

# FREE THINKER

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## THE GOD THEY WANT

"THIS BOOK is really an exercise by various hands in projection." This apt description is given by James Mitchell the editor, in his introduction to *The god I want* (pub. Constable, 21s). The projections become almost lost, like the wanted God, in a mass of verbal padding and it is this padding, the commissioned attempt to make a book long enough to warrant the price of 21s, which constitutes the book's major defect. One must wade through a morass of waffle to extract the few bits and pieces worth reading.

There are ten essays in all. Their value is that they reflect within the confines of one book the present-day dilemma about God. Some people have lost touch with him, but still think he is there. But where? If they only knew. That is their plaintive cry. They have lost touch with God but they still want him. Others feel that God is dead and that he was never much use when alive. Others feel he is still there, that they can see him, though none too clearly, but are not sure if they want him. Others feel he is simply an antiquated invention of our unenlightened forebears. Others see him, know him, and love him. Others feel that as a mere idea he is monstrous and even if he exists, the way in which he exercises his omnipotence is monstrous, and they are prepared to say so to his face.

James Mitchell writes what many must think and some even worry about.

"I used to be a convinced Christian: I am no longer convinced. In fact like many others of my generation I am profoundly uncertain as to what 'being a Christian' actually means any more."

For centuries the existence or morality of the Christian God was questioned only by a few. Today many people question. Education and science have induced questioning on a large scale. Science insists on tests and Almighty God is not to be excluded from scientific probing. As Mitchell says:

"The value of a god must be open to test. No god is worth preserving unless he is of some practical use in curing the ills which plague humanity—all the disease and pain and starvation,

the little children born crippled or spastic or mentally defective: a creator God would be answerable to us for these things at the day of judgment—if he dared to turn up."

God comes through the test badly. But the dilemma still is not fully resolved for those who were taught the truth about him at school—the prime truth being that he exists. To the sceptics the theist replies that people feel the need for God and that this need is in itself sufficient proof of God's existence. William Miller sorts this one out in his admirable contribution.

"Some people have taught that the need for God proves the existence of God; but this is blatantly untrue, for a man in a desert may need a flask of water which is not there. I would go beyond this position and state that even if a millenarian deity suddenly performed his wonders and our needs were met, such a God would not be the one which I wanted, for His past actions could not be forgiven. It is no good tucking a child up in bed and giving it sweets after bullying it all day. The only acceptable God would be one who, having made a mistake in His creation, admitted His mistake and righted it. Meanwhile, we must individually come to terms with ourselves and collectively work for a more desirable world. In this way the need for a God will diminish."

Miller puts God to much the same test as does Mitchell.

"To what divine purpose and in what loving brain was the scorpion forged? What holy chastening is intended when babies are born deformed in mind or body? Is it God's will that two-thirds of the world's population are undernourished? Any zoo will show more subtly horrific inventions than those dreamed up by the creators of Hammer Films; any hospital will show a gallery of pain which is almost unbearable to the viewers; a trip to the slum side of a town (excellently, these are decreasing in Britain and the United States) unmasks the unnecessary plight in which so many people in all times and places have passed their existence on earth. These are generalisations and therefore glib. I ask the reader to think of one specific example of mal-creation from his own experience. If there is a God, he is responsible."

So it is that some of the contributors, like so many others upset by education, have rejected the God of our fathers. But, unknown to them, God clings tenaciously to their flesh and spirit like a limpet. He is above all the God of metamorphosis. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, becomes the God of Humanism. A new God is born of the old, and A. S. Byatt comments on its malaise.

"Although I talk about tolerant agnosticism in human relationships I am not a humanist. I discovered this when I went, as an undergraduate, to a meeting of the Cambridge Humanists where they discussed whether or not they were a religion. They came, I think, to the solemn conclusion that they were not. But it was clear to me from their manner and use of language that they were, and they made me very uncomfortable, for reasons it took me some time to understand. They were worshipping, and their gods were 'humanity', 'human relationships', 'personality', 'personal relationships' . . . Contemporary Christianity and contemporary Humanism do not seem to me very different: most of the people I know now seem to worship either a demythologized Christ or a deified Person which springs

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into being every time contact is made between two other persons. God is not 'out there', oh no, God is 'the ground of our being', God is 'love', love is 'personal relationships', the universe is anthropocentric even more than it was before Copernicus, and all we are for or can do is 'love'."

In a book which almost makes a fetish of verbosity Charles Rycroft, a practising psychoanalyst, makes an important point about words.

"Words were created by man . . . and their function is to act as his tools and servants. When, however, they acquire the status of proper names and are reified, personified and deified, they cease to be tools and become masters. And when men cease to think of themselves as the users of words and start instead to regard themselves as their servants, they become slaves of language and capable of inhumanity. As both religious and political history show, men who in their private lives may be kind and tolerant, are prepared to kill, persecute and engage in heresy-hunting at the behest of Abstract Nouns, whether these be God, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, the Fatherland or the Party. Indeed, much of the behaviour which is adduced as evidence that man is an intrinsically aggressive, destructive and sadistic animal can also be interpreted as a consequence of his liability to lose contact with the sensuous reality of persons and things and to invest ideas with absolute and dogmatic value. When he does this, even the social virtues of loyalty, devotion and integrity become destructive and inhuman."

However, few children even today are taught that God

is a mere word denoting an invention of man. Children are religiously abused in school and, as Robert Hunt pointed out over 100 years ago in his introduction to *Popular Romances of the West of England*,

"those things which make a strong impression on the mind of the child are rarely obliterated by the education through which he advances to maturity, and they exert their influences upon the man in advanced age. A tale of terror, related by an ignorant nurse, rivets the attention of an infant mind, and its details are engraven on the memory. The 'bogle', or 'bogie', with which the child is terrified into quiet by some thoughtless servant, remains a dim and unpleasant reality to shake the nerves of the philosopher. Things like these—seeing that existence is surrounded by clouds of mystery—become a Power which will, ever and anon through life, exert considerable control over our actions."

It is regrettable that, in 1967, there are still thoughtless servants and ignorant nurses in our schools. Pious religionists, they are the thoughtless servants and ignorant nurses of a fantasy God. The Law of the Land accords them the privilege to perpetuate superstitions of thoughtlessness and ignorance. *The god I want* is, in the main, a reminder that even well-informed, sophisticated adults can still want God years after their childhood days when the mechanism of wanting was embedded deeply in their constitution.

## HUMANIST POLICY FOR THE FUTURE

Cynthia Blezard

THE NSS Centenary may be a time for congratulations, but most certainly not complacency. The problems of the future appear far more formidable than those of the past and it is imperative that humanists decide now about priorities and concentrate all their energies on attaining the most vital objectives.

Because it failed to do this, David Tribe's press release<sup>(1)</sup> was, in my opinion, not the challenging programme that he claimed. I do not disagree with much of what he wrote except his implication, probably unintended, that theological and sociological questions can still be divorced.

Religion must be attacked as relentlessly as ever, precisely because the Churches are becoming so active in certain sociological fields that they are able to use their apparent enlightenment in these directions to conceal age-old reactions in others. There is too the insinuation by some Christians (of whom the Archbishop of Canterbury is the latest) that "we are all humanists now". This attitude of apparent sweet reasonableness has, I regret to say, already deceived a few humanists who seem to think a compromise is possible which will solve all our difficulties. Have they forgotten that the ability to adapt to changing conditions is essential for the survival of any species, religious or otherwise, and that the Christians have developed their techniques over a period of twenty centuries, not one?

Of at least equal importance is vehement opposition to religious education in State schools; if we are not to have another generation whose minds are conditioned to a fatalistic belief that human destiny is ultimately beyond our control. It may be true that the overwhelming majority of English people pay only lip-service to Christianity but, according to a recent poll, they apparently do still believe that religious teaching is somehow essential to the future moral wellbeing of their offspring. Now that the "agreed syllabus" has proved to be ineffective, Christian educationalists are concocting schemes based on the theories of learning of Piaget. Whether these will be any more successful remains to be seen, but what is certain is the

immorality of compelling teachers to propagate beliefs they do not necessarily share, and to use State schools for the purpose. The Plowden Committee and the Minister of Education have both evaded the issue on the grounds that most parents still want religious education. But public opinion on an equally controversial issue, the abolition of hanging, was ignored when it suited the Government to do so. To reassure those anxious people who still equate moral rectitude with the "Christian way of life", the NSS should set up a working party to prepare and publish a humanist syllabus of ethical teaching for use in schools.

A society small in numbers and of limited resources cannot hope to make a strong impact in every way that it would like. While continuing to support progressive policies in the various fields that David Tribe has mentioned, I feel we should concentrate our main energies on the problem which transcends all others at the present time—over-population. The facts are undeniable and the immediate consequences more appalling than any previous turn of human history, yet because of religious and social pressures the public at large are only beginning to dimly comprehend the catastrophe which threatens mankind unless this reproductive mania is halted. No campaign that the Society undertook could do more in the long run to implement one of its immediate practical objects, namely, "(improve) . . . the conditions of life for the masses of the people in all lands".

Population growth is not a problem confined to so-called backward countries; the fertility cult is just as strong in the affluent West. In England and Wales for example there are 23 per cent more people to the square mile than in Japan, where the Government has already implemented a birth-control policy. It is intolerable that in this country a Labour Government, claiming to be progressive and dedicated to improving the quality of life, has not done likewise. We should press them by every means possible to face the facts, abandon their professional obsession with power politics and the next election and initiate a com-

prehensive long-term policy of population control which will give moral leadership to the world.

Now that most diseases can be cured, large families are no longer necessary for the comfort and support of parents in their old age. Nor, in a world where atomic war would mean utter destruction for all, do nations need a reserve of "cannon fodder". Sensible people who are genuinely concerned for the well-being of their children would surely realise that families of one, two or occasionally, three, are the very most we can now afford. Incidental benefits would be greater emancipation for women and better opportunities to improve the intellectual and emotional development of children in those vital years before they start school.

While politicians fiddle with their pathetically inadequate plans, food production, housing, education are already failing to keep pace with the meteoric rise in numbers. Many philosophers, scientists and writers view the future with dread (when did you ever read an optimistic science-fiction story?). Studies of animal behaviour show that over-crowding quickly causes mental stress, social disruption and violence—symptoms already apparent in cities all over the world. In the underdeveloped countries, democracy is being stifled as governments are forced to take "short cut" methods of handling the population problem.

Technologists and politicians still continue to woo us with visions of a future where there will be leisure and fulfilment for all. But as Jack Parsons has said, "The stark facts of population growth mean that, unless something really drastic is done soon, far from entering the Golden Age, we shall find that this was it and humanity has passed on".<sup>(2)</sup>

## PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ABORTION BILL CONFIRMED

THE LAST TIME National Opinion Polls carried out an abortion survey among both men and women, was in March 1965. At that time, only 36% of the public supported abortion on the grounds that "the mother has so large a family that another would cause financial hardship and worry"—the 'social clause' as it has come to be called. 58% of the public then believed that a woman ought to be allowed to have an abortion if her child might be born deformed; 61% approved of abortion after rape.

During the past few months there has been carefully organised opposition to impending abortion law reform. Opponents of reform have written in the press, have held public meetings, and have denounced Mr David Steel's Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill from every platform they could find. What has been the impact of all this activity on public opinion?

To determine this, Alra asked National Opinion Polls to carry out another nation-wide survey. 1,899 electors, both men and women, in 100 representative constituencies throughout Britain, were questioned between 15th and 20th February, 1967. The results are a striking vindication of Alra's oft-repeated conviction, that THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY WANT TO SEE SWEEPING REFORMS IN OUR ANTIQUATED ABORTION LAWS. Support for a 'social' clause has risen from 36% to nearly 65%; for abortion on grounds of the child's deformity, from 58% to 80%; and for abortion after rape, from 61% to 80% also.

As expected, there was powerful support for reform from all the Protestant denominations. It is worth noting,

I do not pretend that it will be easy to persuade people to face these unpalatable facts, but unless they do everything else will ultimately be meaningless. Here again, we should formulate our own clear policy, including abolition of tax relief for family men, payment of allowances for the first two children only, free contraceptive advice at State-sponsored family planning clinics, sex instruction in schools, and provision of aid to foreign countries only on condition that effective birth-control policies are exercised there.

These ideas need to be published not only through our meetings, the press and an active political lobby, but on radio and television where, at the moment, the humanist voice is scarcely heard. Brief, furtive appearances at inconvenient hours are of little use; we must expect and demand an equal hearing with the Christians in such programmes as "Meeting Point", "Twenty-four Hours", "This Week", "Panorama", "Three after Six" and "The Frost Programme".

We must convince people that the snowball of population growth has to be halted now before it becomes an uncontrollable avalanche; that it is our common responsibility to exercise forethought and directed will-power in creating a future society where human beings of all ages can live in happiness and fulfilment.

### REFERENCES

- (1) "The Second Hundred Years" (see *Freethinker*, Feb. 17th).
- (2) *New Statesman*, April, 1965.

however, that no less than 63% of Roman Catholics supported the 'rape' clause, and that no less than 59% of Roman Catholics supported the 'deformed child' clause—despite the Hierarchy's strongly voiced denunciation of this. In addition, 44% of Roman Catholics were prepared to support the hotly contested 'social' clause.

### Summary of National Opinion Poll Survey

"Parliament is considering a change of the Abortion laws. At present abortion is legal only to preserve the life or health of the pregnant woman.

"Do you think that abortion should also be legal if the pregnant woman is unable to cope with any more children?"

Should be legal	...	...	64.8%
Should not	...	...	23.9%
Don't know	...	...	11.3%

"Do you think abortion should also be legal if there is serious risk that the child would be deformed?"

Should be legal	...	...	80.5%
Should not	...	...	10.9%
Don't know	...	...	8.6%

"Do you think that abortion should also be legal if the pregnancy is the result of a sexual crime, such as rape?"

Should be legal	...	...	80.5%
Should not	...	...	10.4%
Don't know	...	...	9.1%

## NEWS AND NOTES

I AM GLAD to hear that the American Humanist Association is making Abortion Law Reform 'the top social priority' in 1967. They will have their work cut out. The abortion law in New York State, for example, permits an abortion only when it is necessary to save the mother's life. Roman Catholic bishops are mobilising their forces to oppose a bill recently introduced into the state legislature which would permit therapeutic abortion in specified hospitals:

1. When there is substantial risk that the mother's physical or mental health would be impaired by continued pregnancy or that the baby would be born with a physical or mental defect.
2. When the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.
3. When the pregnancy occurred while the woman was unwed and under the age of 15, or while she was mentally ill or a mental defective.

A month ago the Roman Catholic bishops of New York's eight dioceses issued their first ever joint pastoral letter. This was read at all masses in the state's churches. In their pastoral the bishops said:

"The purpose of this joint pastoral letter is to invite your most serious reflection on our position as Catholics regarding the right to life of every human being and our consequent opposition to abortion.

"The right of innocent human beings to life is sacred and inviolable. It comes from God Himself. The Second Vatican Council, in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, declared clearly the position of the Catholic Church regarding abortion.

"God," the Council says, "has conferred on man the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life—a ministry which must be fulfilled in a manner worthy of man. Therefore, from the moment of its conception, life must be guarded with the greatest care, while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes."

"Since laws which allow abortion violate the unborn child's God-given right, we are opposed to any proposal to extend them. We urge you most strongly to do all in your power to prevent direct attacks upon the lives of unborn children.

"We are by no means blind to the sufferings of mothers and to the problems confronting some families. We shall always support every effort to alleviate human suffering and to solve personal and family problems, but we insist that any solution must respect the life of the innocent, defenceless, unborn child.

"We earnestly hope that all who sincerely wish society to retain its humanity while solving human problems will join with us in defending the sanctity of the human right to life."

The letter was signed by Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, Archbishop McEntegart of Brooklyn, Bishop Kellenberg, Bishop Magina, Bishop Sheen, Bishop Foery, Bishop McNulty, and Bishop Donnellan.

Note the glorious name which heads that heavenly list. Cardinal Spellman, the spiritual guardian of the United States Roman Catholic military forces. At Christmas he was urging his death-dealing Christian soldiers on to righteous victory in a bloody but just war. Two months later he has the goodness to say that "the right of innocent human beings to life is sacred and inviolable". Cardinal Spellman's flesh-bound souls toil day and night with the Holy Ghost in the service of justice shattering innocent defenceless women and children with bullets and bombs. And away from the blood and thunder of the holy war in Vietnam the humanitarian Cardinal declares, with due solemnity, that 'from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care'.

Cardinal Spellman ought to hide his face in shame. Unawareness of inconsistency prevents him. With his

precious baubles and unctuous claptrap he sanctifies genocide and, turning his back on the holocaust he has blessed and the killers he has exonerated, he piously proclaims that 'abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes'.

The napalm burns the little children's flesh. The merciless bombs strike them to an early grave. And many miles away, in the comparative calm of New York, a holy man enunciates morality.

### Father Christie withdraws heresy charge

ON SUNDAY, February 26th, Dr Thomas Roberts, former Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bombay, was addressing Roman Catholic undergraduates at Cambridge University. Father Joseph Christie, their temporary chaplain, stood up during Dr Roberts' speech and asked him to stop. Father Christie accused him of preaching heresy. Dr Roberts subsequently called on Father Christie to substantiate or withdraw the charge. Father Christie stuck to his guns for a while and then, not surprisingly, backed down.

Father Christie, who for a while was so firm in his accusation of heresy, may well have been persuaded by his co-religionists that to persist with the charge would be detrimental to the very institution he wished to protect. Today heresy trials can do more harm than good to the Church which holds them. Even 100 years ago the Church of England learned this to its unhappy cost in the case of the Right Reverend John William Colenso, Lord Bishop of Natal.

Colenso was accused of heresy. The case was tried. The charge was substantiated. But the verdict of guilty and the sentence of deprivation proved to be merely the beginning of a long wrangle which accorded little credit to the Christian Church but much assistance to the Rationalist movement.

To indicate some of the thinking and feeling which motivates those who utter the charge of heresy against one of their fellow churchmen I append part of the letter which helped to set the Colenso heresy trial in motion.

"To the Most Reverend Robert Gray, DD, Lord Bishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan.

MY LORD,— We, the undersigned, being Clerks in Holy Orders of the United Church of England and Ireland, and having care of souls within the Province of Cape Town, under your Lordship's Metropolitan jurisdiction, constrained by a sense of duty to the Church within which we hold office, desire to lay before your Lordship a charge of false teaching on the part of the Right Reverend John William Colenso, Doctor in Divinity, Lord Bishop of Natal, and a Suffragan Bishop of this Province.

"The charge which we bring is founded upon certain extracts from writings published and put forth by the Bishop entitled, *St Paul's Epistle to the Romans newly translated and explained from a missionary point of view*; and Parts I and II of the *Pentateuch and Book of Joshua critically examined*, and sold and published in the city of Cape Town within the last two years . . .

"With respect to the extracts contained in the ninth schedule, we charge the Bishop of Natal with depraving, and impugning, and otherwise bringing into disrepute the Book of Common Prayer, particularly portions of the Ordinal and the Baptismal Services, and in so doing with violating the law of the United Church of England and Ireland, as contained in the 36th of the Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical. We are deeply conscious of the gravity of these charges, as brought against one who holds the office of a Bishop, and of the responsibility which we incur in making them; but the scandal which these publications have caused, and the feelings which are entertained regarding them by the clergy of the Province generally, seemed imperatively to require that we should lay them before your Lordship, and ask for your judgment upon the doctrines which are therein maintained.

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## A SOLUTION TO THE SEX PROBLEM

A. C. Thompson

THERE HAS been much discussion about reform of the divorce laws to permit divorce by mutual consent. The discussion has thus far failed to locate the main issues, and this failure simply demonstrates the futility of thought which is not guided by recognition of the basic principle of morality and law.

In an earlier article, I pointed out that the ultimate, universal ethical principle which must serve as the criterion or standard for all social conduct is that of the survival of society. From the earliest, most primitive beginning of human society up to the present day, people everywhere have necessarily called those individual acts and social behaviours good or right which they deemed would tend to preserve their society; but, although throughout all the centuries of recorded history both philosophy and religion have wrangled over the nature of good and evil, it has been only recently that this simple and basic principle has been located, recognised and put into words.

English jurisprudence has followed John Austin (1790-1859), whose chief doctrine, essentially, was that law derives from custom. It is precarious to base law on custom, because to do so deprives law of reason. It makes of law the unreasoned, superstitious, taboo-like practices of primitive ancestors who had not the racial experience of a maturer generation and who were unable to declare any principle for their morality. The only justification there is for consulting custom consists in this, that if a custom exists, the presumption is that it has been found practical enough to be preserved. There is fear that to change a custom would so disorder things as to endanger society, and hence people exhibit resistance, even horror, towards all proposals to alter or even to examine customs. But, as was pointed out in the previous article, there are two good reasons why the sex customs of antiquity do not adapt to the modern world: (a) the pristine need for peopling the globe has been supplanted by a plenitude of population at some future time approaching the limit which the earth's resources can sustain; and (b) modern contraceptive techniques can eliminate pregnancy as the formerly almost inevitable sequel to sexual intimacy.

The most ancient and primitive of the human species, faced with a logical need for preserving a social structure, but unable to express this necessity in words, resorted to the illogical expedient of combining this necessity with their cosmology—with their explanations of all natural happenings as the manipulation of the world by unseen spirits. Thus from the most primitive palaeolithic times to the present day, morality has been said to be the will of the unseen god or gods rather than the need of human beings for maintaining social structures which foster mutual survival. When humanity failed to recognise this true basis of morality and proclaimed that it came from God, stories were promulgated and accepted of a God revealing law, eg. giving ten commandments to a chieftain atop a mountain; there is now positive evidence that the Biblical story of ten commandments is pure fiction. Since it rests on a spurious base, supernatural morality is not likely to endure, and in fact is even now visibly disintegrating. As more and more people realise that the priests are mistaken about morality, they are likely to reject it. As supernatural sanction goes, so does morality.

What will follow? As spiritism crumbles under advancing science, will the whole world face a new Sophism in which anything is moral that anybody wants? Will lurid

crime be justified by psychology and accepted as normal? Will sexual promiscuity prevail? Or must we acknowledge the need for morality for preserving society, and enforce morality by laws which all can see are logical consequences of this need? We learn in logic that a good proposition may be supported by bad arguments, and that hence disproving the reasons does not necessarily disprove the proposition, which may be true for other reasons. Thus, morality is supported by false supernatural reasons; displaying this falsity does not prove that morality should not exist, for there is a valid natural reason for morality. The need of the hour is for the Secularists to take over from the priests the support of the moral framework of society by building the new morality upon a foundation of truth.

My previous article indicated that the law of sex must provide for reproduction and rearing of the new members who are indispensable for society's survival, and that our racial experience has shown us that the monogamic family, in which children are nurtured with the love and care of both their natural parents, is the most suitable social organ for this purpose.

Unfortunately, some marriages do not endure and the spouses long to regain their freedom. Those who believe that marriage is a sacrament hold that marriage can be dissolved only by God. Those who believe it is a civil contract hold that the parties, and not the State, may dissolve it. Marriage is neither a sacrament nor a contract. It is instead an instrument by which society propagates itself. That it is not a contract, as jurists claim it is, can be seen in the fact that society and law do not recognise homosexual marriage, whereas a contract may be entered into by anyone, regardless of sex. Marriage is as such an instrument of society as education, or a police force, or an army. It should not remain subject to the law of contract, however traditional this concept may be.

I venture to offer the following proposals:

1. Couples who have no dependent child may divorce each other by merely registering their decision in a local office under the Home Office and by establishing, either by medical certificate or by eight-month separation, that the wife is not pregnant, but without any court trial or other formality. If one of the parties desires and the other is unwilling to terminate the marriage, the case will receive a brief informal hearing to determine that the rights of neither party are violated and to apportion the joint property; but the divorce is to be granted despite the unwillingness of one party.

2. If the couple do have a dependent child, and either wishes to end the marriage, either or both undertake legal proceedings for separation. Only one ground will be recognised: that the child is likely to suffer more by the continuation of the marriage than by its dissolution. Infidelity will no longer constitute a ground, except so far as it can be shown that it directly injures the child in some way adverse to normal or potential physical, mental or emotional development. During separation, both parents are responsible for all their children, as nearly as possible to the extent they would be had they remained together. If the spouse who is awarded custody of the children finds a prospective new mate who declares to the court a willingness to marry that spouse and to assume normal parental care of the children, then a divorce is granted and both spouses are freed to remarry. Maltreatment of children to

induce a separation will be a crime, as will be false declaration to induce divorce.

3. Adequate sex instruction will be included in the education of all children, with emphasis upon the social and moral, as well as the biological aspects of reproduction; and, before adolescence, instruction in contraception.

4. Illegitimacy, as well as fornication, adultery and prostitution will be morally wrong and socially disapproved. Parents are to be considered illegitimate rather than children. Both of the illegitimate parents will have the same legal responsibility for their child as if they were legitimate but (unless they marry) separated.

5. The Home Office will keep a record of all marriages and divorces and will not grant a license to marry to anyone not free to do so. They will require all aliens to have their marital status endorsed on their passports.

Now let us see how these proposals would work in practice. A young man and woman who are in love do not perform the sex act in a parked car or a hotel room. There is no reason why they should not marry, respectably, with the knowledge and approval of parents, relatives, friends and all society, with celebration and good wishes. They obtain the right to cohabit. They are avowedly in love, expect to be faithful, are not promiscuous. They practice contraception. If they find themselves unsuited to each other, if they fall out of love, if they cannot make a go of it, they divide their common property, notify the town hall, tell their friends and separate. But if they decide they are meant for each other, and to have a baby, they undertake to make their union permanent and to bring up their baby together. A married girl who deliberately neglects contraception in order to ensnare her husband into permanent marriage is committing a deception; her husband may guard against it by using a contraceptive adapted to the man, such as the rubber sac or condom.

No girl may say, "I didn't know he was already married". There will be no excuse for sex relations undertaken for gratification only, without love. There will be no honourable reason why the man who seeks sex from a woman should be unwilling to marry her. A girl can have good reason for insisting upon the registration at the town hall before submitting herself. There will be no need to "try out" before marriage, for the childless phase of marriage is itself a complete trial, not only of sexual compatibility, but of all the factors which make for harmony in a life partnership.

Serial polygamy, the "marry and divorce" routine, now the luxury of the rich, will be restrained where there are

children. Those who have children will not look forward to evading the responsibility of parenthood. Home and family will cradle the new members of society brought into the world by rich and poor alike, even by cinema stars.

Society has no right to deny its members (if innocent and sane) the privilege and pleasure of mating and reproducing. But it does have a right to knowledge of the potential parents of its new members and to require that their prospective sexual union be officially recorded. Society can not tolerate casual, irresponsible sexual intercourse.

I myself have a little daughter, aged 5. I try to maintain an objective, unemotional attitude towards morality, but I cannot help but feel revolted by the thought that, as the clergymen fight an ever losing battle to sustain a morality with spurious basic principles, all of religious morality is likely so to degenerate that, by the time she matures, it may be fashionable for a girl to sleep with a different man every night and to pay a man for an evening's entertainment with sexual intercourse. This is not what I want for my child. I want reasonable sexual standards accepted, so that when she grows up she can enjoy a full and happy life, complete with self- and sex-expression, and still be a respectable woman and member of society, until she knows she has found the man she wants for the father of my grandchildren, and can undertake the procreation of babies with every prospect of bringing them into as happy a family as I hope she finds herself in now. Her parents have taught her the facts of life. We have told her that "Just as you, in your childhood, want the love and care of both your parents to provide for your needs as you grow up, just so you, when you have your own children, will want them to have the love and care of a nice Mummy and Daddy". Our present broken-down moral code, which the Church cannot justify logically, faces the problem whether to make contraceptives freely available to unmarried adolescents. As the law is now, this is hazardous. It is an attempt to prevent illegitimacy by inviting flagrant promiscuity and endangering the family. My reason for writing this article is chiefly my hope that my proposal, or something like it, will be enacted before my own child grows up.

Science and invention can enable us to attain a perfection of life unknown to our ancestors, but we must admit science also into the realm of human relationships. The invention of contraception, for example, can increase the joy of sexual intimacy by freeing it from worry of the change of status which a baby brings, and for which one may not be prepared, but we must not let it break down family life and the love of parents for their children.

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## NEWS AND NOTES

(Continued from page 84)

"It only remains for us to inform your Lordship that we are prepared, if required, to prove the charges we bring, and further to request that an opportunity may be afforded us of proving them at such time and in such manner as your Lordship may see fit to appoint.

"Dated at Cape Town the 6th, and at Graham's Town the 12th day of May, in the year of our Lord 1863.

We are, my Lord,

Your Lordship's faithful servants,  
H. A. DOUGLAS, Dean of Cape Town.  
N. J. MERRIMAN, Archdeacon of Graham's Town.  
H. BADNALL, Archdeacon of George, and Rector of St Mark's, George Town."

Father Joseph Christie was doubtless induced to remember history and withdraw from the fray while he yet could.

## THEATRE

David Tribe

**Volpone** (Ben Jonson), Garrick.**The Storm** (Alexander Ostrovsky), National Theatre.

A RARE CLASSIC is Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, the second Oxford Playhouse production running in London. On the face of it, everything is wrong with Jonson's play. It begins as a satirical farce and ends as a morality. The hero, a lovable rogue, wisecracks as he is disgraced at the end, so that neither our sense of justice nor our secret hopes are properly satisfied. Through inadequate build-up, the virtuous innocents who triumph over their traducers rouse little sympathy or interest. Figures more appropriate to the masque than to a comedy regularly intrude. Yet the scripting is so witty and the dramatic details so effective that the play wears better than most of Shakespeare's comedies.

Leo McKern is a delightfully gross, extrovert "Fox", though his singing is perhaps a little too refined. The ensemble acting and Frank Hauser's brisk direction make the most of Hutchinson Scott's versatile set.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE has earned our gratitude for reviving a masterpiece by Alexander Ostrovsky (1823-86). *The Storm* was written in 1859, two years before the collapse of the Russian feudal system. Set in a small town on the Volga, whose inhabitants have not yet seen the railway and believe that natural wonders like storms are acts of God, it is full of dark poetry, suppressed passion, erupting superstition and infinite despair. Life is dominated by religious and familial obsequies. But hope and humanity do break through and some victims escape—to the cities or death. There are no tricks in plotting and the action moves forward with all the measured predictability of a Greek tragedy. *En route*, however, Gogol teams up with Turgenev and gives us rich satire and bubbling comedy.

There are many splendid performances: Jill Bennett as the lovely, doomed heroine; Sheila Reid as her irrepressible sister-in-law; Beatrix Lehmann as widowed matriarch, the mummy of all mothers-in-law, for whom tradition is the breath of life; Barbara Hicks as a wandering holy woman, who explains that her kind have more vices than anyone else because Satan plagues them with devils on account of their righteousness; Harry Lomax as a self-taught mechanic, the voice of science crying in the wilderness and the only hope for the future. Josef Svoboda's design misses the Volga summer idyll atmosphere of the 1962 Russian Maly Theatre revival, but beautifully captures the claustrophobia and provincialism. With the help of Richard Pilbrow and Marc Wilkinson he turns on a climactic storm that will not easily be forgotten. Producer John Dexter cleverly fuses a number of highly individual talents.

## BOOK REVIEW

W. Bynner

**Pius XII and the Third Reich**, a documentation by Saul Friedlander. Chatto & Windus.

PROFESSOR FRIEDLANDER, of the Institute of International Studies in Geneva, has summarised the diplomatic reports of German representatives at the Vatican, during the period of the Nazi atrocities against the Jews, which attempted their extermination. Both of his parents were Jews taken from France to Aachen, where they met their death. He himself was given refuge in a Catholic monastery, where he was brought up. No trace of personal bias or of bitterness appears in the narrative, which maintains a judicial detachment throughout. He is at pains to point out that until the Vatican's own documents are published, it is not possible to draw definite conclusions on a number of important questions.

One crucial question which the author would have liked to answer is what exactly did the Holy See know about the final extermination of the Jews (the euphemism is "The Final Solution") from the beginning of 1942?

Certainly in March of that year, Jewish representatives from a number of organisations had had an interview with Msgr. Bernardini the Apostolic Nuncio in Berne, and had sent him in writing a detailed account of measures taken against Jews in Germany and the territories annexed by the Germans. This document was undoubtedly transmitted by Msgr. Bernardini to the Vatican, and could not fail to have confirmed information coming from other sources. What were the Vatican's reactions? The Holy See would presumably have realised that the Germans had undertaken an operation which would be extended rapidly to all the

countries under their control. The German documents record in 1942 interventions by the Apostolic Nuncio in Slovakia, by the Apostolic Nuncio in France with the government of Marshal Petain, and by Msgr. Orsenigo at the Vatican with the German representative there. The latter is dismissed in the reports as of little account. Hopes were then placed in the Pope's Christmas message (Dec. 1942) but this was 26 pages long and couched in such general terms that the German diplomats could ignore it completely.

While there are certain gaps in the evidence waiting to be filled, enough has already been published to make certain conclusions reasonably probable. The overall impression is of a Pope who was by inclination and training a professed Germanophile, who remained an appeaser to the bitter end, although it had long become clear to everyone else that this was to condone unheard of evil. The reason given officially for his failure to denounce publicly the Nazi atrocities in unequivocal terms was that he feared that worse might result; but things could not possibly by this time have been any worse than they were. The over-riding consideration may well have been fear in the Vatican of the advance of Communist régimes in Eastern Europe, and indeed all over the world. This may well have perverted their judgment in assessing the greater evil, and submerge their feelings of compassion for the sufferings of the Jews, who had appealed to the 'Holy Father' in language he should have understood—"Was not Jesus also a Jew".

History will judge, and meanwhile I think we should not shrink from facing squarely the implications for all of us of this fearful chapter in history. This did not happen in the middle ages, but in our time.

## LETTERS

## Corrections

TWO of the misprints that appeared in my review of *Simone Weil* (February 17th) may have confused your readers. At the age of nine the subject "travailed", not "travelled", on behalf of Germany. Later she was a "would-be" Catholic convert. Though she once expressed spiritual allegiance (*adhésion d'esprit*) and her writings are full of Catholic rather than Jewish mysticism, she was never baptised. DAVID TRIBE.

MAY I hasten to point out and correct an unfortunate misprint in my letter published in the FREETHINKER of Feb. 17th? The concluding sentence of my criticism of Nicholas J. Teape's letter should have read, "It is he not us whose thinking is based on phantasy if he imagines that religion can ever be anything but a barrier to the . . . happiness of mankind", and not ". . . if he imagines that religion can never be anything but a barrier . . ." which was printed in error and conveyed a meaning exactly the opposite to that which I intended. MICHAEL GRAY.

IN my article "Honest to Godness", my quotation of the Bishop of Woolwich—"in one sense the definition of heaven and hell is the same; being without God—for ever", should read "being with God". F. H. SNOW.

## BHA Constitution

THE great virtue of a woolly constitution for the BHA or any other organisation which wants freedom and a long life is that it is not limiting. Lawyers exercise great skill in producing just such woolliness. Too precise drafting only results in restriction of concern and of action, the organisation has to be wound up prematurely because its stated aims have either been achieved, become unnecessary or irrelevant because of other changes with the passage of time. Everyone knows the predicament faced by obsolete charities, for instance, vainly trying to provide red flannel petticoats to six virtuous spinsters every year. Up with Wool! ISOBEL GRAHAME.

## NOTICE

A Portuguese refugee and freethinker, resident in Paris, requests the co-operation of a British citizen resident in the UK. He owns a patent and needs a postal accommodation address in this country to meet the requirements of the Patents Office, London. All that is required is the forwarding of correspondence (some two or three letters a year) for a period of fifteen months. The Portuguese refugee is the author of a freethought book banned in Portugal. Will anyone prepared to perform this small but valuable service for a fellow freethinker, please write to Box 102.

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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.  
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### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and  
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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

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate),  
Sunday, March 19th, 6.30 p.m.: MARGARET McILROY, "Some  
Problems of Education".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red  
Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, March 19th, 11 a.m.:  
Professor T. H. PEAR, "Reciprocal Attitudes of North v South";  
Tuesday, March 21st, 6.30 p.m.: "Synthesis on Authoritarianism."

South Place Sunday Concerts (Conway Hall, London), Sunday,  
March 19th, 6.30 p.m.: London String Quartet. Haydn,  
Schubert, Brahms. Admission 3/-.

Worthing Humanist Group (Morelands Hotel, The Pier), Sunday,  
March 19th, 5.30 p.m.: "Civil Liberty". Speaker to be announced.

The Progressive League. Easter Conference at Grittleton House,  
Chippenham, Wilts. Details from Ernest Seeley, 38 Primrose  
Gardens, London, NW3.

West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford  
Community Centre, Wanstead Green, London, E11): Meetings  
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