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Friday,
December 8, 1967**SEX AT SOUTH PLACE**

CONWAY HALL, LONDON, the home of South Place Ethical Society, was recently the scene of two sex-oriented discussions.

Meeting there on Saturday, November 18, the University Humanist Federation's Study-group on Marriage produced interesting work on reform of the marriage laws. The meeting was attended by student Humanists from Cambridge, London, Oxford, Newcastle and other universities and — after discussing possible long-term aims and short-term reforms — the Group recommended two motions to the Annual General Meeting of the UHF which is to be held next January at Nottingham.

The first motion welcomed the Divorce Bill initiated by William Wilson MP, but suggested that 'divorce by consent' which is implicit in the Bill be made explicit. It was also advocated making the waiting period for 'divorce by compulsion' (which arises when one partner doesn't agree to divorce) two years rather than the five years recommended by the Bill and abolishing it altogether in the case of divorce by consent. It was felt this was justified in view of the delays occasioned by court procedure.

In the second discussion, dealing with more fundamental matters, the Group was convinced that any legislation that recognised a formal 'married state' could never be acceptable to Humanists. It was therefore recommended that the Humanist movement work toward the elimination of all such laws with concern for a future legislation formally recognising parenthood only. If individuals still wished to go through marriage ceremonies, either religious or secular, or to make legally enforceable marriage contracts, or even to obey Canon Law, they should still be able to do so: (Indeed, repealing the law on immoral contracts would give greater freedom in this respect). But no solemnization or legal contract should be necessarily sought by those who simply wished to cohabit. Agreement to the last statement excluded one gentleman who informed the Group they were talking 'piffle' and another who warned the Group of the dire consequences of "too much sex", which could, he maintained,

limit one's capacity in later life. It was suggested in return that an unhappy honeymoon night or frigidity, both of which may derive from lack of experience, may also lead to such consequences.

Report from: David Flint (UHF Assistant Secretary and London Organiser)

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RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

AS a contribution to Human Rights Year, which begins December 10, the National Secular Society set up a Working Party under the chairmanship of David Tribe, president of the NSS, to study and issue a statement upon the Rights of Children. The statement has now been completed and copies will be circulated to various organisations and institutions as well as to the Press. Those interested in obtaining copies should write to William McIlroy, Secretary, NSS, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

The statement ranges over a wide area of matters concerning the rights of children, succinctly dealing with such matters as economic independence among youth, the question of whether the state has a duty to safeguard the young person from himself, the desirability of safeguarding the child from dangerous toys, poisonous paints and inflammable clothing by control at the point of manufacture or import, parental example being more effective than

parental bans on such activities as smoking, etc., respect for the child's intellectual integrity and the way this relates to the vexed question of religious education or indoctrination, adoption and fostering, the age of majority, the age of heterosexual and homosexual consent and illegitimacy. The smoking of 'pot' was briefly touched upon, as was baptism of the young child or youth. One of several points stressed may be quoted: "Inevitably the state will have to lay down age limits for certain rights, such as the franchise and possession of driving licences. These will be purely arbitrary; an averaging out of ability and temperament. Where we suggest somewhat different levels from those now in force they are equally arbitrary but, we hope, more realistic today. Wherever possible these limits should be applied elastically, or at least with insight where sanctions are invoked. There is no universal norm for intellectual or emotional development. There is thus an enormous responsibility on teachers and parents to exercise their control with flexibility and understanding, and to encourage the maximum of personal responsibility in the children they supervise".

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**OSWELL BLAKESTON
EXHIBITION**

THE Seymour Gallery (94 Seymour Place, London W1) is presenting a 'one man mixed show' of drawings, oils, 30 paintings and collages by Oswell Blakeston from Dec. 8 to Dec. 15 (inclusive). Mr Blakeston, for many years a frequent contributor to the *Freethinker*, has had his work previously shown at the Grabowski, New Vision and Drian Galleries in London. The Seymour Gallery exhibition will be open between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday to Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Saturday); the Gallery is closed all day on Sunday. A Private View will take place at 6.30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 8. All profits from the sale of work will go to support *Peace News*.

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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, MURRAY 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, December 11th, 8 p.m.: JACK McCLELLAND, "Barefoot to Morocco".

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group (31 Windsor Road, London, N13), Sunday, December 10th, 8 p.m.: Social evening.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, December 10th, 6.30 p.m.: J. F. BURROWS, "Should Christians Unite?"

Luton Humanist Group (Carnegie Room, Central Library), Thursday, December 14th, 8 p.m.: PHYLLIDA CUMIN, "Buddhism".

Manchester Humanist Society (36 George Street), Wednesday, December 13th, 7.30 p.m.: "The Ethics of Population Control". A speaker from the Family Planning Association.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, December 10th, 11 a.m.: DR HELEN ROSENAN, "History and Human Rights". Tuesday, December 12th, 6.45 p.m.: PETER LEWIS, "Genetics and the Biologist".

South Place Sunday Concerts (Conway Hall, London, WC1), Sunday, December 10th, 6.30 p.m.: London Piano Quartet. Beethoven, Brahms, Dohnanyi. Admission 4/-.

EDITORIAL

FROM THE START, the convert to a Christian Church is made to recognize a positive response to the Christian doctrinal teachings is expected from him. God is constantly aware of him and interested in him, and the Christian — like a child anxious to please his parents — must endeavour constantly to behave in a way which he believes pleasing to God.

The convert to Humanism finds no such father-figure, nor any interest in his personal behaviour beyond that which he would encounter outside the Humanist movement. Yet, for many, Humanism may be a positive commitment calling for a conscious attempt to improve one's self and the lives of others. Lacking any encouragement from priests or from a vision of an all-seeing father-figure, the Humanist undertakes this discipline — not as a result of coercion from others — but from a personal decision to justify his existence by adding to the value life has to offer.

Another contrast between Christianity and Humanism is with regard to the relative terms for the adherents of one or the other. Supporters of the various Christian Churches have tended to 'idealize' the name 'Christian', holding that it is not applicable to the vast majority of mankind.

Many Humanists, in debates with clergymen, will have experienced that common source of frustration: the unwillingness of the clergyman to own that he is a Christian just when, were he to do so, the point in debate would go against him. One may also notice the apparent satisfaction with this description when, to acknowledge such a name, means winning the point debated. But this is not always so unfair. Outside debates, clergymen may have such a respect for the title, they feel they cannot — and that others should not — own it. This same 'idealization' may be seen applying to the term 'Humanist' also. The Humanist — as glowingly described in books and talks from representatives of the Humanist movement — is surely too noble to be you or me (well me anyway). He is, I should say, an 'ideal'.

But the contrast between Christians and Humanists here is that Humanists rarely show any hesitation in taking this name to themselves. Persons have been known to join a Humanist organization because it promises a fuller social life (they have shown no knowledge of — or interest in the Humanist ideology) but have had no qualms in calling themselves 'Humanist' immediately their first subscriptions are paid; nor will other members, including committed Humanists, look askance at them for doing so.

There are both benefits and dangers here. The benefits may be recognized when we see that 'Humanist' is being used in two distinct ways; as an 'ideal' (very useful to writers and speakers) and to denote a supporter of the Humanist movement (active, as a member, or passive, as a sympathiser). The dangers arise when this distinction is not clearly seen, whether by an enquirer or new member. If we acknowledge the 'ideal' Humanist of whom we read and, at the same time, glibly call ourselves Humanists, those with more immodesty than discrimination, may feel they have 'arrived' when, in fact, there is a long road ahead.

ACROSS THE SEAS

A Polish Priest's Prank

WE LEARN from *The Faith*, journal of St Paul Apologetics Circle, of a reverent ruse which, presumably, has set all Christendom in stitches. It seems that an atheist speaker had been invited to address a local 'Country Youth Organisation' at Dombrowka in Poland and, arriving at the time he was due to start, found he had to wait in the cold until the local youths were released from a religious service. There is only the one hall at Dombrowka and this is owned by the Church, and the wily local pastor nipped in sharply, rented the hall and held a service to which the local youth were constrained to attend. It was only after some considerable time, the speaker was able to find both an available platform and an audience. The fact that the only hall belonged to the Church is a familiar picture in this country also, but the price the priest had to pay — one goose — is not so typical. We wonder who had to goose who.

* * *

Heresy in NZ

FROM *The Inquirer*, a Unitarian and Free Christian paper, we learn of the theological fracas attendant upon the outspoken comments of Professor Geering, the Principal of Knox College, the theological training institution for Presbyterians in Dunedin, New Zealand. The Professor had written an article in which he denied the Resurrection of Jesus and, in an address to a university, had denied the deity of Christ, personal immortality, miracles, Biblical literalism and virtually the whole Christian doctrine. In these views he had the support of the College staff, and most of the local clergy and laity also. Needless to mention, when the rational impulse is freed to the point that it begins to recognise reality, something has to be done about it in Presbyterian circles. The outcome was a speedy charge of heresy, and the Professor was hauled before an Assembly in a trial given enormous publicity throughout the nation. But those who brought the charge against the Professor had not counted on the typical inconsistency of the Church they represented. The Assembly judged that: "no doctrinal error has been established" and the case was dismissed. The implications for the Freethinker and Humanist are as gratifying as they are perplexing.

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By DAVID TRIBE

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QUOTATIONS

Contributed by Alan Ward

O HAPLESS race of men, when that they charged the gods with such acts and coupled with them bitter wrath! What groanings did they then beget for themselves, what wounds for us, what tears for our children's children! No act is it of piety to be often seen with veiled head to turn to a stone and approach every altar and fall prostrate on the ground and spread out the palms before the statues of the gods and sprinkle the altars with much blood of beasts and link vow to vow, but rather to be able to look on all things with a mind at peace. . . . When human life to view lay foully prostrate upon earth crushed down under the weight of religion, who showed her head from the quarters of heaven with hideous aspect lowering upon mortals, a man of Greece ventured first to life up his mortal eyes to her face and first to withstand her to her face. Him neither story of gods nor thunderbolts nor heaven with threatening roar could quell; they only chafed the more the eager courage of his soul, filling him with desire to be the first to burst the fast bars of nature's portals. Therefore the living force of his soul gained the day; on he passed far beyond the flaming walls of the world and traversed throughout in mind and spirit the immeasurable universe; whence he returns a conqueror to tell us what can and what cannot come into being; in short on what principles each thing has its power defined, its deep-set boundary mark. Therefore religion is put under foot and trampled upon in turn; us his victory brings level with heaven.

This is what I fear herein, lest haply you should fancy that you are entering on unholy grounds of reason and treading the path of sin; whereas on the contrary often and often that religion has given birth to sinful and unholy deeds.

. . . Wherefore we must well grasp the principles of things above, the principle by which the courses of the sun and moon go on, the force by which everything on earth proceeds, but above all we must find out by keen reason what the soul and the nature of the mind consist of. . . .

Well then the existing universe is bounded in none of its dimensions; for then it must have had an outside. Again it is seen that there cannot be an outside of nothing, unless there be something beyond to bound it, so that that is seen, farther than which the nature of this our sense does not follow the thing. Now since we must admit that there is nothing outside the sum, it has no outside, and is therefore without end and limit.

. . . if you will thoroughly consider these things, then carried to the end with slight trouble (you will be able by yourself to understand all the rest). For one thing after another will grow clear and dark night will not rob you of the road and keep you from surveying the uttermost ends of nature; in such wise things will light the torch for other things.

You yourself some time or other overcome by the terror-speaking tales of the seers will seek to fall away from us. Ay indeed for how many dreams may they now imagine for you, enough to upset the calculations of life and trouble all your fortunes with fear! And with good cause; for if men saw that there was a fixed limit to their woes, they would be able in some way to withstand the religious scruples and threatenings of the seers. . . . Nor do hot fevers sooner quit the body, if you toss about on pictured

tapestry and blushing purple, than if you must lie under a poor man's blanket. Wherefore since treasures avail nothing in respect of our body nor birth nor glory of kingly power, advancing farther you must hold that they are of no service to the mind as well. . . . For even as children are flurried and dread all things in the thick darkness, thus we in the daylight fear at times things not a whit more to be dreaded than those at which children shudder in the dark and fancy sure to be. This terror therefore and darkness of the mind must be dispelled not by the rays of the sun and glittering shafts of day, but by the aspect of law and nature.

Lucretius: "De Rerum Natura".

* * *

I WANT to stand at the rim of the world and peer into the darkness beyond, and see a little more than others have seen, of the strange shapes of mystery that inhabit that unknown night. . . . I want to bring back into the world of men a little bit of new wisdom. There is a little wisdom in the world; Heraclitus, Spinoza and a saying here and there. I want to add to it, even if only ever so little.

Bertrand Russell: Letter in the "Observer" (Feb. 1967) written from Brixton Prison (1918).

* * *

. . . I believed only thus far in life after death; that if I were killed some of my works—my own creations, pictures, books—might live on a few years after me, that the love of living people would do the same, and that my child and her descendants would move and talk and feel a little like me after I was dead . . .

Man must survive on the earth. Scientists must help him to do so—help him not to exterminate himself, help him to get his food, help to alleviate his sufferings, help to increase his happiness. But to what end? Just so that his species can survive, not blow itself up, not starve, feel less pain, live more happily? Surely this is not enough, Surely he must evolve, aspire, explore, in order to justify his survival.

Peter Scott: "The Eye of the Wind".

* * *

WE have seen (also) that neither culture nor science is omnipotent. And if one of these is to be our "father", it is the task of maturity to reduce him to human dimensions. For human dimensions are not small. Neither are they Promethean except in our wishes.

What we must conclude, then, is that nowhere shall we find the answer. It is not science rampant on a field of analytical philosophers, since science ultimately must rest on faith—faith in causality or induction or the accessibility of the universe to understanding. But this is not the same as religious faith, for the faith of the scientist consists in what he or anyone else has to believe if he wishes to predict or control the course of experience.

Moreover, we must never forget in our enlightenment what lies just beneath the clean surface of enlightenment. There are our feelings, passions, drives, and vulnerabilities, those things which make human existence precarious and potentially tragic—and which continue to keep alive the human

search for certainty despite our knowledge that the search must fail.

The human problem, thus, would seem to be the art of avoiding the inevitable consequence of a paternal creed: the surrender of intelligence in the purchase of emotional security—or, in a word, infantilism. For no human institution, not culture, science, history, or the holy hegemony, is going to take care of man. Man, I'm afraid, is going to have to take care of himself.

Realising this should not strike us rudderless. It should make us band together in strength, in wholeness, in manly purpose. Ambiguity will be our shibboleth and responsibility our creed. Man is capable of these things. As he stands on the seashore, at the edge of a new tomorrow, in control of the energy of the atom, in possession of the exciting knowledge that he is part of wonderful nature, he must realise that it is now time to stick out the chin. Man has already done much, but it is dawn, not midnight, and, in the gathering light, he looks magnificent.

William S. Beck:

"Modern Science and the Nature of Life".

HUMANISM AND BULLFIGHTING

IN A LETTER to the *Belfast Newsletter*, John D. Stewart writes: "as one professionally involved with the bullfight" in obvious support of—rather than opposition to—this form of blood-sport. Mr Stewart has a perfect right to hold and express his views in this way and it should be made clear he writes not as a representative of the Humanist movement, nor does he make any reference to it.

But since Mr Stewart is one of the most notable Humanists in Ireland, and since there is a danger that his views may be taken as typically 'Humanist', it is important that the contrast between his view and that of the majority of Humanists be made clear. Blood-sports of any kind, even when the eventual death may be quick and painless, is a practice usually abhorred by the majority of Humanists.

In the BHA Statement of Policy adopted at the last BHA Conference, in section 29 (referring to research), it is stated: "Research should aim at furthering human and animal welfare . . .". Barbara Smoker, in *What is Humanism?* writes: "Humanists recognize the rights of other species". M. Roshwald, in *Humanism in Practice*, writes (pp 76-77): "The quality of sympathy should be extended beyond humanity to other creatures susceptible to pain and kindness. For Humanism means not only concern for human-kind, but also implies a humane attitude to any creature capable of feelings". The National Secular Society are quite clear in their part by stating in their 'Immediate Practical Objects' that they advocate: "The extension of the moral law to animals, so as to secure for them legal protection against cruelty, including all types of blood-sports".

QUOTE

"I KNOW the present Pope is making gestures of reform, but he is probably practising *restrictio mentalis*, or *coitus interruptus*, or something."

(Dave Coull: *The Pope and Deadly Anarchy*. From *Freedom: Anarchist Weekly*; October 28, 1967.)

JEWISH MYSTICISM AND THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

Jean-Pierre Schweitzer

Part Two

Jewish Mysticism and Christianity

THE reader, by now, must be asking himself: "How does Christianity come into this?" To answer this question we must now return to Henry Bergson and his two sources of morality and religion: the Social and Individual element.

(a) THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT

Merkabah Mysticism (or better, Gnosticism) was basically an Individualist movement, aiming at personal salvation and restricted to a very small circle of Initiates (though some of it was taught by other Jewish sects like the Essenes). Such individualistic activities are only possible in fairly peaceful and prosperous times, but the first fall of Jerusalem in 63 BCE inaugurated a period of social, political and religious upheaval which only ended in ACE 135 by the crushing of the Simeon bar Kosiba revolt. During these 200 years social pressure became so great that our "merkabah riders" were forced to take notice of the prevailing social current, namely the "messianic" movement and the Zealots. Until then, the Messiah, the Anointed of the Lord, had been a "deliverer" sent by Jehovah to free his people from bondage or foreign invaders. [Cyrus, King of Persia, was called the Messiah by Isaiah, when he delivered the Jews from the Babylonian captivity in 539 BCE (Is. 45 : 1).] Ever since 63 BCE and the beginning of the Roman occupation the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah—but he had failed, so far, to come.

(b) ST PAUL THE REFORMER AND THEOLOGIAN

This is when one of the Merkabah mystics, called Saul, better known to us as St. Paul, had a very bright idea, an idea that would satisfy the public demand for a Messiah and would allow the "Riders" to proceed with their activities, indeed to become the most popular Jewish sect, and to take the lead before the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Zealots, the Essenes, the Baptists, the Hemero-baptists, the Ebionites, the Nazarenes, to name only a few of the numerous Jewish sects which flourished in the 1st century AD (see M. Simon, *Jewish Sects in the Times of Jesus* (1960)).

Paul's idea was as follows: the current Jewish (merkabah) gnosis had been elaborating upon God's "Amanations", or to use the theological term, "Hypostases"; this was a kind of anthropomorphism, or rather anthropopathism (i.e., the personalisation of God's qualities—they spoke of God's *Word* (Hebrew: *dabar*; Greek: *Logos*—see John 1 : 1), God's *Wisdom* (Hebrew: *Hokmah*; Greek: *sophia*), God's *Power* (Hebrew: *geburah*; Greek: *dynamis*—Mark 14 : 62), "and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power), etc. In fact a "septenity" out of which only one survived: God's *Spirit* (Hebrew: *rouah*; Greek: *peuma*—the Holy Ghost) see G. G. Sholem, *op. cit.*—the number seven was a sacred number in the ancient Near East, probably because of the seven planets which astrologers could detect.

Paul combined this theology of the Merkabah gnostics with the messianic social movement, by making the Messiah no longer an earthly deliverer, but a heavenly figure, a *spiritual* deliverer, the Supreme "revealer" of

Gnosis (see Rev. 5 : 5), the second Adam and all the seven "Emanations" in one, as stated in Col. 2 : 9, in the Messiah (or better, in its Greek translation *Christ*), dwells the fullness (plenitude) of the Divinity (Godhead), incarnate (bodily), or, as the Cabalists later put it: the unifying "Sefirah" harmonising within itself the potencies of all the "Sefiroth".

(c) PAUL, THE MERKABAH MYSTIC

What evidence do we have for asserting that Paul was a merkabah mystic?

The account of his conversion, through a *vision*, and numerous passages in his epistles leave little doubt about his knowledge of Gnosis; but the most important evidence probably comes from 2 Cor. 12 : 1-4, "It is not expedient for me, doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ, above 14 years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth) such an one caught up to the *third heaven* . . . How that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter".

This passage shows not only a knowledge of merkabah gnosis* but also a very confused state of mind: "I knew a man . . . whether in the body . . . or not . . . I cannot tell"! This vagueness is typical of gnostics and other consumers of psychedelic drugs. Peter, too, (the head of a rival gnostic sect in Jerusalem) was not probably quite sure whether he had seen the Messiah (Christ) Jesus (a messianic title, meaning "the Salvation of Yaweh" (Hebrew: *Iehoschouach*), more than a name, (see Philip. 9 : 10) in the flesh . . . or not!

In fact the Jews had very confused ideas about the body, the soul, and the blood. The Hebrew word *nefesh* meant both blood and soul (thus, the Jehovah's Witnesses' opposition to blood transfusion!), and therefore what Paul, Peter and John meant, despite their use of the Greek word *sarks*, flesh (though Paul often uses *soma*, body), is that the Messiah was *manifested* rather than incarnated; this is in fact what was taught by the later gnostics (Simon Magus, Valentinus, Marcian and later Manes) and called "docetism", a doctrine that preached that the sentence "the Word was made flesh", was not to be understood in a literal sense.

Indeed his vagueness and confusion of mind are only minor aspects of a generally psychopathic personality, which comes out more clearly in his visions (a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex) and his speaking with tongues (1 Cor. 14 : 18), or *Glossolalia* ("a manifestation of dissociative reactions which can be reproduced by the ingestion of hallucinogenic substances" in *Hysteria and Related Mental Disorders*", p. 151, by Dr D. W. Abse (1966)). Finally, his excessive aversion to sex is a feature common to all mystics (in the occident as well as in the orient) as abstinence from sex contributes very largely to the corporeal degeneration which, with an intellectual basis of superstition, is a prerequisite of the mystical experience.

(Continued at foot of page 391)

HUMANIST LETTER NETWORK (INTERNATIONAL)

Kit Mouat

Humanist Letter Network is a valuable enterprise run on a non-profit-making basis by the voluntary efforts of Kit Mouat. In this article, Mrs Mouat reviews progress made, defines the Network's purpose, draws some interesting conclusions about those she serves and looks toward the future in anticipation of future progress. Those wishing to help this excellent work should write to: Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

NEARLY four years ago this project had just three shillings and two members. My hopes rested in the fact that they both mentioned 'Science Fiction' among their interests, but they didn't get on too well. Fortunately the membership began to grow, and has continued to grow steadily ever since. There are now more than 300 active members, two-thirds as many men as women. Some thirty-five more no longer need the Network or have been 'lost' in the post. One has unfortunately died. Although it does not set out to be a Marriage Bureau (or even to arrange anything but postal contacts) in July 1967 two Humanist couples, who met each other through the Network, were married. Links between the USA and this country are particularly encouraging, but sixteen countries are represented outside the United Kingdom. I am particularly glad that just because the Network is self-supporting and independent of all organisations, Humanists, Freethinkers, Rationalists and Agnostics, are making contact across the organisational (as well as national) barriers.

The work involved is both interesting and encouraging, based as it is in the 'mutual aid' which is surely the root of Humanism itself. I recognise my own traditional responses: the especial sympathy I feel, for instance, for a man tied to the home by an invalid family, or the male divorcee with children to look after. Yet, illogically, I am surprised that there are still some Humanist men who have not yet accepted the new pattern of male-female relationships in our swiftly changing society.

The dreaded 'surplus' that used to be spinster-female is fast becoming male. Although I have more than sixty single men under thirty wanting to write to young women, I have only seventeen unmarried women in the same age-group. In the 45-60 group, however, I need more unattached men, and the more interests they have the better. If they are looking for ready-made families, better still!

Women of sixty nowadays are likely to be capable of holding down good jobs. Girls of twenty-five, then, may think a little harder before marrying men of forty who may expect to be nursed at seventy-five. Women are needed more than ever outside the home. Many are only too glad *not* to be needed in any domestic capacity. Whereas it has been taken for granted that middle-aged men grow sexually bored with their wives, the wives (it has been assumed) are just generally bored by sex. Yet we know now that a woman's sexual life outlives her capacity for child-bearing. How long shall we continue to shy at the thought (as I certainly do now) of women looking for rejuvenation and sexual stimulus in the younger generation, as men have so often done? One Networker suggests that 'for a woman, physical attraction in a man is not so important . . .'. But what is that idea based on? Is it fact or myth?

Although women are still considered most attractive and marriageable when young enough to have children, the women (even the young woman) who has had those children, and is then left without a husband, soon realises how

quickly her marital value has slumped. It may not be quite as much a man's world as it was, but it is still a cruel one for mothers without men. In later life, however, it seems to be men who find it the hardest to survive (if only in practical terms) without the opposite sex. Will the present generation of young men be more independent in the 1980's?

Does all this suggest that the time is coming when men and women will live most happily without one another, except for relatively short-term sexual relationships and parenthood? I don't think so for a minute. But I do believe that the sooner we all get rid of our remaining superstitions about men and women (as we have about gods) the sooner we shall be able to create and enjoy the sort of companionship which makes life infinitely worth living. The Network confirms over and over again the urgent need for (and shortage of) this sort of relationship.

Plans for the future include trying to reach blind Humanists, either through a Braille transcriber or by relying on sighted readers. Funds are rather low, and I am thinking of raising the life membership (*my life!*) from three to five or even ten shillings. I would like to be able to advertise outside the Movement instead of relying only on the free publicity given to me most kindly by the National Secular Society, Rationalist Press Association and British Humanist Association. I plan another Newsletter to all members this winter, but postage and stationery are expensive. If you are not already one of those generous people who have sent donations, stamps and so on, and especially if you feel the Network has done anything for you, please take note of my begging bowl. My renewed thanks to all those who have helped me so far. I don't think any Humanist project could have wished for more success in these four years. Its purpose is, after all, a frontal attack on the universal evil of human loneliness; especially that which is accentuated by living as a Humanist in a Christianity-conditioned society. All those who want to make contact with others who share their non-religious Secular-Humanist beliefs are welcome. I cannot ever promise to succeed; only to continue to do my best within the Network's own limitations.

CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, London, WC1

SOCIAL AND MORAL EDUCATION

PUBLIC MEETING

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15th, 7.30 p.m.

DAVID TRIBE

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

Organised by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1
Telephone: 01-407 2717

A LETTER TO KIT MOUAT

In response to a questionnaire circulated by the National Secular Society and Kit Mouat (in which parents were invited to report what compulsory religious education has meant for them and their children), a lady sent the following letter to Mrs Mouat. For obvious reasons, she wishes to remain anonymous. The *Freethinker* publishes this letter without further comment.

MY children are in Doctor Barnardo's (since I was widowed) and complain that they are made to attend compulsory church service Sunday mornings, compulsory Sunday-school in the afternoon (they can be let off this if they have a relative visit them), and—for children of second-ary school age—compulsory church service in the evening. Many of the children feel resentful about this situation, especially the older ones, but they have no parents to complain for them. In addition, I have been told that some of the Cottages have an hour's Bible reading three times a day after meals from Monday to Saturday. It would seem that regulations made some 60 years ago are still upheld.

From what I have seen I would estimate that only the thinking minority manage to withstand this process, while at least three quarters become heavily indoctrinated, much more so than would be likely in normal outside society. Only highly religious people are accepted as staff at Dr Barnardo's and most of the children attend Barnardo's own school. This means the children grow up without realising any other views on life even exist. They are completely isolated unless they can go home on visits.

A Humanist friend told me that last year he and his wife offered to help arrange outings for Dr Barnardo's children, but they were turned down solely on the grounds that they were not regular church attenders.

It seems shocking to me that children can be kept in such spiritual isolation although in the midst of the community. I hope to be able to support my children again when I have completed by training.

Yours sincerely (Anon.).

SOME OFF-HAND SAYINGS ABOUT HUMANISTS

R. Smith

Some contributions of considerable interest, if no value, from one who takes a very poor view of "the main principles of the modern Humanist Movement". Perhaps a reader may care to put forward another view?—Ed.

WHEN the Humanist added the suffix 'ist' to the word 'human' he thought he had done something wonderful for mankind and philosophy, but all he did was to add another word to our vocabulary. In spite of all the interpretations of what Humanism is, we are all still as wise as ever. Humanism is not a philosophy, it is a religion. When a man changes his religion to Humanism, he goes from one delusion to another. Like all religious people, the Humanist believes he has an answer to human existence. One often wonders why he opposes religion, seeing that he himself is a religious man.

The Humanist believes life is a wonderful gift, but the facts of life prove otherwise. "All is vanity" means "all is nothingness"; the Humanist cannot understand this. One of the greatest sins for a Humanist is to fall into despair; Humanists never despair, that is their religion. If you bring up the subject of death to a Humanist you had better treat the subject lightly; the very mention of death brings about thoughts of despair, so they tell us. The Humanist sincerely

thinks his Humanism is something of supreme importance to the world, but death teaches him otherwise. The Humanist often quotes to us the famous saying of Epicurus on death: "Death means nothing to us"; but when you ask him if the death of his loved ones means nothing to him, then that is another story. The ideal of the Humanist is happiness; it would be monstrous for any Humanist to declare he or she was unhappy; a happy death is a Humanist ideal. A tragic Humanist is a contradiction in terms; it is like speaking of a meat-eating vegetarian. The Humanist is anti-tragic; if he ever tries to deal with tragedy, he tries to explain it away; tragedy is always for the other fellow, not for him; his guarding angel is his Humanism.

The Humanist hero is a man who lives to a ripe old age, and dies a happy death declaring his life-long faith in Humanism. A Humanist Hamlet is an impossibility; a Humanist Macbeth is a disaster.

In spite of all evidence to the contrary, the Humanist is under the impression that ethics is an energising factor in real life. To believe that you could change men into virtuous individuals by the teaching of ethics is like believing you could produce poets and musicians by teaching aesthetics.

Humanists are supposed to be intelligent people, but there seems to be a surprising amount of blockheads amongst them. The biggest joke I know is a Humanist philosopher; if you want a good laugh, read Corliss Lamont's *The Philosophy of Humanism*. It isn't Humanists they should be called, but Humourists.

Humanists are supposed to be against censorship, yet they do plenty of it themselves. For instance, all tragic subjects are suppressed, while death and suicide are taboo to Humanists. The Humanist quite often claims he believes in free expression, but he has no scruples in suppressing any free expression which is diametrically opposed to his own Humanist faith.

NON-HUMANISTIC VIEWS

READERS who enjoy non-humanistic views of Humanism may like to follow a series on *Humanism* under the heading *School for Laymen* at present appearing in the *The British Weekly and Christian World*. Another odd view appeared in the *Methodist Recorder* (November 2) where *Humanism* appeared in a series headed: *The Shaping of Tomorrow*.

JEWISH MYSTICISM AND THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

(Continued from page 389)

(d) THE GOSPELS AS MANUALS OF INITIATION

In conclusion, I shall venture to submit that, like the books of the dead, the Gospels were written for a dual purpose; they were intended for the man in the street, as an exposition of Messianic (or Christian) doctrine, in the form of the "sacred" story of the Messiah-Saviour (see P. L. Couchoud, *The God Jesus* (1951)), but also contain an esoteric tradition, only understandable to initiates, who would use it, as a guide, in their journey into the praeternatural world.

* The gnosticism of St Paul has been pointed out before by scholars, but wrongly attributed to Greek influence (see J. Dupont, *Gnosis in the Epistles of St Paul* (1949)).

LETTERS

Liberty of Opinion

THE publication of the letter of W. Gilmour will I hope relieve some high blood pressure. While not the kind of letter that contributes to the betterment of human relations, it does—none-the-less—reassert what no Freethinker is likely to deny, that any kind of dictatorship, whether Fascist, Communist or Roman Catholic must stand in opposition to any private and individual freedom of thought or liberty of opinion.

PETER CROMMELIN.

Madonna Postage Stamps

IN a multi-racial community of peoples professing many different creeds or none, the imposition of 'Madonna' stamps for use at Christmas is a highly dubious action by the Postmaster-General and should be strongly resisted to prevent future repetition. Postage stamps are surely not meant to be used for this sort of propaganda which really amounts to free religious advertising at public expense.

In the U.S.A. where this practice has caused offence to large sections of the public, the question of this use of postage stamps is being taken to the District Court of Columbia for a ruling on what is considered to be an illegal infringement of the First Amendment which distinctly proclaims separation of Church and State. If that action fails, the matter is likely to go before the Supreme Court.

In this country it is for Freethinkers and Humanists to make a firm protest against this insidious method of using postage stamps as a medium for disseminating religious publicity.

ELIZABETH COLLINS.

Oblique Cuttings?

I FEEL that copying of newspaper cuttings as presented by P. G. Roy under the heading "Food for Thought" are difficult to accept to say the least of it.

Taking some sentences out of their content is always a matter of dubiousness—often a voluntary misrepresentation. Mr Roy, intentionally or not, leads us towards an attitude of anti-Sovietism and anti-Arabism in lieu of giving a fair survey of different

opinions on such problems. In his zealotry for degrading the Soviet Union he cites an unconfirmed report about collaboration between Nazi-Bormann and the Russian Secret Service. For other "reports" he quotes the French monthly *L'Evenement* as his source of information in full distortion of the journal's true spirit. The Editor of *L'Evenement*, Monsieur Emmanuel d'Astier, since the beginning of the Six Days War, has clearly condemned such a one-sided emotional attitude towards the Israeli Arab conflict as demonstrated by Mr Roy's narrow choice of quotations.

The value of such reporting should be discussed by your readers. Speaking for myself, I would much prefer it were Mr Roy to comment on his choice of cuttings in a concise form at the end of his quotations thus enabling us to appreciate the meaning and purpose of his selection.

MDM. GAUTIER (Nice, France.)

Adoption

IN his review of Iris Goodacre's book *Adoption Policy and Practice*, Mr Bynner finds it difficult to understand why only one in twenty children in the care of London County Council, 1949, should be considered "suitable for adoption" and asks: "Why are not all normal healthy children suitable . . .?"

The short answer is that nobody can be sure that any baby, whether their own or another's, will grow into a normal healthy child and, ideally, adoptions should take place before the baby is old enough to identify with its mother.

There are, however, a great many factors which may well indicate that a baby will not become a normal healthy child let alone a normal happy adult. Unless both parents, and preferably their parents too, can be investigated for a medical history of physical and mental disease, of crime or of prostitution (which latter are themselves indications of inherited extrovert psychopathic conditions) a baby cannot be offered for adoption. This rules out all those who are abandoned, and those where one parent—the father—will not show up or co-operate. Many mothers seeking to get rid of their babies have no clue who the father is anyway.

Many adopted children reaching the teens and developing a rebellious attitude to parental standards, merely reject them like some alien graft, and seek the company of others of lower educational and social standards, no matter how much they have been loved, cared for and cherished by their adoptive parents and no matter how well they seem to have settled and identified with those parents during the first 10 to 15 years of their lives together. I have first-hand knowledge of many such cases.

Adopting a baby can be full of hope and great excitement and pleasure, but bringing it up to adulthood is a hazardous and often heartbreaking experience, not to be undertaken in any mood of sentimentality, do-gooding, or even of wanting to have a son or daughter. One dare not allow oneself the luxury of having any expectations for the child to fulfil.

Unfortunately some kind of extreme neurotic or psychotic condition is often present in the personalities of one or both parents who have produced an unwanted child; indeed those very personality traits may well be the cause of the baby being unwanted. Such a child needs very experienced care and training during its upbringing if it is not to perpetuate and increase the misery-making complex of conditions which produce unhappy anti-social adults.

ISOBEL GRAHAM.

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