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## 1866 AND ALL THAT: THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

1866 WAS A BUSY YEAR, not only for Bradlaugh, Mrs Wells and the founders of the Worcester College for the Blind, but also for women who formed their first Suffrage Committee in London that year with the object of collecting 100 signatures on a petition for the enfranchisement of their sex. A petition which J. S. Mill had undertaken to present to Parliament. In less than two weeks 1,499 signatures had been collected.

*Rapiers and Battleaxes* (George Allen and Unwin, 37/6) by Josephine Kamm is the story of the fight for the Rights of Women from the 1730's to the present day. Although the telling is perhaps rather pedestrian, the story deserves repeating until it is as much part of school history as the Magna Carta itself.

The disabilities suffered by a woman were in part intended for her protection, but, as the author points out, "while a married woman could get away with almost any crime and was not responsible for her own debts, she had no legal claim to any of her possessions; her property, her earnings, even her children, all belonged to her husband". And before 1857, of course, no woman could get a divorce. Mary Wollstonecraft pleaded, "Make women rational creatures and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives and mothers, that is if men do not neglect their duties of husbands and fathers". She made no claim for any superiority of the female sex; she wanted women to have power not over men but over themselves. She was condemned both as an atheist and as a feminist; a tricky enough combination even today in a Christian-man's world.

Not all rationalists, not even the women, supported the fight for Votes for Women. Florence Nightingale, for instance, believed that other reforms had a higher priority. It was a Christian woman, Clare Norton (née Sheridan), whose sufferings at the hands of her husband and the British law gave the situation of women much needed publicity. Caroline believed in what she called "the natural superiority of men" but the Infants Custody Bill owed

much to her persistence and courage.

Miss Kamm's book is about the radical, progressive women, Unitarians, Quakers and Rationalists, the men who supported them and the opposition they encountered in their struggle to destroy the sexual "apartheid" (as Brigid Brophy has described the situation even today). Among a long and honourable list of names there was Mary Carpenter who established the Ragged Schools, Louisa Twining, the originator of Workhouse Reform, the gifted and philanthropic Lady Byron, and perhaps the most remarkable of them all, Barbara Bodichon who was a close friend of G. J. Holyoake and shared his views. McCabe credits her as "foundress of Girton"; she certainly gave it £1,000 and left it another £10,000 in her will. The Portman Hall school which she established was undenominational, co-educational and "entirely without class distinction". The cost for each pupil was sixpence per week. Barbara Bodichon was a competent artist, but Miss Kamm writes that she was "never able to reconcile completely her love of art with her dedication to the women's movement". Her husband, Eugène, a French doctor, was one of the early champions of euthanasia.

These intelligent, capable, courageous women must have been constantly torn between the job they know they must do and the image of womanhood into which they knew they must fit in order to be accepted. Many of them suffered from the headaches, languor hysteria and other symptoms which we would probably today call psychosomatic. And no wonder. Bill after bill was introduced to the House and was lost. The battle for higher education, for opportunity in careers, for rights in the family, the home and marriage, for recognition as human beings, continued year after year, but it must often have been heart-breaking. Various periodicals provided a platform, the *English Woman's Journal* for one. Harriet Martineau wielded her pen continually in the cause, once describing the case of a shop-owner who tried the experiment of "employing women in the drapery department, only to find that women shoppers refused to be served by members of their own sex".

Women excelled in the printing trade. In 1871 there were 741 women printers in England, but their employment at indecently low rates led to strikes among the men, and women were ousted from the trade. Soon, however, they began to break into other kinds of work, in offices, shops and even the male preserve of hair-dressing.

Of all the Christian women reformers, Josephine Butler was surely one of the most admirable. Wife of a clergyman, schoolmaster and scholar, she suffered personal tragedy and the typical ill health of Victorian women, but served society energetically by her long and patient struggle for repeal of the iniquitous Contagious Diseases Act. She had the medical profession against her, including

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many suffragists and even the women doctors.

In 1866 J. S. Mill demolished the argument that women had no need of the vote. "They needed", he said "other protection than that of their men. I should like to have a return before this House of the number of women who are annually beaten to death, kicked to death, or trampled to death by their male supporters . . ." Disraeli and Gladstone were among those who opposed the Bill. Queen Victoria announced that Lady Amberley (Bertrand Russell's mother) deserved a "good whipping" for supporting women's rights, and impatience on the part of the reformers led to the violence of the suffragettes, who were led by Emmeline Pankhurst. Gaol sentences were imposed, and prisoners went on hunger strike and endured the torture of forcible feeding. Millicent Fawcett (wife of the blind agnostic, the Right Hon Henry Fawcett, FRS, and

sister of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson) deplored the methods of the militants and won many converts by her own rectitude and honesty.

Josephine Kamm brings her story up to date (mentioning the refusal in 1958 of Baroness Wootton to take the oath when made a Life Peeress), and there is a useful Appendix of "Bills Brought in by Women MPs" from 1922-1966.

In June the Fawcett Library, 27 Wilfred Street, London, SW1, held a Centenary Exhibition with a most interesting collection of papers, books and souvenirs to commemorate the pioneers and their work. At least one woman rationalist and feminist, the Editor of the FREE-THINKER, was there, glowing with reflected glory, very grateful to all those who fought and won the early battles, but conscious, too, that the "war", alas, is not yet over.

### THE GOOD OLD DAYS

#### Rules laid down for the Clerical Staff of R & S Ltd., Merchants and Ships' Chandlers, Sydney Town, 1852.

1. Godliness, cleanliness and punctuality are the necessities of a good business.
2. On the recommendation of the Governor of this Colony this firm has reduced the hours of work, and the clerical staff will now only have to be present between the hours of seven a.m. and six p.m. on weekdays. The Sabbath is for worship, but should any man-of-war or other vessel require victualling, the staff will work on the Sabbath.
3. Daily prayers will be held each morning in the main office. The clerical staff will be present.
4. Clothing must be of a sober nature. The clerical staff will not disport themselves in raiment of bright colours, nor will they wear hose, unless in good repair.
5. Overshoes and top-coats may not be worn in the office, but neck scarves and headwear may be worn in inclement weather.
6. A stove is provided for the benefit of the clerical staff. Coal and wood must be kept in the locker. It is recommended that each member of the clerical staff bring four pounds of coal each day during cold weather.
7. No member of the clerical staff may leave the room without permission from Mr Ryder. The calls of nature are permitted, and the clerical staff may use the garden below the second gate. This area must be kept in good order.
8. No talking is allowed during business hours.
9. The craving for tobacco wines or spirits is a human weakness, and, as such, is forbidden to all members of the clerical staff.
10. Now that the hours of business have been drastically reduced to only eleven hours a day, the partaking of food is allowed between eleven-thirty a.m. and noon, but work will not, on any account, cease.
11. Members of the clerical staff will provide their own pens. A new sharpener is available, on application to Mr Ryder. Mr Ryder will nominate a senior clerk to be responsible for the cleanliness of the main office and the private office, and all boys and juniors will report to him 10 minutes before prayers and will remain after closing hours for similar work. Brushes, brooms, scrubbers, and soap are provided by the owners.
12. The new increased weekly wages are hereunder detailed:  
 Junior boys (to 11 years) ... .. 1s 4d

Boys (to 14 years) ... ..	2s 1d
Juniors ... ..	4s 8d
Junior Clerks ... ..	8s 7d
Clerks ... ..	10s 9d
Senior clerks (after 15 years with the owners)	21s 0d

The owners hereby recognise the generosity of the new labour laws, but will expect a great rise in output of work to compensate for these near Utopian conditions.

### WHEN WILL THE HUNGRY EAT? Gerald Jackson

IN THESE DAYS of automation when man has sufficient scientific knowledge at his command and an abundance of resources at his disposal to enable him to build a far better world, millions still live in squalor and will eventually die of starvation and disease.

Small children whose faces never smile will die in their thousands without ever having one substantial meal inside their pathetic little bodies. We can split the atom but we can't feed the hungry!

Millions whose expectation of life or, rather, "hell", is tragically short suffer degradation and humiliation beyond human endurance, while on the other side of the fence the more affluent societies carry on their way of life, and do little more than send missionaries to teach them how to become good Christians and give thanks to the Lord for the privilege of starving!

And so the suffering continues. The Americans and the Russians spend more and more millions on the space race and (with the other major powers) further millions on research into finding effective ways of blowing people up.

The Church—among the wealthiest property-owners in England—spends thousands building new churches and restoring the old, yet has the audacity to beg for more money. And while starvation continues Christians pray for the hungry!

If there is a heaven and hell, and religionists assure us there is, then hell must be as over-populated as mother earth, with the poor and hungry, I suspect.

The Godless Freethinker does not believe in a mythical heaven or hell; for him heaven and hell are real places on this planet, and which of the two you inhabit is purely a matter of luck. The stupid cliché "all men are equal" should have "but only when they're dead" added.

Is it just a wild dream of the humanist that one day the world will be united as one people? No wars! No God! No religion! just man and clear-headed reasoning. It is only when scientists and the colossal fortunes being spent on finding new tools of destruction are put to the task of making barren lands fertile that the hungry will eat and the world ring with the laughter of their children.

## HOW I BECAME AN ATHEIST

Michael Gray

IT IS PROBABLY A GOOD THING that the title of this series is "How I Became an Atheist", and not "when", since I could not say there was any definite point in time when the transition occurred. The turning to atheism was a long and sometimes painful process spread over a period of years, and it was not finally accomplished until after a series of "false starts". There were the many occasions when my doubts caused me to break away from my religious unbringing, but not strongly enough to prevent my fears from eventually making me return.

I was born into a typical "good Catholic family" and consequently brought up to learn the catechism and to go to Mass every Sunday. I was taught to pray before I could read or write (and almost before I could talk). I attended a Roman Catholic Primary School until I was eleven, then passed on to a grammar school (also Catholic of course) where as much attention was concentrated on religious studies as on any of the educational pursuits. In my last year there, when I was sixteen, I spent a great deal of time studying for the School Certificate in Religious Knowledge, which I passed with distinction! It was, however, while pursuing these studies that the first real doubts began to form in my mind. In trying to appreciate the justification for the Church's dogma and the proofs of its divine authority I only became more unsure. It became increasingly obvious, the more I studied, that there was no evidence to convince anybody other than the biased or the feeble-minded. There was certainly no scientific basis or logical proof that would stand up to investigation. The only thing that the Church's teaching did prove was that it did not have any proof! Nevertheless, even after reaching this conclusion, I still clung stubbornly to my beliefs, justifying myself by the typically Christian means of extolling the virtues of a faith that does not demand proof.

After leaving school I came into contact with a different society. For the first time in my life I mixed freely with people of varying beliefs and attitudes. I slowly began to recognise all the inconsistencies in the world of Christian teaching and all the misery and suffering which surely could not be necessary. However, it was only as a result of my own personal experience of unhappiness that I finally found the strength to reject the beliefs with which I had been indoctrinated for so long. It is sadly typical of human beings that we are quite prepared to accept the suffering of others as necessary for the fulfilment of some Divine Plan, and only rebel when we ourselves are made to suffer. Although I had often been puzzled why there should be such unhappiness in a world created and watched over by a god of Love and Mercy, it had never been sufficient to turn me against this god. As a Catholic I had been taught that we should not seek to understand the "ways of god" but should follow them unquestioningly. However, to pay heed to the advice of Marcus Aurelius (surely the most naïve of all philosophers!) to "do nothing but what god will approve, and accept everything god may assign" is fine as long as others are doing the suffering. To continue to believe that "whatever happens, happens rightly" is not so easy when we ourselves are suffering.

### Rebellion against God

At first my rejection of Christianity took the form of a rebellion against a god which I still thought of as real; I visualised myself as a sort of present-day Lucifer. But this was only a transitional stage. It was not long before I realised the futility of blaming the results of accidents of Man's incompetence on some mythical Creator. Although

the reason I became an Atheist may have been a selfish one, I became more and more convinced of my new beliefs by observing the suffering of others and the million and one inconsistencies in the world with the existence of any god.

In a way I was fortunate that it was not until after leaving school that I became an atheist. If I had formed my present views there, the pressure to conform could have become unendurable, especially if my views had not become as firmly entrenched as they are now. As it was, the only real pressure came from my family, who were (and still are) firm Catholics. My behaviour at first met with that incredulity common to all believers at the rejection of god by anyone. I never experienced much antagonism, only indignation and shock that I could be capable of such a thing, I whom they had once hoped would become a priest! Now they are reconciled to the facts, but they would still be too ashamed to admit to any of our relatives that a "lamb" had "strayed from the fold".

### Necessity for Atheism

In the four years since I rejected religion I have realised more and more the necessity for atheism in a world of chaos. Too much suffering is allowed to continue because it is "god's will". There is no Divine Plan, no order in the chaos except that which we ourselves make; but as long as people are content to accept their "fate", or to pray to some supernatural agency for help, they will never learn to set about helping themselves or others. Only when people realise that the only life we can expect is this life here and now, as we make it ourselves, and only when they realise that we cannot expect eternal happiness in some Other World, will they be prepared to do what is necessary now. The only salvation we can expect lies not beyond this world but within *us*. But first we must rid ourselves of the childish fears and the ignorant superstitions masquerading under the name of "Religion", all so unnecessary in a world already plagued by so many real troubles.

## DEPUTATION

ON JULY 5th a deputation from the National Secular Society on the subject of adoption was received at the Home Office. During the discussion with Mr A. D. Gordon-Brown the NSS representatives (Simon Ellis, David Tribe and Mrs Margaret McIlroy) submitted four recommendations. (1) That adoption work be made a statutory duty of the local authorities instead of a permissive one as at present. (2) That if it was considered essential that natural mothers should have some control over the religion of adoptive parents, at least the form should be re-worded to make it clear that they *need not* nominate a religion. (3) That if denominational adoption societies were accumulating babies they were unable to place, the responsibility for arranging adoptions for these babies should be passed over to local authorities. (4) That a Ministry circular should be sent to Local Authority Children's departments instructing them not to discriminate against non-religious prospective adopters.

The Ministry officials were disinclined to take action, claiming that improvement depended on gradual changes in public opinion which could not be hastened by administrative action. However, they did consider that it would be possible to amend the form of Consent to adoption so as not to suggest to a natural mother that she *must* nominate a religion.

## NEWS AND NOTES

### "Freedom" in Catholic terms . . .

IN *The Universe and Catholic Times* (July 8) Fr Gordon Albion confirmed the problems involved in a church which has "the one true religion . . . to which Christ committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men", when trying to promote the rights of others to social and civil liberty "on religious matters". He stressed the need for "immunity from coercion in civil society" and wrote—"the rights of parents are violated if their children are forced to attend classes at school which go against their religious beliefs . . ." But we have to presume that the "rights" of parents with non-religious beliefs are no concern of his.

For all the talk of "immunity from coercion", the same paper reports that a "Mother Teresa", founder of the Missionaries of Charity, Calcutta, is hoping soon to move into Bhutan, a Buddhist kingdom . . . where orthodox missionary work is forbidden by the government.

### Not those "sick" cards, surely?

IN HOMEWORDS for July (the inset of the Anglican church magazines) the problems of "casual users of the church" is discussed. "As to children brought for christening", we read, "if their names are added to a Cradle Roll and they receive birthday cards, they are more likely to join when old enough . . ." A premium bond every two years until confirmation might really clinch it . . .

### And in America

DR MARTIN LUTHER KING "sparked off a blistering attack on America's white churches . . . and accused them of "showing cold indifference or blatant hypocrisy towards the plight of the American negroes. He went on "One of the shameful tragedies of history is that the very institutions which should remove man from the midnight of racial segregation, participate in creating and perpetuating midnight . . ." (*Evening Standard*, July 18). And in our own unswerving opposition to racialism and colour prejudice, Freethinkers can sympathise with his despair.

### All set to bewilder the Secular-Humanist

THE *Catholic Herald* (July 8), in one of its not infrequent frank articles, dealt with the statistical problem of Crime and Denominations. John Greally wrote: "The Catholic Hierarchy have put it to the Home Secretary that a religious upbringing in the Church is valuable to the State, in that it promotes a sense of social responsibility. But . . . the precise facts and figures of Catholic crime incidence are hard to get . . ." Mr Greally had asked Douglas Gibson (founder of an ex-prisoners' club) what proportion of the prison population he would think to be Catholic (reckoning on a 10 per cent of the whole population being RCs). His reply was "at least a third . . ." and he complained that the clergy generally have "no time for the ones who get into trouble". The Home Office, however, avoids giving denominations in their statistics. For social and other reasons, they say, to publish figures of the Catholics, Anglicans, etc., who enter prison and Borstal would give a misleading idea of the Church in question. Could it be that so long as statistics help the Christians, the government will provide the figures? And if they reflect discredit on the churches (or, for that matter, on the government's support of organised religion, church schools and so on), then such statistics are "not available". It certainly looks like it . . .

On the same day, the *Islington Gazette* reported a four year old child whipped to death by her father, "a man of good character who sang in the choir on Sunday nights . . ." Such a story would only be relevant in the realms of mental sickness if it were not for the fact that the Press of this country continues to equate religious belief and church attendance with morality.

### In spite of the vogue for Pooh bear

BEATRIX POTTER (whose centenary also falls this year), one of so many intelligent, creative Victorian women who were Unitarians, rejecting Hell and being rejected as outsiders by more orthodox Christians, is receiving a well deserved praise for those small books which will surely never be out-of-date.

### Romance is only skin deep

THE *Sun* reported (July 18) that the influential Italian magazine *L'Espresso* has bitterly condemned what it calls "the slavery of wives" in Italy where a husband can legally prevent his wife from leaving the house alone or from meeting people he does not like; can strike his wife, prevent her from taking a job and open her correspondence; can force her into "permanent chastity" if they obtain a legal separation, and can even decide whether a baby is to be breast-fed or whether a wet-nurse is to be hired.

### And work this one out . . .

THE REV ALAN HARRISON is quoted as saying that "This modern England of ours is the bastard child of atheistic intellectualism out of human ethics . . ."

### But where there's life there is hope . . .

THE *Guardian* (July 20) reported the fact that the Lancaster University, when advertising for a Professor of Religious Studies, stated "of any religious faith, or none" and told a story about an American professor who confessed that Harvard's ministers were praying now "to whom it concerns".

### Sour grapes?

"ENGLAND should set an example to all those foreigners", says a Newmarket vicar, "and cut out the girlish habit of kissing and cuddling once a goal has been scored . . ." The vicar says he would be astonished if anyone rushed up and kissed him after he had delivered a good sermon.

### Plus ça change . . .

From *Inquisition and Liberty* by G. G. Coulton (1938).

"The . . . pretence that world Catholicism is *only* a religion and is therefore entitled to the conventional avoidance of religious argument must be dissected and destroyed with hard facts. From the point of view of Western democracy, Catholicism is not merely a religion; it is also a foreign government with a diplomatic corps; an agglomeration of right-wing clerical parties and fascist governments; a cultural imperialism controlling a worldwide system of schools; a mediaeval medical code with comprehensive rules for personal hygiene; a network of clerical-dominated labour unions; a system of censorship of books, newspapers, films and radio; a hierarchy of marriage and annulment courts which compete with the courts of the people. Since all these primarily non-devotional features of Catholic power affect the lives of non-Catholics as well as Catholics, it is right that they should be considered not merely as religion but as economics, politics, medicine, education and diplomacy—in other words, as an organic and vital part of democratic society."

## THE FEMALE CHURCH MILITANT

Phyllis K. Graham

WITHOUT WOMEN, who have no official status in the ministry of the Church, the hierarchy would be nowhere, the Church of Rome could not exist.

That *our* sex should be the clockwork which keeps superstition going is a humbling thought for us women Freethinkers. It ought, by the same token, to be a galvanising one!

### The hand that rocks the cradle

Think of the sheer power on tap in that "inferior" half of Christendom which never says Mass or administers sacraments, has no vote in Church government or part in ecclesiastical policy. To the Catholic wife and mother, bodily slave of her husband and "spiritual" slave of her priest, belongs the great task of conditioning the new generation in the old lies and superstitions and abject submission to authority. She literally makes and multiplies the living stuff of the Church.

Her ambition, to see her son a priest, directs her maternal drive to increasing the "military" as well as the "civilian" power of the Church. And since "a priest in the family" is a status symbol as well as a blessing, she hopes to bask in the reflected glory, social and spiritual, of her consecrated offspring.

As hostess to the local clergy she draws the celibate into the warmth of the family circle, thus easing contact with the male laity (seldom so hospitably inclined) and familiarising her children with the benign presence and friendly jokes of Mother Church "in unbuttoned mood". Such tea-parties or informal "droppings-in" of Canon This or Father That are part of the continuous process of cementing laity, clergy and hierarchy in the sphinxlike solidarity which defies reason and progress. "The day the priest comes the whole house is sanctified", a Catholic told me. So Mother's chocolate cake makes its modest but distinct contribution to the diet of the power-hungry!

### Bolstering the Great Male Ego

But the genial tea-swillers are also sworn-in members of the world's most powerful, efficient and penetrating secret police. They hold the keys of consciences, have access to the inmost thoughts and guilt-feelings of their victims, and are always ready armed with the deadly, inescapable weapon of Hellfire. Yet even the Tribunal of Penance has its honeyed aspect. Harrassed mothers seeking mercy may find themselves up against the cold steel of Juggernaut, one step to being crushed beneath the wheels; for uncommitted virgins, however, there is the solace of "spiritual guidance", the luxury of soul-flattery distilled through a sort of mystical semi-sexuality. (To put it euphemistically.) Thus here again women are valuable agents—through their very weakness, vanity and feminine susceptibility—in bolstering the Great Male Ego which is the "soul" of the Church.

Truly the celibate clergy have more willing and practical support in their office from the female sex than they could ever get individually from wives and daughters. Sacerdotal mystique, however barbed with cruelty or steeled with arrogance, attract devout women irresistibly. And well the Popes know it! Celibacy is likely to remain one of the Papacy's most useful weapons in its war for world-power. (Unless the impossible happens and women come to their senses.)

Even among the sects a full quota of "holy women" can usually be relied on to support their married clergy,

whose lawful wives must frequently be driven to the point where a communal celebrate seems preferable to a shared husband.

### Angels? Snobs? or Witches?

A less obtrusive but insidiously forceful brand, the vowed virginity of the female religious Orders, accomplishes its work underground, placing in the hands of consecrated women a power not granted to the laity and unrecognised by the world at large. To the educational Orders is entrusted the shaping of christian womanhood, that foundation on whose marital docility, animal suffering and loyal superstition the pomp and glory of the great stratocracy is erected.

Convent education is extolled as "sound", with particular attention to "good manners". Its snob-value, rarely mentioned, is one of its chief attractions. Nuns, a privileged caste, are initiates in class-distinction. Their persona is often deceptive. "We call them *the angels*", one nunophile informed me unctuously.

And what, I retort, are these "angels" doing in the dark, in the secret places of those vulnerable minds at their mercy? Impregnating them with poisonous dogmas, dessicating them with arid fundamentalism, splitting them apart with the dichotomy of a false view of life, love, sex, everything vital: searing them with the fear of eternal punishment. Angels, indeed! These are witches in bats'-wing vestments, as intent on the old voodoo mischief as their prototypes ten thousand years ago!

### Vital female militia

Then there are the nursing Sisters, those "ministering angels" who catch the sick and helpless in the cruel net of Catholic "moral law". Their power, literally over life and death, assist enormously in the running of the papal dynamo—as the flattering attentions of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster have recently attested.

"Missionary", though now a dirty word to most humane people, still arouses ardour among the elect and awe in the ignorant; while the female militants move quietly over the earth, an army of locusts that devour the living, leaving in their wake those wastelands of fear, guilt and gloom which characterise the worship of the Cross.

Lastly, in contemplative cloisters, those "powerhouses of Prayer", a hidden militia is mysteriously active. That mad effort at unceasing communion with a non-existent god generates a psychopathic force which aggravates the insanity inherent in the Church. Its effects are violently demonstrated by recurrent outbreaks of cruelty and barbarism in the male Church Militant. A tragic illustration is the frenzy of bloodlust that drove so many monks, friars and secular clergy to deeds of horror in the Second World War, particularly in Yugoslavia. For so it has been from time immemorial: the witches brew the spells and the warriors make war.

But other influences are at work. The backwash of women's struggle for emancipation has begun to disturb even the mass-apathy of Catholic womanhood (if not the self-complacency of witches). It is up to us, women of Freethought, to encourage the signs of revolt and help to mature them into revolution.

"If God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him."

MIKHAIL BAKUNIN (1814-1876) from *God and the State*.

## WOMEN IN MOSLEM TURKEY

*Suzan Batten (b. 1930) is a Turkish journalist (and Secular-Humanist) now living in Britain.*

THE MIDDLE EAST is known as the land of patriarchs, slim minarets and subdued wives, whose hands are considered fit only for kneading white dough.

At the close of a long day as the street lamps cast faint shadows, hard living is very often forgotten in the silence and peace of the call to prayer from the *müezzin*. A Moslem believes that the prayer and worship, which is very much part of daily living, adds to the meaning and value of his day. Such is the very close-knit pattern of a religious people in a secular land; one cannot really see where religion and secularity begin and end.

Turkey is a country where these two currents pull both ways simultaneously, and with the same strength. As religion provides morality, world responsibility demands secularity. And while playing their part in the secular world men and women are, almost subconsciously, deeply involved in conforming to the principles of the Koran.

Women's part in this society is enormous. They can be said to lead a non-resistant militancy, even though they habitually grant the first word to the male.

Readers of history will remember that in 1914, when the foundations of the new Turkey were laid by Kemal Atatürk, women of the country, including barefoot peasants, were spiritually and politically capable of joining forces. It is easy to say, "healthy body, healthy mind" without realising that, in spite of their ill-fed bodies, those women carried quarelling souls within them. They had and retained a common sense made possible only by faith in victory of one kind or another, regardless of their ignorance of world affairs.

Today the daughters of that generation are living in a more educated and a more enlightened Turkey. No doubt they have the same capacity for judgment, coupled with an open mind towards world affairs as a result of the social and political struggles which they share with their men.

Women in Turkey did not have to fight for the vote. It was given to them in 1936 as their right and responsibility and as part of the many changes originated by Atatürk to bring the country up to date. So much progress had been made possible by the hearty contribution of women in every walk of life. A Turkish woman is a "person", who not only nourishes and looks after, but who, in a feminine fashion, thinks and directs as well. Her iron will is perhaps the result of the hardships and responsibility of the household. In the olden days, although she was left behind while her man chose to walk ahead of her, this was never meant to show that she was little cared for, loved or respected. On the contrary, even in the primitive areas of the country, many a simple woman acted as the pillar and wisdom of society; her very simplicity provided her with an uncomplicated directness, and manners, which, though crude, were reliable.

The high esteem in which women of the East are held can be traced back to the times of the prophet Mahomet. They were seen in the battlefield, taking the place of their martyred husbands, mothering countless orphans left in the muddy lanes of Mecca, or shouldering the tasks and duties needed to maintain unity in a rugged bedouin society. Mahomet, as is well known, kept a number of women in his modest household, where, in the absence of

their husbands, they were clothed and fed. He was very much aware of the delicate nature and vulnerable pride of women, and his masculine integrity would not allow him to see them humiliated. In return, Mahomet enjoyed the reverence and the almost mystic devotion of eastern women.

Culture and tradition, springing from the heart of religion, have other-worldly elements at their roots which penetrate into the daily life of the people; but it must be said that these elements act as the moderating influence and lessen the excessiveness and aggressiveness of many thoughts and desires. The daily pledge to obey the word of Allah demands considerable discipline. The incentive of this attitude towards the creation of happiness and both material and spiritual well-being cannot be ignored. Having mingled these two aspects inseparably, one's adaptation to life amidst the crises and complications which arise from ignorance and insufficiency may become less difficult.

The progress in modern Turkey is westward. The stride after the image inspired by the nation's idol, Atatürk, is decidedly in the secular direction, where "education" is the signpost. Men and women, mature in the realisation that the "fate" and progress of their country is in their own hands, are mutually alert and on their guard.

There is a cross-current of ideas concerning the political approach of the intellectuals; religious and secular opinions are actively in conflict. But the high ideals set by Atatürk in his efforts to lead the nation towards enlightenment are cherished and protected on all sides in order to raise the dignity of the people to the level of thought which inspired the Bill of Human Rights.

Turkish women are enthusiastic and efficient in their homemaking; they can also be judges, surgeons, engineers, business directors; there is complete sexual equality in the universities and the medical profession. As for taxation, married women are exempt. The century-old National Health Service provides child allowances. There is no legal abortion and there is no population problem. A great many peasant children die every year from lack of hygiene. There is no compulsory religion in schools, and religion is only a minor aspect of life, which survives but with little strength.

Turkish women can be Presidential candidates or Members of Parliament. Young women are not encouraged to leave their homes and live alone, for family ties are still strong, but, as can be seen from the growing numbers of professional women who have crashed the frontiers of their environment, even this attitude is steadily changing. Indeed the women of Turkey have every freedom to exercise their talents in the building of their country.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
SEVENTH AND LAST IN THE SERIES OF CENTENARY LECTURES ON  
THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FREETHOUGHT

### FREETHOUGHT AND THE ARTS

OSWELL BLAKESTON

JOHN CALDER

PETER COTES

DONALD OGDEN STEWART

DAVID TRIBE

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, WC1  
FRIDAY, AUGUST 5th, 7.30 p.m.

Suzan Batten

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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, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.e. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

**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.

Mercyside 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**

British Humanist Association. Fourth Annual Conference, City of Leicester College of Education, August 26th-29th. RICHARD HAUSER, MARGARET KNIGHT, JOE SANDERS, and MICHAEL NICHOLSON. Details: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8. 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.

**ON WOMEN****The Old Testament**

"And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days . . . but if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks." (Leviticus 12. i, ii, v.)

**The New Testament**

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." (1 Peter 3, i.)

"I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence . . ." (1 Timothy 2, xii.)

"For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man . . ." (1 Corinthians 2, viii, ix.)

**The Koran**

Description of a father on hearing that his wife has had a girlchild:

"His visage darkens. Overcome, he hides from his people for the shame of that which has been announced, wondering whether it were better to keep this child to his dishonour, or bury it in the dust . . ." (Quoted *Taboo* by Armand Denis.)

**WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS**

(in association with the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY)

**INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS**

LONDON—SEPTEMBER 1st—SEPTEMBER 5th, 1966

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, WC1  
(by kind permission of the Committee)**Thursday, September 1st**

2.30 p.m. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Private)

7.30 p.m. ORGANISING COMMITTEE (Private)

**Friday, September 2nd**

10.0 a.m. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL (Private)

7.30 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION

**FREETHOUGHT IN THE FUTURE**

HAROLD PINTER MARGARET KNIGHT

MICHAEL FOOT, MP PROFESSOR HYMAN LEVY

PROFESSOR POMEAU DAVID TRIBE

**Saturday, September 3rd**

9.30 p.m.—5 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION

**FREETHOUGHT IN THE PAST**

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

PROFESSOR WALTER ARNSTEIN DAVID TRIBE

PROFESSOR O. LUTAUD DR G. CONFORTO

H. FREISTUHLER PROFESSOR POMEAU

THE HORSE SHOE HOTEL, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, WC1

**Saturday, September 3rd 7 p.m.****CONGRESS DINNER***Details to be announced soon***Sunday, September 4th**

10 a.m.—5 p.m. PUBLIC SESSION

**FREETHOUGHT IN THE FUTURE**

7.30 p.m. CONCERT

**Monday, September 5th (Public)**

9.30 a.m. CLOSING SESSION (RESOLUTIONS)

2.00 p.m. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL (Private)

3.00 p.m. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Private)

**BOOKS OF INTEREST***A small Selection of Books from the Freethinker Bookshop.*Objections to Christian Belief *Various* 3s. 6d. postage 7d.Objections to Humanism *Various* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.Objections to Roman Catholicism *Ed. Michael de la Bedoyere* 4s. 6d. p. 7d.

An Inquiry into Humanism (Six interviews from the BBC Home Service) 4s. p. 5d.

Lift Up Your Heads (An Anthology for Freethinkers)

*William Kent* 3s. 6d. p. 8d.Italian Women Confess *Ed. Gabriella Parca* 5s. p. 8d.Elites and Society *T. B. Bottomore* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire *Edward Gibbon*

16s. p. 1s.

What Happened in History *V. Gordon Child* 5s. p. 8d.Birth Control in the Modern World *Elizabeth Draper* 5s. p. 8d.The Crown and the Establishment *Kingsley Martin* 3s. 6d. p. 7d.The Vatican versus Mankind *Adrian Pigott* 4s. p.A History of the Popes *Joseph McCabe* 2 vols. 6s. p.**OBITUARY**

IT IS with deep regret that we announce the sudden death on July 24th of Mr James Hendren. He was only 57, and death was due to coronary thrombosis.

Mr Hendren was a keen member of the National Secular Society, and although he lived in Belfast where religion dominates every aspect of life, never tried to conceal his contempt for superstition. He had a wide range of interests, and his death will sadden many in Northern Ireland and this country.

The committal ceremony at Roselawn Crematorium, Belfast—probably the first of its kind at this crematorium—was conducted by Mr D. C. Green, Chairman of Belfast Humanist Group.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Mr Hendren's relatives. He was twice married, and his wife shared his outlook; Louise Hendren devotes much time and energy to the work of Belfast Humanist Group. Her late father, Arthur Hodgkinson, was a prominent Secularist and civic leader in Chester for many years.

## ASSEMBLY ROUND-UP Report Peter Kearney

A DIRECTIVE may be issued to Church of Scotland ministers not to take part in any mixed-marriage ceremonies. The question is being considered by the Assembly's General Church and Nation Committee. The penny has, at last, dropped.

Some Ministers at the recent Assembly discussions made it clear that they are deeply disappointed over Roman Catholic concessions on marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics. There was a strong reluctance to accept the slight concession that non-Catholic ministers could be present at such ceremonies in a Roman Catholic Church and to pronounce a blessing afterwards. The Rev Dr Thomas Maxwell, convenor of the Church and Nation Committee, said that it was for individual Churches to say what they thought about this possibility. But the Rev Dr Rudolph Ehrlich of Edinburgh suggested a stronger line. It was impossible, he thought, for a Protestant minister to take an unimportant rôle at a marriage ceremony in a Catholic Church and claimed that some churches on the Continent have issued a directive. The Church of Scotland should do likewise. The Assembly agreed to remit the question of a directive to the General Administration Committee.

The Assembly opposed the return of the birch and decided to support the Nation Committee's view that they should express sorrow over Vietnam and urge the British Government to try to reduce the scale of the conflict.

**Comment:** The Assembly got rather more excited about a four-letter word being used on Television than in the dreadful situation in Vietnam or the fact that the Roman Catholic Church treats religious organisations with contempt.

## BOOK REVIEW Madeleine Simms

### CHARISMA

"The Flight from Woman" by Karl Stern (Allen & Unwin, 30s). DR STERN IS A GERMAN ROMAN CATHOLIC psychiatrist teaching at a Canadian Catholic university. He adheres to that threadbare dichotomy of "feminine intuition" versus "masculine rationality"; he deplors intuition's low status in the world today, views with horror "the ghastly spectre of a world impoverished of womanly values", laments the fact that "since the French Revolution and the rise of the feminist movement, the cry for equality has changed into an assertion of *sameness*", and quotes approvingly Ortega y Gasset's observation: "The core of the feminine mind, no matter how intelligent the woman may be, is occupied by an irrational power". (And what, pray, is the core of most men's minds occupied by, Dr Stern's included?) On these shaky foundations, he superimposes dubious metaphysics, sweeping generalisations about "contemporary materialism" (Muggeridge does this sort of thing much more entertainingly), and a lot of characteristically muddy conclusions of the kind: "... in short, the entire subject of Christian Personalism cannot be considered apart from the charisma of womanhood".

What is it all in aid of? Why not simply admit that people are different. A few (both men and women) are reasonably rational; most, (both men and women) are pretty irrational largely due to having been inadequately educated. But this won't do at all. For Dr Stern has a thesis to prove, and feminine irrationality is essential to it. Women, with their "intuitions", their "natural dependence", their subterranean communings with nature, come naturally to faith. "Rational" men, with their scientific preoccupations, their rejection of dependence, their demands for proof, are destructive of faith. "Modern rationalism", announces Dr Stern, "does its work against faith with silent violence, like odourless gas. Christ who pardoned murderers, reserved His word of most terrible threat for those who scandalise children." (How's that for a sense of values?) And he concludes: "To plant the seed of doubt in a soul is worse than murder".

Dr Stern likes his women in their "natural" state; that is, irrational, simple, affectionate, dependent, and superstitious—which is how Dr Verwoerd likes his Africans, and for the same reason.

## LETTERS

### Pet Adoption Society wanted

I WAS PLEASED to read your leading article (July 15). One very rarely reads any sensible statistics regarding this country's attitude to animals—more especially household pets. Indeed, we are for ever being confronted by articles—even in the more sober type of newspapers and magazines, which gives its readers the impression that we rate our pets higher than our children. The writers of these articles should be reminded that: we do not let children stray, or take them to the doctor's surgery to be "put down" when they annoy us, inconvenience us, or outgrow the "baby stage". We do not use our children for experimental purposes, or mow them down on roads because we can't be bothered to slow up—most animals knocked down are seen by drivers, including cats at night. We do not let them starve.

The only way we shall prevent cruelty to animals is through an act of Parliament enforcing a law that persons wishing to keep pets will only be allowed to do so through a Pet's Adoption Society—in the same way we adopt children. Human's should then be considered as to whether they are fit persons to keep a pet, whether they are living in a suitable area and can afford to keep it; whether the parents of young children are capable of realising that if junior pets the dog one moment and clouts it the next, it might turn round and snap or bite.

I live in an area where almost every other house keeps a dog. Licences just don't come into it—and raising the dog licence would be no solution.

(Miss) M. KENNEDY

### Problem for Agnostics?

I AM NOT a secularist but plaudable indeed is your front page plea of June 3rd. Secularists, I find, have a most distinct and purposeful part in the scheme of individual development and of intellectual evolution of mankind. That part is explicitly to combat and—if successful—to effectively immobilise Priestcraft, along with any and all attendant doctrine and dogma.

Secularism, as presently maintained by yourselves in various degrees and forms, appears to me to be founded on theoretically unfettered knowledge and ethics; both these entities can be, and to an increasing extent are being, undertaken under the existing aegis of indoctrinated "Religion"; those extreme instances where they are being suppressed—Church of Rome and Jehovah's Witnesses—are merely distinctive extremes of totalitarian ethical and spiritual guidance and consolation for the huge mass of mortals who are neither desirous nor capable of reaching conclusions of their own. The last category of mortals demand such totalitarian domination; anything less would result in undisciplined individual and group chaos, for the notions of such people, once unleashed would be nothing short of devastating to social stability.

My contention is, therefore, that you may be fighting against an unnecessarily powerful enemy; Christianity and Church and Priesthood are synonymous, but your own concepts and contentions preclude any possibility of those three being synonymous with or representative of God. Why, then, persist in the maintenance that you are fighting against God? Surely to do so is the exclusive prerogative of the atheist? I suggest that you are stacking the odds against yourselves unnecessarily when you add God to your opponents! He may be synonymous with Christianity, Church and Priesthood—but what if he is *not*?

HAROLD A. PATERSON, N.B., Canada

## IMPORTANT NEWS

JULY 22nd, 1966 brought a considerable (if not final) victory to all those who have been working so tirelessly for the reform of the British Law of Abortion. Three times since 1961 RCs have blocked that reform, and Humanists have been "blamed" for its introduction. Now we can justifiably take pride in a majority vote in the House of Commons of 223 votes to 29 for Mr David Steel's (Liberal) Bill as we await further stages in its progress. Madeleine Simms, MA, Diane Munday and Dr Peter Draper who have been so deeply and practically involved in the work must have slept well that Friday night. Meanwhile Mary Whitehouse has protested to the BBC about a "24-Hours" programme which (she insists) was "clearly aimed at arousing public sympathy towards one aspect of what was a highly controversial bill".