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Friday,
November 10, 1967**ABORTION LAW — REFORMED**

THE Abortion Law Reform Association, with co-operation and assistance from the British Humanist Association and National Secular Society, have won their day. Despite the resistance of Norman St John-Stevas, MP, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, the Union of Catholic Mothers, the Catholic Mothers' League and a host of assorted reactionaries—the Bill is through.

The House of Lords has reversed its July decisions on two critical amendments, thereby making legal abortion far more widely available.

This is a victory for ALRA which campaigned so long for saner legislation, and a victory for the Humanist Movement which saw in the Cause for which ALRA fought a truly Humanist objective.

After the failure of a number of earlier attempts at reform by private members (beginning with the 1952 attempt by Joseph Reeves, vice-president of ALRA and former chairman of the Rationalist Press Association), the recent success was due to certain current advantages. As David Tribe (NSS president) wrote last May in a letter circulated to all NSS members urging support for the Bill: "... it is so important to show solidarity NOW, with ALRA at the peak of efficiency, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children not yet properly established and public opinion encouragingly in our favour"; Mr Tribe's assessment of the time proved perfectly accurate.

A National Opinion Poll held in 1966 found that 75 per cent of those asked: Should it be made easier to obtain legal abortion? answered in the affirmative. Another poll, in which Christians were asked: Do Christians support abortion law reform? found the majority of all denominations (including 57 per cent of Roman Catholics) gave a favourable response.

That this change in the climate of opinion is largely due to Freethought/Humanist influence is a point attested to rather than refuted by those who opposed the Bill.

The success in Parliament is more directly due to the tenacity and objectivity of David Steel, MP, and his sup-

porters in the House (Peter Jackson, MP, deserving special mention).

More directly, again, the success of the Bill must be assigned to the splendid teamwork of ALRA members Mrs Diane Munday, Mrs Madeleine Simms (both also members of the BHA), Mrs Dilys Cossey (Honorary Secretary), Alastair Service and their self-sacrificing chairman, Mrs Vera Howton. ALRA, in turn, express their gratitude to Mr Tribe and William McIlroy (NSS Secretary) for their many circulars and campaigns, and to David Pollock the tireless organiser of the BHA's Humanist Lobby.

Gratitude to ALRA is reciprocated by both the BHA and NSS who see the campaign as a combined effort which led to mutual victory.

While many Freethinkers and Humanists wish for legislation permitting abortion on demand (available in certain countries), few seriously considered the present time one in which this could be achieved. ALRA feel they have gone as far as possible through Parliamentary processes; it is now a matter for further education to reduce the antipathy shown toward abortion by a section of society.

The new laws will compel no doctor to perform this operation against his will; yet there are those who may be willing—but who will be prevented—by regional authorities whose policy is opposed to abortion. Where this occurs, a woman needing the operation will have to move to another area to obtain it. ALRA intends to maintain constant vigilance in order that measures of this sort do not get out of hand.

It is extremely doubtful that any ALRA supporters consider abortion a good thing in itself; the general feeling being that it is always a matter for regret when a woman has need for such an operation. It is insisted, however, that while something like 31,000 women each year in this country had illegal operations (NOP), frequently endangering health and life, a review of our legislation was necessary. Some claim it as a woman's natural right to have her foetus removed by a consenting surgeon should she wish it; however that may be, nearly all maintain that when a woman's health would be seriously jeopardised by childbirth, or when childbirth means severe deprivation to herself and other children, then society's moral and humanitarian duty is to enable the woman, where she wishes it, to have a legal operation thus preventing the birth of an unwanted child.

CONWAY HALL
Red Lion Square, London, WC1

**SOCIAL & MORAL
EDUCATION****PUBLIC MEETINGS**

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17th
DIANE MUNDAY

(Member of the
BHA Education Committee)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1st

MAURICE HILL

(Author "Moral Education in Secondary
Schools—A Suggested Syllabus")

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15th

DAVID TRIBE

President: National Secular Society
(Author "Religion and Ethics in Schools"
and "100 Years of Freethought")

MEETINGS COMMENCE AT 7.30 P.M.

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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, SE1. Telephone HOP 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.; Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

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

Belfast Humanist Group. War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Monday, November 13th, 8 p.m.: Dr N. F. SARSFIELD, "Marxism and Humanism—How Far are They Compatible?"

The Cambridge Humanists. 27 Portugal Street, Wednesday, November 15th, 8.30 p.m.: Mrs T. WOOSTER, "North Korea—a Westerner's View"; New Hall, J.C.R., Thursday, November 16th, 8.30 p.m., Social Evening.

Havering Humanist Society. The Social Centre, Gubbins Lane, Harold Wood, Tuesday, November 21st, 8 p.m.: ALAN LEE WILLIAMS, MP, "Divorce Law Reform".

Leicester Secular Society. The Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Sunday, November 12th, 6.20 p.m.: DAVID COLLIS, "Robert Taylor—The Devil's Chaplain".

Lincolnshire Humanist Group. The Adam and Eve, Lindum Hill, Tuesday, November 14th, 7.30 p.m.: JOHN STOREY, "Religion and Tomorrow's World".

South Place Ethical Society. Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, November 12th, 11 a.m.: Professor T. H. PEAR, "Permissiveness in Speech and Manner"; Tuesday, November 14th, 6.45 p.m.: "Youth and the Arts". Speakers from London University.

South Place Sunday Concerts. Conway Hall, London, Sunday, November 12th, 6.30 p.m.: Derek Hammond-Stroud and Richard Nunn. Schubert: "Die Schöne Müllerin". Admission 4/-.

University of London Humanist Society. Canterbury Hall, Cartwright Gardens, London, WC1, Sunday, November 19th, 3.30 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "The Police and Civil Liberty".

West Ham Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead, London, E11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

EDITORIAL

PROFESSOR A. J. Ayer, Professor H. Bondi, Lord Francis-Williams and Mrs Margaret Knight filled the Conway Hall in London (Saturday, October 28) to capacity—and on to overflowing. The seats in the hall and on the balcony quickly filled leaving standing-room only, or a possible seat in the Library where the speakers could be heard relayed, for the hundreds still waiting for admission. It was a tremendous climax for the British Humanist Association's *Humanist Week* in which Humanist Groups up and down the country have been bringing Humanism to the general public. The 'Week' is drawing to a close as this goes to press and it's too early to assess the measure of success in publicity and propaganda-value. We may be certain, however, many who had only heard the name will have a better understanding of Humanism now. This is not only good for the BHA but good for the whole Humanist Movement.

Following *Humanist Week*, the National Secular Society is to hold four meetings on alternate Friday evenings beginning November 3. The title of the series is 'Social and Moral Education' and speakers have been selected for their special knowledge and humanist views. They are (1) Michael Duane, a College of Education lecturer and former headmaster of Risinghill School, (2) Diane Munday, member of the BHA Education Committee, (3) Maurice Hill, author of *Moral Education in Secondary Schools—A Suggested Syllabus*, and (4) David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society and author of *Religion and Ethics in Schools* and *100 Years of Freethought*.

* * *

EACH day, letters arrive at this office asking for a greater number of shorter articles, and I quite agree with the feelings expressed. The FREETHINKER would be much better with fewer long articles and a greater variety of material at shorter length. Each day, manuscripts arrive which have to be returned usually because they are just too long. Will all contributors, and would-be contributors, please endeavour to limit their manuscripts to a maximum of about 400—600 words. There will still be room for occasional articles of greater length but there is no need for me to make a special request for these.

For those who have not yet contributed any material, but are considering doing so, a few points of advice may prove useful. Articles should be submitted in typed form, double-spaced, or in legible well-spaced handwriting. In view of the two-week time lag between preparing proofs and date of publication, any items of immediate interest should be promptly submitted. Poetry and fiction have proved unpopular in the past and, while rare exceptions may be made, the general rule is that both should be avoided. Carefully documented material which present the atheist-agnostic case will always be welcome, but valueless carping at the Church or the religious, which merely gives vent to the spleen of irate individuals, will have to go. Writings should be aimed to interest members of the broad Freethought/Humanist Movement, not merely a fractional faction whose greater part comprise extreme Protestants.

SENTIMENTAL SCEPTICISM

F. H. Snow

VIEWING, through the medium of my television set, a religious service on the Isle of Arran, I was impressed by the comfort it apparently afforded the congregation. The faces of those humble inhabitants of that sea-girt particle of Scotland reflected a real consolation from the act of worship of a Heavenly Father. I asked myself: Would it be right to disturb the warm faith of such people as those lonely islanders by introducing ideas sceptical of the reality of their God and his heaven? I visualised the very many other congregations of honest folk, up and down Britain, engaged, that Sunday evening, in self-anaesthetism through the venting of their emotions in worship of a deity. In remote communities, in chapels and mission halls everywhere north and south of the Tweed, services were going on to the honour and glory of the winged god conceived by Old Testament mystics, and spiritual fortification being gained against the irks and woes of existence.

It was highly probable, I reflected, that the vast majority of those people were ignorant of atheistic or agnostic views. They had heard of the wicked who said there was no God, and the profane theory that men had come from apes had probably reached their devout ears, without ruffling their faith, but they had almost certainly not been acquainted with reasoned argument for disbelief in the God whose heaven they hoped to inhabit. They moved in a narrow, fundamental world, looking towards the eternal bliss that was to recompense them for this life's trials. If their belief afforded them happiness, was it morally permissible to try to destroy that belief?

Numerous people who had no religious affiliation, or who even held sceptical views, opposed the expression of such views to believers, for fear of robbing them of spiritual comfort. It was better to let them hug their illusion, they argued, than to kick away their mystical prop for the sake of propagating secularism. Believers of whatever denomination should have their feelings respected, and the voice of criticism should be hushed in their hearing.

Having been, in young manhood, emotionally devout, I could appreciate the sympathy of those unreligious persons for the religious. I had experienced the hurtfulness of anti-Christian arguments, and the laceration of spirit that had preceded and accompanied my metamorphosis from belief to unbelief. The solace of religious faith!—the pain of disillusionment until reason finally effaced it! The satisfaction which established unbelief had afforded me, would be impossible for the great preponderance of atheism-confronted pietists, I reasoned. They would be incapable of attaining my sceptical state, and might be made vainly miserable. Could I justify the endangering of their religious peace—a peace I had personally known and valued—in order to promote a materialistic philosophy?

Those honest folk on the Isle of Arran—no more honest, probably, or less guileful than other Hebridean islanders—believed what they believed against all the canons of the natural common sense that made them distrust, in ordinary affairs, that which had no evidential backing. They, and the astoundingly many millions of other fundamentalists in this age of science, believed what they believed about God, heaven and salvation simply because it had been handed down to them as truth. I believed that what they believed was foolishness, because I had found it to be unsupported by any observable phenomena. I had striven to find an

indubitable pointer to the god of the Arranites, Israelites, Buchmanites and the whole conglomeration of believers; had explored every perceptive avenue, to establish ground for belief in the Lord whose non-existence I had been forced to suspect, and had established a granite case for unbelief. Nevertheless, I ought not to bring that case to the cognisance of the believing, in deference to their feelings and risk to their faith.

That was the position I had to accept or reject, and I re-examined my sceptical motivations, in order to see the matter aright.

Primarily, my motivation for challenging religious convictions was concern for truth. I wished others to see the fallacy of convictions which had no factual foundation. It offended me that the most important matter affecting humanity should be a chimera, and that a vast number of people, whether through ignorance or disregard of reason, accepted that chimera as sacred truth. I could not understand the mentality that could be satisfied with a proposition which contravened all that made for sense in human experience. Truth had always been my greatest regard, and I had a mighty urge to make known the cogent and intelligent reasons for disbelief that earnest and sedulous search for it had identified for me. I wanted to explode the greatest of all lies.

My secondary motivation for wishing to destroy religious belief, was the hindrance of that belief to the removal of many social and political injustices, and the consequent delay in the betterment of human conditions. Worshipers of an Almighty supported the privileges of those who claimed authority through divine sanction. They believed their Lord ordained the state of things that allowed the powerful to exploit the masses, and that the masses ought not to rebel against that order of things—a belief that tended to preserve an oppressive *status quo* in many lands. Devotees of the One, True God condoned the wealthy condition of the Churches, though millions starved. Their faith taught them to regard the remedying of this life's hardships as far less important than qualifying for an after-life of celestial joy, and they interpreted God's Will in opposition to the alleviation of pain and distress through the medium of euthanasia, abortion, divorce by consent and other humane reforms. Until religious belief was expunged, I saw no hope of that urgent and drastic redress which was the secularist objective.

The general religious attitude towards war and armaments furnished me with a powerful motivation for exposing the fallacy of belief in God. Though ostensible followers of the peaceful Jesus, and expressing horror at the slaughter and suffering caused by war, Christians condoned the use of arms for the purpose of killing and maiming soldiers of countries hostile to theirs. In the main, they stood behind their government's policy, however opposed that might be to the non-violence advocated by their gentle Saviour. They were almost mute about the atom bomb, which many of them believed had been given by God for protection against atheistic communism. The great majority were definitely for its retention. I wished to remove the scales that blinded the God-fearing to the light of secular commonsense.

These same fervent believers in the Illustrious One—these normally harmless, kindly-disposed people—would deny me the liberty to publicise my sceptical views if it

were in their power. I can not reasonably blame them, as they believe that, by silencing critics of their faith, they save themselves and others from perdition. In all humility, they are intolerant of scepticism, but their qualities did not lessen their menace to freethought, and provided a further motivation for campaigning against their creed.

I pondered the changes in religious thought that secular ideas had brought about. The motion of the earth round the sun; the earth's scientifically ascertained billions-of-years age; the evolutionary origin of man and animals—these discoveries had shocked the believing, but the vast majority of their kind were comfortable about them now. It had been necessary to hurt the pious many times. Kindly and devout worshippers had been horrified by each rebuff to the Garden of Eden story, but their world had gone on, and they had availed themselves of the Churches' speciously-constructed bridge between Genesis and modern knowledge, to continue their walk towards their chimerical heaven.

Had the feelings of the religious been spared when in danger of being outraged during the last hundred years, how far would we have advanced towards a realistic approach to the problems of suffering humanity? The Kingdom Come that is the paramount objective of believers would have loomed above all else, even in these days, and

IS ADOPTION A 'GOOD THING'?

IN her book *Adoption Policy and Practice* published by Allen & Unwin, Iris Goodacre has written a valuable account of her three years' research. One of the best features of the work is her clear statement of the deficiencies of the present haphazard arrangements, for they can hardly be called a *system* for Adoption, and of the directions in which improvements are needed. These are: the need for research into the results of adoptions, about which, owing to the requirement of confidence, next to nothing is known. There is also an urgent need for more homes for unmarried mothers and their babies, unconnected with religious organisations, and for more information in leaflets about adoption procedure and its legal results, to be available both to applicants for parenthood, and the mothers of illegitimate babies. The latter form over half of the babies placed for adoption in this country, whereas in Denmark 95 per cent are kept by their mothers.

Mrs. Goodacre shows how religious commitment operates automatically in restricting the area of choice of both adoptive parents, and of infants available to them. This factor alone reduces the total number of adoptions arranged through societies. Another feature of 'society' adoptions is their preference for applicants of superior social class, as compared with those selected by the local authority in whose area the survey was carried out. Such factors as better-class houses and higher incomes are given prominence, but often lead to the choice of childless parents, and the creation of only-child families. We can deduce this social selection process at work from the author's Table 8, which compares the social class of parents selected by the voluntary agencies, with those chosen by the local authority in the chosen area.

One society has the reputation, even among its fellows, of seeking an élite of babies for an élite of parents. Apart

humanist ambitions would have received short shrift. If a self-reliant, intelligent, internationally-minded world community was to come about, the illusion of an after-life in the sky would have to be stripped from the minds of men, and that could not be achieved without pain. Dear old ladies and gentlemen, benign matrons and emotional maidens, innocuous worshippers by the million, would have to suffer in the process of demythologising the deity whose sway seriously impeded the realisation of secularist ideals.

My analysis of the reasons that had inspired me to work for the destruction of religious belief, convinced me that no quarter should be given the dupes, however happy, of ancient seers and modern mystics. It convinced me that nostalgic sentiment should not deter me from confronting devotees of my former faith with the eloquent logic of atheism. It convinced me that the truth which ruthless disregard of my religious instincts, and fidelity to objective reason, had made clear to me, must count above everything.

The tendency of sceptics to be soft with believers in the myth called God, threatens the life of the Secular Movement. Whether they name themselves rationalists, free-thinkers or humanists, they must prosecute the war against supernaturalism without compunction or restraint, or subscribe to its survival, with all it signifies, of detriment to human welfare, into the far future.

W. Bynner

from the author's suggestions for improvements, which are obviously needed, the question raised in my mind was whether the present arrangements do not in fact operate as a system of rejection, rather than of adoption. Consider the following facts: of the total number of applicants to voluntary agencies (societies) for adoptive parenthood, one out of ten, approximately, are successful. The comparative figure for the local authority in the survey area concerned was one in six. It should be added that the authority referred some of its applicants, of superior social class, to the societies in an endeavour to 'match' the babies to the parents educational and social background. Whether this matching is in fact possible of achievement, or even worth while to attempt, is difficult to say.

It is difficult to understand why only one in twenty of the children in the care of the L.C.C. in 1949 (figures given by Kornitzer) should be considered 'suitable for adoption'. Why are not all normal healthy children suitable for adoption, if the alternative is institutional care, and if adoption is 'a good thing' as is generally agreed? If the 95 per cent of rejected applicants had been given the opportunity, there is no doubt many of those babies would have been adopted and given the chance of a normal family upbringing, denied to them by the rigidities of the present lack of system.

Most local authorities seem to prefer foster parent homes to adoption. One hopes they have sound reasons for their preference, and not that of merely administrative convenience. They may have found a useful middle course, in the practice of fostering with a view to adoption. But why again, have only 74 (by November 1965) out of a possible 150 local authorities empowered under the Adoption Act 1958 to arrange adoptions for children not placed in their care, not exercised their powers? In this fact alone, there is plenty of scope for investigation by interested Humanists, especially in our larger provincial cities.

REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM

Peter Crommelin

A CLEAR-SIGHTED observer of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, might have predicted long before it became an accomplished fact, the ultimate extinction of that particular contribution to the history of mankind. It is even so with the decline and fall of the Roman Catholic Church. Observation tells us that even the most powerful of all Christian denominations is a diminishing factor in the making of contemporary history. It seems a reasonable deduction from this observation, that the Church is coming to an end, although we cannot fix a date for the final abdication of the last Pope, or for the final acknowledgment by the last priest there never has been any supernatural power to trans-substantiate bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church has many enemies who have no desire to contribute to its survival, but on the contrary earnestly desire either its extinction, or its total transformation into something completely different from its own historic past. Quite a number of individuals oppose papistry, in the name of what they still call Protestant Christianity. An increasing number of rather more rational individuals believe that if Roman Catholic Christianity is doomed, so also is Protestant Christianity. The humanist objection to all religions is based on the fact that all religions make themselves equally offensive in their claim to possess a special relationship to God, the very existence of which has never been clearly proved or demonstrated. It is this claim to a special relationship to an unproven God, that creates an obstacle (that must be removed)—to the growth and expansion of secular humanism.

We must however face the fact that the Roman Catholic Church will *not* be destroyed by its many enemies, whether protestant or rationalist. Nor will the Church be destroyed by the ever more ruthless exposure of the many scandals that lie concealed behind the facade of its holiness or sanctity.

We must be willing to grant to the Church the necessary time to reduce itself to a universally self-evident level of intellectual absurdity both in its dogmas and its disciplines. Belief in progress is based on a kind of moral conviction that in course of time errors will be corrected. The errors of religion must eventually be corrected by the simple understanding that Ecclesiastical Authority has no Secret Knowledge that is hidden from the common man.

The Bible is no longer acceptable to any serious scholar either as an authentic record of past events, or as an infallible source of moral inspiration. The discrediting of Biblical Authority has really destroyed Ecclesiastical Authority, although not all Christians are yet aware of this fact. But they must become aware of it in the course of time.

There are many ways in which Roman Catholic doctrine reveals its own intrinsic absurdity. The very title "Catholic", which means "Universal", is absurd in a body which has long ago abandoned any serious attempt to reduce all mankind to a state of subjection. Even in what we call "the Age of Faith" when the Church was supreme, the claims of Ecclesiastical Authority were never universally acknowledged. Atheism is certainly older than the Roman Catholic Church. And in every age there have been heroic heretics who have stood firmly against the notion that there is any

Divine Right of Kings or Bishops to regulate the conduct of mankind.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of Faith is based on a very obvious misunderstanding of human nature. The Faith by which men live is not, and it never can become a blind obedience to an infallible authority. The faith by which men live has long ceased to be a striving for the supernatural; it has become under the influence of Science, an attempt to gain a fuller and clearer understanding of the natural universe of which we ourselves are a small but undeniable part. Thus the Faith imposed by Papistry on those willing to accept the same, is a perpetual contradiction of the faith by which men live or attempt to live a rational life here on earth. It is not by reciting creeds that we advance in knowledge, but by making efforts and frequently by making mistakes. It is a matter of trial and error. Each and every question answered, leads to another question requiring an answer and so on *ad infinitum*. The ever growing gap between credibility and dogma makes the creeds recited in church seem more and more a ridiculous travesty of truth rather than the strong affirmation of truth they were intended to be when first offered to the world.

The Church then reveals itself as an absurd and dishonest teacher of an irrational system of believing. And as a teacher of Hope the Church is even more absurd. The Church angrily rejects all purely secular hopes and expectations of vast improvements in the human conditions here on earth, Mankind is condemned to a state of sin from which the ritual "absolutions" provided by the sacraments offer no hope of any radical improvement in the character of "Fallen Man". Rejecting all rational hopes, the Church orders people to hope for something totally impossible and inaccessible, such as eternal happiness in heaven, or as it has been vulgarly called "pie in the sky". Worse than this, the priest tries to persuade the faithful that if they will subject themselves humbly to his authority, and perform certain ritual acts and gestures, they will gain eternal life in heaven despite the fact that they make no attempt to improve the moral or ethical quality of their life here on earth. The rationalist is bound to reject the celestial hopes of Christianity as illusory and absurd. And as the Church offers no hope of any real moral reformation of human nature here on earth, the Church may be dismissed as a teacher of hopelessness rather than of hope. Secular humanists certainly have much more confidence in the future of mankind, than the gloomy prophets made sad by the manifest signs of decay in all religions.

If Christian Faith and Hope are a "reductio ad absurdum" so also is Christian Charity. Even if God does exist, to "love" God cannot be regarded as one of the necessities of life. If God does exist, it cannot make the slightest difference to God whether God is loved or not. If in fact there is no God, it must be a waste of time and energy to "love God", as far as mankind is concerned. Charity is a love entirely devoid of all human affection and warmth, so that people say "as cold as charity", and the worst affliction of all is to become dependent on charity. It is in relation to the Christian virtue of charity that secular humanists have their greatest opportunity to demonstrate that they will do more for mankind than Christianity has done through all the wasted centuries of its long life. There are signs that the growing power of secular humanism with the diminishing

power of religious belief will work together for the making of a better world to be enjoyed by all. The real humanist revolution has scarcely even begun.

We look forward eagerly to the time when there will be no more Pope or Bishop or Priest. But in our confident expectation of things to come, we must cultivate a sense of perspective. There seems no reason why the human species should not occupy this planet earth for another million years or more. In the immensities of time that lie ahead, it seems incredible that the rational part of human nature should not mature sufficiently to discard all those errors of judgment and misunderstanding that do for the present dominate so many lives to their material and human disadvantage. There are rationalists who maintain that reli-

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

ALTHOUGH our Government choose to pose as the champion of non-whites in Rhodesia, they have not done alike with regard to the no less racist Australians. So far neither Rhodesia nor South Africa have sent troops to fight in Vietnam, but the Australians have.

The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* proposed reprisal killings in the USA race riots, in these words:

"If every time Negro revolutionaries decided to burn and kill, those maintaining the law killed 500 Negroes, the Negroes might decide to stop burning and killing . . ."

* * *

"Die Soviets voted for partition of Palestine in 1947 and recognised the state of Israel in order to dislodge British power from the Middle East. Two decades later, the Soviets armed Egypt and Syria against Israel in the hope of dislodging American power. . . . The United States was torn then, as it still is, between oil interests in the Arab states and the Jewish vote at home. . . . To take sides with Israel would have endangered the \$2.5 billion stake the American oil companies have in the Middle East."

(I. F. Stone, in *Ramparts*.)

* * *

In a report titled *Four days with Fidel Castro*, K. S. Karol quotes Castro to have declared, *int. al.*:

"Genuine revolutionaries have never threatened a whole nation with extinction. This propaganda backfired in kindling Jewish patriotism and enabling Israel's leaders to mobilise for a preventive war. . . . At the Havana Latin American Conference, we were asked by comrades why we have not broken off diplomatic relations with an aggressor. Our reply was that, so far, socialist countries have never accepted as a principle the necessity of breaking relations with a country accused of aggression, or else all socialist countries ought to have broken off relations with the American aggressor in Vietnam, long ago."

During this Conference, delegates complained bitterly that certain Socialist countries became accomplices to capitalist exploitation in Latin America. Fidel Castro condemned in strong terms the agreements for financial and technical assistance concluded between the Soviet Union and the oligarchs and dictators in Chile and Columbia.

At the same time, it is true, General Barrientos of Bolivia received financial backing from Wall Street for securities in oil and ores (iron, zinc, cadmium and radioactive materials). (Evenement.)

* * *

Hardly anybody bothers to publicise the war of extinction which the Arabs of the Sudan wage against the Negroes

gion is already dead, and that to attack it is merely "to flog a dead horse". But however false and empty the professions of religion may be, so long as they are made they must be attacked with all the arguments made available by science and sound reason. It is not sufficient to blame the preacher for failing to practise what he preaches. The nature of the doctrine preached must be constantly subjected to the penetrating probe of rational criticism. It is sometimes said that the strength of a chain depends on its weakest link. The strength of a religion depends on its strongest point of doctrine. It is that strongest point that must be sought for and demolished. If secular humanism is to take the place of religion, it must be able to demonstrate in the course of time that nothing has remained of Christian Faith or Hope or Charity.

P. G. Roy

in the south of their country. UN estimates put the number of Negroes killed between 1963 and 1966 as more than half a million. The ANYA-NYA—the Negroe freedom fighters—are the only liberation army who are not supported by any foreign power. (Stern, Hamburg.)

* * *

"Jubilant masses assembled in St. Mark's Cathedral and other Coptic churches all over Egypt during the six-day war. Islamic and Coptic priests jointly hailed the Jihadd (Holy War) against Israel as willed by God, and Cyrillus VI, pope of Alexandria and All-Africa, has been preaching the basic identity of the Christian Gospel with Nasser's Arab Socialism. "The Kingdom of God", he shouted, "equates the aspirations of the Arab Socialist Union [Egypt's only political party] and Nasser [as before Hitler] had been chosen by God for his historical mission!"

"In response, Nasser's government has given the green light to Coptic missions, in the hope that such missionary work in Africa—in Egypt or the Islamic world—will strengthen pan-Arab influence. The Coptes are to conduct their missionary activity in areas where the Negro population still vividly remembers the Arab slave traders." (Christ und die Welt, Stuttgart.)

* * *

"The Kurdish movement in Iraq is supported by Israel. The Kurd leader, Barzani, has declared that without Israel there would no longer be an autonomous Kurdish movement." (Evenement.)

* * *

An article in the London *Observer* stated that, as far as is known, during the last years of the War Nazi Bormann was in close touch with the Russian Secret Service.

* * *

"The recent events in the Middle East reflect a pattern of nationalist and historical disputes of that area being exacerbated by the ambitions and greed of the superpowers. Neither the Soviet Union nor the United States has clean hands.

"Russia's gifts of massive armaments to the Arab states are clearly motivated more by designs on the oil and waterways of the Mideast than by any sympathy with Arab nationalism. . . . The United States, which refused to allow Jewish refugees into this country before the creation of Israel, has been consistently willing to compromise Israel's interests in order to cultivate pro-Western oil-rich sheikdoms. America opposes Nasser, not so much because of his opposition to Israel, but because of his independence from Western control. While it was Russian tanks which opposed Israel in the Sinai, it was US tanks which opposed it in Jordan. . . . It is foolish to believe the United States and Russia want anything there (in the Mideast) but oil and power. . . ."

(Leader in *Ramparts*.)

BOOSTING SUPERSTITION WITH FREETHOUGHT

Gonzalo Quigue

MR Peter Crommelin (ex-RC priest) in his article *No Atheist*, in the FREETHINKER of July 28, 1967, tried to boost God-belief by trampling on religions. His sixth paragraph ran thus:

"Three things I have discovered by personal experience that I am unable to doubt are the existence of matter, the existence of mind, and the existence of God as equally necessary both to matter and mind. I cannot imagine the finite without the infinite, or time without eternity. I cannot imagine evolution without creation, or creation without a creator. I do not believe that creation has had a beginning, or that it will have an end. I believe that creation is the eternal life of the creator. Since God cannot be classified at all, it is obvious that God cannot be classified as a logical necessity. Nonetheless I believe that in a godless universe, logic itself would be devoid of ultimate meaning or significance."

Let us analyse this paragraph sentence by sentence to bring out its sense and nonsense. Everybody certainly does not doubt the existence of matter and mind. Many people, however, regard a universe of matter as they regard man-made objects like a chair, a table or a house. Their argument runs thus: "A chair, a table and a house were made by a carpenter. Therefore the universe must have been made by a Super-Carpenter—a God!" This is a stone-age argument. Cavemen in the beginning of mankind tried to explain the universe by inventing all sorts of myths. In this modern age there are still people who think that everything must have a beginning. This is a thinking habit built by their day to day experience in seeing things being made by men. And so, why not the universe as being made by a Superior Power called God? So many people do not know that the universe has always been in continuous flux or cosmic evolution. It has no beginning in much the same way that space, time, and quantity have no beginnings. In fairness to Mr Crommelin, however, we should mention some obvious facts in the 6th paragraph, 4th line. He said:

"I cannot imagine the finite without the infinite, or time without eternity."

Correct. The finite is part of the infinite. And a period of time is part of eternity.

From paragraph 6, line 5:

"I cannot imagine evolution without creation, or creation without a creator."

Mr Crommelin implied that evolution was creation carried on by God. Some theologians think they can fight evolution by slandering and down-grading science. Other theologians, like Mr Crommelin, realising the futility of fighting evolution, try to join it by implying it is a work of God.

From paragraph 6, line 7:

"I do not believe that creation has had a beginning, or that it will have an end."

If he meant creation by a God, he was wrong and superstitious; continuous creation by nature, yes. Evolution is inherent in nature. Matter, energy, and evolution are co-existent and eternal.

From paragraph 6, line 8:

"I believe that creation is the eternal life of the creator."

Creation by nature or evolution is the eternal act of nature, the creator.

From paragraph 6, line 9:

"Since God cannot be classified at all, it is obvious that God cannot be classified as a logical necessity."

Some people think that God cannot be classified—"for how can you classify nonsense," they ask. And yet, empirically, God is classified as a nonsensical idea. Belief in the reality of this is classified as superstitious nonsense. God cannot certainly be classified as a logical necessity, nor as any kind of necessity, for God is neither matter nor energy, but a primitive idea born of the ignorance, fear and superstition of early men.

From paragraph 6, line 11:

"Nonetheless I believe that in a godless universe, logic itself would be devoid of ultimate meaning or significance."

Theologians fondly equate God-belief with their "Scholastic or Thomistic logic" and human values to "explain and guide" the universe!

The last two sentences of paragraph 8:

"But if reality contains nothing beyond physics and chemistry, it is difficult to see what moral objection can be made to the deliberate encouragement of illusion. If there is nothing beyond physics, it must follow that illusion is better and richer than the very poor reality."

The poorest reality is better than the richest illusion. The true is always better than the false. We shall boost science much further and love and care more for our fellowmen if we do not rely on the God illusion!

THEATRE

David Tribe

As You Like It (William Shakespeare), National Theatre.

"DISGUSTING", muttered the critic next to me during the flower-power multiple marriage scene in the Old Vic production of *As You Like It*. But when Rosalind "made curtsy" in the Epilogue, there was an enthusiastic response from a packed house; though I suspect that many applauders, to whom it was not really as they liked it, were nervous of being thought old-fashioned. There was plenty to disturb the ageing grammar school English master. The show was in drag; the scenery and props were of perspex or similar plastic, with great tubes shuffling up and down in the flies; the costumes looked as if they'd come from sales in Carnaby Street and the Old Kent Road; Touchstone was camp and the famous songs were jazzed up and hammed; Jacques delivered the "seven ages" looking and sounding like Malcolm Muggeridge. It wasn't quite Elizabethan, for the women's parts were played by men rather than boys, and Ralph Kottai's sets were indicated by futuristic shapes and not placards. Nor was it quite modern rush, for Mar Wilkinson's music was more fifties than sixties, and the overall impression was less like contemporary West End than the German expressionist cinema of the twenties. What makes Clifford William's production important is that it is disturbing in a far less trivial way. Shakespeare has been moulded down the centuries to fit the demands of a pious bourgeois intelligentsia. The low comedy and bisexual eroticism have been glossed over, historical point has been given to the essentially elusive comedies and lyrical justifications for the unexpected songs. But while the producer raises questions he doesn't give entirely convincing answers, and in seeking to become timeless he presents a patchwork of period curiosities. The National Theatre cast is, as usual, both able and well-balanced, with Jeremy Brett as Orlando and Ronald Pickup as Rosalind.

SECULAR-HUMANIST female, teacher, aged 30, divorced, one son (aged 5), living S.E. England, interested music, literature, country-lover, seeks introduction to male. similar interests. Box 321, FREETHINKER.

REVIEW

Peter Crommelin

The "Ring" at Covent Garden, 1967

NO performance of Wagner's great musical drama should be allowed to pass unnoticed by freethinkers. A great world classic which ends with the total destruction of the gods is bound to give pleasure to those who are militant atheists also. At least one freethinker is well aware of the fact that he was induced to aim at freedom of thought and expression very largely by a study of the life and work of Richard Wagner.

Wagner cannot be confined solely to 'opera' any more than Bernard Shaw (the Perfect Wagnerite) can be confined solely to the theatre. Wagner has influenced all dramatic productions, musical and non-musical, since his time. He not only revolutionised the operatic stage, he revolutionised the stage, and in a more general sense that larger stage on which the humanist revolution is still working itself out. Wagner can be claimed as a supreme creative genius standing firmly and unquestionably on the side of those who regard freedom of thought and freedom to think as the supreme, and in a sense the only, value of life.

A work of art, however great it may be, cannot win a war. It can only stimulate the will to victory. Anyone who can even begin to understand the four mighty movements of the "Ring" must surely be stimulated to fight more heroically against each and every form of plutocracy and theocracy.

The work of Wagner can be recommended to atheists and Freethinkers not only for its revolutionary propaganda, but equally for the many hours it provides of glorious musical sound, each moment of which derives its moving force and meaning from a real dramatic situation. Any reasonably good performance of the whole cycle of *The Ring of The Nibelung* is an unforgettable experience. It seems a crying shame that this experience is still confined to a privileged few. Certainly a cultural revolution is needed as part of the humanist revolution.

LETTERS

Carol Con

CAROLING on the week before Christmas will be remembered by many as a friendly act to bring pleasure and good cheer to shut-ins and neighbours. But now it has become something entirely different due to the activities of one religious sect which uses it strictly for profit.

After dark, a sound truck is parked in the better neighbourhoods, usually where it is not too conspicuous. At a given signal, Christmas carols on tapes or records ring out loud and clear. As they begin, well-dressed and personable young men and women (previously stationed at both ends of the block) hurry from door to door ringing doorbells.

When occupants answer the bell, they hear the singing and are greeted by some such phrase as: "Would you like to contribute to our Christmas caroling?" Full of the Christmas spirit, and thinking there really are young carolers in the neighbourhood, housewives may donate generously.

When one block has been thus exploited, the eager money collectors hurry to the truck and may even stop a carol in the middle of the record! The sound truck is then quickly moved to another block, the tape or record again started, and the money-collecting process is repeated.

This act is descriptive of the sect's piously-promoted "contributions from outsiders" campaigns carried on worldwide. Many millions of dollars are thus obtained each year according to the sect's own official figures.

I believe the public should know of this stupendous, religiously-cloaked, money-gathering imposition on the good will of unsuspecting people at Christmas time. Then, if wishing to donate, people may at least know to whom and for what they are contributing.

The Seventh-Day Adventists have worked this deceptive caroling and begging racket in the weeks just before Christmas each year. Watch out for them and tell your friends. Their doctrine is based on fear and misinformation. They have taught the "soon-coming-end" of the world now for 120 years, and they don't know which

day of the week is the Sabbath. Contributing to any deceptive organisation does not help society as a whole.

WILLARD E. EDWARDS, Hawaii.

[Mr Edwards writes in the margin of his letter: "The SDAS work this annual racket in USA, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, England and other countries where I have witnessed it."]

Fascist Catholicism

ONE expects tripe about Roman Catholicism in the Roman Catholic press but not in the FREETHINKER. On September 22nd Peter Crommelin, an ex-RC priest I understand, had this to say: "The kind of atheism associated by persons of my age with such names as Hitler and Stalin". Now I am not concerned with Hitler's private beliefs (who knows what he privately believed?) any more than I am concerned with the Pope's. For all I know the Pope may be an atheist but he doesn't claim to be one and he doesn't act like one, and the same is true of Hitler.

Hitler was born a Roman Catholic, baptised as one, and brought up as one. He organised the Nazi Party from Munich, the RC "capital" of Germany. Mr Crommelin knows who the Church of Rome's "classical" enemies are, they are: (1) militant Protestants, (2) Freemasons, (3) genuine Democrats (they believe in government by the People's Will not the Pope's Will), (4) Marxian Socialists, and (5) Jews, because like Protestants they don't bow down to the Pope. Well aren't these the very things Hitler tried to destroy? What Hitler did was exactly what the Pope would have done if he had been in Hitler's position.

Or to put it another way, Nazism was *secret* Catholic Action. Fascism everywhere was Roman Catholic; even in the United States the Fascist leader (Coughlin) was a Roman Catholic priest—and openly Roman Catholic. But in Germany this had to be hidden because there the Roman Catholics were in the minority.

But take a look at Hitler's lieutenants. When Hitler became Chancellor his Vice Chancellor was von Papen and his Foreign Minister von Neurath, both Roman Catholics. The following were born and bred Roman Catholics: Goebbels, Himmler, Heydrich, Frank, Kaltenbrunner. What was Bormann? Not even Mr Crommelin could answer, for Bormann was a mystery: but his son is a Jesuit priest today. Just as Himmler—for an uncle—had a Jesuit priest.

Mr Crommelin knows that the Vatican signed a concordat with Hitler. Does the Vatican sign concordats with avowed atheists? One of the clauses of this concordat was the State endowment of RC schools in Germany, which is causing a bit of trouble in West Germany today. No, Mr Crommelin, Hitler was NOT an atheist, he was a 20th century German Torquemada, he was the Counter Reformation personified and triumphant in Germany.

That's why when the Franco rebellion broke out in Spain the Pope's two sons, one a stooge and the other a champion, Mussolini and Hitler, intervened and defeated the Reforming Spanish Government, drowning it in blood.

May I add that in the FREETHINKER of September 8th Mr Crommelin wrote: "But up to the present moment I have not discovered that atheists are any better than Christians". What does Mr Crommelin mean by better? There is surely one respect in which any atheist is better than most Christians. I don't believe that the average RC priest or RC laymen really believes that a wafer is turned into the "Actual Body" of Christ. They profess to believe a lot of myths, drivel and bunkum which they know is fiction. Well I have never met an atheist hypocrite yet! It seems to me that Mr Crommelin still suffers from some of the brain-washing he got when he was a priest.

W. GILMOUR.

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