

# FREETHINKER

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## THINKING ABOUT THE FREETHINKER

IF THE FREETHINKER were in a position to advertise in the *Writers' and Artists' Year Book*, the entry would read like this:

**FREETHINKER, THE** (1881) 6d Weekly. Articles (approx. 500-1,500 words) with a Secular-Humanist outlook on current problems of religion, social reform, ethics, philosophy and science. No poetry or short stories. Payment: 3 copies of the paper.

And there would be no opportunity to explain or elaborate. This, then, is my opportunity to say what I think the FREETHINKER should continue to provide. Above all it should be readable. Even when the material is academic and scholarly, it must be intelligible to the intelligent but not necessarily intellectual reader. It must not take for granted a readership of one sex or age group, and although it cannot hope to please everyone all the time, it should provide enough variety so that there is something for everyone. It should stimulate discussion. It must constantly reaffirm our Secularist and non-religious convictions, showing how these develop, serve humanity, stand up to free investigation, and comfort those who hold them; but it must also encourage the growth of those convictions so that they remain flexible and relevant to the society and times in which we live.

The FREETHINKER has always tried to provide its readers with ammunition for the battles in which Atheists, Agnostics and Humanists find themselves with Christians. It must continue to do this. Because very few of us dine and wine with Cambridge theologians or heretic Bishops, and are more likely to find ourselves face to face with non-liberal Roman Catholics, bazaar-running vicars, Jehovah's Witnesses and the LDOS, we need to be able to reply to the Fundamentalist arguments with vigour and accuracy. At the same time we have to be prepared for the Christian defences to shift before our eyes, and we must be able to detect where the quicksands of "Christian Humanism" begin. We have to know how to cope with Christians who will not hesitate to adopt *our* labels if it will help them to persuade the public that Secular Humanism is no more than a sub-standard version of the old religious faiths. And we have continually to stress that

if labels do not serve to promote understanding they are worse than useless, they are incentives to double-thinking.

The FREETHINKER should emphasise that our convictions are positive, the result of serious thinking about Christianity, and not a merely negative rebellion against its claims and dictatorship. We should be informed about Christian history and tradition, its dogmas and its doubts, and I hope this paper will continue to try and provide this sort of information (or at least a guide to where it can be found). One of our many advantages is the fact that we don't have to fear (as Christians have to fear) genuine democracy and the freedom of speech of our opponents. Indeed we are committed to tolerate and preserve that freedom. **But we do demand the opportunity to share that freedom.**

We believe in education. We believe that unless beliefs can stand up to free investigation then they are not worth having. We believe in the Rights of Man (Women and Children) to choose what they can believe from knowledge and understanding, and not through ignorance or as the result of indoctrination. We believe in hearing what other people have to say, but we must continue to make it quite clear that, as yet, Secular Humanists have not been given the right of reply over the air or in the press, and that it is quite time that more people heard what we have to say. Christians will continue to do their best to keep us quiet; for they love God, not toleration, they want faith, not freedom, and above all they want their own wishful-thinking protected by every possible means. Our antidote to the religious propaganda to which we are so continuously submitted should be laced with punch and not with poison, but we are in no doubt as to the necessity for such an antidote. Alongside our militant opposition to organised religion, and together with a constant awareness of what is being done in its name, we must present practical, constructive and compassionate Secularism for all to see. No one should need to ask, "But what do Secularists *do*?" The FREETHINKER gives proof of just how much is done, not only by our organisations but also by individual Humanists. It will continue to report not only on British activities but also on Secularism abroad, for ours is increasingly an international movement.

Secular Humanists need to develop self-confidence. Not the sort of arrogance we see so often in Christians who "know" that they have the Only Answer, or some Absolute Truth, but the optimism of those who are prepared to spend their lives looking for a great many different answers, and believe that they know how to do it. We are no "Chosen People". We do not have to decry the achievements of others, nor pretend that mistakes have not been made in the name of Rationalism, but we are justified

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in being proud of all that has been done for the happiness (and therefore for the morality) of mankind by men and women who have rejected religious faiths. Many of us may still be in the process of discovering "Humanity's Gain from Unbelief" (to quote Charles Bradlaugh), and we need to be reminded of that gain.

The FREETHINKER is inevitably "political", for no one who cares about the way life is lived can opt out of politics, but it is *non-party political*; more about this another week.

For all this talk about what I want the FREETHINKER to be and to do, readers must remember that Editors can only publish the material they get; and, as I have said, there is no payment. And why no poetry? Well, poets are sensitive people. Whereas most writers have to get used to frequent rejection slips, somehow they are easier to accept for prose than for poetry. When a poem is returned, it is rather as if a mother is seeing her baby placed bottom in a competition. And by what standards can verse be judged? An Editor's personal taste may be no criterion of real poetic value, and yet by what other yardstick can he or she come to a decision? So no poetry, please.

I don't want to take up so much space in future editions (if I can avoid it) but I would like now to look across to the Editors (they all happen to be women) who have helped Secular-Humanism on to a small platform. Joan Little's *New Forum* died at too early an age, as did *Reality*; but *Debate* (Marina Oliver, 13 Westmoreland Road, Harrow, Middlesex) stepped in, and long may it survive. A fellow NSS member introduced me to *Women Speaking* (Hon. Editor and publisher Dr Esther Hodge, The Wick, Roundwood Avenue, Hutton, Brentwood, Essex) which gives quarterly views and news about women at a serious level. Shirley Toulson of *The Nursery World* had the courage to publish a Humanist View of Religion for the Under 7's and all these Editors have been more than fair in their presentation of the follow-up readers' letters. Mary Stott of the *Guardian* calls herself an "agnostic" but writes more like a religious Quaker. One article on "The Problems of Humanist Parents" was accepted and paid for but a more devout gentleman editor decreed that it should not in fact be published. We can only hope that Mrs Stott will try again and come to realise how many Humanist women there are who want to find Humanist views in the *Guardian*. The Editor of *Women's Hour* asked me for a script on "My Philosophy", and although it was adjusted it was not bowdlerised. I hope that both she and Miss Ryder-Smith (the producer) felt rewarded when the majority of letters afterwards proved to be in favour of more Humanism on the air. And so I would like to pay my tribute and to say "thank you" to these Editors who have given their active support to freedom of speech and toleration. We all know their problems and I only wish that those Editors who have so much less to lose were as progressive. As for my predecessors on the FREETHINKER, Colin McCall and David Tribe (who so admirably combined his Editorship with the heavy task of being President of the NSS), I can only say that never before have I been so appreciative of all they have done for the FREETHINKER! As a contributor I always found them courteous and helpful, and I hope soon now to find *them* as contributors . . .

Now for the future:

**OPEN FORUM:** I propose to invite letters from readers on a number of different questions and problems, say, for three or four weeks in which the subject can be thrashed

out, to be summarised at the end. I shall begin straight away by asking you now: "What do you enjoy most in the FREETHINKER?"

"How do you think we can widen our circulation within the limits of the policy outlined above?"

"How much are you prepared to pay a week for it?" (No, the paper cannot be made larger, contain pictures or commission well-known writers. It is already heavily subsidised and what we want is to increase circulation but not the cost.)

"Do you think you could persuade your Library and/or newsagents to take the FREETHINKER, and if not, why not?"

"Have you any subjects you would particularly like dealt with?"

Send your comments and suggestions NOW to me, the Editor, the FREETHINKER, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex. When this subject has been dealt with we shall move on to "Contract Marriage", "Mercy Killing", "Militancy or Compromise" and so on. Do tell anyone you know who is interested in such questions and encourage them to take out a subscription.

**READERS' READING LIST:** You are invited to tell me when you have enjoyed a book which you think has particular interest for Secular Humanists. Send me the name, author, publisher and price, together with not more than 50 words as to what the book is about.

**READERS' LETTERS:** Although I think the FREETHINKER has been almost unique in offering space to the opponents of Freethought, and this is, where space allows, generous, priority must be given to Secularists who wish to express their views. Please keep your letters short and to the point.

**ARTICLES** should be typed wherever possible (or at least legibly written) on quarto paper, double spacing, and a sae should be enclosed. Factual accounts should be clearly documented. I cannot, I am afraid, undertake to write personally about MSS. I have my full quota of letter writing in the Humanist Letter Network, and cannot take on any more. However a formal rejection slip only means that I do not think that the MS is right for the FREETHINKER. Other editors may welcome it, so try again. A last look back: when the FREETHINKER was first published 85 years ago it was (Arthur H. Nethercot writes) "a small, ribald, vulgarly irreverent magazine" committed to destructive freethought rather than to positive, constructive Secular Humanism as we know it today. It had (said G. W. Foote, the Editor), only two kinds of ill-wishers, the Christians and the "mealy-mouthed Freethinkers". In no time at all, Foote and his publisher Ramsey were in gaol for blasphemy. Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, who had, in fact, been very critical of the crude Biblical illustrations which had rocked the boat, visited them and set up a prisoners' aid fund. Annie wrote articles attacking the blasphemy laws. When at last the prisoners were due to be released Annie planned to meet them with a brass band; but Foote said that he would rather stay in gaol that face that! Nevertheless he said later than she had behaved with "the finest womanly tact and sensibility", and with the "temper of a hero". As a result of all the publicity the National Secular Society increased its membership considerably. Times, as you will see from what I have written, have changed for the better; but we cannot afford to forget just how much they still need changing.

THE EDITOR



## FUTURE OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

D. J. McConologue

DURING THE STRUGGLES with the Modernists in the Roman Catholic Church in the first decade of the present century, Pope Pius X in a letter to the French hierarchy reiterated the traditional ultramontane view of the rôle of the laity.

The multitude (of the faithful) . . . has no other right than that of allowing itself to be led and, as a docile flock, to follow its shepherds.

Later, when he had driven all honest scholars out of the Church, he struck a medal to celebrate his victory. He had won a battle, but the war was still to be fought. The acute unease of the educated laity, and of the minority of intelligently sincere clergy, with the traditional orthodoxy and social rôle of their Church was not to be dissipated, though it could be silenced, by the fulminations of an ignorant and stubborn Italian peasant Pope, who could not understand, much less resolve, their perplexities.

His temporary success was due to the fact that the strongholds of Roman Catholicism were in the Latin countries with their high rates of illiteracy (due to the unceasing efforts of Holy Church to maintain her traditional ideal), and in the English-speaking world among the Irish, who were devoid of any tradition of disinterested and critical scholarship.

### A changed position

In the last sixty years, the position has changed. Catholics in the English-speaking world and in the northern European countries have been acquiring education and entering the professions. The result is that now a second educated generation is emerging, which has a growing awareness of the mental limitations of its priests, and which feels that much that has been imposed on it as Divine Truth seems puerile, grotesque and morally repellent. Many break with the Church; others for family reasons remain, but seek interpretations for their beliefs that makes their position more bearable.

These are the people who are responsible for the present cult of Teilhard de Chardin. Among them, the most popular theologians are those who, understandably, ignore Aquinas and turn instead to liberal Protestant theologians such as Tillich, Bultmann and Bonhoeffer, who are aware of and try to tackle the present intellectual and moral objections to Christian belief. These are also the people, I believe, who were responsible for the success of the mildly critical *Objections to Roman Catholicism*, the predecessor of the present volume *The Future of Catholic Christianity*, edited by Michael de la Bedoyere (Constable, 21s).

It is, in the opinion of its editor, "an infinitely better and more serious book than *Objections*", and its main purpose is to help in publicising and implementing the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, where the more progressive bishops, in spite of the procedural obstructions of the Traditionalist minority, achieved a number of substantial reforms. The book is a collection of ten essays by different authors, and, as in most collections, the essays differ in interest and depth. The most penetrating is Magdalen Goffin's "The Broken Pitcher".

### Believe, pray, pay, obey

The refusal of the Church to face difficulties when they arise, she argues, has now brought its nemesis, with the result that "if the Roman Catholic Church finds herself in a state of confusion, disarray, and doctrinal chaos un-

paralleled in her history she is but paying the price of her (fool's) paradise". The restatement of traditional beliefs must now proceed so rapidly that it will be difficult not to upset and perplex the simpler believer, the traditional charcoal-burner. "Spoon-fed for generations, they are disconcerted to discover that some of what they have been led to believe part of the deposit of faith has been relegated to mere theological opinion, that perhaps limbo does not exist and after all Adam and Eve never lived in an earthly paradise". Conditioned in contempt for Protestantism, they now find their infallible guides turning to Protestantism for guidance in their intellectual *impasse*.

The lines of demarcation lie not between this or that Church, but between groups of people from any denomination who offer different solutions to those problems.

People do not leave the Church through wickedness, but "because much that the Christian Church said turned out not to be true, to be intellectually, morally, and imaginatively unacceptable to a consensus of informed minds".

### Renaissance demanded

It would be impossible to summarise and do justice to Mrs Goffin's long and closely reasoned essay. She rejects traditional orthodoxy and sketches the outlines of a reconstruction. She adopts many positions that appear Modernist, such as the view (shared, incidentally, by several other contributors) that any statement of truth, even religious truth, cannot be other than temporary, provisional and subject to revision. Here she could appeal to an *obiter dictum* of Pope John XXIII. She would base religion, not "upon supposedly inerrant statements made about it or any more or less external evidence", but "upon those profound intuitions of the head and heart which Coleridge called our higher reason".

Yvonne Lubbock's "Belief Is Being" is also rewarding. Her position is well summed up in the quotation from Matthew Arnold "that man cannot do without it (the Christian religion) and cannot do with it as it is". In Napoleon's phrase, the greatest enemies of religion are education and history. Mrs Lubbock is aware of the charges brought by both, which she fairly summarises, and to much of which she pleads guilty on behalf of her Church. But to someone who does not share her need for belief, much of her article will appear to be occupied with pseudo-problems.

The third feminine contribution, Bernadine Bishop's "The Future of the Female", seems less satisfactory, being written in a style of generalised metaphysical allegory which I find uncongenial.

### Talking money, listening angels

Of the remaining contributions, I found Daniel Callahan's "Liberal Catholicism in America" and Andrew Boyle's "Towards a New Integrity" the most interesting. American Catholicism, which is mostly Irish or Irish-dominated, is certainly the most naïve and glib of any literate Catholic community. It is, however, the richest in material terms, contributing about fifty per cent of the Vatican's current income, and any pressure from this source would be bound to produce results. There is an Italian proverb: "When money talks, even the angels listen". Mr Callahan's article is historical and descriptive rather than theologico-political. He detects, which is not surprising, that some of the more advanced liberal

(Continued on page 176)



## WINDOW ON THE WORLD

A FEW YEARS AGO, a section of our crank community revived Mithraism in this country; and now comes the news that their French counterparts in the district around Carcasson, Narbonne, Béziers and Albi once again call themselves Cathars. It will be remembered that the Cathari—the Clean, Pure (Puritans)—were a sect of Christian heretics, flourishing between the 11-13th century, especially in the East, where they were known as Bogomili and Manichees. In France they were called Albigenes. They were dualistic ascetics, believing that the materialistic world was that of evil, whilst there also was a pure and good sphere of the spirit. Christianity mobilized several crusades against them until, in 1245, Simon de Montfort stormed their last stronghold, Montségur—now the Cathar Temple and meeting-place of French occultists. They call themselves New Templars and preach a neo-Nazi cult including the vow to save the white race. Their Pope is a Rosicrucian from Holland, with a real monastery at Uzzat, Department Ariège. They claim a certain membership in France and abroad, among them university lecturers and adherents of the late Teilhard de Chardin. Every Easter they convene conferences and an Annual General Meeting at Montségur. Announcing their aims, *Le Nouvel Observateur* (March 30/April 5) gives the theme for the current Easter Convocation as “The Creation of the Material World by the Satanic Entities”.

### That Old Black Magic

The same issue reports that in the Vendée people still believe in Black Magic, and that a stranger who looks and acts in a slightly suspicious way could be murdered as a sorcerer, especially if at the same time some cattle have died. They never see a vet, they just hang medallions of the Virgin round the necks of their cows and pigs and consider this sufficient protection.

However, many people refuse to see the close connection between primitive magic and superstition on the one hand and organized religion on the other. They are accustomed to shrug off our efforts as “flogging a dead horse” and quite unnecessary because “the beliefs of others are their private concern”. But *are* they a private concern when religion has a monopoly, forcing even unbelievers under its dictates? We must keep the silly Sunday restrictions, we are not given programmes on radio or TV which openly contradict the Bible and just now a French film of *The Nun*, a novel by encyclopaedist Denis Diderot, has been banned.

### “Obscenity”

Nor are we allowed to read what they consider “obscene”. And yet the standard (if one can call it this) varies from one country to another. Our judges of morality—despite previous rebuffs in the cases of *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*—have banned John Cleland's 18th century erotic classic, *Fanny Hill*, while in other countries, even in the United States, she has been cleared of the censorious judgments of her detractors. The book is in fact a sexual manual, an elegantly fusty period-piece which does not contain a single obscene word.

“James Joyce's *Ulysses* was held obscene until a US court cleared it in a celebrated 1933 case, recalled *Newsweek* (April 4), so we may hope that in the not too distant future *Fanny Hill* may get a delayed clearance even in

Otto Wolfgang

Britain (particularly as everywhere in the world the Social Democrats or Labourites are the strongest supporters of the American Way of Life). Nobody has a right to prescribe what adults must or must not read. You may debar children from seeing adult films or reading certain books, but, as Havard's child psychiatrist, Robert Coles, avows:

The sexual and violent impulses are already inherent in the child, so it cannot be corrupted, only refined.

The Milan girl student on an obscenity charge, who this year refused to submit to a rigorous physical examination, hurled at the Bench the question:

Is this the world of adults—is this the reality they want us to accept? Sorry, but I can't help felling more adult than you who arrogate the right to judge me.

### Youth and Religion

From Hesse (Germany) *Der Spiegel* reports another instance of effective student reaction against the idiocy of their elders—in this case the CDU motion to re-introduce collective prayers in school. Members of the *Liberaler Studentenbund* at Marburg University distributed handbills with a quotation from Matthew 6, 5-6:

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

### Doing Deals

Cardinal Ottaviani—the most powerful Vatican leader after the Pope—has lately given a number of interviews. In one to the Italian magazine *Gente* (People), he avowed

Today the Church does not wish to condemn, only to persuade; she loves all mankind, so she wants to attract all men. However, the doctrinal position of the Church is immovable whilst Communism still exercises Marxist methods which are based on a materialistic philosophy.

He explained that the Decree of 1949, according to which Marxists must be excommunicated, no longer applies to people who are party members without adhering to Dialectical Materialism. But if they insist on their “error”, viz adhering to Marxist ideas, then the Father Confessor “can deny them absolution”.

However, the open declaration that the Church may suffer rank-and-file fellow-travellers if not avowed Marxists will hardly dampen the enthusiasm of certain Communists for the near-legendary Dialogue.

“Intolerance in Secularism” is the title given by the *Daily Telegraph* to a recent letter. The last sentence reads:

Miss Brophy is obviously so imbued with secularism that she cannot see that all her ideas of social morality and citizenship are based on religious teachings.

When will the religionists understand that mankind would not exist but for the fact that long before the formation of religious ideas there existed a code of ethics and behaviour, whilst religion is nothing else but a way of “doing a deal with the gods” (Socrates) ?

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



## FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1  
Telephone: HOP 0029

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. in U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

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

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC

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

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.  
Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.  
Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.  
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

Bristol Humanist Group (Kelmescott, 4 Portland Street, Clifton), Saturday, June 11th, 3 p.m., Garden Party.  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, June 5th, 11 a.m.: Professor T. H. PEAR, "Universities of the Future: A Psychologist's Comment".  
West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, E11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.  
Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.c. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

### COSMO GROUP

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

## NEWS AND NOTES

ON FRIDAY, 10 JUNE, Dr E. H. Hutten, Dr Lawrence Kotkas and Dr David Stewart will be speaking on FREETHOUGHT AND SCIENCE at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, at 7.30 pm. This will be the second of the Centenary Lectures given by the National Secular Society.

ACTIVE HUMANIST Margaret Oakley has been made a JP, the youngest ever in Dorset. She has our best wishes and congratulations, which also go to the distinguished Atheist Freethinker, H. Cutner, who, at the age of 84, is still busy as an artist. 1,000 proofs were recently taken from the plate of his latest etching of Bath Abbey.

THE AGNOSTICS ADOPTION SOCIETY has been given notice to leave its present offices by the end of June. Anyone who knows of alternative premises to let, preferably in South East or South West London, is *urgently requested* to contact Mrs Daphne Bosch, AAS, 55 Dawes Street, London SE17 RODney 0399. Minimum requirements are three rooms, or possibly two large rooms, plus a small waiting area.

THE HUMANIST LETTER NETWORK (INTERNATIONAL) reports in its May Newsletter a steadily growing membership which now totals 207 active members. Kit Mouat is very grateful to everyone who has sent donations and is sending another cheque (£5) to the Agnostics Adoption Society.

### Surprise, Surprise . . .

THE *Western Morning News* reports the failure of an Anglican service of exorcism. A Plymouth couple, troubled for over three months by "supernatural happenings", have been driven to spend their nights in a relative's home, less than a week after a local clergyman had taken the matter in hand. It is understood that the Bishop of Exeter, who authorised the service of exorcism, has been informed of the fresh outbreak of incidents.

### As Good as Any Other ?

GREEN-LINE BUS conductors have their own version of a well-known prayer:

Our Farnham which art in Hendon, Harrow Road be thy name.  
Thy Kingston come, thy Wimbledon, in Erith as it is in Hendon.  
Give us this day our Maidenhead, and forgive us our Westminster, as we forgive them that Westminster against us.  
For thine is the Kingston, the Purley and Crawley, for Iver and Iver, Crouch End.

THE *Guardian* reports that Mr Paul Halmos told the National Marriage Guidance Council's annual conference at Blackpool recently, that "psychiatrists, psychotherapists and social case workers supported a sexual morality which was a direct descendant of Christian conservative thinking and had nothing to do with psychology". Mr Halmos, author of "The Faith of the Counsellors" said that lay counsellors "diagnosis" of illicit sexual behaviour as "neurotic", "sick", or "immature", exerted a pressure almost comparable to traditional sanctions. The counsellors' declared policy to "prevent marriage breakdowns" was also challenged by Mr Halmos, who questioned their moral authority. They claimed that when couples sought help with their marriage, it was they, and not the counsellors who desired to perpetuate marital ties. It was not right said, Mr Halmos, to justify the counsellor's moral stance by saying he was acting on the client's mandate. KM.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

## GENTENARY LECTURES THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FREETHOUGHT

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

- Friday, June 10th  
FREETHOUGHT AND SCIENCE  
Dr. E. H. HUTTEN      Dr. DAVID STEWART  
Dr LAWRENCE KOTKAS
- Friday, June 24th  
FREETHOUGHT AND LAW REFORM  
DIANE MUNDAY      ANTONY GREY
- Friday, July 8th  
FREETHOUGHT AND LIBERTY  
TOM SARGENT      AVRIL FOX      JAMES SHEPHERD  
MARTIN ENNALS
- Friday, July 22nd  
FREETHOUGHT AND SOCIAL WORK  
PETER FRYER      KERSTINE RICHARDS
- Friday, August 5th  
FREETHOUGHT AND THE ARTS  
OSWELL BLAKESTON      PETER COTES      JOAN MILLER  
JOHN CALDER      KATHLEEN EWART

Meetings commence at 7.30 p.m.  
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, WC1



## EVOLUTIONARY HUMANIST

JULIAN HUXLEY'S *Essays of a Humanist* (Penguin, 6s) is a reprint of the book formerly published by Chatto and Windus in 1964. As we may expect, about half of the fourteen essays are on biology and evolution. In fact I think it fair to say that Huxley's evolutionary preoccupations emerge much more clearly than his humanism.

He considers the origins of Darwinism, examining Darwin's method and range and indicating the other contributors in this important field. It is refreshing to see mention of Darwin's *Descent of Man* and *Emotions in Man and Animals*. With increased specialisation of activity it is rare these days to find scientists writing great volumes. The nineteenth century scientists did this sort of thing more frequently and some such works can still be read with great profit. Among such works the above ones of Darwin are foremost.

Huxley spends some time considering what is meant by "higher" and "lower" in terms of evolution and gives an interesting survey of recent work in ornithology. Birds, it seems, are particularly useful in the study of species-formation, animal population, animal behaviour, etc. He also includes essays on the wild life of Africa and Southern Spain.

### Questionable to Freethinkers

One of the essays served as an introduction to Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man*, and another examines the recent theological ferment caused by the Bishop of Woolwich and other writers. The former essay is odder, from the humanist point of view, than the latter. Chardin, as a Jesuit, can scarcely be assumed to be sympathetic to the efforts of humanists, but he is particularly interested in evolution and, after all, so is Huxley. The subsequent criticism of Dr John Robinson is clearer and more satisfactory but here too there are features that may be reasonably questioned by freethinkers.

Huxley accuses Robinson of wanting to have his cake and eat it. Robinson's analysis of "God" suppresses the personal aspect of God and, in so doing, leaves little of the traditional view intact. Huxley rightly questions the retention of the word God in this situation. He is less eager, however, to abandon the word religion.

To Huxley, as well as Robinson, religion is not to be eliminated: it is to be modernised. To Huxley humanism can provide the terms of reference for the new religion and, in this way, proving an "idea-system" which is fully compatible with the findings of modern science.

I believe that this approach is inherently unsatisfactory for a humanist. If I were a Christian seeking to preserve the secular power of the institutionalised Church I would try to hang religious language on to a secular interpretation of man and the world. To some extent Huxley is assisting in this operation. I cannot welcome such a sentence as

For the first time in history, science can become the ally of religion instead of its rival or its enemy, for it can provide a "scientific" theology, a scientifically-ordered framework of belief, to whatever new religion emerges from the present ideological disorder (p 107).

And he also states, with other humanists, that "the world owes a great debt" to Christian ethics. I find this an odd remark. What is good in Christian ethics predates them; what is unique to them is very often objectionable in the extreme.

G. L. Simons

### Attitude to Marxism

Huxley's attitude to Marxism is interesting. Whilst approving of certain Marxist principles (eg the dialectical law of quantity-change producing quality change) he still regards Marxism as a "theological" system containing indefensible dogmas. This view is, of course, fashionable in the West, but I think that it is an over-simplification. Whilst it is certainly true there is a "theological" content in Marxism there is one also in science), it must be remembered that Marxist thought has always stressed the importance of science in assessing man's place in society and the world. Some modern Marxists are producing subtle and important work on the relation of cybernetics to society. (Lawrence and Wishart are, I believe, publishing such a work later this year.) Huxley readily acknowledges the importance of cybernetics in examining society and other causal situations.

He also examines the population problem, criticising Communists and Catholics for organised opposition to comprehensive family planning (China, incidentally, has now introduced a programme of birth control). And he surveys the eugenic possibilities for the future. I feel that he is at times politically naïve. He seems to assume that the Welfare State is adequate for its purpose and looks too much towards international charities. Christians too have always recommended charities, but these are inadequate. Human problems require a political solution. Charity is at best a short term solution, at worst the problems are aggravated.

### Facts and Opinions

This is an interesting book—chiefly, for me, because of its factual data. I am interested to learn, for example, that schizophrenia may have a genetic basis, that night-migrant birds navigate by the stars, that Sir Walter Raleigh anticipated Darwin in some respects. But I am less happy about Huxley's rationalism. I believe that his vision of the Good Society is basically sound, but that he gives too many hostages to the forces of reaction.

To me, political action seems the only way to change society radically. Huxley is an enlightened liberal, but gentle liberalism is ineffectual or takes a long time. We shouldn't be prepared to wait so long.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

## CENTENARY RALLY

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

**NORTHAMPTON**

SUNDAY, JULY 17th

*Speakers include:*

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER      DAVID COLLIS  
REGINALD PAGET, QC, MP      DAVID TRIBE

*Transport from—*

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



## REVIEW

## THE MATCHGIRLS

"THE MATCHGIRLS" is a splendid musical now on at the Globe Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue. If you enjoyed "West Side Story", then I think it is probable that you would enjoy this. If you didn't, then it is still worth seeing as first class entertainment with a story of particular interest to Secularists. And the story, of course, is about the strike of the Matchgirls in 1888.

At the end of the 19th century Bryant & May were (Arthur Nethercot writes) "a prime instance of capitalist exploitation of the working classes for private profit". Hundreds of girls in a string of factories worked under appalling conditions. As early as October, 1885, Charles Bradlaugh's paper *The National Reformer* reported a strike resulting from a lowering of the wages and the grim hazards to health, especially the loss of teeth from the inhalation of chemicals. The strike failed because women workers had no Trades Unions behind them. One of the champions of the unskilled women workers in London was a Christian, Herbert Burrows who was soon joined by the atheist-Socialist Annie Besant.

In June, 1888, Annie Besant went to Bromley and talked to three unsuspecting matchgirls, and, as a result, wrote a harrowing and effective article called "White Slavery in London" for her own magazine *The Link*. A few days later she appealed to the shareholders of the company, with a deliberate reference to the "country clergymen with shares", possibly implying that her husband, the Reverend Frank Besant, was among the guilty. And then back to the factory with roses for the girls who "literally danced for joy". Annie had to undertake the temporary support of the three girls who had given her information about the factory conditions, as they had been threatened with the sack unless they recanted. One of the newspapers which joined in the battle was the *Observer*. Annie and Herbert Burrows called a Protest Meeting at Mile End Waste. Deputations were appointed and further meetings called. Although Bryant & May threatened to import labour from Scotland, or to move the factories to Scandinavia, the girls decided to strike.

More money was raised to help support them, through newspaper appeals and contributions, but some five hundred of the girls went down to the country to try and supplement their slender strike pay by hop-picking. In London the fight went on. J. M. Robertson, the great rationalist, and G. B. Shaw were among others who supported Annie and the strikers.

As the result of pressure from the press, conferences, deputations and delegations, and what must have been extraordinary courage and patience on the part of the girls and their allies, seven important concessions were granted with a "no reprisal" guarantee. The girls were satisfied, and although their wage gain was trivial they had at least achieved more humane working conditions. A. H. Nethercot writes, "Byant & May became and have remained, one of the most successfully and co-operatively run firms in England . . ."

These, then, are the bones of the story, and Bill Owen, who wrote the book and lyrics for the musical, has kept faithfully to them.

Some critics have suggested that the subject of "phosy jaw" and the wretched working conditions of the matchgirls is no fit subject for a musical, and I was prepared to agree. Now I think these critics are wrong, for the seriousness of the story comes over well and is in no way diminished by the musical medium. And surely it is a good thing that someone has taken the trouble to present this important flash-back in history in a form that is honest yet, at the same time, good to look at and listen to. If only Secularism could be put across with as much verve as this plea for socialism, we might now have a very much larger National Secular Society than we have.

Humanists will appreciate the research and "home-work" which Bill Owen has done (and which, I felt, Osborne had *not* done for his play "Luther"). For instance, when Annie Besant is dictating a letter to Charles Bradlaugh MP, she cancels "Love, Annie" (or something similar) for "Yours sincerely", which is presumably a reference to her concern for the spurious rumours of the time that Annie Besant and Bradlaugh were "more than just friends". This scene was in "The Freethought Bookshop"!

Marion Grimaldi makes a handsome and dignified Annie Besant, and Vivienne Martin, whose verve and skill in singing, dancing and acting is a joy from start to finish, is the heroine matchgirl. Gerard Hely introduces the love interest, and who is to say that there wasn't any. The company supports them with the sort of vivacity and technical ease we have come to expect only from the Americans.

The clichés and jokes about the pregnant girl were wearisome;

there really isn't anything funny about the last stages of pregnancy. Banality is avoided, however, by the sudden departure of the mother-to-be (bringing to an end a most realistic all-woman fight) and the birth of her dead child. Even the cliché of the country yokel was saved by the best comic dancing I have seen for some time. Gilian Lynne's choreography is excellent, and the whole production is emphasised effectively by the decor of factory, tenements and the hop field. I don't know if the scene where Gladstone's statue is unveiled (and the girls cause a riot because they have been forced to contribute to it and lose half a day's pay for compulsory attendance at the ceremony) was historically correct, but it was a lively scene. Tony Russell's music is reminiscent of Bernstein (especially the song "We're going to Show 'Em") but was none the worse for that. The resounding applause was well deserved, and I hope THE MATCHGIRLS has a long and very successful run. KM.

## BOOKS OF INTEREST

*A small Selection of Books from the Freethinker Bookshop.*

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## FUTURE OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM

(Continued from page 171)

Catholics in America are calling into question basic Catholic beliefs.

One does not have to search very hard to find some who wonder about the contemporary validity of the "supernatural"; they have taken to heart the enterprise of demythologising Scripture and Christian doctrine.

There are others who question whether the Church can claim any binding authority and suspect that "the doctrine of papal infallibility was a bad mistake on the part of the Church".

Andrew Boyle's "Towards a New Integrity" is a plea for greater intellectual honesty and frankness on the part of the Church and hierarchy.

Of the remaining contributions, John Todd's "Love and Morals" and Ronald Brech's "Economic Planning for the Church" will be of interest primarily to Catholics. T. L. Westow, in "The Heart of Unity", foresees, among other changes, that "the glamour of the clerical position will decline sharply", resulting in the ending of compulsory clerical celibacy.

### Spiritual problems

Archbishop Thomas Roberts, SJ, writes an amusing but essentially lightweight parable which he calls "Quaker Marriage" and the volume ends with a long essay by E. J. Watkin on "The Wisdom of the Spirit". Mr Watkin is the most traditionalist of the contributors, and his essay will be of interest mostly to Catholics worried by the present doctrinal eruptions. Mr Watkin is a self-confessed Christian Platonist, and he defends the spirit, and not the letter of the traditional beliefs.

Humanists and Freethinkers will not go to this book to "mug up" the case against Roman Catholicism, or with opportunist motives. Its interest for them lies in the fact that it is a book in which a number of educated Catholics face up to difficulties in their religion and try to meet them without the traditional tactics which have made so much Catholic apologetic writing so distasteful.

### From *aggiornamento* to *domani*

The question arises about its significance. Can the Church, as she has always done, regard the intellectuals as an expendable minority, and either silence them or drive them out? Or will she try to hold them by making concessions? The latter seems the more probable. Most pro-clerical intellectuals come from countries where Catholics are in a minority, and any repression would be sure to get wide and adverse publicity. Ceremonies of excommunication are now rarer than coronations. Furthermore, she realises that the ideas of the intellectuals seep down to the less-educated through the media of modern communication, and fewer and fewer of the faithful are now protected by their illiteracy.

But the situation of the Church generally is dangerous. History shows that totalitarian structures experience their greatest danger, not at the period when their tyranny is greatest, but at the moment when they move cautiously towards liberalisation. This, it seems, is the state of the Church of Rome at present. When Pope John launched his *aggiornamento*, he unleashed forces which his successors may find hard to control. Harnack remarked that the history of dogma was its refutation, and it seems hard to see how a belief in Catholic dogma can survive a free

examination of its origins. Already there are signs of this. Three hundred years ago, Thomas Hobbes wrote

It is with the mysteries of our Religion as with wholesome pills for the sick, which swallowed whole, have the virtue to cure; but chewed are for the most part cast up again without effect.

To swallow without chewing is becoming every day more difficult.

## LETTERS

### Public Opinion and Statutes

IN REPLY to her letter on this theme (May 13), may I point out that the community is not ruled by the public or private opinions of Miss Barbara Smoker or anybody else. Law remains law once it reaches the Statute Book and the relevant Act ceases to have authority only if it be repealed or consolidated. Common Law can be statute-barred. Such is the exact position which justifies my calling attention to an act of 1392. Presumably Miss Smoker would admit that Magna Carta still has some relevance although its date is 1215, but it would be merely a mistake to attribute this relevance to public opinion in 1966 or at any intervening date.

I am well aware that the common law concerning blasphemy is still operative and that the statute of 1697 is still on the Statute Book. Miss Smoker will find all of the details in my article in the *Plain View* of some four years ago.

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

### No Politics

IN YOUR ISSUE of April 15 are some excellent articles. A précis of Micklewright's "Dr Ramsey and the Pope" should be shouted from the house-tops. Since the Archbishop defied the law, one wonders if the NSS could not bring him to book through the courts.

"I Found Another God" is also well worthy of space in your columns. But since "conscience" is his God, I wonder whether Gerald Jackson is acquainted with Darwin's reference to it in *The Origin of Species*.

"Gods" by Gonzalo Quioque is stimulating reading; and so is "How Far Can Realism Go in the Theatre" by Kit Mouat.

But the front page article addressed to Mr Prime Minister is utterly deplorable. It deals with political issues which are not even remotely concerned with freethought or supernaturalism. Free thinkers include people of all political views. They are united only in their religious scepticism.

The Europeans in Rhodesia developed land which had been left virgin by the blacks. They thereby created wealth and gave lucrative employment to negroes. They are entitled to protect their property. H. G. Wells asserted in the last century that the British Empire was collapsing; and it has now done so. And just as Christianity is the ghost of the Roman Empire, so the Commonwealth is that of the British. The British Empire is as dead as mutton, and its ghost should be laid. Mutual defence pacts with our kith in the Antipodes and elsewhere might be possible. But we should disown the negroes. They are not of our family. Millions of pounds of our money is being wasted because Britain will not realise that her empire is dead. If there were no black nurses in hospitals, white girls would volunteer, given reasonable pay and conditions.

If Ian Smith can convince the British people that their empire is dead he will have richly earned their gratitude. I shall certainly stop my order for the FREETHINKER if it continues its virulent enmity to my relatives in Rhodesia.

W. E. HUXLEY

### Rome in Sheffield

SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY is dominated by American money with its inevitable influence. The "vertical escalator"-type lift in the skyscraper building is quite needlessly designated "Pater-noster". Ask for explanation why a lift needs a name at all and if so why "Our Father", and we are told: "Well, it's the name for an RC set of holy beads and the lift works like a ring necklace". Surely "Bicycle Chain" would in that case be more apt. Why let a Catholic expression creep into usage? Incidentally, this skyscraper is the ugliest in the world, and dedicated to "Art and Architecture"!

In this priest-ridden city another anomaly has come to my notice. The City Libraries have published a long booklist on Roman Catholicism which "is by no means complete—it is merely a selection of the much wider choice available". No anti-religious list is printed.

W. G. GELLET