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PARENTAL ATTITUDES TO 'RI'

Margaret Knight

IN recent years there have been a number of surveys on parental attitudes to religious education in state schools. Most of these have shown that some 65 to 70 per cent of parents are more or less unreservedly in favour of the present system. Last year, however, an enquiry in NE England came up with a figure of 96 per cent—a result which naturally caused jubilation among Christians, and which was widely publicised in a popular TV series, as well as in the *Times Educational Supplement* and elsewhere. In the National Secular Society's latest pamphlet *RI Surveys* (price 1s), Mr Maurice Hill, Vice-President of the Humanist Teachers Association, subjects the methods and findings of this latest enquiry to a much-needed scrutiny.

The survey, carried out by Mr P. R. May and Mr. O. R. Johnston, of the Department of Education in the Universities of Durham and Newcastle-on-Tyne, is described in an article PARENTAL ATTITUDES TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN STATE SCHOOLS in the *Durham Research Review* for April 1967. This Review is not widely accessible however, and probably most people have derived their impressions of the survey from press reports. These reports have not always made it clear that the survey differed from most previous enquiries in that it did not use the familiar opinion-poll technique by which representative samples of the population are interviewed in various areas of the country. Instead, the enquiry was confined to the Durham and Newcastle areas, and was conducted by means of a printed questionnaire which was distributed, with the co-operation of the Headmaster, through selected schools, and returned through the post.

Now postal questionnaires are an acceptable tool of sociological research, provided that certain conditions are fulfilled. Among the most important of these conditions are (i) that a large proportion of the questionnaires are returned, (ii) that the wording of the questions is free from ambiguity, and (iii) that the questions are not formulated in such a way as to suggest a particular answer. None of these conditions was fulfilled in the May and Johnston enquiry.

In an authoritative article (RESEARCH ON MAIL SURVEYS, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 124, part 2, 1961), Christopher Scott of the Government Social Survey writes, "During the last 30 to 40 years the mail survey [which had previously been in some disrepute] has gradually climbed back to respectability. It is now generally admitted that a high response rate is essential, and that high rates can in fact be achieved". The author then goes on to describe five recent mail surveys in which the proportion of "usable responses" ranged from 85 to 94 per cent.

In the May-Johnston survey the proportion was only 53.5 per cent; and this despite the fact that the commonest single cause of response failure—namely that the addressee has moved house and cannot be traced—was ruled out by the method of distribution.

May and Johnston seem quite undisturbed by the low response rate, and comment cheerfully that the 46.5 per cent of non-responders "though perhaps less interested in the issues raised" would probably, if they *had* replied, have expressed views that did not differ greatly from those of the responders. It is difficult to share this confidence. The questionnaire forms, as already stated, were distributed through the schools, children being given copies to take home to their parents. The forms were enclosed in sealed envelopes which also contained a letter "outlining the religious provisions of the act and explaining the purpose of the questionnaire", and a stamped envelope addressed either to the Durham or Newcastle University Departments of Education. Parents were not asked to sign the completed form, but to give various personal details, including the name of the school that their child attended. It seems far from unlikely, in view of the vaguely official aura with which the questionnaire was surrounded, that many parents would conclude that the most acceptable answers would be those that supported the *status quo*—and that if they could not honestly give such answers it would be wiser not to reply.

This impression would be confirmed by the wording of some of the questions. It is notoriously difficult to frame an unloaded question when one is hoping to obtain a particular answer, and this difficulty was by no means surmounted in the May-Johnston enquiry. Mr May, the senior research worker, is, as he stated on television, a Christian; and Mr Maurice Hill's NSS pamphlet gives many telling examples of the Christian bias (no doubt unconscious) that have crept into the wording of many of the questions. There is not space to quote these examples, but the extent of the bias can be illustrated by an imaginary parallel.

Suppose a secular humanist were to devise a questionnaire in which the first two items were as follows:

1. Do you think the present system of compulsory "RI" in schools should be changed? (Answer "yes" or "no".)
2. If you answered "yes" is this because you think that
 - Children are bored by "RI"?
 - Children are taught mythological stories as though they were true?
 - Many teachers do not believe what they have to teach?
 - "RI" is a waste of time?

—and suppose further that there were no alternative form of question 2 beginning "If you answered 'no.'" There would be a loud and justified outcry about the loaded nature of the questions. But they are no more loaded than the first three "opinion" questions in the May-Johnston

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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 01-407 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 and MCRAE.

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

British Humanist Association, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8, Friday, March 15, 7.30 p.m.: Professor RUDOLPH DREIKURS, 'Psychology in the Classroom'.

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group, The Lecture Theatre (Room 102), Southgate Technical College, High Street, London, N14, Wednesday, March 20, 8 p.m.: DIANA ROOKLEDGE, 'Practical Social Action'.

Leicester Secular Society, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, March 17, 6.30 p.m.: Mr PAT SLOAN, 'USSR; 50 Years of Socialist Government'.

Merseyside Humanist Group, Strand Hotel, Brunswick Street, Liverpool 2, Friday, March 22, 7.30 for 8 p.m.: Annual Dinner (Tickets 30/-, from Mrs M. Clowes, 32 Caldly Road, Aintree, Liverpool 9).

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, March 17, 11 a.m.: Dr JOHN LEWIS, 'Freedom and Ethics in Society'; Tuesday, March 19, 6.45 p.m.: BILL BRUGGER, 'Social and Cultural Development in China'.

South Place Sunday Concerts, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, March 17, 6.30 p.m.: London String Quartet, Haydn, Ravel, Brahms.

NAZARIN

WHEN, many years ago, people spoke of The Film Society, there was no ambiguity—they were talking of the original film society, founded in 1925 by a varied section of the arts, science and professions that included Anthony Asquith, Sidney Bernstein, J. B. S. Haldane, Julian Huxley, Augustus John, Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells—and operating only in London.

The ripples from the eight shows held every season were large and they spread far, for the organisation was a unique one which was pioneering a deeper, more thought-provoking attitude to the cinema.

In many localities today there are either small film societies or specialised commercial cinemas that cater for the same basic kind of audience. The latest of these societies, the Freethought-Humanist Film Club, continues the good work of putting on thought-provoking films and, even more important, of stimulating its audiences to discuss the pictures.

The showing of Luis Bunel's *Nazarin* at the Conway Hall, London, February 19, demonstrated the value of this element of discussion, which is of necessity absent in the commercial cinema. I felt that the audience got far more out of *Nazarin* by the added stimulus of other people's views.

Especially when a film comes from abroad (this was made in Mexico) and is by a director who is not making his picture primarily for Anglo-Saxon audiences, one appreciates an introduction to put it into its right context. NSS President, David Tribe, did this in a most erudite way, giving a short account of Luis Bunuel's life and work, and about his theme in *Nazarin*. Not having been brought up in a religious family, let alone a Roman Catholic community, much of Bunuel's points would have been lost on me had it not been for Mr Tribe.

The story deals with a poor priest in poverty-stricken Mexico; his name: Nazarin. What he does and what happens to him follow the story of Jesus of Nazareth. As Mr Tribe pointed out, the film nearly received a Roman Catholic Film Award, but finally the Catholics decided they could not give it their prize. The discussion after the showing centred on the question: What was the real nature of the film? Religious? Or an exposure of Catholicism? Was it even blasphemous in parts?

The debate went on quite late, but, as is so often the case, that was not the end of it. People went on, delving deeper into the film afterwards. I had taken two friends of mine to the show, and we certainly continued afterwards. The Freethought-Humanist Film Club, in the best traditions of the film society movement, has started some ripples spreading outwards—and this is not just a turn of phrase, because there seemed to be present at the showing quite a few unfamiliar faces, a number of whom did not appear to have been previously reached by other NSS activities. That is a very healthy sign.

Report from Christopher Brunel.

The AGNOSTICS ADOPTION SOCIETY are holding their ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on March 16, 1968, at 2.30 p.m. at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1. Chairman: Professor A. J. Ayer. Speaker: Miss Jane Rowe whose talk will be on "New Developments in Adoption". All those interested in the work of the Society are welcome.

FREUD AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

G. F. Westcott

AT the end of the nineteenth century psychology was an academic subject—the province of philosophers—concerned largely with the description of human mental faculties and the minute subjective analysis of mental states. Physiological psychology had made some progress, and there had been a few works on more dynamic psychology, by such authors as W. James and J. Dewey.

In 1895 J. Brewer and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) published *Studien in Hysteria*, describing catharsis as a method of psychiatric cure, through “free association” and “transference”. In 1898 Freud published *Role of Sexuality in the Aetiology of Neurosis*.

Freud, in his first popular book, *Die Traumdeutung* (1900) (English translation *Interpretation of Dreams* (1905)), wrote: “The dream is built up in the same manner as a neurotic symptom. It is a compromise between the demands of a repressed instinctive urge, and the resistance of a power that exercises censorship within the Ego. In this work, Freud also developed his theory of the unconscious and introduced dream analysis into psychotherapy. As in his other works he emphasised the importance of sex; though his concept of sex, originally narrow, later broadened into “an urge towards joy”.

In spite of great opposition, abuse and ridicule it soon became apparent that psychoanalysis was of great importance to everyone in everyday life, as well as in medicine, biology, sociology and the arts.

In 1902 a group of Viennese doctors joined with Freud in a seminar for the study of psychoanalysis, and soon psychoanalysis became a worldwide movement.

In 1904 Freud published *Psycho-pathology of Everyday Life*, which included an interesting theory of forgetting; followed, in 1906, by *Phobia of a Five-year-old Boy* (the first book on child-analysis); in 1908, by *Character and Analeroticism* (Character-formation); in 1910, by *Leonardo da Vinci* (Study of genius); in 1913 by *Totem and Tabu* (Sociology and religion); and, in 1919 by *A Child is being Beaten* (Origin of sex perversion).

Other psychoanalysts published outstanding works, such as, O. Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1914); I. Ricklin's *Wish Fulfilment in Fairy Tales* (1915); H. Silberer's *Problems of Mysticism and its Symbolism* (1917); and J. C. Flugel's *The Psycho-analytical Study of the Family* (1921).

In 1912/13 two outstanding psychoanalysts left Freud's circle, namely, K. Jung to whom we owe “extrovert” and “introvert” and the concept of “archaetype”, and A. Adler who developed the concept of the “inferiority complex”.

In 1923 Freud's *Das Ich und das Es* was published. In this he divided the human mind into three main parts: the (conscious) “ego”; the “id” (the unconscious reservoir of instinctual urges); and the “super-ego” (the moral elements, a most important supervising control which is largely unconscious). This theory of an evolved hierarchical structure of the mind, opens up the exciting possibility that eventually a corresponding physical and physiological structure may be discovered, thus helping to solve the body/mind problem.

In Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* he wrote: “Thus

religion would be regarded as the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity” . . . “The truths contained in religious doctrines are after all so distorted and systematically disguised that the mass of mankind cannot recognise them as truth.” . . . “We have come to the conclusion that it is better to avoid such symbolic disguisings of the truth, and to allow the child knowledge of the real state of affairs in a way suitable for his stage of intellectual development”.

Freud knew that his views would be strenuously opposed by conservative traditional authorities and that he would receive much personal abuse. Today when religions are being attacked on many grounds—including historical, logical, ethical, psychological and sociological—the position is very different.

Influenced by psychoanalysis, movements for greater sexual freedom arose in Russian and Western Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. (These are described in the works of W. Reich.) These movements failed, but there are signs of a revival in England today.

With Freud psychology began to move towards becoming a science to which man could look for help to understand his own and other people's behaviour. Further, by the wide range of its applications, psychoanalysis has helped to unite many previously independent sciences into a single correlated body of science.

BRADLAUGH MEMORIAL SERIOUSLY DAMAGED

THE Bradlaugh Memorial which stands in Brookwood Cemetery was found on Thursday, February 22, to have been seriously damaged by vandals. The matter has been put in the hands of the Police and the local C.I.D. who are now looking into it.

It was discovered that the granite capping had been wrenched off and thrown to the ground, breaking two of the iron stanchions which carry the surrounding chains, while the bronze bust itself was missing.

The damage and theft were reported to Mr Basil Bradlaugh Bonner, great-grandson of the National Secular Society's founder Charles Bradlaugh.

This is the second time the bronze bust has been removed from the Brookwood Memorial. The previous occasion was in 1938 when, after a few weeks, it was discovered on the edge of a golf course some miles away.

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By DAVID TRIBE

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THE DEAD HORSE IS STILL KICKING

Otto Wolfgang

Why Soviet legislation misfired

RETURNING from Mao's China, Alberto Moravia, the well-known Italian author, wrote in *Corriere della Sera* (July 12, 1967):

"... turning literature into politics is a gift from Russia. It's not a Marxist theory, but a Soviet one. Marx, like the good German he was, with a proper respect for the independence of culture, never once said that literature should perform political propaganda. Stalin did. But Stalin got the idea directly from the secret police of Czar Nicholas II who was convinced that literature was inherently and invariably dangerous, and therefore persecuted the intellectuals. Finally, though, after sufficient persecution, the intellectuals did indeed become dangerous, and made their literature political."

Quoted from the USA monthly *Atlas*. It is noteworthy that Fidel Castro in an address to writers said, they must have creative freedom, the main thing is that they raise the cultural level.

This statement, however simplified it may be, also applies to religionists in the Soviet world. Anti-religious legislation has made it more than difficult for them to obey what they consider divine obligations; the Soviet Constitution guarantees freedom of anti-religious propaganda, and religious worship (i.e. not propaganda), if the congregation is able to get official recognition. For this purpose they have to show that their members behave inside Soviet laws and that their rites do not incite believers to break state laws. In consequence, in the course of 1966 many offenders were arrested and imprisoned for terms of up to five years for singing hymns, forming processions to rivers for public performance of baptism, publishing clandestine literature, but mainly for the indoctrination of children. In March 1966, therefore, additions to Article 142 of the Penal Code specified that henceforth it was illegal to circulate any sort of religious literature or to organise any type of gathering or procession which might "disturb public order". The sharp intensification of discriminating legislation produced a rather dramatic opposition within the ranks of the believers.

The officially tolerated Orthodox Church has about 8,000 places of worship open; it is allowed to print Bibles and prayerbooks, to manufacture candles for sale and to have a restricted range of regular publications. The reason for this lenient attitude is that the Metropolitan (later Patriarch) Sergey arranged with Stalin a *modus vivendi*: he received, during World War II, significant concessions in return for active participation in rallying popular support for the war effort. After the war, however, the anti-religious campaign was taken up anew and led to growing discontent among the Orthodox Church membership with their leaders. Far greater, however, is the rebellion within the Baptist Church following of some 540,000. They have 5,500 churches open, whilst the 2,268,000 Soviet Jews have only 60 synagogues, no central religious organisation, no magazine or journal, and no Bibles; their rabbis are consistently refused permission to go abroad for training or conferences. Soviet Muslims have occasionally been permitted to make pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina.

The Jewish Problem

The Soviet authorities view the Jews as different from other ethnic groups in the USSR—entirely urbanised, not

identified with a specific territory, and with a tribal rather than an ecumenical religion; from the start, Jews are suspect of non-loyalty because of their emotional bonds outside the country, particularly Israel and USA. In order to make assimilation impossible for them, they are considered an ethnic rather than a religious group and are being registered as such in the passports which every Soviet citizen has to produce at many occasions. This enables petty officials to discriminate against them in the admission to public jobs or universities.

However, war experiences and the trauma of Stalinist anti-Semitism increased among Soviet Jewry too a feeling of togetherness and led to a revival of a wave of nationalism as has swept over all areas of the Soviet Union; many young people, without any previous background of religious upbringing or indoctrination, crowd the few open synagogues during Jewish holidays; others wear the Star of David, learn Hebrew in secret or listen to the Israeli radio.

And yet, if offered an opportunity to emigrate, the majority of them would surely decline (writes a student in the official USA magazine *Problems of Communism*); they merely refuse to accept to be bullied and discriminated against; they want the old formula revived that culture must be "national in form and socialist in content".

The Moslem Sector

The great love professed, for political reasons, by the Soviet rulers for the Arabs in general and Egypt in particular is not simulated in regard to their own 25 million Muslims. Islam is tolerated as a creed, but a large influx of Slavs and other non-Asian colonists is being maintained so that the overall average of Muslims in their republics is about 64 per cent only, and linguistic reforms aim at eliminating outside influences, particularly from neighbouring Persian and Arabic countries. However, as *Voprosi filosofii* No. 12 avers, the proportion of religious believers in the Muslim republics is now higher than in any of the others.

What Went Wrong ?

As freethinkers we must ask why, after half a century of official anti-religious campaign, religion is still very much alive and kicking in the Soviet sector of the world.

Of course, we cannot accept the argument of the believers that the survival of religion is a proof of the power of God; but reduced to the grain of truth it contains, this spurious argument means that tradition and millennia of religious indoctrination have created in many a sort of obsessional neurosis stronger than human laws. We can change social conditions but we cannot change overnight people who are the product of capitalist societies. Many still enjoy religious pomp and ceremony without believing any longer; they need a psychological 'kick', so even sober-minded people observe at weddings, for instance, all the obsolete fertility rites and symbolic motions without knowing why. When Johnny gets married all the world ought to know it. So instead of just registering the fact that a man and wife have decided to stand together in life 'for better, for worse', he must throw an expensive party with a tribal community meal, religious 'consecration' and pagan rites to impress on the bride and her clan that he, Johnny, has condescended to choose her as his favourite (*pro tem*).

In 1957 I wrote in the SPES monthly—reprinted in the *New Zealand and the Indian Rationalist—int. al.*:

"Religion is the result of all sorts of fear, want and insecurity and at the same time it is the necessary opiate to make life more bearable to the weak; the root of and the want for it, therefore, will only wither away in a truly classless society where there is no longer want of fear or exploitation of man through man. By the same token, the Iron Curtain countries are hardly any nearer to socialism today; the frequent resurgence, whenever possible, of Church fanaticism coupled with anti-Semitism, clearly prove that exploitation, want and fear continue to exist."

And this is why we oppose the spreading of harmful ideas and fight the 'Opium of the People', not its victims. To persecute people who otherwise, for instance in the fight against USA aggression in Vietnam, may be our allies) because of their indoctrinated superstitions and their obsessional fear only turns them into martyrs. Mexico proved it before the Soviet Union, and before Mexico the failure of Bismarck's 'Kulturkampf' against the Catholic Church in Germany.

Lenin—who left the anti-religious propaganda to the League of Militant Atheists—wrote:

"We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our Party is concerned. *Religion must be of no concern to the state*, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be abso-

lutely free to profess any religion he pleases or no religion whatever. . . . Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citizen's religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated."

(*Socialism and Religion*, Foreign Language Edition, Moscow.)

Stalin dissolved the League of Militant Atheists and substituted it with a philosophical society that edits *Nauka i religia* (Science and Religion). However, as countless highly intelligent people prove, science and reason are no valid arguments against belief in a 'higher power'. Marx made it clear that the social existence of an individual engenders his conscious outlook and he who fears a change in his privileged social position, a risk in health or fortunes, may cling to ancient magical ideas to fortify his hopes.

In his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx made the gruffy remark:

"Everyone is entitled to relieve himself bodily or spiritually (*Jeder muss seine religioese wie leibliche Notdurft verrichten koennen*) without the police poking their noses in."

And Engels enlarged on it in 1874 by saying that

"Firstly—on paper you can decree a lot but people may still refuse to comply; and secondly, persecution is the surest way to boost unwanted convictions. One thing is clear: the only service you can render God nowadays is to raise atheism to an enforceable doctrine."

PIOUS HOSPITAL VULTURES

A press release issued on behalf of the National Secular Society by David Tribe, President.

THE Whittington Hospital Management Committee and the Minister of Health are to be congratulated on humanely and courageously facing up to their responsibilities in banning ward religious services. Though the entrenched Christian churches of the land are, characteristically, disputing this position, hospitals are, or should be, run for the benefit of their patients and not for the benefit of their chaplains.

Secular humanists are trying very hard to believe that Christians are genuinely penitent for their aggressions of the past and are now dedicated to dialogue, liberal values, the open society, the triumph of compassion over ritual. But the credibility gap is defeating us. Unable to exert much control today over healthy adults the churches are now pretending this is not their intention. At the same time their pressures are expanding where resistance is weaker: in cowardly onslaughts on children and the sick.

Hospitals have long been a favoured field for missionary activity. No doubt the original motivation was a charitable one. No doubt words of comfort are still given to ill believers. No doubt selfless practical work is done for all in the name of a deity as well as in the name of the NHS. But religionists know that chances for conversion and influence are best among the vulnerable. For centuries they have induced ailing sinners to make wills in favour of ecclesiastical establishments. Devout matrons have ruled their nursing staff like abbesses of Carmelite convents. Pious nurses have inserted religious denominations on patients' charts when they have specifically stated they are freethinkers; allowed their condition to weaken while thrusting

theological debate upon them; expressed their disapproval of unmarried mothers, women who want abortion, drug addicts and anybody else whose condition they attribute to 'immorality'. Hospital chaplains stride the wards with more arrogance than medical superintendents, and are complacent if patients in crisis snuff out so long as the last sounds they hear are the holy caterwauling of a band of missionaries who have intruded themselves upon the privacy and helpless condition of *everyone* in the ward, believing or unbelieving, recovering or sinking, rowdy or peace-loving.

There are ample facilities for those who want religion in hospital. If they are mobile there are the chapel services. If not there are relayed services or radio broadcasts on earphones, Bibles and other religious books from the library trolley, visits from the chaplain for those who want them. Even religious people do not want imposed services when they are not in the mood or are seriously ill. There are signs that, fearing their vested interests are threatened, the churches are coming together to fight the health authorities. We hope the Minister of Health will boldly face a showdown, and that other hospital management committees will follow the lead of Whittington. Though they are denied status and proper facilities, secular humanists try to visit those patients of their views who would like to see them. But here is a service which should be much more secularised. Clearly there is a place for hospital chaplains with bedridden religionists. But most lonely people in hospital do not want to discuss either theology or freethought with visitors, and outside there is a large pool of suitable non-working wives and retired people, often lonely themselves, who would gladly and freely make themselves available for visiting if proper arrangements were made by hospitals in conjunction with local authorities. The days when hospitals were built to the glory of God have gone.

THE WISHES OF PARENTS

Isobel Grahame

IN 1945 the school management committee, of which I was then a member, circularised parents asking if they would agree to sex education being given in school to those children about to go on from primary to secondary schooling. With the exception of a few of the better educated parents in the village, we received a massive *no*, and immediately followed it up with a strongly worded request that the necessary information be given at home. Next day school was besieged by anxious Mums and Dads and a sprinkling of grandparents imploring us to provide sex education in school!

On investigation I discovered that the quick reversal of parental wishes was the result of fear, and oddly enough it was the same fear which gave rise to the two opposite 'wishes'. Our first letter raised the fear that children would learn something the parents didn't know themselves and would embarrass their elders by asking awkward questions about matters which were considered indecent at home, and thus uncover parental ignorance. The second letter made the recipients realise their incompetence to perform the task at home and they feared the children might tell teachers that Mum and Dad didn't know or had got it all wrong and made a mess of it.

There are statistics purporting to show that a majority of parents want their children to be instructed in Christianity and Christian worship in state schools. Is it possible that this majority who opt for one form of religious belief (presumably their own) have never studied others, or are they so ignorant and apathetic that they cannot distinguish between instruction and education, and confuse both with worship?

It would be interesting and informative if one could make some comparison with statistics about what the parents want their children to learn under the other subject headings on the syllabus, but I doubt if they are ever consulted—probably with good reason, for in the nature of things parents are nearly 20 years out of date by the time they get married and have children, and a great majority must have received instruction in many matters which, if only they had known it, was already out of date when it was taught.

I think the pollsters have got results relating to RE in schools which indicate, not the considered wishes of informed adults, but fear on the part of parents who dread the prospect of having to discuss comparative religion with

their enlightened sons and daughters and even—perish the thought!—have to explain the basis and extent of their own beliefs.

PARENTAL ATTITUDES TO 'RI'

(Continued from front page)

questionnaire (these questions are numbered 4-6, questions 1-3 being purely factual). The questions run:

4. I want my child to know about and understand Christianity. (Answer "agree" or "disagree".)
5. If you [agree] is this because you think
 - Christianity is true?
 - It is part of our history?
 - It is an interesting study?
 - It helps people to be good?
 - Most people seem to want it?
 - The schools seem to want it?
6. Helping people to know about and understand Christianity is part of
 - The Church's business?
 - The parents' business?
 - The state day school's business?

There is no alternative form of question 5 beginning "If you disagree"; and this fact, together with the nature of the succeeding question, might well suggest that the questionnaire is intended primarily for those who agree, and that if you disagree there is not much point in continuing with it.

Of the 53.5 per cent of the sample who replied, 96 per cent gave affirmative answers to question 4 ("Do you want your child to know about and understand Christianity?"). But this is by no means equivalent, as May and Johnston assume, to a 96 per cent vote in favour of the present system of school "RI". Most humanists want their children to "know about and understand Christianity". But this does not mean that they want them indoctrinated with Christian belief, which is the purpose of the present agreed-syllabus type of religious instruction.

One cannot be sure how question 4 was interpreted by the parents who answered it. But two facts are perhaps significant. First, only 62 per cent gave as a reason for their affirmative answer "Because Christianity is true". (This, incidentally, provides another example of ambiguous wording—"I believe Christianity is true" may express anything from fundamentalism to a belief that it is a good thing to love one's neighbour.) Second, 80 per cent replied "yes" to the question whether children should be taught about other religions besides Christianity—which rather suggests that it was "teaching about" rather than "indoctrination in" that most parents had in mind.

In conclusion: it can safely be said that May and Johnston's techniques are unsound and their conclusions exaggerated. But it remains true none the less that in all the surveys that have so far been made a substantial majority (though nothing like 96 per cent) of parents have declared themselves in favour of "RI". But no survey to date has made the all-important distinction between indoctrination and teaching ABOUT; and none has referred to the possibility of giving moral education along secular lines instead of linking it with "RI". A questionnaire compiled jointly by Christians and humanists, which explored parents' reactions to these alternatives, might begin to get us some-where.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

PUBLIC FORUM:

DIVORCE LAW REFORM

Speakers include

MARJORIE PROOPS

WILLIAM WILSON, MP

DAVID TRIBE (Chairman)

CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, London, WC1

THURSDAY, APRIL 18th, 1968, 7.30 p.m.

REVIEWS

Robert W. Morrell

"Nottingham Chartism" by Peter Wyncoll. Illustrated. 60 p.p. Nottingham Trades Council, 3/6.

OF the mass political movements in this country Chartism is among the better known but least satisfactorily written upon. The movement arose and fell during the formative years of organised freethought, and many of those associated with it were also, or later became, closely associated with freethought as active propagandists by word of mouth, pen or both.

Freethought in the nineteenth century had a stronger political character than the movement has today, though recent activities seem to suggest a change is taking place. This political character had its roots much deeper than just the Chartist Movement as is seen by the open advocacy of the ideas of Thomas Paine by many within Chartism who later became activists within freethought. This short work by Peter Wyncoll brings out the inter-relationship of the various movements, though as his title indicates his work is concerned mainly with Chartist agitation in one place, Nottingham.

A leading Nottingham Chartist, James Sweet, for many years chaired anniversary dinners to honour the memory of Thomas Paine and, as Wyncoll states, "many more like him must have read and drawn strength from Paine's *Rights of Man*. It was men such as Sweet, a bookseller and barber, who put not only Chartism but freethought on the map.

Many other figures come to life in this absorbing booklet and, as one reads it, it becomes increasingly clear that all too many leaders of the Chartists let their followers down. Fergus O'Connor himself, while doing sterling service, went to great lengths to stress his respectability and following his election as Chartist Member of Parliament published an address which made clear his loyalty to throne and altar.

The full history of Chartism and its influence is still to be written, many provincial centres like Nottingham, famous in the annals of the movement, appear to have been rather neglected by scholars, hence Peter Wyncoll's fact-packed booklet is very welcome as much to the political historian as to the student of freethought history. The author is clearly no advocate of 'kings' history' and thus open to the charge of bias. Yet his is a bias that is fully justified as we owe a great deal to those who heroically fought for social and political reform, a fight that was entered into by the Chartists and in which the freethought movement carried on; it is a fight as yet far from won.

Richard Clements

HUMAN RIGHTS

MUCH will be heard in the coming months about human rights and fundamental freedoms for all regardless of race, language, sex or religion; indeed, the spate of talk and writing has already begun. Those who engage in the various activities initiated by the campaign marking the twentieth anniversary of the proclamation must be on their guard against double talk, the flight from hard facts, and the banalities of the platform spell-binders. Humanist speakers and writers must try to give our people a constructive lead.

A book has recently appeared which will be of real service to all who are studying this subject. (Its title is HUMAN RIGHTS: *A Study Guide for the International Year for Human Rights, 1968*; Heinemann, price 6s.) The vast and complicated theme of human rights is set out and discussed in three main sections of the book: (1) Human Rights in the World; (2) Human Rights in Britain; (3) Human Rights in Europe. The various aspects of each section is considered in detail by a knowledgeable and skillful team of writers. Their work is supported by extracts from the various international agreements, suggested topics for discussion and reading lists. The book is a veritable *vade-mecum* for the general reader, as well as for lecturers and writers on this whole subject. I recommend the book to our societies and groups.

Apart from a general interest in promoting the growth of the idea of world citizenship, and the formulation of a wise and decent code of human behaviour, Secularists will have a special concern about Articles (18) and (19) of the Universal Declaration. Our readers may care to have the exact wording of each of these brief sections in mind at this time.

They read:

ARTICLE 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

ARTICLE 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Such rights as those mentioned above have a long history; and all of them have had to be fought for by determined people. They were not gifts from the sky. Nor did they come into being from the mere proclamation of *natural* rights, for without the *will* and *method* to enforce such rights in everyday life, better working and living conditions will not be achieved. The need for both thought and action in this field is today as necessary as ever.

Thus there are in the United Kingdom today three international conventions which the authors of this book insist ought to be ratified without undue delay by the British Government: (1) The International Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination; (2) the Convention about discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and (3) the ILO Convention dealing with equal pay for men and women for work of equal value.

Finally, Humanists will wish to stress that the key clauses in the Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations, meeting in Paris, on December 10, 1948, need to be considered in the light of the population explosion in the post-war period. The time has surely come for a knowledge of family planning to be accepted internationally as a fundamental human right.

VISIT TO CLIFTONVILLE DURING EASTER HOLIDAY

WE are holding a Centre at "Seacroft" Private Hotel, 28-29 Dalby Square, Cliftonville, between Thursday, April 11 and Saturday, April 20, and expect about forty to be there at the weekend peak period, including a few children. Local freethinkers are invited to drop in on Easter Sunday evening, any time from 7 p.m., to meet others and to take part in an informal discussion on Human Rights with particular regard to Women's Rights. Tea and coffee will be available at about 9 p.m. If you can let us know beforehand it will be appreciated, but do not let this stop you from coming if you find at the last minute that you can manage it.

On the previous day, Saturday 13th, we plan to join ramblers from South Place Ethical Society. Details of the walk should be available here by the beginning of April, or you could telephone the hotel on Good Friday, leaving your phone number if I am out. The hotel number is Thanet 20718. Any suggestions for rambling or other activities during the week would be welcome. MARJORIE MEPHAM.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

HUMAN RIGHTS YEAR DINNER

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WILLIAM HAMLING, MP
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Letters to the Editor

NOTE: Letters exceeding 200 words may be cut, abbreviated, digested or rewritten.

Re Open Society (February 16)

MR BLACKHAM wishes the schools to be training-grounds for the Open Society. How can they?

The present routine of worship at school assembly with prayers, Bible reading and a hymn, even if it conveys a feeling of remoteness from the life into which the school will plunge again a few minutes later, yet has the advantage of venerable tradition and being considered by our rulers as of vital importance. To change that would be a loss which a secularist assembly would have to face.

What form of 'uplift' can take the place of the traditional? A classroom moral instruction period is not feasible, for lack of time, risk of boredom, and an inevitable uneasiness in the teacher, whose behaviour is known to the children and tacitly invites comparison with the standards he is putting forward.

I suggest, as a profitable way of 'making the jump' from 'is' to 'ought', short readings expressing humanistic ideals. One source could be the Bible. Students of whatever religion, or none, could be present at a reading of 'The Prodigal Son', 'The Good Samaritan', and Nathan's story of the ewe lamb.

But best of all is, as says Mr Blackham, 'permeation'. It is a hard way with every teacher alert to seize the opportunity to criticise briefly and sympathetically specific failures in behaviour in his class and to praise examples of service and unselfishness, his own conduct never falling below what he advocates.

There are teachers and headmasters doing these things already. It is gratifying to see the assembly wake up when the headmaster turns from the formal, routine repetition, to his spontaneous comment on conduct as shown in an event just occurred in the school or beyond its walls.

JOSEPH H. HIRD.

Opposed to censorship

YOU threaten censorship of "Copy which contains libel, obscenity, detected error or falsity, gross abuse, obscurity, racialism or incitement to violence . . ."; a frustrating and uninviting prospect! You say you are "opposed to certain forces and influences, not to people"—a warning not to criticise people by name?

How much of this is necessary or appropriate to freethinking—how much a mere carry-over from standards set in accordance with beliefs and principles which freethinkers expressly reject?

What is libel? Obscenity? Racialism?—do you alone know the authoritative view or truth? Even matters of fact are not always certain.

About naming people! I think we Freethinkers must be especially courageous here. In my experience of political action for world government I found out where the priorities of people like Lord Boyd-Orr, Lord Russell and Ted Leather, MP, really stood. They posed as advocates of World Government, but when tested at the polls showed they were Labour Party or Conservative Party although neither of these parties asked for a mandate to work towards World Government. No wonder world international anarchy persists!

E. G. MACFARLANE,

World Government again

H. FAIRHURST'S views are out of date. He says "To destroy war we must destroy capitalism", yet wars occurred before capitalism. Hasn't Mr Fairhurst heard of the split between Communist China and Communist Russia? Of Stalin's quarrel with Tito's Yugoslavia? Of Albania's quarrel with Yugoslavia? Of Khrushchev's aggression against Hungary? (A "nauseating contemplation", eh, Mr Fairhurst?)

If all the world were Communist, wars would continue unless there was a World Government. The need for more raw materials in one place and the need for more space in over-populated areas in another would contribute to that, as would the same military gangs at the head of each independent state anxious to justify its existence.

An article in *German Foreign Policy*, bought at a Communist Party bookshop, states that the anti-Soviet policy of the West German Federal Republic was opposed by West German indus-

trialists. This proves (1) capitalism isn't always a cause of war, (2) capitalists can't always control the foreign policy of their government, and (3) Communists can't keep up to date.

National Sovereignty is the cause of war; World Government is the remedy. Those who support World Government realise that, like all such major changes, it can only be brought about as a result of efforts by many people. The trouble is, we have too many people who keep putting forward ideas that are out of date and won't listen to up to date ones, and who try to stop the latter being discussed. Communists believe that because war was revolutionary (in the sense of being a new idea and a needed reform) it is still revolutionary now. They are wrong. World Government is the need now.

I. S. LOW.

Internationalism or World Government

SOME think that Internationalism would operate justly and honestly. I believe such thinking a fallacy. John Bull, Uncle Sam, and other industrious partners in World Government would find themselves trying to support the rest of the world.

Opportunist World Government officials would jockey for control of the world's wealth and overall power. Would the three February 16 correspondents prefer them to be Catholic or Communist?

Opportunism and a lowering of moral standards cause dishonesty, not nationalism. It is lack of patriotism in any nation which allows it to degenerate, or allows rascals to govern or control.

Should a World Government Army or Police Force war against or punish Rhodesia or South Africa for trying to preserve their standards of civilisation? By what right or thinking should the industrious workers of the world be penalised in order to support the least provident and least productive (except in producing children)?

Individuals intrigue, whether members of a nation or United Nations. We need international honesty, morality, and control of opportunism before any World Government is attempted. In my January 26 article I said the clergy have been responsible for much of the hypocrisy and evil in the world (including Vietnam) and that it is time to end it.

WILLARD E. EDWARDS, Bishop of Universal Life Church in Hawaii, and a minister in Life Science Intl., two New-Age humanist, rationalist and scientific organisations.

A Christian Open Society?

I HAVE read with special attention Harold Blackham's answers to questions put to him by Brian Cooper (February 16) on the subject: "The Open Society".

An Open Society, as clearly described by Mr Blackham, is what we need in order to build a new society, a society of universal brotherhood, built on love and mutual comprehension.

There are, however, several organisations with the same object of an Open Society, and these, for the benefit of mankind I suppose, should unite. One of these is the so-called *Focolarini* (i.e. belonging to the 'hearths') which has its HQ in Italy and a branch address in England: *New Time* (magazine), 2 Stamford Court, Goldhawk Road, London, W6. I hope Mr. Blackham will be glad to know about it and will seek further information.

The *Focolarini* is a Christian organisation, but Mr. Blackham will certainly be glad to see how the principles and spirit of Open Society are being put in practice by it.

FR. G. M. PARIS, OP (Malta).

The value of life

MR LOWRY suspects that I am changing my ground, but he suspects wrongly. I have seen no real evidence in the writings of humanists that they understand the world which produces Hamlets and Macbeths. All I have seen so far is plenty of evidence that humanists are diametrically opposed to the powerful insight that Hamlets and Macbeths have on this world.

Epicurus could never see the tragic aspects of dying and death, but nevertheless he failed to take the sling out of death. His famous statement on death is a big joke, as deaths means something to everyone. People mourn for their loved ones because they can do nought else in the circumstances.

I would say it is nature which decides the values of life, and in the eyes of nature life has no value at all. Man may delude himself by some ideology that life has a value, but nature makes short work of that as it finally annihilates him.

The Christian believes that life is a gift from God, and that is its value. Where do humanists get their value of life?

R SMITH.