

FREETHINKER

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WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF . . .

"WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF . . ." must be a grand game for historians to play; ". . . if Cromwell had never been born?" "if Henry VIII hadn't wanted a divorce?" or, say, "if the apostate Emperor Julian had not been killed at the age of 32 in 363 AD?"

His fellow pagans (Julian admitted) were an apathetic lot; it was the Christians (the "impious Galileans" as he called them) who were fanatical in their zeal, and determined to get on. Julian rejected the Christian faith when he was 19. He believed in goodness and truth, honesty and loyalty in public life, and in the value of music, but he did not believe in "the new-fangled Galilean god". In his letters (forged and generally mutilated by Christians because of his disrespectful references to their faith) he wrote that it was not reasonable to overawe youth "into being led against their will to the beliefs of their ancestors, though it might be proper to cure these, even against their will, as one cures the insane . . ." He didn't want any Christians "either put to death or unjustly beaten, or to suffer any other injury" and he "never allowed a single one of them to be dragged against his will to worship at the (pagan) altars". He insisted that the Christians should stop persecuting each other as well as the heretics; "at least agree among yourselves", he told them.

Julian's attitude to Christianity was that of a philosopher who rejects the claims of one small sect to have set up a universal religion. It is largely thanks to Cyril of Alexandria (the Saint whose followers so brutally murdered Hypatia in 415 AD) that the works of Julian have been preserved. In order to condemn them he had to quote . . .

Julian couldn't understand why anyone should bother so much about Jesus, a Jewish rabbi who (he believed) had been executed for treason some 300 years before. The Galileans were so obviously attributing all the characteristics of Aesculapius to their "Saviour Christ", and he despaired of anyone who could regard their chronicles as "divinely inspired".

Christianity survived, of course, not (as Christians insist) because it was "true" or even "good", but because it

absorbed the beliefs and rituals of its rivals. So long as belief and faith in the new-fangled hotch-potch of Christian paganism were the "end", all "means", bar none, were justified. In 362 AD the Emperor Julian declared religious freedom; everyone was free to worship whichever god he chose. Julian was essentially the philosopher, and he foolishly believed that arguments could be won by reason, whereas, of course, reason was not one of the Christians' weapons. They relied on violence, political power, fraud and persecution if need be. Communism is perhaps (as others have suggested) the logical outcome of Christianity.

The Emperor Julian was a polytheist at a time when Mithraism constituted the major rival to Christianity. Mithra was a Persian hero who was supposed to have lived about 1000 BC. He was thought of as the "genius of celestial light", the bridge between dark and light, good and evil. It was said that he was born in a cave as the result of light striking a rock on December 25th, while shepherds watched. St Jerome (c 342-420 AD) complained that the pagans celebrated their worship of pagan gods in the very cave where Jesus was born, but he can hardly have been very surprised.

Mithra developed in the Zoroastrian (Persian) hierarchy of gods and became the centre of a cult as god of wisdom, health and holiness of soul. The tribes of Iran worshipped Mithra until they were converted to Islam. Mithra "knew and saw all and could not be deceived"; his priests were called "father". Julian considered the Mithraic code of conduct to be superior to that of the quarrelling Galileans. Mithraists practised mutual aid in their organised groups, and preferred right action to contemplation. They taught that strength is gentleness, and praised courage and self-restraint. They had their own sacramental meal of bread and wine and water, but they did not believe that a sprinkling of water could banish sin.

No one is sure who killed Julian in battle. It might or might not have been a Christian. The dying words, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" attributed to him are fantasy. My encyclopaedia quotes Beugnat as saying "Julian's life was an accident and, at his death, events reverted to their natural course". A real slip-up, one has to presume, on the part of the Almighty who clearly wasn't concentrating on the progress of his one true religion!

The Emperor Jovian reintroduced Christianity as the state religion, and Mithraism, having been absorbed and adapted, lost much of its own identity. The Christians realised that many people were tired of myths. They wanted a real, live super-man, and so the myths were turned into facts by the fairy-godfathers. The pagan

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miracles of turning water into wine and walking on the sea were said actually to have been performed by the Galilean Christ! What more could anyone craving truth and magic want? But there were still mystics who worshipped a blend of Zoroaster and Christ in the form of Manichaeism, which remained a major rival to Christianity and spread through the Empire in the 4th century. The candid St Jerome said that the morals of the Manichaeans were far superior to those of the Christians, but, as the most dangerous heretics, they were persecuted by order of the Popes, and never more viciously than in the Massacre of the Albigenians between 1211 and 1215.

At this season of the *Christ-cum-pagan-Mass*, Secularists and Humanists would do well to consider how Christian self-preservation operates. Many people now want "facts" to be demythologised, and so this is just what the up-to-date Christians are busy doing. The rival today is not mysticism but Secular-Humanism, and so, modernists suggest that if people believe in nothing then "nothing" is, "in fact", "God" and there is no such thing as an atheist. Because secularism is the rival to Christian faith, it must be absorbed, and so we have "Secular Christianity". Whatever happens, and at all costs, the Christians will make

HUMANIST "KIBBUTZIM"?

FOR SEVERAL YEARS I have made a study of various forms of communal living, and my search for such communities brought me mainly into contact with various religious communities throughout the world. I was seeking a non-religious community that would also be free from political dogma, and I eventually found what I sought in the form of the Beeville Community in the North Island of New Zealand. The Beeville Community is a society of humanists and freethinkers. All the land and buildings are owned by the Beeville Trust Board, which for many years had the problem of providing adequate housing for members. All are now satisfactorily housed in centrally heated concrete and timber buildings with well finished interiors. At present there are two units unoccupied, but these are relatively small in size and lack toilet and washing facilities. Central facilities can be used in conjunction with these units however. Single people are provided with single bedrooms, and meals are provided by a catering staff. Families have a flat or house to live in. Existing Trust property may be used communally where the need arises. The school building, which is at present unused, is to be made available to the surrounding district.

The Beeville Community is pleasantly situated between the towns of Hamilton and Morrinsville; the climate is temperate with an annual rainfall of 50 inches. The property consists of 80 acres, 12 of which are in permanent orchard, with one acre of asparagus; the balance is used up for industrial purposes, housing, gardens, swimming pool and parkland. The industries of the community consist of a pre-cast concrete factory of modest size; a modern honey-processing plant and building, along with 480 beehives.

The work force for these enterprises consists of eight adult resident members plus some casual labour which is employed during the fruit harvest. Full-time workers work an average of 50 hours a week, fewer hours in winter than in summer. Some work on a part-time basis and receive a salary on a proportionate basis. At present all members receive remuneration on an equalitarian basis. Full-time

sure that Christianity survives. Watch it, Humanists! By calling Humanism a "religion"; by condoning semantic hocus-pocus (*hoc est corpus*), you are helping Christianity to absorb and to adapt Secular-Humanism until it, too, may lose its identity. Freethought goes back to the first man and woman who said, "I insist on thinking for myself. I don't believe in magic . . ." Modernist Christians don't want Freethought-Humanism; they still want to have "faith" in their own up-to-date form of paganism. We believe that the ethics of non-Christian, non-religious, Secular-Humanists are superior to those of believers who look to some deity for rules and reasons, and to some after-life for reward. What Humanism has to do is to stand firm, and, if necessary, to do the absorbing of those half-believers who cling to organised religion like trapeze artists holding on by their teeth. They can't, in the very nature of their position, hold on and talk intelligibly.

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John Illingworth

worker-members receive £18 per week, and part worker-members receive a salary based on the hours they work. Board and rent is charged at the rate of £4 per adult, all inclusive; members draw on foods freely from a central food store and have access to community-grown fruits and vegetables. Furnishings, clothes and household utensils are personal possessions, except in the case of single people using communal facilities. Vehicles are provided by the Board for members' use at a nominal hire charge.

The Constitution of the Beeville Community is as follows:

1. To be aware of the Unity of Man and to give practical effect to it.
2. To bring together and maintain a group of people unified in their affection for each other and so able to communicate easily.
3. To develop and maintain a sound economy that will give individuals the necessary resources and leisure to pursue a full cultural life.
4. To conduct a school that will give scope for the pupils to develop to the full their capacities and intelligence.
5. To have a lively and healthy interest in the world at large, communicating and aligning with all that seems good or best in it.
6. To so organise the community that it may run smoothly, with control only by consent.
7. To provide for the individual to work at that which he is most interested in doing.
8. To engage in organic farming.

At present Beeville Community is able to provide sufficient work for its members. Unless economic expansion keeps abreast of new arrivals, however, work will have to be sought in the surrounding district or the nearest town. It has been proposed that Beeville should initiate the founding of a second humanist community on the Great Barrier Island which is just 56 miles north of Auckland. This new community would include a fishing co-operative. Beeville Community does not have sufficient land to accommodate many more people, but there is adequate scope for

industrial and agricultural expansion on the Great Barrier Island, which has a sub-tropical climate.

New arrivals at the Beeville Community would find a wide variety of duties to choose from, which includes domestic work, honey packing, fruit grading, harvesting crops and hand-weeding, making and maintaining hive parts, serving customers and office work; there is also the heavier work of concrete manufacturing, building, picking and pruning fruit trees. In addition volunteers will be

needed to pioneer the new humanist community on the Great Barrier Island. These volunteers will have the choice of living aboard fishing vessels or ashore at Port Fitzroy, which is the beautiful natural harbour of the Great Barrier Island.

The Beeville Community is pleased to receive enquiries, which should be addressed to Francis Hansen, General Manager and Secretary, Beeville Community, RD5, Morrinsville, New Zealand.

HUMANISM HOME AND FAMILY, No. 3

Isobel Grahame

ONCE upon a time a little boy asked his teacher: "Please, Miss, what am I for?" "God sent you into the world to help others", she replied. The child pondered for a moment and then came back with: "What did He send the others for?"

This is the season of charitable appeals, and I sometimes wonder about the economics of Yule-tide fund-raising when I survey the mass of glossy brochures, expensive photographs, sample cards, seals, plastic flowers, etc., which cascades through my letterbox each year and presumably through hundreds of thousands of others. The heady idea of doing good may lead some of the doers unwittingly to perpetuate the cause of distress by relieving only its immediate effects, thus generating further occasions for doing good.

Would people give as generously if the appeals were not for money to help the disabled, but for removing more of the causes of disability before disaster strikes its victims down? How good would the do-gooder feel if there was no one to thank him or her because the gift had prevented distress and disablement?

Spontaneous sentimental combustion

A couple of years ago the BBC showed a somewhat saccharoid session under the tree in Trafalgar Square. A Father Christmas from one of the stores was asked what he would do with the money if he won a fortune. "I'd give it all to THE KIDDIES", he said, and a beaming Mum chipped in with: "I'd give it all to THE OLD FOLKS". Both were warmly applauded by the crowd, whose temperature rose visibly under the influence of spontaneous sentimental combustion. That incident has stuck in my gizzard ever since. How civilised are we when people automatically assume that children and old people suffer so much that they must all be objects of charity!

William Blake wrote: "General Good is the plea of the scoundrel and the flatterer, he who would do good to another must do it in minute particulars". How true—and what a tiresome bore it is to find out exactly what would be most good (ie, acceptable) to each object of our charity; it would be much easier to give to some fund for general good and be spared the inexorable recurrence of the often squalid or messy needs of individuals. Much of the distress suffered by children is due to poverty of the parents—material poverty and poverty of intellect or ability, which must be tackled through education and training for adult life and parenthood. But much of the distress suffered by old people is not due to disease or total disablement, but because the homes they live in and the layout and services in the towns they have to travel to and shop in, are thoroughly badly designed.

Recently the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents announced a competition for architects to design accident-proof homes. One would have thought that in a rational and civilised country the first concern in the design of anything would be safety for the consumer; but there are 8,600 domestic fatalities a year, which take a disproportionately heavy toll of the very young and the very old.

It is said that charity begins at home. I suggest that rational, humane, thinking people could—instead of trying to do general good—have a real blitz on all those badly designed things which do a great deal of general harm; those very things which are harmful and disabling to young children and old people are also nuisances to those in the age groups between, and although they adjust and survive these troubles better, who knows what a prematurely ageing effect this may be having right now?

No rewards offered

May I suggest a winter game for Freethinkers to play with themselves? Imagine yourself to be old, with slightly stiff or painful joints, especially in hands and knees, and obliged to wear spectacles which have at most only two fixed focal lengths. Now go about your daily business at home and around the town making a note of everything which causes you difficulty or is a potential danger (remembering that exasperation and exhaustion cause accident proneness) and spare enough time and postage to bring all these things to the attention of whatever authority ought to be concerned to remedy these environmental hazards. Your local newspaper Editor might be enlisted to provide a small space each week to publicise your findings, and the safety committee of your council, if it has one, should be eager for information of this kind. Eventually after many setbacks and much persistence it is possible that even silly things like round slippery door knobs and even sardine tins which fail to open may be designed out of existence.

Of course nobody will thank you for what you have done because you will have to be a nuisance, but at least the world will be that little bit easier to live in for THE KIDDIES, and for the OLD FOLKS who, by that time, will be you and me.

FREETHINKER FIGHTING FUND

THE FREETHINKER is the only weekly Secularist-Humanist paper in the country. It is still only 6d. How much do YOU care how many people it reaches? To advertise we need money, and our expenses are ever-increasing. Whose copy are you reading now? Have you got a subscription? Couldn't you contribute something to the Fighting Fund, say 6d or 6s or £6 or £60? How much do you really care about Freethought and helping other people to hear about it? Do, please, help if you can.

The FREETHINKER, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1

NEWS AND NOTES

ONE OF THE DIFFICULT questions we are often asked is, "Is So-and-So really a Humanist?" A grammar school boy was concerned because he heard that Yehudi Menuhin (who is on the BHA Advisory Council list) "practised yoga . . ." It would, of course, be good to be able to say, "Yes, this great violinist is, without doubt, one of us . . ." But now we would clearly be wrong to say anything of the sort. In a letter to the *Sunday Telegraph* (Nov. 27) Mr Menuhin wrote,

"Having a high regard for some of the members of the BHA, I attended one of their meetings some two years ago at which I did become aware of the basic divergence of view between those amongst them who, like myself, are by nature metaphysical and for whom the metaphysical is as present as the obviously tangible, and those who would strike a new defiant attitude, merely creating a physiognomy of opposition. This is hardly my inclination—nor is the political trend it seems to have taken of late. I find nothing more embarrassing than a public relations campaign for organised support—especially in the field of conscience, humility and grace, and those of us who are fortunate enough to possess it know we cannot impose it upon others, but are always searching for a way of sharing it".

We can be grateful to Mr Menuhin for making his position clear. "Name dropping" is one of the less attractive habits. Let us hope, then, that other listed Humanist VIPs will be equally helpful, so that we are not tempted to claim them as allies when in fact they have no intention of supporting our aims or organisations.

Asked to resign

SOMEONE who is, however, one of us and deserving of our support is Mrs Ruth Hancock, a member of the Tunbridge Wells Humanist Group, who has been asked to resign from her post as teacher at the primary school at Ide Hill, Nr Sevenoaks, because she made public her Humanist views. At a recent PTA meeting at Edenbridge State Primary School Mrs Hancock declared that because RI is compulsory in schools, teachers who "opt out" of taking it make administrative difficulties for the school and lessen the chances of their own promotion. The right place for teaching Christianity, she said, was at home, in Church or at Sunday School. Mrs Hancock has, in fact, been taking RI classes as honestly and as generously as possible.

In the local press (which, like so much of the British provincial press, is clearly biased against Humanism) Canon S. H. Hoffman has condemned Mrs Hancock for "applying for, accepting and continuing to hold a teaching post in a school built by the church and dedicated to the maintenance of the Christian faith".

He did not say, however, that Ide Hill is yet another "single-school area" where the *only primary school is Anglican*. The headmaster has been quoted as saying that "Most parents don't even realise that this is a church school. They think of it as the village school". If there were, as there undoubtedly should be, a state primary school at Ide Hill where Mrs Hancock lives with her small child and her parents, she would, of course, have preferred to teach there. Nor does the Canon mention the fact that the Church did not consider her views on religion important when she applied for the job as no one asked her about them. She has made no secret of her Humanist beliefs, and her headmaster could easily have informed the church authorities if he had wanted to do so. Until she goes Mrs Hancock is forbidden to answer any of the children's questions. She will take no more RI lessons. This story raises a large number of important questions: should

Humanist teachers refuse to take RI altogether, thereby being debarred from many teaching posts and risking the loss of promotion? (As a mere parent I say "yes"!) Now that church schools are going to receive even more financial support from the public as a whole, will the Canon admit that the Church has no right to employ only teachers belonging to its particular sect, or at least to make life difficult for those who do not belong? What is the Ministry of Education going to do about this absurd and shameful situation where the education it provides is inadequate and left in the hands of clerics to use for their own ends? Mrs Hancock is just one of many. Humanists don't seek martyrdom and Mrs Hancock would not claim that she is a martyr, but she is undoubtedly the victim of a monstrous situation in which injustice, bigotry and Church privilege flourishes.

Self-confessed

THE *Catholic Herald* (Dec. 2) reported an interview with Bernard Braden in which he was asked "Do you believe in God".

He answered, "I'm afraid I don't really . . . it is foolish of me, or anyone, to say categorically, 'I don't believe in God' or to say rather 'There is no God'. I only know that having been brought up in the church till the age of 20 I personally have never had a religious experience, and I've never met anyone who has convinced me that he had". He went on, "I'm perfectly content to think of myself as a humanist. But I'm in no position to judge whether or not, if I was in a plane that I knew was going to crash 3,000 feet up, two minutes from now, I wouldn't suddenly call upon the God I knew as a child".

We might suggest to Mr Braden that he might well do so, but that this would have much more to do with reflexes and his childhood indoctrination than with truth! Mr Braden explained how his daughter had wanted a white church wedding and that this had worried him, although he "acceded . . . because it was what she wanted . . ."

The Mug again

"WITH God all things are possible", said Mr Muggeridge (*Catholic Herald*, Dec. 2) "even the opening of our blind human eyes . . ." Just as well to have God on his side, considering the money he makes from being watched and read by the non-blind. His article (how did you guess?) was on money being "the root of all evil". He even gets that wrong. St. Paul said that it was *the love* of money that was the root, etc, etc. What a muddle-headed old hypocrite he is.

That play again

THE JEWS have now extricated themselves from promoting the Oberammergau Passion Play in this country next spring and Mr John Mulvery, a Roman Catholic, has taken over. (*The Sun*, Dec. 2.)

What price unity?

ROMAN CATHOLIC Bishop of Nottingham, Dr Edward Ellis, has warned his young congregations of four counties (*Observer*, Dec. 4), "Don't marry non-Catholics". He deplored the fact that "the latest measures concerning divorce and abortion" have found supporters "even among Catholics" . . . "It is one thing for a friend, a spiritual director or a confessor to be compassionate like Christ . . . It is quite another thing to say that God's laws concerning purity and chastity, marriage and the family do not bind in certain cases. Conscience must never be considered a law to itself". As for mixed marriages "No sound, lasting, still less happy, married life can well be founded on such divided minds". Dr Ramsey had better take another little journey to Rome perhaps.

DOGMA, THE HUMANIST AND ACTION

G. L. Simons

IT IS characteristic of the best Humanists that they are undogmatic. This can scarcely be said of the best Catholics (when judged by Catholics) or the best Marxists (when judged by Marxists). In Catholicism dogma is essential, and in Marxism there is a core of propositions that are axiomatic. To the Humanist there are manifest dangers in dogma: mental growth is stunted; enquiry is discouraged; the likelihood of persecution and obscurantism is increased. But to the dogmatist, dogma has two great justifications. The first, explicitly, is that dogma represents Truth: for the Catholic the Trinity is a dogma because the Trinity exists; for the Marxist the historical dialectic is a dogma (although it would not be so called) since the dialectic can be seen to govern social change. The second justification, implicitly, is that it helps to further the creed; it is with this feature that we are concerned.

To the Humanist, dogma is not satisfactorily based on evidence. In a Humanist dictionary "dogma" may well be defined as "statements or views that go beyond or against the available evidence". Dogma, in a simplified version, has great propaganda value. It is a maxim of advertising that ideas be presented simply and in a sensational way. The propagandist and the advertiser make little headway with the reflective person who queries meaning and asks for evidence. But reflective people are few and the propagandists are trying to influence the masses—for it is in the masses that votes and purchasing power can be found.

Dogma can often be seen to represent views which people may wish to hold but for which the evidence is lacking. Cliché is one of dogma's most popular manifestations: "everyone knows the difference between right and wrong", "you can't change human nature", "you can prove anything with statistics". And it is characteristic that many people have *emotional commitment* to clichés of this type. In times of war, and other forms of social conflict, the clichés become more dangerous and the emotional commitment grows. The (supposed) wickedness of Jews and Negroes can be advertised and used to stir up anger; the "commie" can be incarcerated; the heretic persecuted. The human well of emotion is deep and often untapped; political, religious and moral dogma have a curious ability to channel this emotion into social activity. Men's fears, resentments and frustrations can be sublimated into hostility, or enthusiasm for a creed.

From the religious or political point of view this is often desirable. The impassioned mob, the witch-hunt, the pogrom have (not surprisingly) been successful in gaining adherents for a creed. And this is not only achieved by creating fear and insecurity; bestiality is more a part of Man than many people would like to admit, and when social stress is high it is easy to sublimate this bestiality into self-righteous causes. And when the advertised dogma convincingly claims metaphysical certainty its potency and social impact is all the greater. The orthodox Catholic who believes that the Roman Church "and She only" has all the Truth (and this guaranteed by God) naturally dismisses objections as impious ramblings. And the Marxist, who so firmly believes that the dialectic is indelibly inscribed on history, dismisses dissensions as the incoherency of corrupt bourgeois philosophy. Dogma thus breeds emotional commitment—and with it—conviction, arrogance and enthusiasm for the cause. The question for the Humanist is: can he, though lacking dogma, be equally enthusiastic?

Many a Humanist would be tempted to answer yes. But would he be right? How many Humanists are prepared to forego marriage, a family, and the usual sensual comforts (were it necessary) for the propagation of the creed? How many Humanists are prepared to sell all they have and give the proceeds to the BHA? How many Humanists are prepared to live in poverty? Are any at all? Some religious people are willing to do these things.

The ability of dogma to arouse enthusiasm

The Humanist does not see life in terms of eternity. He believes that Mankind may exist for a few million years and that the life of the individual is somewhat shorter. For the religious person, privation is often seen as a matter of *prudence*, a rigour to be endured for the sake of eternal bliss. The Humanist (understandably) does not share this view, and his motivation is thereby lessened. In this sense it seems reasonable to conclude that, as far as practical behaviour is concerned, the dedication of the committed religious person sometimes exceeds that of the committed Humanist. It must not be inferred from this that the "selflessness" of the former is any greater; I took care to use the word "prudence"—it was not for nothing that Cardinal Heenan said on television that the most important thing to him was "to save his soul". The point remains, however, that dogma has the ability to arouse enthusiasm (fanaticism, if you like) and that the world-view of the Humanist is such as to mitigate his practical commitment in the way we have suggested. Is this serious? What does it imply?

Science has lessened the gravity of our conclusion. Cults no longer have to compete in a primitive, superstitious environment. Science—and in particular scientific method—is the great ally of the Humanist. Our age is unusual in that for the first time the scientist can reasonably attempt to answer many of the "ultimate questions" that were once the exclusive realm of the philosopher/theologian; almost without trying, the Humanist can make an impact in the modern world—the atmosphere is right for him: he and his breathe freely. Governments have supported science since it seemed surprisingly able to exterminate large numbers of hostile foreigners; the motive may be questionable, but it has encouraged the spread of scientific thinking and this has benefited the Humanist. But although he has every reason for confidence (and need not emulate the hermit or monk) he needs to act in a way that may be demanding.

Putting Humanism into action

Society is changing; the Humanist must strive to influence the direction of the change. He must behave responsibly; he must belie the myth that moral maturity needs a religious base, and he must be true to his secular convictions. If he wishes to see a Humanist society he must act accordingly: his children must not be baptised or christened; weddings and funerals must be secular; his children must be withdrawn from religious instruction; objections should be made to the BBC about the disproportionate amount of religious broadcasting; objections should be made to newspaper editors about regular religious articles in the absence of Humanist counter-parts; if local FPA facilities do not exist, the Association and the MP should be contacted to counter the Roman Catholic lobby;

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BOOK REVIEWS

David Tribe

MANY RURAL and suburban parishes are going their somnolent way beyond sight or sound of the changing world. But the Church of England is not without those who have seen the red light and the swirl of traffic as they stand at the crossroads. Some of the more eloquent of these have been brought together by the Right Rev L. S. Hunter, Bishop Emeritus of Sheffield, in *The English Church* (Pelican, 4s 6d). They are the Suffragan Bishop of Middleton, the Dean of Manchester, the Master of the Temple and two canons of Westminster. Between them they combine considerable expertise in missions, foreign and industrial, and the ecumenical movement. They try to present a positive image: How can the Church remain established and still be a missionary body? Behind the image one hears the cold metallic note of clerical voices crying in a wilderness of secularisation.

The three great forces that have eroded Anglicanism into its present form of power without glory or glory without power are named by Dean Jowett as "the educational controversies", the development of social welfare legislation and the growth of the Labour and Trade Union movements towards positions of power in local affairs". Throughout these changes "the basic attitude of the Church had been paternalistic and 'charitable' in the narrow sense", so that it "would not face the question of the reorganisation of society". Bishops and deans, admits the editor, "also were aloof from the people and shut away trying to keep themselves warm in their draughty palaces and deaneries. The manual workers have long memories. We have much to live down".

How to recapture lost ground? There must be renewed Christian action in society though not, they claim, the "ecclesiastical 'lobby' or power bloc" technique of Catholic Action. They advise pastors and laity to acquire sociological skills to aid the community, use the parish church as a real centre of the parish (without advocating a return to complete mediaeval usage) and talk of "engagement" and—of course—"dialogue". But these are high ecclesiastics, so we have much on the Paul Report (*Deployment and Payment of the Clergy*, 1964), the apostolic rôle of bishops, the need to abolish the parson's freehold, the advantages of Establishment if more self-government can at the same time be extracted without going over to presbytery control. There is also interesting historical material on the Church-State relation.

Ruth Samuel

The Child's Attitude to Death by Marjorie Editha Mitchell (Pemberton, Barrie & Rockliff, 25s).

"MAN THAT IS BORN of woman hath but a short time to live"; these words so often said at so many funerals have always seemed to state an unquestionable fact. But is it a fact? In this book, Mrs Mitchell suggests that in helping children to face the sadness of death it might be sensible to indicate that one day, far ahead, scientists may succeed in conquering death.

This serious and detailed study of Mrs Mitchell's is an examination of how the 20th Century has changed the attitude of children with respect to death. In the past it was quite usual to help a child to face the death of members of its family or of its friends by pointing out that heaven would provide greater happiness than life. When the majority of people were surrounded by poverty, when illness was commonplace, and when there was a total lack of security, it could readily be accepted that death, if not preferable to life, might at least make a pleasant change. In these affluent days it is not so easy; there is ample pleasure on earth. Education has widened life's horizons, and, freed from need, few fear the torments of hell. There is now so much more to lose with death; and even the religious rarely envisage a wonderful new life in heaven. Other fears surround us, notably that of a nuclear holocaust. At the same time the biological sciences advance at a tremendous rate, and the possibility of the creation of life in the laboratory, the "test-tube baby" is not the nonsense it was once thought. Whereas at one time children would accept the story of the resurrection unquestionably, the present wider knowledge of life, the prevalence of cremation, and the greater scepticism of the age, now make such a possibility less acceptable even to quite small children.

It is important that children should know that death exists and must be faced by everyone directly and indirectly throughout life. Now that it is rare for a child to experience the death of one of its siblings or parents, the first awareness of death frequently comes with the loss of a grandparent or a beloved pet. In their early years, as the author tells us, children believe death to be reversible and the first real fears are unlikely to come before the age of six or seven. It is at this point that the religious family can help the child by tales of the immortal soul and the arms

of Jesus, but the Humanist parent is now able to talk of the possibilities, not certainties, of the re-creation of life and explain that at present factual knowledge of the mechanisms of the life and death of matter is only just beginning to emerge. By the time children reach adolescence they are less ready to accept religious explanations of death and the hereafter and more inclined to explore the scientific possibilities surrounding the processes of life and death.

The taboos and rites associated with funerals are discussed in this book. These creations of man, which help him over the fact of death, are themselves reflected in the creative play where children enact the circumstances of death, be it natural or violent.

Surprisingly, no mention is made of the great fear children have of being left alone. This reviewer has recent personal experience of a child whose grandfather died and who expressed her grief very vocally showing particular sorrow for her grandmother, now alone, "with no one to cuddle her".

Although at times repetitive, this book does perform the useful function of making parent, teacher and general reader rethink his present attitude to death and almost certainly will encourage him to moderate his explanations, if only a little, when next challenged by a small puzzled voice asking, "Why? How? When?"

Rae Melamed

In Praise of Older Women by Stephen Vizinczey (Barrie and Rockliff, 21s).

"IS there a life before death?" is a Hungarian quotation which is, broadly, the leitmotif of this novel. And by life the author means not only a hedonistic pursuit after pleasure, but living fully, and feeling with your blood and your heart.

Born in Hungary, the hero, Andras Vajda, was not yet twelve years old when in May 1945 an American jeep picked him up on the road, alone and half starved. He began to procure women for the American soldiers and this created in him a precocious curiosity and awakening. Vizinczey describes the confusion of a young adolescent who, in an age where every glossy magazine, every advertisement, every film, sets out to titillate his sexual appetite until he is in a state of almost constant stimulation, has to cope with the agonising restraints and curbs of our society as best he can. His youthful gropings and experiments are a failure. Giggling, teasing young girls deny him and frustrate him, and eventually he turns to older women for satisfaction. Here he finds fulfilment and understanding. This is a state of affairs perhaps better known on the Continent than in our own country where all the accent is on youth and a woman of forty or over "has had it".

The author gives a short, lucid picture of life under the Russians and events leading up to the Hungarian uprising of 1956, after which Andras escapes from Hungary, arriving eventually in Canada to a totally new life.

The rest of the book is simply a very personal, frank account of Andras' amorous adventures, told in a lighthearted, factual way. It is unusual and refreshing to read a plain, straightforward account of a man's love life without the super-imposition of psychoanalytic analyses, philosophic diatribes or outpourings of guilty introspection. He enjoys and appreciates women and describes his experiences in an astonishingly uncomplicated and sincere way. He cuts right through the encrustations of our moral codes and the inhibitions of our society without any pretence whatsoever.

How much of this novel is auto-biographical is anybody's guess. I was surprised at the author's command of English. The narrative flows smoothly on, and nowhere does one feel that the language is not his mother tongue.

I recommend the book to those readers to whom *nihil humanum alienum est*.

From D. MOLYNEUX, Aberdeen.

DEFINITION OF HUMANISM ON A POSTCARD

HUMANISM is the Art, Science or Knack (call it what you will), of cutting away the Deadwood of Mythologies, Superstitions, Old Beliefs, Old Curses, So-called Moral Religions and other useless growths all of which will become less and less tenable with the passage of time. Fair Education and the advancement of Scientific Work, and all of which are feeding on the Tree of Real Knowledge. Ultimately the Tree can be left free of all Uncertified Weeds and be able to grow into the Future as a sound plant. Humanism will preserve all those outmoded and parasitical Deadwood Growths in suitable Museums; it will not require to have an Index of "forbidden (unnecessary)" fruits.

[Your own definition in not more than 150 words is invited. Please send it to the Editor.]

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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.c to Kit
Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.**OUTDOOR**Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and
evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.Manchester Branch NSS, Platts Fields, Car Park, Victoria Street,
Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.: Messrs COLLINS, DUIGNAN, MILLS and
WOOD.Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays,
1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday,
1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.**INDOOR**Havering Humanist Society (Social Centre, Gubbins Lane, Harold
Wood), Tuesday, December 20th, 8 p.m.: A speaker from the
United States Information Service.Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate),
Sunday, December 18th, 6.30 p.m.: A. STEADMAN, "Spiritualism
and Survival".South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London, WC2), Sunday, December 18th, 11 a.m.: Professor Sir
ALEXANDER HADDON, "The Modern Materialism"; Tuesday,
December 20th, 6.30 p.m.: JOSHUA FOX, "A Synthesis on
Mental Health".South Place Sunday Concerts (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London, WC1), Sunday, December 18th, 6.30 p.m.: Amici
String Quartet, Bernard Richards. Mozart, Boccherini, Schubert.
Admission 3/-.The 59 Society (Kensington Public Library, London, W8), Thurs-
day, December 29th, 8 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "What the
Communists Want".**DOGMA, THE HUMANIST AND ACTION***(Continued from page 397)*reform groups should be encouraged; discussions started
wherever possible, etc, etc. (Doubtless, Humanists can add
to this short list.)Dogma has assisted the propagandists in the past, but
it can never be the tool of the Humanist—and he does not
need it. He has certain advantages not possessed by
secular-minded thinkers in less technical times. But he
must be worthy; his behaviour must derive from his intel-
lectual beliefs—not from convenience, expediency or
pseudo-reasons invented to justify lethargy. We are often
told that atheism is destructive, that a vacuum is created
when religion is abandoned. Let us always fill the vacuum.
We have no need of dogma; let us also leave apathy and
complacency to other people.**AFRAID TO LEAVE GOD!**

Gonzalo Quiogue

THE PHILIPPINES is a beautiful tropical country rich
in natural resources. And its people are famous for being
hospitable and religious. What more can tourists want?The Filipino farmer believes he is the favourite of God.
Because he is neither white nor black. He is brown; just
the right colour. And he is a devout Catholic. He loves
the only "true God and religion" in the world. The Filipino
Catholic believes that although Jehovah is also the God of
Protestants, the latter shall not escape hell! For the reason
that Protestants left Catholicism long ago. On the other
hand, Protestant Filipinos believe they are the enlightened
Christians who will go straight to heaven! And that they
are exempted from the cross-examination enforced by St
Peter at the pearly gates of heaven. The Protestants look
down upon the Catholics as the illiterates of Christianity.
The Protestants think that the Catholics have many reli-
gious superstitions and primitive church rites, and that
the latter have to vacation first in Purgatory before entering
heaven.But why can't all Christians go direct to heaven? God
can make the bad, good and pious.Some Christian Filipinos think that all Christians will
go direct to heaven, and all non-Christians, to hell; for
the simple reason that the non-Christians do not worship
the one true God, Jehovah.In the Philippines the Catholic does not read freethought
articles. He thinks it is a sin. And he is afraid to doubt
and leave God. He does not believe the talk of some bad
men that hell is now air-conditioned. He is not taking
chances. The Catholic is afraid that, if he reads free-
thought, his mind and reason might convince him that
Jehovah is just a vacuum exploited by the clergy to make
a living. In all things and problems in his earthly life, the
Filipino Catholic follows his intellect and reason, except
in the idea of leaving his God. Because he has loved and
venerated Him all his life and he is also afraid to incur
His anger.A belief long ingrained in the brain is perfectly ten-
acious. It has become tiny barnacles in the neurons. What
an appalling disservice religion is doing to the minds of
good men! Throughout their lives they are doomed to
live in superstition and in time and money wasting prayers,
donations and tithes!**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY**

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LETTERS

Women Alone

I WAS very interested in the anonymous article (Oct. 21). There are, I think, three things to be considered. (1) The boggy of marriage must be done away with. That awful "till death us do part" scares many away from marriage. (2) Men and women must be allowed to live openly together if they want to, without the stigma of "living in sin". (3) Women must, and this is important, be prepared to face being hurt, the man may wish to end the arrangement before they do and they must expect to sometimes be rejected if they make the first approach. They can't have it both ways; doing away with marriage does away with a certain degree of security.

If only women will be honest and put aside all silly feminine ideas of dependence, the problem might be solved. But this, of course, will not be easy; all reforms must be fought for. Good luck to all those who, in spite of conformist public opinion, stand out in the forefront of the battle line. LILIAN MIDDLETON

Women (and men) alone

LONELY women sometimes have themselves to blame for not offering more encouragement to shy men. I have had thirty-six jobs, and in every one, I have worked with young men who could not get girl friends.

Neither husband nor wife should be "the boss". In conjugal love, there is no desire on either side to dominate. Co-operation replaces competition. There should be no discrimination against a person on the grounds of sex, and there should be a State scheme, to ensure that every person, from the age of puberty upwards, is offered the facilities for obtaining sexual intercourse. Esher. JOHN SUTHERLAND

Hell

WITH reference to F. H. Snow's article on Hell may I quote for the interest of those of your readers who have not already seen it the following quotation from Lecky?

"I have before me *The Sight of Hell*, by the Rev J. Furniss, CSSR, published 'permissu superiorum', by Duff (Dublin and London). 'See: on the middle of that red-hot floor stands a girl . . . Her feet are bare. She says I have been standing on this red-hot floor for years . . . Look at my burnt and bleeding feet . . . The fourth dungeon is the boiling kettle . . . in the middle of it there is a boy . . . His eyes are burning like two burning coals. Two long flames come out of his ears . . . Sometimes he opens his mouth, and blazing fire rolls out . . . there is the sound like a kettle boiling . . . The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy. The brain is boiling and bubbling in his head. The marrow is boiling in his bones . . . The fifth dungeon is the red-hot oven . . . The little child is in this . . . Hear how it screams to come out . . . It beats its head against the roof . . . God was very good to this child. Very likely God saw it would get worse and worse . . . and so it would have to be punished much more in Hell . . .'"

There are other authoritative horrific quotations from Lecky. S. G. KNOTT

Appreciation

THE SIXPENCE a week the FREETHINKER costs me is a very small amount for the service the paper gives me. Its practical and rational teaching enable one to form a humanist philosophy which is deeply satisfying. It comes indeed first as a surprise to realise the intellectual relief that one experiences when one gives up belief in religious dogmas which have no rational foundation. Then, as my mind becomes more and more responsive to Humanism, I find a greater love and compassion for all suffering humanity, for the love that I once had for a non-existent god is now diverted to the needs of the human race. In all this I find myself more and more indebted to the contributors to the FREETHINKER. I therefore must express my very sincere appreciation of all that paper has, and is, doing for me.

I hope that its circulation will be greatly increased so that many more can share the experience that I have had.

"NEWCOMER TO SECULAR-HUMANISM"

Lest we forget

AS a subscriber to the FREETHINKER and *The Liberal* (USA) and one who is ever alert to aid freethought and the rejection of everything "supernatural", and commercialised religions in general, I write to recommend the use of the "greatest sword to our hand"—namely the open admission of the "Aims in Chief of the Papacy"—viz certain words used at the crowning of the present Pope and every Pope that preceded him in the annals of the greatest abuse of Power, out of the façade of religion that has

ever plagued the world—at the placing of the crown upon the Papal Head—the following words were used, "and crown thee ruler of the world".

This arrogant claim is a weapon that I have never seen in print, ever! Surely it blatantly reveals what is the never-ending aims of popery. Could this statement be often printed, in the way a slogan is, in Freethinking and Humanist journals to keep it ever in mind as the "final objective of Popery"—to again poison the minds of men under the intolerance they know so well to inflict.

The Press in Australia is anything but free. The clerics get full pages and any space they want—but any letter in reply is always rejected—with the terse reply "We cannot use it". No wonder 'tis said "No one sees a religion die". Tax free, Rate free they go merrily on—Catholic action working here, as do the termites. Western Australia. WM. C. SOPER

The case for Atheism

MOST of Mr Hjorth's unblushing atheism is preferable to the nervous hesitancy of fence-sitting agnostics afraid of offending high priests and TV executives—still busy bemusing us with Bible stories. Most of the hallucinations of Bible writers would be in the same category as visions of pink elephants, drunks seen climbing up the wall—an organic condition. All our perceptions depend on original functions—thus artists, musicians and mathematicians "dream up" new conceptions, though of course the mathematician is more logical than dreamy.

Finding good fellowship and love amongst people is not the same as finding a loving Heavenly Father who anyway seems powerless to prevent some of his children being burned in napalm fires.

If some of the kindly people are policemen and magistrates, not quite as servile to humbug priests as their predecessors—we still find most of them are under the thumb of Bankers who plot wars and national debts as ancient Popes also did—a National Debt that is in no way coupled to a Gospel of Love. I grow a little tired of the constant "sling off" at the crafty priests—and never a word amongst Rationalists of the foolish trust we place in Bank directors who lend nothing and create nothing but debts by their usurious credit monopoly that makes avaricious Caesar look like a cheeky choirboy. Like the Popes, these Bank directors thrive on public gullability but what Rationalist journal ever points that out?

Western Australia.

BOB TINDALL

Roman hopes for Scotland

BEING an ex-RC, Michael Gray's article on lapsed Catholics interested me very much. On the day I read it (Nov. 11) the *Glasgow Herald* reported a pastoral letter of Scotland's RC hierarchy, stating that RC schools would remain segregated because "secular schools, where all faiths are considered equally valid, are unacceptable". It is, I think, evident that Rome has no intention of modifying her claim to be "the one true faith" with bishops possessing divine authority to regulate private and public life. Time there was in Scotland when opposition to Roman clericalism showed itself in distrust and hostility to papists. Tolerance has largely replaced this nowadays, enabling Rome to advance her influence in every sphere. The continuance, both of Southern Irish emigration (Scotland's RC population is almost entirely of recent Irish extraction) and of 100 per cent state aid to its schools, gives Rome every hope of achieving the final triumph of the counter-reformation in Scotland by undoing everything the Renaissance and Reformation accomplished in the Northern Kingdom. Glasgow. JAMES MCMAHON

IMPORTANT

WHEN I took over the editorship of the FREETHINKER last June it was to enable David Tribe to get down to some concentrated writing. Now I am getting restive to return to my own book which had to be abandoned eight months ago. The Humanist Letter Network (International) is also beginning to show signs of neglect, and is growing all the time as more and more people join our organisations. So we are looking for an editor to take over. It is not for me to say what qualifications are needed, but if you think you have them would you please write and say why (giving full details) to: W. GRIFFITHS, Esq.

22 The Lane, Little Brickhill, Bletchley, Bucks.
and I, for one, shall be very grateful! KIT MOUAT