thinking mind asks what need had he to impart them through the medium of highly-trained, eminent clergy, when he could register them on the minds of babes and simpletons, or voice them from the sky? Why colleges of cardinals, if not to formulate what they wish to believe their God reveals?

And what do these 'revelations' amount to? Nothing that in any way advances knowledge of anything. The most eminent theologian can put forward no 'revelation' that human thought could not devise. Not a single idea or set of ideas that could honestly be construed as a hitherto hidden truth, has been expressed in any so-called revelation to the Roman or any Church. Vital doctrinal pronouncements, all within the scope of mortal intelligence, decided by the learned and brainy, after long argument or heated controversy, as has so often been the case, cannot qualify as revelations. Not an item of information of humanly unknowable events has leaked through in God's revealings; not a correction of ghastly scriptural errors. Heaven's Lord hasn't even put the Cain business right.

Are we justified in claiming intellectual superiority over the savage? Can we consider ourselves civilised when but a tiny minority of our people use their thinking powers about an ever-elusive, totally inept God? How far above the mentality of jungle religionists are our Christians, with a crucified god as fetish? What right have we to claim emancipation from superstitious bondage whilst we teach children to believe in a deity which we have no excuse for regarding as anything more than the conception of ancient kinsmen of the ape? With our multifarious claimants to God's Truth—Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Plymouth Brethren, Quakers, Baptists, Buchmanites, Christian Scientists, Four-Square Gospellers, Salvationists and others—are we greatly more sapient than our simian ancestors?

## RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

A joint statement issued by the British Humanist Association, the National Secular Society, and the Humanist Teachers Association.

February, 1968.

THE 1944 Education Act laid upon local education authorities the duty of contributing towards "the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community". It hoped to achieve the first two aspirations by imposing on every maintained school a daily act of worship, and religious instruction according to Agreed Syllabuses.

Today, 23 years later, informed observers can see that the Act has not achieved its purpose. Universal religion in schools has failed to reduce juvenile delinquency or establish an acceptable standard of morality. Collective worship, and Agreed Syllabuses based on a specific belief system, rest on the assumption that we all share the same cultural background and world view. This assumption was erroneous in 1944, when the country's ancestral faith was being promoted in the interests of wartime solidarity, and it is even less realistic now. Inside the churches themselves, the most sacred fundamentals of the Christian faith are being questioned, large numbers of immigrants adhere to other great world religions, and more and more ordinary people are finding it possible to live upright and satisfying lives without any form of religious belief. It is no longer sensible to link morality and religion; indeed, it may be positively harmful. We believe that most parents want for their children not training in a particular religious faith, but *moral education*.

Our community is not uniform but plural. Liberal men and women of all ideologies increasingly see the need for a fully open society, in which generally accepted values are recognised by all. However private remain the realms of individual belief and thought, every man has a social life which brings him into contact with fellow-citizens of all ideologies. Their relationships must be determined by agreed principles outside the chance beliefs of individuals or groups. It is now generally agreed that there is a common pool of human moral principles which need not in any way be based on religious beliefs. These it is the task above all of the schools to look for and promote, using the talents of all trained teachers of good will without assault on the conscience of any one of them.

Certain religious and philosophical views have influenced great numbers of people, changed the course of history and inspired much literature, art and music. Children can be taught about these ideologies without being indoctrinated in any one of them. They will not then grow up in ignorance of the speculative views mankind has held down the ages, and when they come to beliefs of their own, these will be arrived at freely and with understanding, not under duress nor for the sake of conformity. If it is a religious faith it will be a living and not a dead thing.

If our recommendations are followed, moral guidance in schools will not invoke the beliefs of one particular section of the community, but will become genuinely "undenominational". There will be neither hypocrisy and empty

conformity on the one hand, nor segregation and embarrassment on the other. There will be no isolation of children or staff on religious grounds to call attention to racial and other differences.

We therefore recommend:

1. Amendment of the 1944 Act to remove compulsory worship and religious instruction from the schools.
2. The introduction of courses in comparative religion for senior forms.
3. Moral education in practice, using all aspects of school life and organisation to promote tolerance, co-operation and friendliness.
4. Moral education in theory, without religious ties, based on common sense and common humanity.

The grave difficulties, which at present complicate personal relations in the school and do no good to religion, or morals, are quite unnecessary. We are joined in a campaign to bring home to public opinion the seriousness of these consequences of the Act of 1944 and to work for the removal of the imposed religious obligations so that there can be a sound basis in the county school community for education in morality and about religion.

## HUMANIST HOLIDAYS

HUMANIST Holidays have now found a member to help with the children at the Portrush Centre next August. This centre is now nearly booked to capacity but the Edinburgh Centre and the Cliftonville Easter Centre still have some vacancies for the weekend or the whole nine days.

For particulars, write: Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

### HUMAN RIGHTS YEAR DINNER

*Speakers*

PETER JACKSON, MP  
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 JOHN MORTIMER  
 JOCELYN BARROW  
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## FOUNDATIONS OF MORMON BELIEF

A. J. Lowry

IN any study of the various quaint and exotic sects flourishing today, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints cannot be denied a prominent place. Devotees of this faith must believe in the truth of not only the Bible, but also of three sources of scripture, entirely their own: *The Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price*.

The first and most famous of these tells of a small party of Israelites, who, about the year 600 B.C. sailed to America where they later bifurcated into the Nephites (who were good) and the Lamanites (who were not). The latter so enraged the Lord that he cursed them with black skins (2 Nephi 5 : 21); their descendants, the Mormons claim, being the red Indians that we see today! From the same book we are also informed that ancient America contained horses, asses, and even elephants (Ether 9 : 19), while *The Pearl of Great Price* goes even further and assures us that God lives on a planet (named Kolob) which rotates about its axis once every thousand years (Abraham 3 : 4).

Despite their initial favour with God, the Nephites were eventually exterminated by the Lamanite (bad) race in 421 A.D. Before this, however, a Nephite prophet succeeded in inscribing the whole of *The Book of Mormon* (and twice as much again) on gold plates, which he then buried. By divine aid and angelic guidance, these plates (so the story goes) were revealed in 1827 to Joseph Smith, who translated them with the aid of a pair of magical spectacles conveniently buried with them. After this, an angel took the plates away, leaving the whole story of their existence dependent on the words of Joseph Smith, three of his relations and a few of his friends.

Because of the highly fabulous content and extremely narrow evidential basis of this story, a scrutiny of Joseph Smith's personal integrity would appear to be in order. Many who knew this man, including his own mother, describe him as little better than a fraud (see Lucy Mack

Smith's *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*), but his followers reply that all these people are telling lies. It is agreed by everyone, however, that he did write *The Testimony of Joseph Smith*, but even from this work his fraudulent nature soon becomes clear. According to Smith's testimony, Martin Harris, his friend, copied some of the characters from the gold plates, together with Smith's translation of them, and took them to one Professor Anthon for verification. The professor gave him a certificate to this effect, stating that the characters were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac and Arabic, but tore it up in fury when he heard by what means the translation had occurred. But Anthon himself states that all he was shown were various extracts from the Roman, Greek and Hebrew alphabets, together with a rather badly drawn representation of the Mexican calendar.

Someone is obviously lying, and it is not difficult to guess who. For if Harris and Smith's story were true, it would mean that this race of American Israelites (Nephites) deliberately abandoned Hebrew, their native tongue, and instead communicated for over a thousand years (600 B.C.—421 A.D.) in the languages of four of the nations they most abhorred. Also, since hieroglyphs and cuneiform are forms of picture writing, whilst Arabic used a true alphabet, any text written in a mixture of all these scripts would be no more intelligible than if this article were written in a pot-pourri of English, Etruscan wall murals and Chinese! Thus it is obvious that not only is Smith's story a lie, it is not even a clever one.

In view of their author's character, therefore, the fantastic claims advanced in *The Book of Mormon* and his other writings may be completely dismissed. Whilst it is no doubt interesting to attempt to understand the factors motivating people to join a church such as his, the truth or credibility of its assertions cannot seriously be said to be amongst them.

## HUMAN HAPPINESS AND HYPERTENSION

Jean Straker

READERS of the FREETHINKER will recall that in discussing the Abortion Bill filibuster in the House of Commons with William Hamling (August 4, 1967) I expressed concern at the strain imposed on members by such all-night debates. We now know that the British Heart Association has reported on the problem, that one of the members, who stayed to 'give witness by his presence', has since applied for the Chiltern Hundreds, and also that there has been a change in House arrangements to avoid all-night debates of that type.

These are essentially humanistic considerations and appear to me to be relevant matters to freethought in our time. For this reason I want to link up such humanistic concern for human health and limitations to two other recently published remarks.

Readers who also take *The Humanist* will know that there has been some correspondence about my advertisements in that journal. A letter published in the February 1968 issue from Andrew Ferguson is of particular interest,

for it seeks to draw a common thread through some of the topics which have been discussed in recent letters: adoption, homosexuality, divorce, abortion, religious instruction in school, Sunday observance, nudism and contraception.

Two points are made: one is that Humanism must concern itself with issues which have previously been obscured by belief in the supernatural and belief in Authority, and the other is that Humanists must direct their efforts to achieve the maximum cost-effectiveness, where 'effectiveness' is measured in terms of human happiness. Open discussion of the topics listed is in accordance with these principles.

I now want to bring into line some remarks made by Academician Anokhin, a physiologist, which have appeared in *Soviet News* (January 30).

"It is becoming clear now that myocardial infection (coronary thrombosis), hypertension (high blood pressure), and apoplexies are merely the tragic end of a long series of complications which occur in the human body, chiefly in the nervous system . . ."

"Its cause, however, is hidden, developing in the most delicate processes of the brain, in its almost imperceptible chemical reactions, in the molecules of the brain substance, accumulating and ruthlessly piling up to pathological dimensions everything that man experiences throughout his life: uncontrollable emotional outbursts, frustrations caused by prolonged depressive adversities."

Now, the last link in my chain is from a short speech of welcome I gave to the members of the Department of Gynaecographic Studies on August 24, 1966, to meet Leon Jakobovit, the co-director of the Department of Psycholinguistics at the University of Illinois. I said:

"As I see it the problems to be looked at fall into a kind of class defined by this concept:

That social taboos, civil and religious laws, and promoted cultural mores impose on the individual certain restraints which may be inhibited natural muscle and nerve responses to environmental stimuli induce varying forms of spasticity which in turn impair electro-chemical balance in the human organism, resulting sometimes in a breakdown of individual viability."

We shall have a Humanist Group gynaecography seminar at Oxford on May 5 and will then examine the relationship between nervous conditions and censorship. As the thread draws out it becomes increasingly clear that the conspiracy to deny freethought to people by censorship and by fragmentation of knowledge into isolated disciplines is being converted by human physiological transfer from psychological tension into cardiovascular diseases.

The inference then that I am seeking to draw is that the enemy to freethought—that is 'thought without tension', thought that does not carry with it repressions and neuroses—is not so much a belief in some fantasy or other of man, but the whole series of customs and taboos which make full thought and life impossible.

In that filibuster dialogue I said to Billy Hamling:

"In some paradigmatic way I see the anti-abortion cabal as a microcosm of a social force in which ecclesiastical morality, vested interests in maintaining the *status quo*, a sadistic nature and self-aggrandisement appear to have a common interest in preventing social advancement for the masses."

I want now to alter that last phrase. I want to delete "preventing social advancement for the masses" and substitute "killing people before their time".

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## Letters to the Editor

### "Catholic Infiltration: Great Britain"

JOE NASEBY'S shameless bundle of *non sequiturs* masquerading as "evidence" of Catholic infiltration into British politics (February 9) hardly deserves comment were it not that such irresponsible stuff all too accurately reflects the vulnerable, cranky side of the secular/humanist movement. Vulnerable because it is on the evidence of this sort of thing that we are all lumped together in some quarters as a lunatic fringe, instead of the thoughtful reasonable people we try to be.

Mr Naseby's 'Reds-under-the-beds' mentality leads him to assume, on the basis of an assortment of unrelated facts and opinions, the existence of a Popish plot, apparently involving the active co-operation of Mr Wilson, to take over the country. Come back, McCarthy!

As a humanist, I am all in favour of exposing and attacking Church privilege, power and influence, and I agree that it's the Roman Catholic Church which represents the greatest threat to the growth of democratic humanism. The second greatest threat is the temptation, open to all humanists, to depart from the vital principles of rational open-mindedness and dispassionate inquiry in favour of irrational assumption and emotional prejudice.

We all enjoy sniffing out conspiracy and intrigue in high places, and it makes good, provocative copy whether it happens to be true or not. But when it comes to preserving humanist principles, shouldn't such wish-fulfilment fantasies be reserved for the private dream-world to which they belong? And where they can do no harm?

PETER KANE.

### My stars

HAVING no brains does not stop me trying to think why the clever boys accept Jesus Christ and his promises. As they are so clever, must they not be right and I, in my horrible ignorance, be wrong?

But I think I have now found the answer to this question. The other day I was swearing with gusto amid my bacon and egg (not 'eggs', I'm backing Britain) when it occurred to me that I was depressed. I had no Jesus to tell my troubles to and my wife already knew them. Then a great light nigh cracked my glasses. Of course! I picked up the *Daily* . . . and read my stars. I was to come into some money and would receive an important letter.

You see, in my simplicity, I had turned to my stars just as others turn to the bleeding cross.

I got into a row at work. I lost five and sixpence. The letter was a bill for electricity.

But I shall not change my paper. Like many this day it has more about stars of hope than about the stars of Bethlehem.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

### Cheer up Mr Smith

I ADMIRE the egoism but hardly the logic of Mr Smith's letter (February 2). To dismiss one's opponents by claiming that they do not understand your arguments is no doubt very convenient—especially if you can think of no better reply—but it is far from convincing.

I suspect that Mr Smith is changing his ground, but even if he *did* intend to say that humanism fails to understand how Hamlets and Macbeths are produced, I cannot agree with him. Such characters are best understood by psychology and sociology, and it is by promoting the study of these that humanism gains a fuller understanding of the world and the people who dwell in it.

As for Epicurus, since both Mr Hird and myself have attempted to explain the meaning of his statement, and since Mr Smith will neither accept our conclusions or produce evidence to justify a different one, I can see no point in carrying the discussion further. In answer to his question, I would say that very few people mourn for the dead; the majority mourn for themselves because they are lonely.

Who decides the value of human life? Mr Smith? Or the people who live it? I would say the latter and, from the simple fact that the majority do not blow out their brains, I conclude that they find their lives to be of value. Certainly there is much misery in

the world, but most of it could be alleviated if only man would employ a little more reason in his actions. Perhaps Mr Smith finds his own existence futile; from the tone of his letter I suspect that he does. In that case I feel sorry for him, and the best advice I can offer is for him to cheer up and become a humanist.

A. J. LOWRY.

### Thanks, Mr Macfarlane

HAVING read E. G. Macfarlane's article (Government or Religion, February 2), I should like to request the hospitality of your columns to thank Mr Macfarlane, on behalf of the Scottish National Party, for some much needed publicity he so kindly gave us.

GEORGE D. RODGER.

### Revolution to destroy war—a "higher intelligence"

ONE may reasonably ponder how politically naïve World Government propagandists are! Do they fondly assume the ballot box is all powerful? As one claiming higher intelligence in this matter, I assert quite categorically respect for the ballot box is observed solely when it functions within the capitalist framework of society.

World Government could only be established by pushing around the gigantic national and international combination of capital, merchant banking houses, the Big Five, investment corporations, etc. Do World Government campaigners expect them to accept this at the behest of a ballot box? Any Standard One primary pupil knows capitalism leads to war and always has. Try to displace capitalism through the ballot box and you will witness complete denigration and utter contempt for the ballot box by those in the corridors of power who have resort to the armed forces, police and black militia.

To destroy war, we must destroy capitalism, and revolution is the only means; an undeniable truth, and, I suspect, a nauseating contemplation for World Government campaigners.

H. FAIRHURST.

### Cut the sneering

I SHOULD like to congratulate you on the improvement in the quality of the contents of the FREETHINKER which I seem to have noticed in the last month or two. I also prefer the new style to the old. I see from the latest issue that you are developing a new policy for the paper. Please continue along the same lines.

I think the paper would be improved by the omission of a type of sneering, ridiculing article which has appeared too frequently in the past. A recent example is F. H. Snow's article and the ensuing correspondence about God's bottom. Nobody is more anti-religion than I am, but no modern thinking Christian (and the FREETHINKER is not read by the unthinking) believes literally in the images which F. H. Snow derides. Such articles are, in my opinion, in bad taste and do no service to the cause of Humanism.

A. DOUGLAS.

### Irish Catholics

AS an ex-Catholic Irishman please allow me to say that I think Joe Naseby's article *Catholic Infiltration* (February 9) recalls the hysterical nonsense which abounded at the time of Cromwell and again during the madness of the 'Popish Plot'. Surely the weakness of the Catholic Church is now obvious to all. In the USA, for instance, it is expected that 10,000 will quit the Church within the next three years.

Hitler was an ex-Catholic, not a Catholic, but it would seem Mr Naseby would hang him on both counts. By the same token he should condemn to the flames everything that Joseph McCabe has written. Luther, and the majority of the English at the time of Henry VIII, were also Catholic.

Humanists condemn injustice upon whomsoever it is perpetrated, but have you ever condemned the injustices committed by Protestants of English and Scottish extraction against Irish Roman Catholics in the homeland of the Irish people? These Protestants wield religion as a weapon of war; it is savagery; but do you condemn it as such? Or is it all right because it is used by English Protestants against Irish Catholics and Nationalists and for the purpose of holding lands that have been stolen from Nationalists?

The Catholics of England are too weak to threaten English liberty, now or in the future. Both Tories and Labour consider them a valuable counterbalance against Communism. Who can be a more patriotic John Bull than an English Catholic? Scratch any Englishman, I suspect even a humanist Englishman, and you will find a patriot who will say "Ulster is British".

J. DOHERTY.