

FREETHINKER

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THE BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

THE "bouquet to the National Secular Society on the occasion of its entry into the second hundred years" has been duly presented by the outgoing editor of this paper, Kit Mouat, and appreciated by the NSS President, David Tribe. I do not intend to add or detract blooms from this bouquet. One could say much, in praise and criticism, of a society which has existed, worked and influenced throughout a hundred years. For the future, neutral as yet in its unbirth, I wish the NSS well. For a hundred years it has played its part in making life more tolerable for many. The struggle to achieve a secular society, an open society, continues. The times have changed. The problems have changed. Methods must change as well.

I now turn my attention from the centenarian in the Secular Humanist movement to the rather newly born British Humanist Association. For having created so seemingly much out of so seemingly little in so seemingly short a period it deserves nothing but praise for its enterprise and energy.

However, its brief past has caused me some disillusionment. I hope its future will convert this into renewed hope. My personal feelings are significant in so far as I now edit and write regularly for one of the few humanist journals in the country, ought to know and do know something of what has happened and is happening in the movement. My feelings on this matter are more significant, however, in that they are shared by others who wished the BHA well at its inception, who had high hopes for it, supported it then, and who now still hope for a change in orientation. That many BHA members are anxious to work for the realisation of a secular and open society is probable, if only because so many of these people are also members of the Rationalist Press Association and the NSS and have been for some time.

The problem, I think, is this. The frail craft, which was hastily altered, strengthened and expanded, has become overloaded with that being called the intellectual. That the BHA has promoted knowledge and acceptance of Humanism in its short life there can be no doubt and credit is due to it on that account. Over the past three years

it has done a great deal to popularise the word "Humanist", to such an extent indeed that many Christians want to cash in on it. Unfortunately, many inquisitive and acquisitive people have come to think of Humanism as synonymous with intellectualism, and I feel sure that a not inconsiderable number of pitiable beings have joined the British Humanist Association or certain Humanist groups that they may adorn themselves with the label "Humanist" and, by implication, feel "Intellectual". Henceforth looking at oneself in the mirror is a more pleasurable experience.

Few will dispute that the BHA is heavily loaded with well-educated middle-class people. I believe many of our narcissistically Intellectual Humanists are disinclined to fraternise with working-class people and that they do not want to make their meetings acceptable or their discussions intelligible to those not as well-educated or as well-placed professionally as they are. Some may say that this disinclination is their prerogative. But how does one square this with the BHA manifesto dictum that "We accept the responsibility of making life meaningful to non-theistic members of the community, for their moral welfare, and for their interests where these are prejudiced by the Churches" (*Humanist News*, Nov. 1966). How can you make life more meaningful for people, when you are unwilling or unable to communicate with them? Half of the non-theistic members of the community would scarcely understand what some Humanists were talking about even if they were discussing the darning of socks.

The first BHA was a true association, an association of two organisations, the Rationalist Press Association and the Ethical Union. When the RPA subsequently withdrew from this companionate marriage the BHA survived the shock of parting and remained, a remnant of divorce, within the shell of the EU. It has since been resuscitated and broken out of its restrictive casing. If it will only commit itself to the pursuit of secular humanism, long may it live. One point is certain. If the new BHA wants to concern itself with the moral welfare of the masses and is anxious to make life more meaningful for the non-theistic members of the community, it must not emulate the communications record of its progenitor, the EU. To illustrate what I mean I quote the words, words, words of one, Horace J. Bridges, a great Ethical Unionist, talking about the mission in the ethical sphere of the Daddy of them all, Felix Adler, the founder of the Ethical Movement—

"His philosophy, in bald and brief summary, was that the spiritual universe is the real universe. The supersensible world is more real than the sensible, because the latter possesses only the partial reality of an order of things that begin and end in time and no part of which has true permanence. But the spiritual world in which he believed was not unified for him (as it is

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for the ordinary theist) in an infinite individual spirit. Its unity was rather analogous to that of a constellation or a solar system; that is, it consisted in the system of relations between its members. It is an infinite system comprising infinitely many members, and its unity arises from the reciprocal action, the mutual influence, of those members—of each upon all and of all upon each. He always insisted that human society is only *one province* of the spiritual universe. The characteristic of all these “provinces”, including human society, is that every single member in them is indispensable to the *completeness*, therefore to the *perfection*, and therefore to the *ultimate reality* of the system as such.” (Horace J. Bridges, *Signs of The Times in Religion*, pub. Watts & Co., 1936, pp. 183-4.)

We do not hold the past sayings of the departed against the present actions of the living. Unfortunately, the mystical ghosts of begetting ethicists live on in the spectacular spates of elegantly contrived phrases emanating from the smoothly middle-class mouths of honey-tongued Human-

ists, utterly incomprehensible to so many of those non-theistic members of the community for whom the BHA wishes to make life meaningful.

1967 is for the British Humanist Association Campaign Year. The BHA has great plans. It also has a great message. May it make a massive effort to make this message meaningful to the many, rather than to the few.

To conclude my first editorial, I should like to dispel a popular misconception and point out that the FREE-THINKER is not the official organ of the National Secular Society. It is an independent weekly paper concerned with Freethought and Humanism and financed by G. W. FOOTE & Co. LTD. I shall gladly consider articles on Freethought and Humanism from anyone, Roman Catholic Cardinals and Fundamentalist Hot-Gospellers included.

HUMANISM, HOME AND FAMILY, No. 4

Isobel Grahame

NEW YEAR is time for stock-taking, for looking forward, and for planning what to do next. Humanists could provide some clear thinking on the subject of rights and freedoms, about which we talk and write a good deal. Has the pendulum swung so far from slavery and serfdom that we have talked ourselves into believing that such ideals as freedom and rights are actual things which we could all have next year—if only . . . ?

How much liberty can individuals expect to have in this industrial phase of human being? Rights and freedoms are products of human thought, not properties of the Universe, and I wonder whether the only people who can exercise anything approaching personal freedom are vegetarian hermits.

Civilisation daily extends the areas of need within which individuals must depend, sometimes to an almost frightening degree, upon the skill, the health, the honesty and good-will of others. We feel we have a right not to be killed by electrical apparatus and not to get typhoid from tapwater; not to have children indoctrinated or coerced at school by teachers who present matters of opinion and preference as though they were matters of fact. We have two tragi-comic illusions about the Health Service: first, that it is “free”, and second, that if only it worked perfectly it would cure the sick upon whom its efforts should always be concentrated. Perhaps our newest slaves, the computers, will make possible vast and detailed surveys of healthy and vigorous people to find out if they have unexpected common factors which help to keep them so.

If we have any rights at all, then the needs of the healthy must be satisfied with as much concern as the needs of the sick; for the rights of the sick and of the healthy to services provided by society *are equal*. But millions of unfortunates who fall within that dehumanised group called “The General Public” have their health, holidays, livelihoods and even lives put in jeopardy every time some kind of public service is curtailed or withdrawn during an industrial dispute. Official comforters assure us over the air that “supplies to hospitals will be maintained”, thus generating a glow of pride at their humanitarian ethics. Why the doses of warm treacle? The withdrawal of such civilised essentials as the sources of fuel and power, transport and communications puts numberless healthy people at risk in their homes, at work and out on the street. They have no autonomy, no freedom of choice, for they cannot buy or make the products of national monopolies elsewhere. But the need of the healthy for reliable services is equal to the

need of the sick (the majority of whom are not in hospitals anyway).

Could not efforts be made in 1967 to discover better means of achieving particular good, rather than resorting to what reason and simple arithmetic indicate to be general harm? If the needs of the healthy—whether human beings, animals or plants—are disregarded in favour of the needs of the sick, the sick will eventually suffer, for it is the healthy individuals who provide for us all.

There is no freedom in the absence of reliable service.

A friend of mine was invited to convalesce at a cottage deep in the unspoiled countryside where he would be able to relax under the balmy influence of the simple life, doing nothing but paint pictures, think great creative thoughts and get well quickly—or so he thought. No road marred the rural approaches to his haven of rest, and no unsightly poles, wires or pipes spoiled the beauty of its environment, for it had no mod. cons., in fact no services at all. The only shop was in a village three miles away over muddy meadows fraught with bulls or neurotic ganders and bounded with deep ditches and solidly defensive stiles. Like every other commodity except the weather, furniture had been manhandled to the door by sturdy people used to the drudgery of pumping water, emptying cesspools, humping cans of paraffin, decarbonising wicks, sawing logs, making, mending, fetching, carrying and building endless fires under stubborn coppers from which to wring the rare luxury of a bath or wash the smalls.

My friend got better very quickly indeed, and soon returned to London with never a brush laid to canvas, but plenty of destructive thoughts in his head.

Neither is there freedom in the presence of dishonesty; yet racketeering flourishes in so many spheres of life, in spite of civilisation, Christianity and general education. The more we develop technical expertise, the greater are the opportunities for disguising dishonesty as general good, or explaining it away with bogus psychology. With the help of sociological jargon, snobbery and class distinctions are resurrected in the name of peer-groups, in-things and out-people. It is unethical to steal from one's in-group, but it is a must to acquire one's employer's property, because he is an out-person, one of THEM. Public property inexplicably belongs to THEM, although a moment's thought would suggest to all but the most moronic that WE—all of us—pay for public property, and because WE own it WE have to pay for it when it is damaged by US working off our repressions on THEM.

Apparently the Earth belongs to US, who have a right to litter it with imperishable rubbish, as well as a right to complain to THEM when we find our favourite picnic place soiled with orange peel, broken glass and human excreta. Do school children ever ask who the Earth belongs to, who England belongs to, who THEY were who lived here before US, back in the mists of history and before? If so, what answers do they get? If the answer is that it all belongs to God, then a lot of Christians treat His property in a very eccentric way. Is there a time limit to the meaning of "indigenous", and what are race, colour and creed but evidence of the evolutionary continuum from which we derive our fundamental energy and matter, and to which it must inevitably return after we have died?

There is no freedom without good-will, the magnetic force which holds society together. We have debased and

confused the word Love, by using it to mean concern and even sexual infatuation. "Love is the supreme acceptance of one personality by another, without condition or approval, or any other consideration" (quoted somewhere by Nine Epton?). Love cannot be turned on like company's water, and it is a kind of blasphemy against the highest human emotion to suggest that one must love all one's neighbours or, worse still, all little children and the kinds of animals we buy for pets. Let us leave Love to the quietude and privacy of intimate human relationships, where it can be manifest in limitless different ways. If Humanism aims at improving the condition of human beings, so that Love can evolve from skilful LIFEMANSHIP, we might do worse than resolve to improve the social and economic status of service, honesty and good-will by all possible means during this New Year of 1967.

A SURVEY OF MY BELIEF

Gregory S. Smelters

A British Study Group Organisation* recently requested me to comment clearly and as briefly as possible under the appropriate headings supplied below, to which I complied with pleasure as follows:—

1. *Your religious denomination?*—I have officially left the RC Church.
2. *Do you*
 - (a) *attend church regularly?*—Never.
 - (b) *believe completely in every aspect of your religion?*—Not at all: it is wholly mythology and witchcraft.
3. *If not, whether you go to church or not, what part of its teachings do you find difficult to accept?*—Christian mythology is a false account of the world and man; Christian ritual is a savage survival of witchcraft; Christian ethics belongs to a society of lords and slaves; Christian churches exist on false pretence and bluff.
4. *To what other movement or organisation do you belong?*—I have intermittently belonged to the British RPA, the American Humanist Association, and have been contributing letters, notes and articles to the Freethought press of many lands.
5. *What do you think it can offer that the churches cannot?*—A non-mythological and non-slavish attitude of mind and behaviour towards the world and man, plus scientific discussions, and/or knowledge, on daily issues.
6. *Do you consider it to be a complete answer, individually and collectively, to the problems of life and death?*—It is the only completely adequate method of finding adequate answers to all problems of life and death.
7. *Regardless of the other replies you may have given, do you feel that in the present age the world needs one universal comprehensive answer embracing all aspects of creation?*—Not at all—since no such "question" is logically possible. At all times human beings need particular scientific answers to innumerable particular questions or situations.
8. *Even if it called for a re-adjustment of some of the traditional religions and beliefs?*—Scientific method and knowledge call for a complete elimination of mythologies, witchcraft, and churches as guides for living and thinking.
9. (a) *Are you an atheist?*—Yes, of course.
Briefly, why?—Atheism (a denial of all gods, includ-

ing, of course, the West Semitic god Yahweh, his breath-soul, and his pre-existent son Yehoshuah, etc, etc) is a truism. "The god Yahweh" of the Hebrew Bible was falsely rendered in Greek and English as "the Lord God", which has originated an interminable muddle which is now eliminated by correct translation.

(b) *Are you an agnostic?*—No, of course not.

Briefly, why?—There is nothing 'un-knowable' (agnostos) about Christian mythology and witchcraft: Yahweh is a West Semitic fairy-tale, and prayers and sacrifices to him and his priests are futile, barbaric survivals of behaviour or thought.

10. *Do you believe in any form of God, Spiritual Force, Creator?*—"God" should never have cropped up in the English Bible, if the correct translation had been made from the very start, "the god", and "the god" always meant "the god Yahweh", the maker of Earth, Moon, etc, in Hebrew mythology as well as in Christianity. "Spiritual Force" is a contradictory (and thus empty combination, since "force" is a space-time agent, whereas "spirit" is a myth).
11. (a) *Do you believe in a hereafter?*—No, of course not. "Hereafter" is a survival of primitive belief in ghosts living under the earth, or in the Far West, or beyond the Moon. Now it means "nowhere at all" and is thus an empty label.
 (b) *If so, do you understand it as a practical probability?*—It is a semantic self-delusion among moderns. Among savages, it may be a practical probability, until they dig up the graves and find nothing but bones.
12. *Any further remarks concerning your personal beliefs?*—My basic criterion of how I distinguish a scientific modern like myself from all traditional believers is that the latter look, like all savages, not for the "how", but for the "who", when they look for causes (cf *Before Philosophy*, p. 24, by H. Frankfort, etc. Pelican Books).

* CO-QUEST, 168 Allison Road, Bristol, 4.

WANTED

PART-TIME ASSISTANT required (male) for preparation and dispatch of FREETHINKER and mail orders. Reply by letter to The Manageress, The Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

NEWS AND NOTES

I THANK Kit Mouat for leaving the FREETHINKER in such a good state of health and wish her well with the book she is currently writing.

The Pope, Peking and Peace

THE *Guardian* reports (7.1.67) that the Pope wants peace talks with Peking. He is reported as saying that "there were no more missionaries there, there had been no mainland Chinese bishops at the Ecumenical Council, and that the Holy See was even accused of being hostile to the legitimate desires of the Chinese people. All this was not true."

The Pope should take the trouble to read *Li Hung Chang's Scrap Book*, compiled and edited by Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim, published in 1913 by Watts & Co. He would then readily understand why the Chinese do not want missionaries in their country. The past record of Christian proselytizing has taught them a bitter lesson.

Some day, perhaps, we will reprint the letter to the *Daily Mail* in 1900 from Ivan Chen, secretary to the then Chinese Minister, which Maxim quotes in his book. What Ivan Chen said then still holds good today.

Family planning

I AM GLAD to see that Mr Edwin Brooks, Labour MP for Bebington, is to introduce a private member's bill in the Commons on February 17th to amend the National Health Service Act so that local health authorities may be empowered, or even directed, to provide family planning advice and treatment for all women, on social as well as medical grounds. The bill would enable local authorities to provide both advice and supplies free. Let us hope that the bill has a smooth passage.

Schools TV

THE *Daily Telegraph* reports (4.1.67) that an increasingly important rôle will be played by television in the schools of the future, according to Mr George Thomas, Minister of State, Welsh Office. Mr Thomas was speaking at a Welsh conference on schools television sponsored by the Welsh office of the Independent Television Authority and TWW.

The TV religious advisers will doubtless advise that a fair dose of religion should be medicinally infused as part of the Schools TV expansion. Time will show us if they are successful.

Breaking the monopoly

THE VATICAN has attacked *avant-garde* Roman Catholics reported to be celebrating the "Last Supper" Masses in private homes. This coincides with the rumour that one of our top pop singers has just finished recording a new song called "Where have all the communicants gone?"

Crusade against slum schools

DR RONALD GOLDMAN, Principal of Didsbury College of Education, is reported as saying that areas such as Paddington, London, Moss Side, Manchester, and Sparkbrook, Birmingham, were becoming ghettos for hundreds of thousands of immigrant children as well as for children born in Britain (*Guardian*, 5.1.67). He appealed to teachers to start a crusade against slum schools and to press for compensatory programmes for such children.

On Friday, February 10th at Caxton Hall, Dr Goldman will be taking part in a meeting on Religion in Schools

organised by the NSS. Secular Humanists may not agree with all of Dr Goldman's views on the wisdom of the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act. But all will surely share his concern about the blatantly third-class educational facilities of slum schools. Here is yet another of many areas of activity and social reform where Humanists and Christians can and should co-operate.

Strife in Sydney

THE CONFLICT between conservatism and liberalism in the Roman Catholic Church rages in Australia as well. Bishop Muldoon of Sydney has made biting criticisms of the "near heresies" and "erroneous views" of a visiting American RC nun, Mother Gorman. The *Sydney Morning Herald* comments (17.12.66) that "as a Christian psychologist, Mother Gorman is quick to acknowledge her debts to Martin Buber, Paul Tillich, Harvey Cox, and to reveal the influence of the new theology. One can see why a traditional theologian is scandalised by such statements as that there is no scientific proof for the existence of God, or that a Buddhist could be 'truly a Christian', or even that now only about 16 per cent of the population are capable of 'a mature religious and moral approach'."

While continuing to fight the conservatism in the Roman Catholic Church, we should encourage the liberals within the Church to develop their liberalism to the point where it is pure rationalism or at least unfettered by authoritarianism.

Sounds logical

COVINGTON, Ky. (AP)—Mrs A. T. Dinwiddie asked her Sunday School class what "you must do before you obtain forgiveness of sin".

There was a pause. Finally, one 6-year-old timidly held up his hand and said: "Sin". (*Reported in The Daily Journal, Elizabeth, New Jersey, 12.12.66.*)

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RELIGION AND SCIENCE

A. C. Thompson

ALL THEIR LIVES, Mr and Mrs Chaddington were honest, God-fearing, devout Christians. Their dearest hope was that their only child, their son, Algernon, would become a clergyman and would devote his life to the Lord's service and to bringing people to Jesus and to eternal salvation.

The Chaddingtons were poor, securing a barely sufficient existence from the small farm they owned and worked. When Algernon was of school-leaving age, Mr Chaddington had an unfortunate accident in which he injured his back and was no longer fit to do much on the farm. But they did so much want Algernon to remain at school! They sold most of the farm and Mrs Chaddington was forced to take a job as a charwoman. The church came to their help, made it possible for Algernon to continue his studies into university, arranged for scholarships and fellowships for post-graduate study of theology.

When Algernon became vicar of his home-parish church, his poor delighted parents were proud of him. All their sacrifices had been worth while. Their life dream had come true. The Rev. Algernon Chaddington's flock now esteem him as their spiritual leader, look to him for guidance in life's problems, revere him as their advocate with the Father in Heaven.

At university, Algernon had met a pious Christian girl. They were attracted to each other by their common longing to labour in Christ's vineyard. They were married. Today, as the vicar's wife, she sustains the women's organisations of the church, heads various charities and is active in other civic and humanitarian causes.

Now, Algernon has been offered an appointment to the theological college of a great and foremost university, where he would train other men for the Lord's ministry.

But, over a period of years, the Rev. Chaddington has felt growing doubts about the truth of Christian doctrines. Scientific discoveries, Biblical criticism and new thought have exposed grave incompatibilities between faith and fact. Now he has reached the point at which he knows, very frankly, that his reason can no longer assent to the beliefs he once held. Even the idea of a Divine Cause of the whole universe giving a moral law to Moses seems nothing but myth and folklore.

Painful dilemma

What is the Rev. Chaddington to do?

Should he honestly confess his disbelief? Should he give up everything, resign his living, move out of the vicarage, part from his followers and associates, decline the university post, go looking for a job as a clerk in a shop or office? Should he hurt those near and dear to him? Or should he put his tongue in his cheek and continue to preach and teach what he no longer believes?

If Mr Chaddington had become a scientist instead of a clergyman, he would never face such a dilemma. For when the scientist finds upon further evidence that his previous belief or theory was wrong, he can fearlessly announce his error to the whole world and become thereby not a less but a greater scientist. It was the scientists themselves who discovered and proclaimed that Piltown Man was a fraud, that the phlogiston and caloric theories were untenable, that Aristotle was wrong about falling bodies, that a heliocentric theory of the solar system should replace the geocentric one. But Rev. Chaddington's moral influence upon society and Mrs Chaddington's charitable endeavours must depend upon his subservient assent to specific supernatural theories.

One significant way in which science differs from religion is that it is a passionate devotion to truth, not a fanatical enforcement of dogma. It is true that the history of science is full instances in which truth has been stifled for reasons of professional jealousy, intolerance, resistance to the new, but eventually, in science, truth generally prevails, however tortuous and painful its victory. In religion, devotion to truth is not to be tolerated. One must swallow the dogma entire and for the whole of his life, and he who even doubts or questions is anathema and must be cast from the society of believers.

A sticky wicket

The fictitious story of Mr Chaddington is a sound reflection of what can and does happen. One who has religious friends inevitably finds himself occasionally at a religious service. As he hears the sermon, sometimes he cannot help but feel that this man is not sincere, that he does not honestly believe what he is saying, that he gropes for sentences which have a religious ring but which do not commit him. He utters platitudes: that kindness towards others is praiseworthy, that war is a terrible evil, that one should be faithful in the performance of duty. He portrays Jesus Christ as a wise, kindly person who tried to teach and exhort men to do good, not as the supreme God who created the whole universe from nothing, who is still living, and who will some day destroy the universe, judge and either reward or punish every human being who ever lived upon the earth. One hardly ever hears in church any more mention of Hell or its fire prepared for punishing the wicked. One often wonders how the clergyman, with the intelligence and diligent study which he devotes to his calling, can believe the doctrines it is his duty to preach.

Recently, I discussed a religious doctrine with a clerical friend. He did not argue against me. But I noticed a look of sadness cross his face and I felt suddenly sorry for him. No doubt about it, clergymen are good men: they try to accomplish rectitude, they encourage others to do what is right, they are a potent influence for morality. It may be that the world is better because of them. But their morality is based on insecure foundations.

Plight of the churches

This brings us to the crucial question: what will be the function of the clergy and of the churches? In a world which outgrows the spiritism which has clung to humanity since the days of our ignorant ancestors of prehistory, should the clergy join the unemployed, should splendid church buildings become no more than hollow walls? It is difficult to forecast the future rôle of the churches. There is little doubt that they could fulfil an important social function, encouraging morality, bringing comfort to the afflicted, help to the needy, fellowship to the friendless, inspiration to the despondent, consolation to the sorrowful. The church has a personal touch which government lacks and which some people feel they need. The good which the church does could be done without religion—without belief in spiritual beings, without post-mortem sanctions.

One recommendation might be, as a starter, that the clergy should release their captive audiences. Instead of requiring their hearers to listen to a sermon in complete silence with no opportunity to contribute or to ask questions, they might permit discussion at church services. Why not? Forbidding discussion is evident espousal of the indoctrination which so distinguishes the methods of religion from the methods of science—the indoctrination which silenced natural inquiry throughout the Middle

Agencies until the scientific awakening of Europe, which even in recent times has opposed the progress of knowledge, which says, "Simply learn what I tell you, be content with it and question no further".

A second need of modern churches is the adoption of more scientific methods of inquiry. For example, throughout the known history of the world, the nature of evil has been held to depend on the activities of devils, demons and other spirits. According to the Bible, Jesus also believed this. But surely there can be scientific, natural, psychological or sociological explanations of offences against other individuals and against the law. The churches are not looking for such explanations; even if such were found, they would crown them with phrases dug out of the Bible. A natural principle of ethics based wholly on the nature of man with no supernatural implications is sorely needed in the modern world but the churches are not trying to find it. Why does one little child grow up to be a respected member of society while another becomes its intractable enemy to be caught and caged for years in prison? What is there in human nature that causes prejudice against people of other races, or that impels people,

even against their better judgment, to go to war, to drop bombs and kill, while they face death themselves?

The first task of the churches is to gain that freedom of thought which prevails in philosophy and science and which has been so notably absent from religion and theology. Their next task will be to find truthful scientific or philosophic explanations of religious data, particularly of the nature of good and evil. Unless they do this, they may not survive. Attendance may diminish until they are no longer possible economically. Fewer and fewer neophytes may enter divinity school; in fact, the churches are debating right now whether to admit women to the ministry, for they can no longer find enough men. Desperately, they must meet the open-minded attitude of science squarely in the modern age or they will become obsolete and whatever good they might do will be lost. In particular, the churches must enshrine intellectual freedom rather than plaster statues; and they must seek and find a rational natural principle of ethics to replace the good-and-evil-spirit theory of morality which has grown with the human race from primitive savagery to the Bible and Christianity.

ENSORSHIP AND INTOLERANCE

Michael Gray

UNDOUBTEDLY a major curse in any free society is the censor mentality as exhibited by such people as Mrs Whitehouse, the latest of a long line of self-appointed guardians of public morals. These people seek to ensure that society is protected from evil, corrupting influences (which means anything they happen to disagree with) by imposing their own particular interpretation of morality on everyone else. Censorship is the means they adopt to achieve this aim, and, although repulsive enough in itself, the most repellent aspect of censorship is that it is intractably linked with intolerance. It is not surprising, therefore, that it has always been resorted to by intolerant creeds.

Christianity has made great use of this weapon in the past (eg, the Catholic Index, only very recently abolished) and continues to do so even today. In any Christian country there is a constant campaign to keep opposing views from being heard—by censorship and discrimination on radio, TV and press, and wherever possible (as in Catholic countries it usually is) even by suppressing freedom of speech. Thus in Britain we have the BBC, whose charter is supposed to forbid it from taking sides on controversial issues, blatantly broadcasting religious propaganda for many hours every week, whereas atheists and humanists are rarely allowed even a few minutes to present their views. Popular newspapers, all too eager to publish hysterical letters full of Christian platitudes (usually sprinkled with "Come to Jesus" and "Bring back the birch" in about equal quantities), almost always refuse to publish atheistic letters.

Censorship extends into many other aspects of life. It is probably exercised most in an effort to wipe out so-called pornography. Here censorship is exposed in all its absurdity—demonstrably it just does not work. Even an elementary knowledge of psychology reveals that you cannot prevent a person from doing something simply by forbidding it; you may even make him more determined to do it. Censorship may have swept pornography off the open market, but in doing so it has merely created a black market where ruthless men can make an easy living exploiting the weaknesses of others by selling such material

at inflated prices. Despite the regulations of censorship, any man can still get hold of such material, the only difference being that he must look a little harder and pay a lot more. Moreover, the majority of those who indulge in pornography are people with sick or disturbed minds, more to be pitied than chastised. Banning it does not solve anything; you cannot cure a man's sickness by simply forbidding him to be ill.

Legal anomalies

As well as the injustice and intolerance inherent in censorship there are also ridiculous anomalies. The law's interpretation of what constitutes pornography is at times ludicrous. In Britain photographs of the nude human body which are not "touched up" to conceal the body hair (ie, which are *true* representations) are considered obscene, whereas those photographs which do meet legal requirements (ie, distorted images) are allowed on open sale! If true photographs of the human body are to be considered obscene and liable to corrupt public morals, then how much more so must be the sight of the actual naked body itself? Yet the standard of morals amongst Naturists is at least as high, and in most cases higher than that of society as a whole. The obvious conclusion is that it is not the sight of the human body which is liable to corrupt, but the perverted thinking of those who consider it is. Dirt, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

The Arts are constantly made to suffer because of the stupidities of censorship. Any artist—author, poet, painter or actor—must be free to portray life as he sees it, and his creativity is impaired if he has all the while to worry about whether what he produces will be acceptable to Big Brother Establishment. The Theatre in particular is plagued by restrictions, and it, too, has its share of ridiculous anomalies. Kenneth Tynan, a well-known advocate of the total abolition of censorship, illustrated this in an interview reported in the November *Humanist*. Although the censor would pounce at the mere suggestion that sexual intercourse should take place during the action of a play in a theatre

"if you were to do a ballet at Covent Garden which included sexual intercourse it could not be banned by the Lord Chamberlain because a performance of ballet is not submitted to the

Lord Chamberlain for censorship".

The complete abolition of censorship would not result in a catastrophic decline in public morals, as many would have us believe. Previously banned pornography might find a ready market for a time, while the novelty lasted, but the market would soon return to normal once the open sale of such material had become accepted as commonplace. Indeed there would probably be an *increase* in morality in general if the much saner and healthier attitude of having everything brought out into the open were adopted. Periods of severe moral restrictions in the past have usually been of the times when morality was at its lowest, and the only thing the restrictions increased was hypocrisy. It is an old but true saying that forbidden fruit tastes best; therefore, remove the restrictions and you remove most of the demand. All our experience points to the fact that censorship does not abolish anything; it merely drives it underground to flourish more than ever.

BOOK REVIEWS

Madeleine Simms

Psychoanalysis Observed, edit. Charles Rycroft (Constable, 21s). THIS BOOK was to have appeared in the series containing *Objections to Humanism*, *Objections to Christian Belief*, and the like. It was soon realised, however, that psychoanalysis is not a belief in that sense at all, so that such a title would be misleading. If it is not a belief, then, what is it? The possible answers range from substitute religion, science, semantic theory, to an entirely new phenomenon for which we have yet to invent a label.

In an interesting introduction to the book, in which he discusses these various possible interpretations, Charles Rycroft, himself an analyst, turns to the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion. He tells us that Freud believed that anyone who questioned the meaning of life was "ill". "By this," says Rycroft, "he can, I think, only have meant that living itself gives meaning to life and that this is doubted only by those who have become to some measure self-alienated, and who as a result have recourse to religious or ideological theories of meaning as a 'secondary construction', an attempt to restore the lost sense of meaningfulness by deriving it from some source external to the self. This was, I suspect, the real basis of his antagonism to religion."

This makes interesting reading in face of the oft-repeated, and slightly pathetic, Christian re-iteration of the question: What point is there in living, if you don't believe in anything? There are two, not merely one, fallacies here. The fact that you do not believe in God, does not mean you do not believe in anything; and why, anyway, should the point of life be made dependent upon belief in an external *Thing* for whose existence we have no shred of evidence? For one's continued life and happiness to depend upon such a fragile plant is surely a profound sign of sickness, as Freud recognised. Such belief is hardly likely to survive into mature, adult life. Freud regarded religion as an illusion "which those who needed it, created for themselves in order to preserve the childhood illusion of being absolutely protected and loved by a father."

While I would not dissent from one word of this, it does leave us Secularists with an awkward question. The truth is difficult to live with. Most people can live much more successfully with illusions of various kinds. Religious illusions are the most comforting of all. They make the fact of death less final, and therefore less to be feared. They make the blatant injustice and wickedness of this world bearable, by reference to fair shares we shall all enjoy in the next world. If Irish peasants are really happier and more amiable people than Hampstead and Chelsea atheists—is there a grimly utilitarian moral to be drawn from all this? Let sleeping illusions lie, you have nothing to lose but the Truth?

G. L. Simons

THERE IS NO DOUBT that confusion exists in the Roman Catholic Church, and has arisen from the obvious need for the Roman Church to adapt a rigid and superstitious tradition to the requirements of a more liberal and scientific age. The dilemma can easily be detected in **Religion and Practice** (Oxford, 30s) by Anthony Levi, SJ. It is clear that the book has been written with humanism in mind, and that it is hoped that humanists will read it; if they do, they will learn little.

If we believe in freedom we cannot also believe in censorship, except perhaps in the case of children, where the sole aim is to prevent them from coming into contact with material they are neither mentally nor morally developed enough to deal with. But men and women should not be treated as children; censorship imposed on adults is intolerable. Furthermore it is unnecessary, since every man possesses the ability to judge for himself what is right and what is wrong—but he can *not* judge for others. If he considers a book pornographic, he need not read it; if he thinks a film or play is immoral, he can refuse to go and see it; and if a radio or TV programme offends him, he can switch it off. But this does not give him the right to prevent others from reading or watching. The freedom to exercise their own judgment and form their own opinions must be recognised as the right of *all* men, not just of a privileged few who seek to impose their "absolute morality" on everyone else.

The book is intended to confront a number of questions, one of which is the relationship between humane behaviour and "Christian sanctity". Levi aims to show that humanists are Christians, even though they don't know it: ". . . if they are capable of properly moral activity, they must have exercised their faith in an act" (p. 20). Needless to say, he fails to establish the point, and relies instead upon stating that it is so (see pp. 180 and 193).

The modern Catholic difficulty is underlined by the admission (p. 13) that perhaps the existence of God cannot be proved by "a chain of argument at all". And at the same time there is an admission (p. 11) that "human reason" is "the only faculty we have for achieving truth . . .", and (p. 156) that revealed religion "has to be capable of measuring up to empirical criteria".

It is also highly significant that Levi has been influenced by the Bishop of Woolwich. God is defined (p. 14) in terms of "our deepest human aspirations" and, in talking of the ascension (p. 71), it is pointed out that this does not mean "that Christ ascended to somewhere, as if heaven were a place . . ." The odd thing is that most of the rest of the book is set well inside the orthodox tradition, sometimes almost to the point of fundamentalism. The devil and Satan are clearly personalised, and Levi seems in no doubt about the literal nature of the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. This approach is original, to say the least; it is usual for our reflective divines to worry about the peripheral stuff first, and then go on to wonder whether God is all he's cracked up to be. Levi seems to have reversed the process; he is original in this, if in nothing else. (It must be admitted that his later talk of God sounds suitably Roman Catholic.)

His views on morality are enlightened for a Catholic, but would be painfully diffident and inconclusive for a humanist. He gropes his way to the view that perhaps birth control can be justified (p. 100), and admits that perhaps adultery and sexual promiscuity are not increasing as fast as some people would have us believe. But all the specifically practical moral considerations are only touched on, making the title of the book seem rather misleading. There is little here but a restatement of doctrine, with a slight shift of emphasis.

He is also sometimes vague. I am not always quite sure what to think when I come across a sentence such as "The redemption has made it connatural to us, but the freely chosen self-transcendence which lies at the heart of our perfection as human beings involves the acceptance of a power as well as of a truth, of God's grace, as well as of His self-revelation within us" (p. 17), which is, however, untypical. Sometimes Levi asks the right questions, such as how does a Christian know he is not constructing a dream world round the real one? and could not God's purpose have been achieved without making Christ suffer so? His answers are less than convincing.

Levi's difficulty in trying to straddle the modern and the traditional is nicely shown by first pointing out that the saints were "sometimes even neurotic" (p. 135) and "vulnerably prone to sado-masochistic complications" (p. 149), and then by saying that "the highest forms of human life are the saintly forms" (p. 195).

There is however at least one statement with which all humanists would be prepared to agree: ". . . the contents of Christian doctrine on individual, and even quite major points, can still be a matter for discussion" and "*that erroneous views can be . . . held quite widely in the Church*" (p. 168, my italics).

FREETHINKER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

Humanist Holidays. Hastings: Thursday, March 23rd to April 1st. Burton-in-the-Wirral, Cheshire: Painting Holiday, July 29th to August 12th. Details from Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone, Vigilant 8796.

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.

Froebel Institute, Grove House, Roehampton, London, SW15, Monday, January 23rd, 7.30 p.m.: "The Case for Atheism". Speaker: DAVID TRIBE.

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

Coventry and Mid-Warwickshire Humanist Group (Tudor House, Spon Street, Coventry), Thursday, January 26th, 8 p.m. Speaker: ROY PARKINSON, Chairman of the Midland Group of the National Council for Civil Liberties.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate) Sunday, January 22nd, 6.30 p.m.: Any Questions—Local Affairs. Speakers: Councillor Mrs K. BENSON, Alderman E. MARSTON, Councillor S. A. BARSTON, Councillor E. M. HARDY. National College for the Training of Youth Leaders (Humberstone Drive, Leicester), Tuesday, January 24th, 7.30 p.m.: Discussion, DAVID TRIBE and an Evangelical Christian.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday January 22nd, 11 a.m.: Lord SORENSON, "Israel and Jordan"; Tuesday, January 24th, 6.30 p.m.: "A Synthesis on Cruelty to Animals".

South Place Sunday Concerts (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, January 22nd, 6.30 p.m.: London String Quartet, Haydn, Brahms, Dvorak. Admission 3/-.

LETTERS

Freethought and Freeloze

I WOULD LIKE to support Michael Gray's article on free love, and, even more, to attack the views of your correspondents (Dec. 23).

Moralists are always trying to regulate the conduct of other people by saying that so-and-so "ought" to be the case. It is true that morality is ultimately based on value judgments, but these are only a few, and most people (certainly most Humanists) will agree about them anyway. In fact nearly all such statements are convenient substitutes for thought and state the conclusion as if it were the premise.

The question is not one of morals but of fact; does marriage serve human ends as well as it might if it were reformed or abolished?

In a marriage without consent, every conception is unwanted and heartbreak is a daily phenomenon for parents and children alike. Even a happy union may start to sour because the necessity for co-operation is removed by the state or church. As for T. M. Edwards who thinks it significant that so many people choose to marry, he might ponder the fact that many choose to marry in church. I would submit that a similar explanation suffices in each case.

North Shields.

R. J. BIRD

The Tragedy of Death

IN his article "The right to die" Michael Gray says "Death is always a tragedy, since it means the total extinction of a human being". I cannot quite follow the logical necessity of this remark. Death is certainly a tragedy if it comes prematurely as the result of an accident or a crime, but I cannot see why a freethinker should regard the total extinction of a human being as tragic if it comes at the end of a long and useful and completely enjoyed life, or as Mr Gray himself points out in his article, death is the only way of escape from intolerable pain.

Where is the tragedy of death? Unless you happen to believe in a God who could and ought to give eternal life to the human being. In which case you might describe the death of a human being, as the tragic failure of God to perform the proper function of Deity. But an atheist might take the agnostic position that if eternal life is a practical possibility it may happen, even though death seems to be complete extinction or total annihilation. As William de Morgan once remarked "I am ready for anything, extinction or expansion".

Ross-on-Wye.

P. P. CROMMELIN

A FRIEND passed on a copy of FREETHINKER (Dec. 2) to me. I found your approach generally interesting, but may I ask whether the cause of freethought is really served by putting up Aunt Sallys for the fun of knocking them down and by storming forts which have been abandoned by those who count from a reasonable and intelligent point of view? Take F. H. Snow's article (p. 378). We are told that "No Christian, one may safely assert, would deny the almightiness of God". Nonsense! I know plenty who would. The radicals assert that God is love but almighty he cannot be at the same time. Mr Snow might profitably compare his article with a poem "A bird in church" by D. S. L. Birch in *New Christian*, Nov. 17. Not all Christians spend their time whitewashing God, but Snow's attempt to whitewash man about Aberfan, is almost as bad as the efforts of those who do.

If Michael Gray has read the recent Christian report on "Sex Morality", there is no evidence of his having done so in his article (p. 379). There are plenty of Christians who do not consider "any sexual relationship outside marriage sinful and thus immoral". This has been evident from various sources for a number of years now. How is it that Michael Gray doesn't know?

At the foot of your "Notes and News" you say that television continues to advertise cigarettes. Does it? I thought all cigarette advertising on TV was banned a year or two ago. I cannot recollect having seen any cigarette adverts on TV for a long time. Can you produce evidence for this statement? What does seem to be happening is that advertising on other media is being stepped up.

I am not a Christian and I believe in freethought. I think however the basis of the latter should be reality and not phantasy. Ipswich.

NICHOLAS J. TEAPE

[As for advertising: cigarettes in TV Times, cigars on the screen. Kit Mouat "out to grass" not a moment too soon! Apologies. KM.]