

The Humanist World Weekly

Registered at the
G.P.O. as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,
December 29, 1967

Freethought Humanism Rationalism Secularism

Abiogenesis
Abortion
Adoption
Aesthetics
Aggression
Agnosticism
Agreement
Altruism
Anxiety
Blasphemy
Censorship
Christ
Christian Church
Christianity
Civilisation
Civil Liberty
Commonsense
Co-operation
Crime
Criticism
Death
Debate
Determinism
Divorce
Drugs
Eclecticism
Education
Empiricism
Ethics
Euthanasia
Evolution
Faith
Family Planning
Freewill
Fulfilment
Fundamentalism
God
Guilt
Heresy
History
Humanity
Human Rights
Human Welfare
Hunger
Idealism
Indoctrination
Justice
Knowledge
Legislation
Liberty

THIS ISSUE, prepared together with the previous issue early in December, brings you no topical news of the sort which has recently appeared on this cover. No news may be good news; at least there may be less to ruffle your digestion and festive spirits. Even so, these pages should be investigated with caution; they carry the usual irreverent range of freely-expressed views on a variety of subjects not always mentioned in polite society. The FREETHINKER is a Freethought paper, permitting free expression and discussion on any subject which may interest members and sympathisers of the broad Humanist-Rational-Secular Movement, whether or not the views expressed are representative of—or totally opposed to—the ideology of this Movement.

This point should be made quite clear: opinions declared in the FREETHINKER do not necessarily coincide with the policies of any organisation within the movement mentioned, nor do they necessarily accord with the views of the FREETHINKER'S editor.

A broad movement, such as the movement which identifies with the four keywords at the head of this column, and to which the FREETHINKER owes first allegiance, has a broad range of interests and concerns. The list of subjects appearing on either side of this notice are the first hundred subjects which one may find dealt with in any year's issue of the FREETHINKER. There are many aspects and sub-divisions of each, making for a very wide range of concerns for the contributor to write upon and for the reader to interest himself in. There are others also which space doesn't allow us to mention. No one need ever fear, nor can anyone justly claim, the FREETHINKER is narrow in its concerns. Each of those subjects mentioned on this page has been dealt with in the last twelve months. Contributions to these pages in the coming year will certainly broaden the FREETHINKER'S wide interests.

For the eighty-seventh time, a FREETHINKER editor wishes his readers a Happy New Year and happy Freethought reading; previous editors with greater rhetoric, certainly, but never with more sincerity.

Good health and happiness to you all.

Life
Logic
Marriage
Materialism
Maturity
Medicine
Metaphysics
Morality
Mysticism
Nature
Naturalism
News
Nonsense
Nudity
Occultism
Open Society
Peace
Penology
Permissiveness
Personalities
Philosophy
Popery
Population
Poverty
Predestination
Preservation
Psychology
Race
Realism
Reason
Reform
Religion
Resources
Responsibility
Scepticism
Science
Self-reliance
Society
Supernaturalism
Superstition
Sunday Observance
Tolerance
Totalitarianism
Truth
Ultimate Reality
Understanding
Values
War
Working Hypotheses
World Government

FREETHINKER

Published by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

Editor: KARL HYDE

FREETHINKER subscriptions
and orders for literature

... The Freethinker Bookshop
01-407 0029

Editorial matter

... The Editor, The Freethinker
01-407 1251

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

12 months : £1 17s 6d 6 months : 19s 3 months : 9s 6d.

USA AND CANADA

12 months : \$5.25 6 months : \$2.75 3 months : \$1.40

The FREETHINKER can be ordered through any newsagent.

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

Birmingham Branch NSS, Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Wednesday, January 3rd, 6.45 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.

Havering Humanist Society, The Social Centre, Gubbins Lane, Harold Wood, Tuesday, January 2nd, 8 p.m.: A meeting.

Lincolnshire Humanist Group. The Annesley Hotel, Monday, January 1st, 7.30 p.m.: Social evening.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Tuesday, January 2nd, 6.45 p.m.: Dr PETER DRAPER, "Synthesis on Medicine and Ethics".

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

West Kent Branch NSS, Public Library, The Drive, Sevenoaks, Wednesday, January 3rd, 8 p.m.: Discussion, "Divorce on Demand".

OBITUARY

WE regret to announce the death of Ada Fairhall, widow of Teddy Fairhall, at the age of ninety on November 30. Both she and her husband had life-long associations with the South Place Ethical Society, their parents having been members before they were born. Mr Fairhall was at one time Honorary Treasurer of SPES. Mrs Fairhall, always ready to stress the importance of Secularism, had been a member of the National Secular Society for over thirty years at her death. She will be greatly missed by her many friends and we extend our deepest sympathy to her family.

GEMS FROM THE WRITINGS OF THOMAS PAINE

THESE are the times that try men's souls. The Summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like Hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated.

* * *

Some people can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it.

* * *

I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink, but he whose heart is firm and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.

* * *

As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of all governments to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business which government hath to do therewith.

* * *

It is an affront to truth to treat falsehood with complaisance.

* * *

The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step below the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.

* * *

When it shall be said in any country in the world, "My poor are happy; neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive; the rational world is my friend, I am a friend of its happiness"—when these things can be said, then may that country boast of its constitution and its government.

* * *

When we consider, for the feelings of nature cannot be dismissed, the calamities of war and the miseries it inflicts upon the human species, the thousands and tens of thousands, of every age and sex who are rendered wretched by the event, surely there is something in the heart of man that calls upon him to think! Surely there is some tender chord, tuned by the hand of the Creator, that still struggles to emit in the hearing of the soul a note of sorrowing sympathy. Let it then be heard, and let man learn to feel that the true greatness of a nation is founded on principles of humanity, and not on conquest. War involves in its progress such a train of unforeseen and unsuspected circumstances, such a combination of foreign matters, that no human wisdom can calculate the end. It has but one thing certain, and that is to increase taxes. I defend the cause of the poor.

of the manufacturer, of the tradesman, of the farmer, and of all those on whom the real burden of taxes fall—but above all, I defend the cause of women and children—of all humanity.

* * *

Poverty is a thing created by that which is called civilised life.

* * *

The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is reason. I have never used any other and I trust I never shall.

* * *

Certain I am that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

A QUESTION OF FAITH

AS those experienced in arguing with them will surely agree, the Pentecostal's defence of his peculiar position consists of not so much misusing the established formulae of logic, but of regarding with contempt the whole tradition of rational thought, and substituting for it a form of mystical thinking largely their own. In this new rationale, the place of reason is taken by faith—a euphemism for wishful thinking—and the most common form of 'deduction' appears to be: 'I want x to be; therefore I believe x to be; therefore x is'. X, of course, is most usually the existence of God, though with slight variations in form, it might equally well become the survival of the soul beyond death, the infallibility of the Bible, or the immanence of the Second Coming.

In more constructive systems of thought, people are persuaded of certain opinions because (they believe) they have reasons to support them. In the Pentecostal's mind, however, the belief in God is considered, not to warrant justification by evidence, but to be itself the greatest piece of evidence in favour of its own validity! By this prime Christian virtue, "faith", is meant believing what there is no evidence to substantiate, and then using your own self-conviction as 'proof' that what you believed in the first place was true.

Application of the Hypothesis

"Faith", wrote St Paul, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11 : 1). In other words, the proof of a statement for which no other evidence is available, is the fact that the proposer of the statement believes it to be true. Always willing to learn from such a great man as Paul, may I suggest that we take this great axiom of truth, and apply it to our everyday lives? The first point to be indisputably proved would be that every mother's baby was by far the most beautiful in the world. Had our investigation been held a few centuries ago, we would have been able to prove that the earth was the centre of the centre of the universe, but today we would have to make do with proving that it isn't. We could also, of course, prove that each of the political parties was better than the others, and on every other controversial issue we would likewise prove conclusively that both sides

I had rather record a thousand errors on the side of mercy than be obliged to tell one act of severe justice.

* * *

Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it.

* * *

To argue with a man who has renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consists in holding humanity in contempt, is like administering medicine to the dead.

* * *

When will men stop condemning in others the things they do themselves?

With acknowledgements to the Thomas Paine Society for permission to reprint the above from one of their pamphlets.

A. J. Lowry

were absolutely right on every point where they disagreed with each other. In short, we could prove anything and everything, provided only that we could find one person to say they believed in it. If the Pentecostals themselves were to use such reasoning outside of their church for a week, the resultant mental confusion would be so great that they would have to be locked up for the rest of their lives.

Matters Spiritual

However, it might be argued that although such 'reasoning' leads us into confusion and distress in secular matters, the key-stone of faith is still a sure indication of truth in matters spiritual. Unfortunately, however, the reverse appears to be the case. In the sixteenth century, the number of faithful Catholics faithfully committing to the flames faithful Protestants, was equalled only by the number of the latter faithfully returning the compliment. Both, of course, were entirely convinced of divine support for their missions, a fact which can lead us only to scepticism, or a belief in the schizophrenic nature of the deity. Even today the Pentecostales share the world with Mormons, Zen Buddhists, Vedantists, Sufi mystics and Taoists, all of whom claim that their personal experience is the greatest justification of their mutually-contradictory beliefs. If we go back in history, and add the mysteries of Isis and Orpheus to our list, the situation becomes even more confused.

Conclusion

It is the characteristic of a correctly framed system of logic to yield clear, distinct and unambiguous answers to the problems we wish to solve. Compared with this standard, the Christian criterion for judging truth by the intuitive faculties flounders miserably in a welter of self-contradictory mysticism. This, of course, is the inevitable result of any philosophy such as Christianity, which is possessed of sufficient dishonesty to attempt to completely re-shape thinking to furnish a proof for its own lame and otherwise unprovable notions. But if Christianity's mistake acts as an awful warning to all future thinkers of the dangers inherent in auto-suggestion, then we might perhaps say that a millenium and a half of Christian-dominated history has not been entirely in vain.

COMFORT AND COMMENTS

G. F. Westcott

AFTER reading *The Anxiety Makers*, I asked Dr Comfort if he would grant me an interview. He could not find time for this, but very kindly agreed to answer a few written questions. Below I give the questions (Q), followed by Dr Comfort's answers (A), and, in some cases, further comments by me.

Q1. In *The Anxiety Makers* you give a clear account of the way doctors have made their patients anxious and of the effects of this anxiety. What do you think was the cause of this anxiety?

A1. Not answerable in brief—it would take a book.

So perhaps we may hope that Dr Comfort will produce this book!

Q2. Was one of the main causes of anxiety of both doctors and patients the dominance of the Christian basic ideology, which regarded suffering and disease as punishments for sin and made great use of repression (e.g., "Thou shalt not . . ."), and, in particular, tried to limit the expression of the often irrepressible sexual instincts within the bounds of marriage, and even taught that any extraneous sexual thoughts were sins, punishable by eternal torture in hell, unless genuinely repented and absolved through the services of the Church?

A2. Yes, but we need also to ask why that particular ideology should have appealed to that culture.

My theory is this: Religions developed and survived in so far as they provided powerful supernatural support for the social customs and the laws of the secular ruling hierarchy, so as to produce a strong united group able to survive in competition with other nations. The success and spread of Christianity in the West was due, among other reasons, to its adoption of a universal, in place of a tribal, god and its skilful use of repression to produce a vicious circle of individual sin and its remission by the ministrations of its clergy, which was difficult for indoctrinated or converts to break away from. The myth of the "scapegoat" is found in several religions and may be an archetype. It has to be accepted by Christians as historical fact, that is, that sinners can escape punishment for their evil acts by the vicarious sacrifice and suffering of an innocent and perfect victim. Neither this myth nor that of eternal punishment can be justified ethically; however, some not too critical minds are able to accept them as acts of a just and good god. There seems to be an inherent tendency for human beings to become intensely involved, e.g. to believe in a particular religion, join a political party, worship a hero or fall in love. In the past it was possible for every nation to impose a particular religion on most of its inhabitants; but as toleration, information and communication have spread this has gradually become impossible and today fewer and fewer people even belong to definite denominations and many now develop independent and personal basic ideologies of their own. The reasons why one individual accepts one basic ideology and another a different one must be investigated objectively if sociology is to become a science. Perhaps one reason why this has not yet happened is that many sociologists are already committed believers and intuitively reject any action which might expose the real reasons for their beliefs.

In religion, politics, law, finance, commerce, etc., special jargons and technologies have been developed, partly deliberately and partly unwittingly. These confuse the general public and make many accept the view that such matters can only be understood and dealt with by experts. Thus clergy, politicians, lawyers, financiers and businessmen are able to mislead and manipulate public opinion in

their own sectional interests. We should insist on the use of simple, clear language which can be understood by most people in an educated democracy. We need more Chapman Pinchers!

There seems to me to be a growing disillusionment with our existing type of government—the Establishment, including the medical establishments. Perhaps it is becoming realised that ours is not a true democracy governed by the wishes of the general public, but rather a system of government largely based on the influence of MPs, of vested interests and pressure groups which include, of course, the Churches, the Civil Service and the political parties themselves. These are in the main powerful, wealthy and well-organised, but also obsolescent and decaying bodies. Consequently, legislation and social pressures are usually decades behind the consensus of public opinion.

In this age of pressure groups, Freethinkers and upholders of individual freedom have hardly any influence on the Establishment. They are naturally reluctant to commit themselves to any complex, rigid programme of particular legal and social reforms. Perhaps, however, they might be willing to join a pressure group to oppose existing laws which restrict individual freedom or new laws which would introduce further restrictions, unless these laws are proved by adequate contemporary objective evidence to do more good than harm.

Dr Comfort states that one of the consequences of the growing discontent with the Establishment is an increasing disregard of it, even, sometimes, to the extent of disobeying some of its laws. I have been trying to penetrate behind the hypocritical screen of censorship, etc., created by "the powers that be" and, so far as I can see, Comfort's analysis is very true where sexual practices are concerned.

Q3. Do you think that the growing permissiveness in sex is likely to provide greater happiness and less neurosis in the future?

A3. It depends entirely on what is meant by growing permissiveness. If it means responsibility without guilt, yes.

Q4. Do you consider that the existing laws of censorship are doing more harm than good, especially when applied to responsible adults?

A4. Yes.

Q5. For example, do you consider that the Hicklin definition of obscenity as "whether the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall" has, in the light of modern scientific knowledge, any just value in law as applied today in the law courts? Or do you think that it does little more than allow the judge or magistrate or jury, to express their personal and subjective prejudices?

A5. Obscenity is what disturbs, not what corrupts. The definition is humbug.

The Hicklin definition was given in 1857. It was slightly modified in the Obscene Publications Act, 1959, which states: ". . . an article shall be deemed obscene if its effects or (where the article comprises two or more distinct items) the effect of any one of its items is, if taken as a whole, such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it." Perhaps the most important change is ". . . are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances . . ." instead of "may". Legal practice, however, relies so much on precedent that, it seems to me, to have become quite out of touch with the present consensus of public opinion. Magistrates and judges

still seem to regard obscene as having the meaning of the old-fashioned word "lewd", and to assume that anything "lewd" is likely to "deprave and corrupt" those who may read, see or hear it. It is thus unnecessary for them to consider evidence as to what "deprave and corrupt" means, what kinds of people are likely to be so affected, and whether under the special conditions of publication the danger of doing harm is likely. Today "likely" may be taken to mean "conceivably even if unlikely", while the responsibility of the original publisher is extended to include the hypothetical effects of the possible republication by others. Any citizen can initiate a charge of obscenity at the public expense which may lead to conviction. The only practical action left to the defendant seems to be to appeal for a jury trial on the grounds of artistic merit. This involves the calling as expert witnesses of university professors and well-known art critics and artists. Other "public good" defences such as value to science, psychology or psychiatry, etc., and even the natural right of responsible adults to freedom of conscience, thought and choice, are ignored. Only rich defendants can afford to pay the high legal costs incurred, even if the case is won.

Q6. What changes, if any, would you like to see in the laws of censorship?

A6. Abolition. Incidentally, there is no censorship now—only the threat of prosecution.

Presumably, Dr Comfort is thinking of the uncertain and subjective interpretation of the law and the prohibitive expense of taking further action. There still exists unofficial censorship, e.g., printers who refuse to print and photographic firms who refuse to return negatives or to deliver prints which they judge might be liable to be prosecuted as obscene.

Q7. The Ephebatic Group, Birmingham, is trying to gain support for a sex education film to be shown in schools to 12-

year-old boys and girls together, in which human bodies, both male and female, and all their functions, both physical and mental and including sexual intercourse, are treated as purely natural phenomena. Do you approve of this project?

A7. It seems harmless enough, but not a high priority in sex education. Most of them probably wouldn't learn much from it that they didn't know—unsuccessfully married adults might profit more from such practical instruction.

Q8. Dr E. J. Trimmer in a recent broadcast stated that longevity is associated with sexuality and that, if present medical knowledge were to be applied, the expectation of life would be raised to nearly 100 years. He added, however, that the great obstacle to this happening was that the climate of opinion of many influential bodies and people (including many doctors), that sexual activities by those over middle age are somehow indecent, undesirable and should be discouraged. Will you comment on this, please? Has sexual activity any influence on longevity, and on a happy and useful old age?

A8. Unless we can interfere fundamentally with ageing, there is no evidence that better medical facilities can raise the specific age much above 80. Statistics refute the 100 years and more prediction. There is no evidence that sexually active people live longer, but long-lived people are commonly sexually active. Obviously it contributes to happy old age.

As the treatment mentioned by Dr Trimmer is presumably new and has probably been used on very few patients, it can hardly be expected to have significantly affected statistical tables yet.

Q9. Can you say why women have a longer expectation of life than men? Has it, for example, anything to do with their different reaction to sexuality?

A9. The reason is unknown, but may possibly be related to the fact that woman is the homogonic sex. It has no obvious connection with sexual behaviour in the sense you mean. It might conceivably be connected with the immunological system which allows the female mammal to have a placental infant.

Q10. Finally, may I have your permission to publish your replies to these questions?

A.10. Yes, if you wish.

DOES IT REALLY MATTER TO YOU?

Isobel Grahame

ONE of the questions asked at a meeting held recently to inaugurate a new Humanist Group in Hertfordshire was, "Do humanists remain standing when others kneel to pray?"

At first I was surprised, but on reflection there seems to be no general rule, one must act according to the circumstances, but it was evident that to a new humanist the problem presented considerable perplexity.

Any humanist at a religious ceremony would be there voluntarily if it were held in some kind of church—as a guest wishing to honour friends, neighbours and relatives, and share in their pleasure or their grief. Weddings, baptisms and funerals must be attended from time to time, and in fact one would be present at similar ceremonies in foreign countries out of courtesy and friendship, if invited. It would be bad manners and bad for the image of humanism to make such occasions an excuse for some kind of protest.

Humanism advocates the open society with freedom of belief, freedom to worship and freedom from compulsory worship.

It is, however, a very different matter when humanists find themselves unwillingly involved in opening and closing prayers associated with entirely secular proceedings of

local authorities, and other committees concerned with the business of ratepayers and taxpayers whose beliefs or lack of them are nobody's business but their own. In such circumstances it is only right that humanists should protest and remain aloof and uninvolved in such ritual observances however perfunctorily performed.

Often, it is only after someone has protested that the other members give the matter any thought at all. They have been conforming for so long that the significance of the act of worship has lost all meaning. These are the kind of people who are startled when told that it is insulting to people of other faiths or none to be required to put their 'Christian' names on some official form or an application for a job.

A local solicitor acting as a commissioner for oaths so rarely met a client wishing to affirm that the official form of words had been long mislaid among his papers. When I refused the book he hesitated and then asked testily, "Does it really matter to you? It seems a very trivial quibble to me."

One wonders whether such men have ever stopped to consider the purpose of swearing or affirming certain documents, and if not whether they ought to refuse fees for the job!

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FREETHOUGHT

Chapman Cohen

The following talk by Chapman Cohen was first issued as a gramophone record in 1932 and, in 1954, printed in a pamphlet of the same title. Chapman Cohen was editor of the *Freethinker* from 1915 to 1951. As editor of the *Freethinker*, and as President of the National Secular Society he was the immediate successor in both offices to G. W. Foote who founded the *Freethinker* in 1881.

I WILL commence with a definition. Freethought may be defined as the rejection of authority in matters of opinion. It sets the persuasion of fact against the coercion of force. A Freethinker is one who forms his own opinions on the facts as he sees them. Right or wrong, his opinions are his own. He is a voice, not an echo.

Historically, freethought has become identified with the rejection of religious doctrines. This is because it is from the side of religion that the impulse to intolerance has come. Human society is born in the shadow of religious fear, and in that stage the suppression of heresy is a sacred social duty. Then comes the rise of a priesthood, and the independent thinker is met with punishment in this world and the threat of eternal damnation hereafter. Even today it is from the religious side that the greatest danger to freedom of thought comes. Religion is the last thing man will civilise.

Considerable progress was made in the old Greek and Roman civilisations in the way of establishing freedom of thought. Neither had anything in the shape of a sacred book warning men not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, and, in Greece particularly, every question of religion, ethics, science and philosophy was discussed with the freedom that Europe subsequently lost and has never altogether regained. Indeed if it were possible to revive an Athenian of, say, the time of Socrates and place him in the centre of Europe at any date from the 5th to the 16th century, and if he had seen the prison, the stake and the torture chamber being used to prevent criticisms of religion, he would have thought that the world had been overtaken with an epidemic of insanity.

The intellectual freedom of Europe died with the establishment of the Christian Church. Bible in hand, the Church met every new idea with a "Thus saith the Lord". On the ruins of the ancient civilisation, she placed the flag on an interested dogmatism, and opened one of the most hideous chapters in the history of mankind. Enquiry was forbidden, freedom of speech was taboo, a premium was offered for

cowardice and hypocrisy, a tax was placed upon intellectual sincerity. Intolerance became a virtue and persecution a habit.

Nothing more demoralising has ever existed. Where religious heresy was concerned, no man could feel himself safe. In the name of religion a man was taught to denounce his neighbour, a wife her husband, a child its parent. The Church went further, and made man a policeman over himself, until men feared to think, lest they should be led to doubt. The thinker was everywhere suspect. The credulous fool was held up as the model of religious perfection. It was the vilest system the world has ever known.

In prohibiting the free play of ideas the Church struck at the foundation of progress. Throughout the whole of animate nature variation is one of the conditions of development. The opposite process is elimination, by which unfavourable or undesirable variations are weeded out. The Church adopted the latter policy. Every variation against its teaching was crushed. It imposed conformity on all with the result of achieving stagnation—and worse. A sheep-like attitude was inculcated, and where men are trained like sheep they share the fate of sheep—they are sheared and eaten.

Had a bench of Bishops existed amongst our simian ancestors, the human race would never have arisen. The first variations towards a more human type would have been crushed as a blasphemous innovation.

In the history of every institution there is a time when it has to face the challenge of new knowledge. The man who makes this challenge is an asset of great social value. He compels us to something like a mental stocktaking, to get rid of unusable goods and to restock on better lines. The greatest need of today is to create an environment that is completely hospitable to new ideas.

The vote spreads political power over a wide area but carries no guarantee of its right use. All can read, but reading without the critical habit is of but small value. The Press flashes its lightning, and the mass of the public are without a conductor that will protect them from its dangers. There never was a time when there was greater need for independent thinking than there is today. Unfortunately, fifteen centuries of Christian rule have made intolerance of unorthodox opinions fatally common.

In the Christian mythology, it is noted that man's primal sin was an act of disobedience. He ate of the Tree of Knowledge, and the Gods cannot forgive that offence; yet knowledge is the greatest need of mankind. It is that which has raised him from savagery to civilisation. It is that which makes him more than the equal of the Gods. It lifts him above them. But you cannot acquire sound knowledge without the courage to examine, modify and reject what is already established. This is a painful and troublesome process; but the pain is that of a new birth, the trouble that of clearing away things that have outlived their utility.

Freethought, then, claims the fullest possible freedom of thought, speech, publication and action. It asks for these, not as luxuries, but as necessities; it asks not for their mere toleration, but for their encouragement. They must be the unquestioned and inalienable rights in a society where men and women can exist with dignity and self-respect.

100 YEARS OF FREETHOUGHT

By DAVID TRIBE

"An impressive work of scholarly research and an eminently readable and interesting account."—*Humanist*.

Price 42/- from bookshops or by post (1/6)

THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP
103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1

OUR FESTIVE STAMPS

George R. Goodman

Part 2

TO recapitulate: The Festival of the returning *Lux Benigna*, or benign Sunlight, has mighty little to do with Christianity. It existed already for millennia prior to our era and was, and still is, celebrated by all religions and none. The Church merely plastered her reason-insulting dogmatism on to existing pagan feasts in the hope of making converts amongst the illiterate, for, at that time, only a very small percentage of the people could read or write.

How ignorant and confused even the priestly class were, can be gauged from the fact that for three and a half centuries the *birth* of their alleged "Lord and Saviour" was celebrated on March 25 and was only transferred to December 25—the Winter Solstice—in the year 345 by decree of Pope Julius I.

This arbitrary and rather belated act made the Festival come more into line with the spurious and wholly incredible account in Matthew and shows once again that when a Movement is founded on a colossal untruth, it has to be constantly supported by a million white lies or pious frauds.

The dilemma of Sunday School teachers and clergymen, all the year round, is very real indeed and often pitiful to behold, bordering on the burlesque when heard on TV or radio.

The majestic tapestry of ancient Truths—reasonably based on Nature's seasonal happenings—was needlessly spoiled by fatuous imbecilities, ruthlessly superimposed by the purveyors of dogmatical nonsense.

But let us have another look at the Nativity scenes on Airmail form and stamp. On both of them is a bull and a donkey—both animals were part and parcel of ancient Egypt's mythology.

Apis, the Bull, was the zodiacal sign of Taurus and the "Age of Taurus" prevailed at the period under discussion, roughly five to six thousand years ago, very much pre-Christian.

Thousands of years ago, the Ass was a symbol of great importance and was always associated with the Messiah; there was, at one time, a cult of *Atum-Iu*, the ass-eared divinity. The Egyptian Jesus was portrayed as sitting on an ass and we find this symbolism again in the Gospels where an alleged Messiah was supposed to have been welcomed with hosannas and palms by a hostile population. Alas, the scenario got into the wrong place, for this entry into the "Celestial City" should have taken place *after* his death! Compare Bunyan's *Celestial City* and Augustine's *City of God*.

The doves in the picture are also Egyptian typology, for Horus was said to rise in the form of a dove. The dove was also the symbol of the Holy Spirit. At that time, the dove was *not* the symbol of peace, as nowadays.

Most impressive is that little corner of bricks—its Egyptian name is *Apta*, which also means crib or manger and denotes the birthplace of the Solar Deity.

The Egyptian Messiah was said to have been born at the Vernal Equinox in *Apta*, the corner, and this *Apta* was used as the hieroglyphic sign of the solar birthplace. The artist must have made an exhaustive study of Egyptian mythology!

That the Early Christian Church celebrated the alleged "Birth of Christ" for 345 years at March 25, can be explained by the fact that it was based on the two birthdays of the double Horus in Egypt; and also, because all festivals are based on Sun-worship, the solar god and the zodiac.

On the Mother-night of the Year, December 25, the Priests used to cry out: "The Virgin has brought forth—the Light is about to begin to grow again!" Compare this with the Druidic ceremonies at Stonehenge—practically identical.

The Age of Taurus, the Bull, extended roughly from 4565 to 2410 before our era; then the Age of Aries, the Ram, began and lasted until about 255. But, very often, the people did not use the new symbols immediately—with the result that they overlapped.

The children of Israel were particularly naughty. Although they were supposed to be the "favourites" of the Deity, they turned again and again to the worship of the Golden Calf of Baal, driving Moses to distraction; in an outburst of temper, he was alleged to have smashed the Ten Commandments.

In Church symbology we often come across the zodiacal signs of two different ages, each associated with the Messiah.

There is Aries, the Ram, with the Sun's disc behind his head (indicating that he belongs to the Solar-god) and a shepherd's crook, which later on became a bishop's crosier.

But a bishop's ceremonial headgear (mitre), represents a fishmouth, because it belongs to the following period, Pisces.

The first three centuries of our era were entirely dominated by the Fish-typology. To enumerate all the proofs would take up too much space. But one thing can be stated quite definitely: the cross was *not* the symbol of the early Christians!

It took the Church many centuries of unceasing propaganda to introduce that revolting picture of a so-called "Saviour" dangling from a cross with "bloody sweat" dripping down. It was, by far, the biggest and most wicked fraud in the history of mankind and has caused more bloodshed and misery than all the wars and murders within the last 1,800 years!

Nothing can mitigate this unscrupulous and contemptible priestly trickery, and no words are strong enough to expose this evil imposition that has kept trusting and decent human beings in the thralldom of blackmailing confidence abusers.

Finally, the threepenny stamp: Despite the fact that it depicts a German—or Nordic—fairy tale, it makes the greatest appeal to us, because it does not embody a religious theme, but a myth which refers to our times and, particularly, our climate and surroundings.

It is difficult to say whether our erudite Postmaster General chose the scene of Little Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs deliberately or stumbled on to the true meaning by accident. But it is a fact that the "death" of an invented Jesus and the "coma" of a fairy-tale Snow White are *both the same allegory!* Both represent Nature's Winter-sleep (so do Osiris and Lazarus) and the Seven Dwarfs are the underground forces of Nature's "feeding" plants, cereals, flowers, shrubs and trees.

The Iusa (Jesus) "dies" in the yearly Passion Play at the Autumn Equinox and "rises" again at the Spring Equinox.

Likewise, little Snow White falls (through a poisoned apple) into a coma; is placed into a glass-coffin and sleeps until the rays of the beneficent sun kiss her to life again. In this case, the Sun-god is represented by a "handsome young Prince"—and all is lovely in the garden!

After inwardly digesting this festive fare, philatelists and readers of the FREETHINKER should now lick their Airmail forms and "Sun-god stamps" with more gusto, well knowing that their gum does not contain LSD resin and that they will not get drugged, except through reading Church magazines or listening to religious broadcasts!

LETTERS

Negative Faith

IN reply to my critic F. H. Snow, whose letter you published on December 1, I would certainly class the gods of Olympus and unicorns with dragons, centaurs, gryphons and triple-headed giants. I will include werewolves, phoenixes, angels, demons and djinns in this class too, if it will make him any happier.

I am highly sceptical of the existence of any of these creatures, as no evidence has ever been produced under satisfactory conditions to establish their presence. This does not, however establish within me sufficient negative faith to state categorically that they do not exist. If Mr Snow believes that he possesses the scientific gnosis to satisfactorily demonstrate the inherent impossibility of the existence of, say, three-headed giants, at every place and at every time in the history of the universe, then I promise to give him a more sympathetic hearing than he has obviously been willing to extend to me. In the meantime, however, I am too much of a sceptic to accept their non-existence on his authority.

I confess that I have not issued questionnaires to discover how many share my views on Zeus, but such data would surely be of little value to the philosophical point I am attempting to make.

Had my critic read my article a little more carefully before rushing into print, he would have seen that I explicitly stated that I was not a devotee of Zeus. For the record, I do not believe in 'my' unicorns either.

I repeat that it is time that man grew out of his supernatural beliefs for good. Let us hope that all readers of the FREETHINKER have long since grown out of beliefs in the *ex cathedra* pronouncements of Mr Snow.

A. J. LOWRY.

Plea for Unity in Diversity

WHATEVER political party may for a longer or shorter term be in power, we would do well to remind ourselves and others that the real value of any party depends on its wisdom to bring us nearer to the one ideology which alone could make for peace and security in this strife-ridden world—and that is *unity in diversity*.

It needs but a moment's reflection to realise that *separateness* has been the basic cause of all major conflicts—separateness with its alliances with some countries against others and its un-Christian doctrine that the only way to preserve peace is by spending countless millions on ever more diabolical missiles for the destroying of our fellow men, in the hope that no nation would ever dare to use them.

As against all these evils—national vanities might also be included—unity in diversity means, of course, good relations with all countries, despite their differing "isms", in that one system of government may not be suited to every nation, a fact which is all too often disregarded, and hence the meddling of one country in the affairs of another.

This highest of all ideologies will not be brought about by contentious politics, but only in the course of time through an ever-widening climate of thought directed to that end. Therefore may I suggest that all efforts to further it cannot begin too soon?

CYRIL SCOTT.

Wagner

I SEE someone called P. G. Roy is in hysterics because P. Crommelin says nice things about Wagner. I want to say several things.

- (1) It was Nietzsche, not Wagner, who wrote about the Superman.
- (2) It's not generally known that Wagner fought for democracy in the German Revolution of 1848-9 (thus losing an excellent job). If this revolt had succeeded, the Nazi dictatorship would probably have never happened. Also Wagner was one of the first Germans to turn against Bismarck's militarist policy—see Guy de Pourtales's *Richard Wagner*.
- (3) "Wagner was born into an era of industrial boom", says P. G. Roy. Wagner was born in 1813. And Sir John Clapham in his *Economic Development of France and Germany* says that modern industry in Germany didn't get going till about 1840.
- (4) Wagner was a great composer. Hearing "The Ring" is an experience. Even Cecil Gray, an anti-Wagnerian, at least once admitted Wagner's greatness. And so did Brahms—who was a great composer himself—and was not in the habit of giving praise when he thought it wasn't deserved.
- (5) Joseph McCabe, in his *Rationalist Encyclopedia*, regarded Wagner as a force for atheism.

As a practical politician I have found that views of the kind expressed in P. G. Roy's letter help to make war more likely. They can be subtly used to stir up nationalism and keep people from thinking about World Government. Most of the people I know who hold them supported Sir Anthony Eden's policy over Suez in 1956 and support the USA's present policy in Vietnam.

I. S. LOW.

Prayer

TO give an example of the futility of prayer, how is it that the religious heads cannot do anything to stop the spread of foot and mouth disease?

M. D. SILAS.

AGNOSTICS ADOPTION SOCIETY seeks second case-worker for adoption placements in London and the Home Counties. Post would include casework with unmarried mothers, foster placements for babies and work with adopters. Salary for trained person within range of £1,295-£1,740, but newly trained caseworker or graduate with relevant experience will also be considered. Applicants need not be agnostic and should be able to drive a car. Apply to Adoptions Administrator, AAS, 69 Chaucer Road, London, SE24.

CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, London, WC1
(Underground: Holborn)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1st, 7.30 p.m.

PUBLIC FORUM

THE RIGHT TO DIE

Speakers include

NORMAN ST. JOHN-STEVAS, MP
DAVID TRIBE

Chairman:

Archdeacon EDWARD CARPENTER

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