

**The Humanist World Weekly**Registered at the  
G.P.O. as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,  
July 5, 1968**THE POPE'S GONE MAD**

**EITHER his Holiness is off his head—or he takes us all for nitwits. If our press is to be relied upon, and in accurately reporting the words of his Holiness we may believe that it is, then these are the conclusions between which we must choose following his "happy announcement" at Rome on Wednesday, June 26.**

Unless, that is, we prefer to take his announcement—that fragments of bone found under St Peter's Basilica are the authentic remains of St Peter himself—as signifying that he is off his head and that he believes we are *also*.

He said: "We are right in believing that the few—but sacred—mortal remains of the Prince of the Apostles have been traced". He went on to say that only after the most painstaking and accurate investigation, by competent and prudent people, was *reliable proof of their authenticity obtained*.

It is important to mark that the Pope did not say, simply, "we believe" nor "we think we are right in believing" but "*we are right in believing . . .*". There is no longer any doubt; it is a settled and firmly established fact; "proof" has been obtained.

Positive identification of some skeletal remnants, in these circumstances, having been buried for about 2,000 years, might rank as the greatest accomplishment in forensic medicine the world has ever known. But it isn't.

It has long been believed, by those given to such beliefs, that St Peter was crucified upside down during the persecutions of the first century, and that he was buried where the basilica's high altar now stands. The belief having become established, Pope Pius XII started investigations in 1939 in the hope of finding something to substantiate the tradition. In 1940 digging was begun under St Peter's and, by 1950, archaeologists had excavated a Roman cemetery, an empty tomb (announced as St Peter's by Pope Pius) and three sets of bones two of which were found quite close to the tomb.

These discoveries were mostly the work of Signora Marguerita Garducci who has maintained for many years that one of the groups of bones were

those of the Apostle Peter. The third set of bones was found behind a wall in a much earlier church, and these bones, said to have belonged to a man who died aged between 60 and 70 years, were the set on which Signora Garducci pinned her faith. Pope Pius, however, announced that positive identification of St Peter's bones was impossible.

Recently, the bones have reposed at Rome's Institute of Legal Medicine where they have been undergoing carbon-dating and other scientific tests. Presumably, the Pope rests his case on the scientific findings of the various archaeologists and other scientists who have examined the bits of bone. Presumably he has sought careful advice before making his announcement. Who then can question the twin utterances of science and Pope? We can.

The bones may have belonged to a man who died between 60 and 70 years of age, and they may have been found—not in "St Peter's tomb" (which was empty)—but near the area where tradition has it that St Peter was buried; but this does not make them St Peter's bones. There are other difficulties yet to be overcome.

It is not firmly established that St Peter was buried where tradition points; nor is it firmly established that he was crucified upside down; nor is it established that Peter was ever in Rome; nor is it definitely established that an apostle of the name Peter ever existed.

If it cannot be firmly established that Peter existed, and was in Rome, and was buried under the area of the high altar, it obviously cannot be proved that some bone chippings were a part of his skeleton.

But already these "scientific findings" are being used to substantiate the claims of Christian tradition. This is typical, of course, and while it may

bring a blush to many a modernist's Christian cheek, the Pope's crazy statement will bring further intellectual havoc to a large half of Christendom. Does the Pope himself really believe these are Peter's bones? Is so, he's off his rocker. If not, he must think we are all brainless nitwits.

\* \* \*

**TRANSCRIPT**

HUMANISM, Christianity and Sex was the title given to a forum held at Conway Hall, London, on October 11, 1967, organised by the National Secular Society. It is also the title of a new NSS booklet by David Tribe, being a "lightly edited transcript of David Tribe's address" at that forum.

Others taking part in the forum were Brigid Brophy, Father Corbishley and Leo Abse, MP. Their talks are not, however, included in the booklet.

The new publication makes acknowledgements to the Chairman, the Rev. A. B. Dowing, and to Jean Straker "for generously recording and transcribing this address".

It is available, price 6d, from the Freethinker Bookshop, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

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**OSWELL BLAKESTONE'S  
NEW NOVEL**

*And The Screaming Started* (Hutchinson, 25s), due to appear on July 22, grew from a short piece—"Provincial Dialogue with Two Young Artists"—which the author wrote for the **FREETHINKER** and which was published on January 1, 1965.

On the painting front, an exhibition called "Sometimes for Fun", organised by Oswald Blakestone, opens at The Everyman Cinema Foyer Gallery, Hampstead, on July 1 and runs there until August 3.

Co-exhibitors with Mr Blakestone are Halima Nalecz, director of the Dryan Gallery, and Nicholas Tidnam, a young art master and painter.

# FREETHINKER

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

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

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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

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.

Merseaside 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

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group, 153 Princes Avenue, London, N13, Sunday, July 7, 8 p.m.: Mrs CAROL SMITH, "Girls in a Jam" (The problems of the unmarried mother). Also social evening.

Humanist Housing Association, Blackham House, 35 Worples Road, Wimbledon, SW19, Sunday, July 7, 3 p.m.—5.30 p.m.: Garden Party.

Lewisham Humanist Group, The Saville, 436 Lewisham High Street (near the hospital), Lewisham, Friday, July 12, 8 p.m.: GERALD SAMUEL, "Is the Battle Won?"

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, July 7, 11 a.m.: Lord SORENSON, "Ivory Towers".

## CORRESPONDENCE ON BLASPHEMY

IN the FREETHINKER of June 7 I said I should refer the question of the legal position of 'blasphemy' today to the Lord Chancellor. Very properly he replied that, as he might one day have to deal with the matter in his judicial capacity, he would pass my letter on to the Law Commission.

I have now received a reply from Mr Lionel Alexander, secretary of its Working Party on 'Codification of the

Criminal Law: General Principles'. He says:

"I prefer to offer no opinion on what Parliament may have intended in the Criminal Law Act 1967, because it is clear to me on the face of the Act what intention the courts, on the ordinary canons of construction, would have to impute to Parliament. The Act of Uniformity 1548 and the Criminal Libel Act 1819, are specifically mentioned in Part III and Part I respectively of the 1967 Act, so that, to the extent that they remain unrepealed, they are both still in force. Nothing in section 13 of the 1967 Act (nor, I add, in the Theft Bill) seems to me to abrogate the common law offence. It follows that your view of the present position seems correct".

Mr Alexander has sent me a Working Paper naming the first intention of his Working Party as a consideration 'whether any offences at common law should outlive the codification' and has invited me to make representations on the subject of blasphemy in due course.

In the meantime it is clear that though Jean Straker may have read the 1967 Criminal Law Act 'with care' (June 21), his optimistic interpretation is, according to the best authority, incorrect. Let me say that I don't under-rate the constitutional importance of the repealing of the 1967 Blasphemy Act, which made it an offence simply to deny the truth of Christianity, as this was one of the straws apologists were able to clutch at when claiming Britain is really a Christian country. But this is small comfort on the blasphemy front, as it appears this particular Act has never been enforced. The other Acts, and more especially the common law offence, remain.

I should like to say that the emergency motion at the NCCL AGM which wasn't 'specific' (my piece in the FREETHINKER, June 7) wasn't Jean Straker's. His was related to the draft Freedom of Communications Bill mentioning only, when last I saw it, indecency and obscenity but perfectly precise within its own terms. This was rejected for a technicality by the Standing Orders Committee and not reinstated by the AGM. A rather vague emergency motion on censorship was brought in, and I then moved an amendment naming blasphemy, indecency and obscenity, which was carried. I pay full credit to Mr Straker for the admirable groundwork on the indecency-obscenity issue he has done over the last few years. But he will probably agree that the NSS has been active in anti-blasphemy legislation for considerably longer. It seems to me that the three can usefully be combined in a measure of 'communications'.

One gets the impression Mr Straker is afraid the inclusion of blasphemy will prejudice the chances of the other two proposals. If this is so, let me suggest to him that the boot is more likely to be on the other foot. Whatever may be true in Denmark, scratch an Englishman and you are more likely to find a puritan (in its narrow meaning) than a pietist. The amendment in question went through with quite a comfortable majority, but NSS motions in other years on blasphemy alone went through with considerably more support. Those speeches against the amendment—including one from a representative of the Communist Party—expressed concern over the indecency and obscenity, not the blasphemy side of it. Even within the freethought movement there are people who share this concern, and they are perfectly entitled to their view. It is one, I believe, which is on the wane. On the whole, though, it might be true to say that those who oppose liberalisation in blasphemy are likely to oppose it in indecency-obscenity, but not necessarily the other way round.

DAVID TRIBE, *President, NSS.*

## Another Change of Editor for the Freethinker

NEXT August, if not sooner, the FREETHINKER will once again undergo a change of editor—the fifth such change in the three years since August, 1965. To give fullest details would be, perhaps, to abuse my position as editor; I will therefore content myself with an account of the bare facts.

Because I have not been able to develop the FREETHINKER in the way I thought was necessary (which would, I confess, have meant introducing some radical changes), and because I have not produced the paper wanted by those who employ me (Secular Society Ltd., whose Board of Directors comprise G. N. Deodhekar, David Collis, William McIlroy, David Tribe and Mrs. E. Venton), strained relations resulted, together with an uncertain compromise in the shape of the FREETHINKER of satisfaction neither to the Board nor myself. It seems the *carte* was not as *blanche* as it had appeared to me at the interview and, accordingly, I tendered my resignation in March to Mr McIlroy; he refused to accept it, though the Board Meeting unanimously decided it should be accepted.

My employers have not yet told me who is to replace me, so, beyond saying that David Reynolds (who produces *The Humanist*) is an excellent chap, all I can do is wish the next editor a happy term in this chair—but perhaps they will change the chair as well.

### Statement from the Freethinker Board

MR KARL HYDE'S 'account of the bare facts' calls for comment. All that he needed to say was that he had tendered his resignation and this had been accepted by the board. On the board's part, at least, this was a perfectly amicable arrangement. Mr Hyde has seen fit, however, to proceed with three paragraphs of comment, suggesting that he was misled at the appointment interview and that the board has acted in a thoroughly capricious way.

It is first of all necessary to comment on the number of editorial changes over the last few years. For most of the FREETHINKER'S history it has been edited by someone who as circuit lecturer, president or secretary of the National Secular Society was employed full-time in the movement. Colin McCall was the last in this long tradition. It is true that when I became editor at the beginning of 1966 I was also president of the NSS; but both positions by this time were honorary, remunerative lecturing within the movement had disappeared, and I had to earn a living lecturing, and prepare for a literary career, in the outside world. Not surprisingly I could undertake the FREETHINKER only for a stop-gap period. Similar personal circumstances applied to my successors Kit Mouat and David Collis. We were therefore delighted when, in the latter part of 1967, the maturation of a legacy made it possible for us to offer the editorship of the paper as a professional appointment with a modest salary. Naturally we expected that in these improved circumstances the liveliness and circulation of the FREETHINKER would increase. These hopes have not yet been realised.

Mr Hyde has given as a reason for resignation his discovery that his *carte* wasn't as *blanche* as he thought. Some may feel that the editorial *carte* of what has always been a campaigning journal has in this case remained too *blanche*. Be that as it may, the editor has remained freer

By far the best part of this job has been in getting to know the FREETHINKER'S readers and contributors. No editor could possibly have a better readership, and my greatest difficulty is in trying to find words adequate to express my appreciation of your help, and for the pleasure it has meant to me to meet you or correspond with you. Thank you all.

\* \* \*

Now, before we loose count, let us record for posterity all the past editors of the FREETHINKER. (Correct me if I am wrong anywhere.)

|                                |     |     |     |                         |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------------------------|
| G. W. Foote                    | ... | ... | ... | May 1881 — Oct. 1915    |
| Chapman Cohen                  | ... | ... | ... | Oct. 1915 — Jun. 1951   |
| F. A. Ridley                   | ... | ... | ... | Jun. 1951 — Apr. 1954   |
| G. H. Taylor                   | ... | ... | ... | Apr. 1954 — May 1954    |
| F. A. Hornibrook               |     |     |     |                         |
| Bayard Simmons                 |     |     |     |                         |
| G. H. Taylor (Editorial Board) |     |     |     | May 1954 — Dec. 1957    |
| F. A. Hornibrook               |     |     |     |                         |
| Colin McCall                   |     |     |     |                         |
| G. H. Taylor (Editorial Board) |     |     |     | Dec. 1957 — Aug. 1959   |
| Colin McCall                   | ... | ... | ... | Aug. 1959 — Dec. 1965   |
| David Tribe                    | ... | ... | ... | Jan. 1966 — May 1966    |
| Kit Mouat                      | ... | ... | ... | Jun. 1966 — Jan. 1967   |
| David Collis                   | ... | ... | ... | Jan. 1967 — Oct. 1967   |
| Karl Hyde                      | ... | ... | ... | Oct. 1967 — ? Aug. 1968 |

from intervention by the board than is the general experience. So much so, that some readers have gained the impression that an alignment within the humanist movement is contemplated which has never been in the mind of the board or of the NSS. One indication of this freedom is the fact that before Mr Hyde's editorship I was myself theatre and film critic for the paper but cheerfully relinquished this post when he told me he saw no need for such material. This is not of course a radical change. What are then the 'radical changes' that would 'develop' the paper were the editor not thwarted? I only wish I knew. The one radical change proposed by Mr Hyde to my knowledge was that the paper should become a fortnightly. Certainly this was turned down flat. From within a few months of its foundation in 1881 the FREETHINKER has been a weekly. At first there were many other freethought weeklies in each of many countries. Now, I believe, we are the only one to survive anywhere, the only paper to compete in topicality with the innumerable religious weeklies. We are proud of this position, which we hold in trust. I was frankly amazed that Mr Hyde should regard such a proposal as part of his *carte blanche*, a mere matter of editorial convenience and not requiring a board decision of the profoundest significance, the more so as only a few weeks before he had himself changed the sub-title from 'Freethought and Humanism Weekly' to 'Humanist World Weekly'.

Readers have been told why the resignation was tendered. It is thus necessary to state why it was accepted. Both Mr McIlroy and myself are conscious of the apparent instability frequent editorial changes might suggest. We are also anxious to be good employers. When another director was however told of the proposed resignation he asked for a full board meeting to consider the position. In a memorandum he outlined 'the job specification determined by the

(Continued on page 213)

## 95 THESES FOR A SECOND REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH

*continued*

25. The necessity for preserving a social structure wherein each individual interacts with others and is guaranteed his own rights in return for duty to respect the rights of others has been the actual principle which has guided all moral concepts and conduct as long as humanity has existed, but it has not until recently been explicitly recognised and put into words, although suggestions of it can be found in all the world's literature. It is a principle that all human beings have necessarily found mandatory as long as they have inhabited the earth, however clearly or dimly they may have discerned it, whether they were able to verbalise it or not, however they fabricated alternative theories such as that of an unseen spirit, because the principle is a logical imperative. If a people at any time permitted the conduct they approved to depart from this principle, they faced the breakdown of their society, and any people who persisted in ignoring this principle, if such a thing is conceivable, are now extinct.

26. From the evolutionary struggle for existence by which man ascended, we are left today with those societies inhabiting the earth that have been not only physically, mentally or numerically superior to those that have vanished, but that have practiced forms of morality appropriate to their group survival; and those societies have emerged with a particular morality, while moral practices of extinct peoples, insofar as they differ, are lost. Struggles among societies of men now imperils survival of the human species, and the Social-Survival principle urges an enlarged conception of society and moral control of the struggle for existence. The future course of humanity must be shaped by intelligent direction rather than by natural selection; and the evolution and cultivation of this ethical progress in the world today must be accepted as a moral duty.

27. The criterion of civilisation, the yard-stick for the worth of various cultures in different regions of the earth at different periods is not, as proposed by some sociologists, the ratio of average achievement to average effort, but rather aptness for survival. That society is good in which human life can continue in tranquility, in which material needs are satisfied, in which benevolence and harmony prevail, in which exists the greatest possible self-determination, in which children are reared to their fullest potentialities.

28. A philosophy of Value—Axiology—Plato's triad of Goodness, Truth and Beauty serving as headings for Ethics, Logic and Aesthetics—can be based upon ability to sustain life or, in the case of aesthetic value, to enrich life with amusement, relaxation and inspiration.

29. Permanism sees religion, whether true or false, not only as an expedient to justify and enforce morality, but also as a strong integrating force in society, contributing to the cohesiveness of the social group. Common belief and common worship, celebrations, rites of marriage, childbirth, death and burial, splendid ecclesiastical architecture, the offices of priests and hierarchy, indoctrination of children all conspire to unite a people more solidly in common feeling. Permanism and Supernaturalism have the same aim, to preserve society; Permanism declares this candidly, Supernaturalism disguises it.

### Part 6: Divine Law

30. The Bible story of the giving of a Divine Law, in-

cluding Ten Commandments, by a Hebrew tribal god, YHWH, to a legendary leader, Moses, in the Sinai Desert during an escape from slavery was a fiction perpetrated for the sake of giving better authority to purely human reform laws enacted many centuries after the reputed time of Moses.

31. The moral teachings of Jesus were fragmentary, unsystematic, expressed in scattered passages in the Gospels, generally incapable of literal application and subject to individual interpretation. Instead of offering direct evidence or reasons, he demanded faith in himself personally. His principles appear to be three: love of God (Supernaturalism), love of neighbour (Sympathy-intuitionism), and the "golden rule" (Reciprocal Hedonism). Neither YHWH nor Jesus ever seemed to discern the social implications of morality; Christianity ever since has emphasised the relation of man to God rather than of man to man.

32. Through the centuries, there has been no answer to Plato's dilemma of Euthyphro, that if morality is obedience to divine will, either it must be irrational and arbitrary, or the divine will merely recognises moral law which is independent of and superior to God.

33. Supernatural ethics, in motive, is really covert Egoistic Hedonism. The motive for obedience is selfish: to win God's reward and to avoid his punishment either in this life (as in the Hebrew religion) or in a future life after death (as in the religion of ancient Egypt, Christianity and Islam), to sacrifice lesser happiness now for the sake of a greater happiness later, or even to experience a feeling of being saved by accepting a personal saviour. But to obey a rule because God will reward or punish is not for an ethical reason: what is right or wrong, and what will be rewarded or punished, are separate questions.

34. Supernatural ethics, in practice, is really covert Permanism. The most primitive of the human species, faced with a logical need for preserving a social structure but unable to express this necessity in words, resorted to the illogical expedient of explaining all natural phenomena as manipulation of the world by unseen spirits. From Neolithic to modern times moral law has been declared the will of unseen god or gods rather than need of human beings for maintaining social structures that foster mutual survival. But a supernatural origin for ethics does not justify man imposing morality upon man. Whether or not positive law (human statute and common law) has echoed religious precepts, the question here is not whether and why civil and criminal law agree or should agree with allegedly divine law, but rather why, if law comes from God, man-made law should exist at all. This question supernaturalism cannot answer, whereas Permanism provides an answer that is logically imperative: people impose the conduct they regard, correctly or mistakenly, as necessary for survival of their society.

35. Permanism is not inconsistent with belief in the existence of God, nor with any natural-law theory of ethics, either religious or naturalistic. Permanism need not deny that a supposed cause of the universe could have ordained human beings with propensity for social living, that God made survival of society a natural necessity and that he also made the laws that concern means of survival. But the theory is independent of theology; it holds whether there is a God or not.

**Part 7: Evil**

36. Evil is not the work of devils, demons or other evil spirits, as has been believed by Supernaturalists throughout known history and as was believed also by Jesus, as told in the Gospels.

37. Moral evil, distinguished from physical evil, is endeavour to promote individual or group survival at peril of social survival.

38. Society is justified in inflicting punishment upon evildoers, and in imposing a death penalty for murder.

39. The greatest moral error committed by all humanity in all times is confusion over what constitutes a human society. Minority groups within society, formed on the basis of race, nationality, class, occupation, religion, political adherence, ideology, youth or special interest are diminutive societies whose particular interests and loyalties often clash. The Church must unify people in common understanding of the source of social division and conflict.

40. A society may do wrong, just as may an individual; and it is the duty of the Church and of its members to denounce immoral or irresponsible national conduct everywhere.

**Part 8: Rights and Duties**

41. Rights and duties are the reciprocal conduct standards for individuals and groups which are conducive to and necessary for the survival of society. A first task of casuistry, of practical application of ethical theory, is identification of the modes of conduct that tend to maintain society and to establish them as rights and duties. Rights are not conferred by law or custom; law expresses rights and custom practices them. Rights are not the result of a social contract. Duties depend on extraneous principle of survival of society rather than upon anything intrinsic in the duties themselves. All members of society should have the maximum liberty consistent with and limited only by the need for the survival of society.

42. The basic social right of a human being is that of membership in a society of the people with whom he interacts. Exclusion of a minority or of an individual from a society is morally wrong.

43. The right to life is natural and inherent, and not abrogated by membership in a society. Except as a penalty for murder, society may not permit any of its members to kill any other member. The State cannot rightly authorise such acts as euthanasia. Induced abortion can be permitted only if it alone can save the life of the mother. For a coherent theoretical ground for a system of jurisprudence, a logical principle must be applied consistently; if law of homicide is based on an ethical principle that right to life is, except for crime, inviolable, society must defend this right impartially.

44. The right to possess property in land is not a natural but a conferred one, an expedient that has been found practical, a matter of custom rather than nature, a contingent right dependent on the structure of a society. The right to possess property in other things than land is natural to the extent of what is actually necessary for comfortable survival and the right to inherit such property is natural to this extent. Natural right of inheritance does not extend to personal attainments such as titles. The right to procreate is a natural but dependent right, dependent on the rights of the child.

45. Censorship, in any form, is fundamentally evil, but freedom of expression cannot be without limit. The limits which must be set to utterance, publication or presentation of offensive matter are difficult to fix by law and precarious to entrust to an individual or group censor. Because the Church can crystallise organised opinion on particular

matters, but law cannot, a censorship of good taste can appropriately be a function of the Church.

46. The solution of the problem of freedom of action as affected by belief is ultimately an epistemological one.

**Part 9: Justice**

47. Justice, the award to each person of his due rights, the grant to all persons of equal rights insofar as they are equal, must also require that society accord to different individuals unequal rights insofar as they are unequal who, in most societies, are the most frequent and most disputable cases. It is a fiction that all men are equal, for they differ in a thousand ways. It is a legal fiction that all men are equal before the law; they are equal to the extent that they are not beyond the law, favoured or oppressed by it. True equality is not possible in a society because the only means that can enforce equality themselves destroy equality. Justice does imply unequal treatment for unequal people if and only if personal inequality is the source or reasonable justification of the right or duty, privilege or penalty, in respect to which a person is treated unequally from others.

48. Equity, the concept of ideal justice which is independent of the law and may be even contrary to the law, should mean not equality but proportionality. Society must accord to all more than their natural rights insofar as they have earned or merited it, and grant to no one more than his natural and earned rights. The ratio of the treatment accorded to one person in relation to the rights of that person should be equal to that accorded to another person in relation to the rights of that other person. In all cases the ratio which social treatment bears to individual rights should be equal. These quantities are, to an extent, measurable.

49. It is hence possible to construct a formula for justice in accordance with which fair treatment for all persons may be estimated. Such formula could be applied to economic and commercial affairs, for it can disclose fair levels of prices and wages with which economic stability of the nation could be possible.

*(To be continued)*

The Rev. Thompson holds his Philosophian Church (secular-) services every Sunday at 3.30 p.m. Those who may be interested in attending (perhaps in order to hear the 95 Theses defended, or to be given an opportunity to declare their own views upon them) should make for the Rosslyn Chapel in Hampstead which is on the corner of Rosslyn Hill and Willoughby Road.

**STATEMENT FROM THE FREETHINKER BOARD**

*(Continued from page 211)*

Board and accepted . . . over six months ago. This was threefold: (1) solicit articles, prepare them for the printer and correct proofs; (2) write weekly editorial/reportage; (3) promote sales of the paper.' He then commented on recent issues. Like Mr Hyde, I do not propose to give 'fullest details' here, except to say that when this memorandum was considered the board unanimously decided to accept the resignation.

I regret it has been necessary to say as much as this. We all like Mr Hyde, who has many excellent qualities, knows the movement well, and speaks and writes interestingly about it. We wish him every success in his future career. On two points we enthusiastically agree with him: in extending best wishes to his successor, who is indeed David Reynolds, and in thanking our admirable readers and contributors.

DAVID TRIBE, *Chairman,*

Secular Society Ltd. and G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.

## THE SLAVE GIRL OF MANKIND

Phyllis K. Graham

THIS exotic title is not, as you might reasonably think, culled from the columns of a popular Sunday newspaper. It came ready-made out of a book called *The Humiliation of the Church* by Albert H. van den Heuvel, a Dutch theologian who is Youth Secretary for the World Council of Churches. The book represents, he tells us, "sixty months of trying to interpret the anger and disillusionment of a younger generation to the leaders of our denominations, and to communicate the excitement of what has been said and done to bring about the renewal of the life of the Church". He adds, "In a few years' time I am sure we shall all smile about what is said (and sometimes shouted) in the following pages. History moves quickly, and we change within it".

Well, yes—about history, but the people in it are not always so mobile. Particularly those in the church history department. As regards that 'certain smile', one can only hope that a mildly satirical sense of humour will set in and ease the last exit, though the hope is slight. Meanwhile there is more than enough to make a cat laugh, though some humans may find themselves not amused.

Let us hasten, with proper solemnity, to clarify the situation. 'The Slave-Girl of Mankind' is the latest sacred title of the Church, expressive of her recently discovered vocation to humble service, rather than arrogant domination, of humanity. An excellent discovery, and better late than never; but, oh Abraham Lincoln, what a philological bêtise! And if it were only that . . .

They mean well, but why must they wallow? We know they are pathetically anxious to present the Church with a New Look, a charm that will simultaneously disarm criticism, wipe out old shames and warm the cockles of the hearts. But can't they see that an institution which is in no position to do anything but bite the dust before the modern world, should at least take its Canossa with decent reticence and not try to make capital on it? Can they be ignorant of the fact that 'slave' is a filthy word in twentieth-century usage? Can't they see that it evokes memories of shame and overtones of guilt that revolt the modern conscience and revive the discredit of the Church?

But supposing some hint of all this did penetrate the reinforced concrete of their skulls, would it change their essential mentality? One fears not. 'That this disposition be with you which was also in Jesus Messiah who made himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave . . .' (Phil. 2). Christian spirituality is a slavery complex. Simple 'to serve' is not enough: surrender of 'body, mind and soul' in abject 'humility' is its highest ideal. The word 'slave' turns up repeatedly in pious treaties and prayers, in the self-revelations of saints, mystics and other aspirants to spiritual perfection. Many ordinary Catholics consecrate themselves as 'Slaves of Mary', and practise de Montfort's devotion of 'Holy Slavery'. And now we learn that the church (note, with deliberate small 'c' in this context) "is a slave-girl in biblical language, like her Master existing for others . . . she has to be among men for men. She cannot get out of the world to prepare herself for service . . . Slave-girls are trained on the job!"

One does appreciate that they're trying to make a virtue of necessity. "The humiliation of the church is her *raison-êtré*." But *must* they rub salt in their wounds with such

painful and embarrassing publicity? "Imagine what would happen if the church really listened to the New Testament description and lived up to her existence of being bought and put to work as a slave-girl of mankind." A Freudian mass-fantasy, probably. "That is the challenge we have to live up to." Or down to? "Only in this way will we discover what is called the glorious life of the children of God." The qualifying phrase seems particularly apt. What they *are* uncovering to a sceptical world is the machochistic element in the Christian make-up which predominates when loss of power and prestige sends the sadistic half of the complex underground.

Their enforced abasement is now projected on the god-image, which, having gradually diminished into thin air like the famous Cat, is not even to be distinguished by a last fading grin. For god has retired from creation (some say he is dead) and is "weak and powerless in this world", as Bonhoeffer discovered more than twenty years ago. (Certain Greeks discovered this more than twenty centuries ago; the world itself, we may assume, was never under any delusion). "The Bible", we learn from the same source, "directs him" (man) "to the powerlessness and suffering of God; only a suffering God can help . . . who conquers power and space in the world by his weakness." The autocracy of JHWH and the hell-threats of "his Rabbi Joshua" have somehow petered out into the spinelessness of a victim who "allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to the cross", and "this strange theology of the weakness of God has penetrated into many a study and activity". But has it, we may well ask, stormed the citadel of youth? Or is it likely that it will? Insistence on a totally debilitated deity seems hardly to offer a sort of vision to inspire the young. How can a Being who admittedly doesn't know his way about the modern world, having retired from the business, either in dudgeon or despair, be of any help to a disorientated younger generation, or pacify its upsurging violence?

Apparently it is being asked to console itself with the sweet ministrations of 'the Slave-Girl' . . . This Arabian Nights concept might possibly appeal to the temporary mood of the hippie, the flower children, the gentler type of dooper, and any other limp escapers from the doghouse of Christian culture. But what of an angry young generation of negroes with minds as scarred as their ancestors' backs with the searing-iron? What of the violent young generation of students and others whose cry is freedom, whose loathing is society in bonds to hypocrisy and corruption? What of the bewildered young generation being pushed through the schools, bored or sickened with compulsory RI, prematurely cynicized by the servile humbug all around them?

In a world torn apart by the claws of the Scarlet Woman, will our young be seduced by the fawning hands of the Slave-Girl? It does not, mercifully, appear very likely. The Church Governing was a hideous catastrophe, but the church grovelling is an insidious slimy horror that might permeate a senile society. We may be in a sorry mess, but we are not that. The young are rejecting the chains that enslave our societies. With more knowledge at their disposal than any preceding generation, they may or not not achieve the harmony of knowledge with wisdom essential for the salvation of mankind. They may clear the world

of superstition, or they may create new creeds to fill a vacuum. But one cannot imagine our shrewd and sophisticated juniors being taken in by the wiles of the Girl the Master left behind him. Or shall we say, we prefer not to contemplate the possibility.

Not to end on a note of cynicism, we must acknowledge the tribute paid by the Rev. Albert to the 'Holyoakes' (that's us), for whom 'a world without God' "is certainly not blasphemy, but, on the contrary, is the programme to be carried out". Despite some rather odd ideas on their location—"in Latin America and certainly in the east of Europe the Holyoakes are still very vocal"—he admits,

## IDEOLOGY AND THE BBC

THE 'squares' in British politics and social affairs generally are very worried about the activities of the British Broadcasting Corporation in its choice of programmes. Listen to the writer of the centre-page article in *The Sunday Post* for June 16, 1968. The starting point for the article was "a remarkable programme . . . called *Students in Revolt*. Later on we find the following familiar refrain:

"A feeling is growing among viewers that there's a subtle and dangerous change in the BBC's attitude to traditional standards. It presents sympathetically and constantly the viewpoint of people who are hostile to the old disciplines of life. You see this permissiveness in plays, documentaries, and current affairs programmes. Again and again you find the same themes. Religious belief is out-of-date. Morality is out-of-date. The finer standards of behaviour are old hat, only for squares.

"By making these themes familiar the BBC helps to make them fashionable. Drug-taking is only one example. How many times have viewers seen and heard programmes about marihuana? You can, of course, argue that television must deal with the facts of life. But at the same time *the BBC has a duty to uphold certain standards of behaviour*. If it fails to do this, it is neglecting its responsibility. If it goes further and undermines these standards, it is committing social sabotage. That's why we are sure most people feel it was wrong for the BBC to allow the ranting few to flaunt their reckless philosophies on Thursday night."

I have italicized the passages which I find most interesting in all this—though it is also worth noticing that the 'squares' feel just as helpless in the face of BBC policies as, no doubt, we freethinkers and humanists often do!

Let us ask ourselves—as objectively and passionlessly as possible—what are the principles which the Governors of the BBC employ when they make such important policy decisions as to put on *Students in Revolt*?

Perhaps the first pointer which comes to mind is that which is actually cut into the stonework of Broadcasting House—and I might remind readers that when statesmen resort to putting words into the stonework of buildings you can rest assured that they feel pretty certain of their justifiability even when they sound like rubbish to a freethinker. The words I have in mind are "Nation shall speak peace unto Nation".

In my view these words summarise the most "reckless philosophy" that the mind of a human being has ever pro-

duced. But because the BBC has its charter cut into the stonework of Broadcasting House readers of the *FREETHINKER* will readily believe that it is most unlikely that criticism, of the words in the stonework, will be allowed by the BBC authorities to reach the ears of TV and radio licence holders. Why? For the simple reason that no chartered organisation can reasonably be expected to allow its own charter to be attacked. Yet, because it is a rotten charter, and will not bear rational examination at the hands of a competent freethinker, it will probably outlast us all since it is continually censoring ideas which would destroy its own charter.

handsomely: "I would say that for us the Holyoakes *have* conquered the Holy Land. The programme *is* carried out, and therefore we feel more at home with those who simply approach the world without God phenomenologically, as a statement of fact, as a *self-evident description of reality*".

So perhaps, after all, with the Master so amicably settled into non-existence, we may happily tick off the Slave-Girl as a mere Figment of Albert's exotic imagination. Church into Char is indeed a progression to be welcomed; but no char works for nothing in this democratic age—and no church ever yet has, or ever will.

E. G. Macfarlane

What we must try to understand is that the 'square' newspaper owners and editors (who outnumber freethought and humanism advocates) will probably be congenitally unable to see anything wrong with the words in the BBC stonework. Such people are so accustomed to personifying *nations* and *states* that it will probably never occur to them that this may be a dangerous practice which is largely responsible for the persistence of the actuality of international anarchy stemming from the false personifying of *nations*.

The only persons are human beings. Let us freethinkers and humanists never forget this simple fact. And the proper unit for Government to control is not the individual nation but the individual human being.

The history of the League of Nations and, more recently, the UN, all too clearly shows that the erroneous personifying of nations is the worst mistake in social thinking that the mind of a human being has ever perpetrated. And when a mistake of this magnitude is cut into the granite of a building we may well look out for murder and mayhem among the populace of the world—because there is no escape from ideological mistakes of this kind once they are widely taught and believed by millions of unsuspecting and ill-educated persons in all sections of the world society.

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The cure for the mistake only begins with the pointing-out of its existence—which is what I am doing here. I have no doubt that many persons—some of whom may even consider themselves to be freethinkers and humanists!—will ignore my warning. I can, even now, name some supporters of the United Nations Organisation with its various subsidiary off-shoots, such as the Human Rights movement, who will loftily pooh-pooh my condemnation of the granite-carved ideology-principle of the BBC. But such

(Continued overleaf)

persons are wrong to pin their hopes on the principles of internationalism and their naive notion that sovereign states will pay the least bit of attention to Human Rights, or any other rights, proposed by any body without their own sovereign national government.

One man I have in mind here is Jean Straker—and I will be most interested to hear his reaction to this article. I only hope that the Editor of the FREETHINKER will be unorthodox enough to allow me to particularise in this unprecedented way in an article in the paper. My excuse is that we are running out of time and my opinion of Mr Straker is so high that I feel sure that this innovation will work out the way I want it to do—which is for Mr Straker to admit that he has been wrong to support the Human Rights movement as he has done in the past (i.e. under the aegis of the UN) and that he will now *join with me* in demanding a political movement which will have as one of its policies the *reconstituting of the BBC* so that the present BBC ideology will be abandoned (i.e. erased from the granite!) and replaced with slogan “person will speak peace unto person”.

## REVIEW

H. J. Blackham

### OUR GRAND OLD MAN

*The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, Vol. II, 1914-1944 (Allen & Unwin, 42s).

ESPECIALLY in this second volume, the *Autobiography* has the virtues of an unfinished sketch: it provides most of the raw material and many of the clues which the interested reader needs to enable him to form his own impressions and draw his own conclusions. Bertrand Russell is a very complex person, and he has found a way of exposing himself that gives his friends the chance to form a balanced estimate, and his enemies enough vulnerable places to keep them happy for a long time. His admirers will certainly have the best of it.

There is a private man and a public person. The *Autobiography* naturally is about the private man, but it provides the background to the public figure, and helps us to see why he has always appealed to and spoken for the young, and why his political judgements have sometimes been remarkably perceptive and foreseeing, sometimes remarkably wild and reckless. He is consistent in being persistently self-contradictory. This is reflected even in his prose style, which is usually a model of economic plain statement enlivened with wit, but sometimes grandiose rhetoric gets the better of him. The conflict of reason and emotion is a recurrent theme in his history.

There is an underlying pattern in his personal development. Since early youth he was isolated by scepticism, yet longed to identify himself with enthusiastic believers—chiefly in politics. The first world war separated him still further as a pacifist. At the same time, he entered into intimate affectionate relations with persons in which he found ecstasy, and yet insisted that the sea and the stars and civilisation meant more to him than anyone. In 1916 when he was convinced that Wittgenstein's criticisms of his epistemology were justified he became filled with despair that he would never again be able to do fundamental work in philosophy. But abstract work had left half of him unsatisfied, and he turned with new elation to the prospect of success in changing people's thoughts, a new career in propagating his social and political ideas through writing. His only doubt was that he would be overwhelmed again by a passion for things eternal and perfect like mathematics. He was a platonist at heart. By 1931 he had lost his platonism (by a further turn of the sceptical screw), his personal happiness in human relations, and all social and political optimism. This was the lowest point in his personal story, and it was at this time that he dictated a draft which was the basis of the present volume down to 1921. He also wrote at that time *The Conquest of Happiness* and *The Scientific Outlook*, which bear the mark of the period. At this point the *Autobiography* passes into the reticence of a mere chronicle to the end of the volume.

Bertrand Russell exemplifies greatly the typical humanist values and virtues. He formulated them himself as clarity of thought and kindness, which were for him at first disjointed; intellectual values dominated when things went well, kindness when they went badly. But later they were conjoined in him. Other qualities he admired were candour, courage, and generosity, and they have been pre-eminent characteristics of his own life and personality. Having these qualities passionately, he has tended always to go to excesses in these directions. Love of truth drove him to seek absolute certainty in mathematics, which later drove him into complete scepticism and solipsism. Love of men (and women) drove him to seek the ecstasy of romantic union and the utopia of a free and rational society of splendid individuals. Disillusionment in these quests drove him beyond the bounds of humanism, hankering for the eternal and absolute as the real goal of his search—grand impersonal ends to which men are always liable to subject themselves and their fellows, against which humanism is the protest. The needle oscillates violently and swings back to centre, but Russell never settles. He is non-establishmentarian to the end. He maintains the tension between the ideal and the possible. And that is why an incredibly old man still speaks for the young at heart in a terribly irrational world.

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Readers of the FREETHINKER will be pleased to know that when Russell was in Japan he visited Robert Young, editor of the *Japan Chronicle*, who had in his study a large picture of Bradlaugh, for whom he had a devoted admiration. Russell thought Young a delightful man and his newspaper the best he had ever known. Robert Young suggested to the Conway Memorial Committee in 1922 that Russell be invited to give the annual lecture. He hoped Russell if asked would consent, and reinforced his plea by saying that Moncure Conway 'was a fine character, always prepared to champion the oppressed and defend free speech' and that 'he stood by Foote when prosecuted on account of the FREETHINKER'.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Next step: Universalism?

WHILST agreeing in principle with E. G. Macfarlane's assertion that a world nation must be our object rather than an international society, it is my belief that such a notion will never be achieved while the human race, as far as we know, is alone in the known universe.

Societies will only co-operate and unite when they have a common foe or know of 'some place over there' where people have different ideas or values.

As things are the best we can hope for is a reasonably peaceful internationalism; after all, it is only through rivalry between nations that much scientific progress has been achieved.

If the inhabitants of this planet ever did pool all its resources for the common good it would be because (a) we were preparing to fend off an alien invasion, (b) we were about to abandon the planet because of some impending natural catastrophe, or (c) because we were about to set up some fantastic trading pact with an alien civilisation . . . or do I read too much science fiction?

In any case, what's the good of being 'citizens of the universe' until there are some other 'citizens' with whom to compare notes?

BERNARD WHITING.

### Religious TV

HOW determined some people are to brainwash the population with religious drivel, may be gauged from reports that "selected" families, moving to a new housing estate, will get colour TV, free, providing they promise to invite neighbours to special closed-circuit religious services, sponsored by Lord Rank who will engage top-of-the-bill speakers giving an exciting and interesting approach to Christianity.

This is not rank fantasy, for he thinks that this is a far better investment than to build a church costing £90,000 which would attract an average congregation of 28 people. Whereas, with this new communication, he hopes to have thousands of listeners. According to report, Lord Rank thinks the Church is dumb not to have exploited this greatest kind of communication sufficiently well! What—with three hours per day of religious broadcasts?

GEORGE R. GOODMAN.