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A QUESTION OF RIGHT

David Collis

FURTHER to the FREETHINKER editorial of July 12 on the NSS Annual Conference, I should like to comment on the handling of the Annual Report, since it caused me to take the grave step of challenging the Chairman's ruling.

Somebody at the Conference suggested it might be better to drop the first section of the Annual Report, the "general view of the world" as it has been referred to, since it was clearly contentious and not directly related to the Society's activities. Mr Tribe commented that the Society had traditionally had a "world view" as part of its Annual Report and referred to the 19th century National Secular Society Almanacs. I pointed out to Mr Tribe that this "world view" in the almanacs had been signed by the person who wrote it and thus clearly represented the writer's view and not necessarily those of the Society as a whole. A personally signed "world view" did not need to be formally adopted by the AGM as the Society's corporate view, since it did not purport to be the Society's corporate view and did not therefore require discussion, emendations and a voted acceptance or rejection. Mr Tribe ruled that it was quite open to any member who wished the "world view" to be personally signed to table a motion to this effect for the next AGM but at this AGM it was not open to a member to move the deletion of this particular section.

I disagreed with Mr Tribe that this AGM was not qualified to take action on this issue immediately, if it so wished. We were, I said, at that very time, discussing different parts of the Report. Motions were being put for the addition, deletion and amendment of phrases, clauses and sentences. I knew of no rule or standing order which specified a percentage limit to the changes which could be made to the Report. If it were open to a member to move the deletion of a phrase, a clause or a sentence, it was surely equally open to a member to move the deletion of a paragraph or even a section, unless Standing Orders expressly forbade this. After all further motions for emendation had been put, what remained of the Report would be the Annual Report which the AGM would then be called upon to adopt or reject. I further pointed out to Mr Tribe that if the motion to delete the "world view" section of the Annual Report were carried, it would still be open to the President, supported by the Executive Committee, to authorise the publication of his personal "world view", duly signed by him, along with but distinct from the Annual Report. The latter would be that as adopted by the AGM; the former would be the President's personal message to the Society's members and others. If the Society's members took such a poor view of the President's personal sentiments as expressed in this "world view", then no doubt they would take these sentiments into account in deciding who they wished to elect as their President at the next AGM.

I do not recall having said that this "world view" section *should* be removed from the Report. But since there were those who clearly wished that it *should* be removed, I merely wished to observe, on a point of order, that it *could* be removed. In actual fact, Standing Orders do not specify any procedure for the emendation of the Annual Report before voting on its adoption. One could indeed argue that it should either be printed and circulated for consideration before the AGM, so that amendments might be submitted before the AGM as required by Standing Orders 11 and 12, or that it should be read at the AGM as is at present the case and adopted or rejected in its entirety. But for the Chairman to arbitrarily determine what may be amended and what may not be amended, particularly on an item as important as the Annual Report, seems to me grossly improper and it was for this reason among others that I called for the Chairman to be replaced.

I still hold that my interpretation of allowable procedure is correct and I still hold that the Chairman improperly ruled that it was not within the competence of this particular AGM to vote for the deletion of that particular section. If Mr Tribe, at this remove of time, still maintains that he was in the right I shall be glad if he will tell me, and the readers, where I am wrong.

HUMANIST PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

THE first dinner of the Humanist Parliamentary Group was held in the House of Commons on July 9. Dr David Kerr, MP, was in the Chair and described it afterwards as 'the most successful occasion of its kind that has ever been held'.

It is the first time a group of Parliamentarians has met as an organised body of humanists rather than at the invitation of an external humanist organisation. Both houses were represented.

The Humanist Parliamentary Group, formed last November, is jointly sponsored by the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society.

Dr James Henming, the educational psychologist and Chairman of the BHA's Education Committee, was the guest of honour, and spoke of the need for a new approach to moral education based on community values. This, to be done properly, would require reform of the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act which at present required 'conformity and hypocrisy and resulted in moral instability'.

It is intended to hold similar functions in future, probably every parliamentary term.

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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.

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.

PUBLIC MEETING: CENSORSHIP IN LITERATURE

Following the *Last Exit to Brooklyn* Appeal at the Court of Appeals on July 22, the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society (18 Brewer Street, London, W1) are to hold a PUBLIC MEETING at the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London, SW1, on Sunday, July 28 at 8 p.m. Speakers will include Rennee Short, MP, William Hamling, MP, Mervyn Jones, William Gaskell, etc.

FREE COPIES OF CREDO

AS an extra inducement to gain your help in widening sales of the FREETHINKER, a free copy of *Credo: The Faith of a Humanist* (net 3/-), a book of Humanist poetry by A. A. H. Douglas with a foreword by E. M. Forster (generously donated to the FREETHINKER by A. A. H. Douglas), will be sent to each new subscriber and to the reader who introduces the new subscriber. New subscribers will be those who have never before subscribed to this journal. Subscriptions, introductions and all correspondence in connection with *Credo* should be addressed to the Editor, FREETHINKER, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

IN DARKEST BRIGHTON

MORNING assembly in the latest school here looks like developing into a glorified ritual. Not content with the legal imposition of R.I. we now have an added vehicle of indoctrination in the form of a "sanctuary" built into a school hall complete with crucifix and carved figures taken from a former demolished church in Brighton. A device to keep the flag flying regardless of restricting both the mental outlook and reasoning power of young minds. It is true a lilac curtain can be drawn across the "sanctuary" to conceal this innovation when not in use, doubtless adding to the air of mystery so intriguing to children.

The building in question is a modern C of E primary school, recently opened with a service of dedication by the local Bishop (Lewes). It was decided that the new school should be built to conform to the purposes and principles intended by the founder of the original building which had to be demolished to make way for a development scheme. This nineteenth century founder, Rev. H. Wagner, a former vicar of St. Paul's Church to which the school was attached, was possessed of more wealth than enlightened intelligence. He built six churches in Brighton allegedly C of E, but Catholic in all but Papal allegiance. The present Wagner trust agreed to accept £44,000 for the demolished school site, and the new well designed and more appropriately placed school is the result. It is, however, unfortunate that the controlling mentality is still medieval, and that the Education authorities continue to permit denominational schools to function, with or without "sanctuaries", into the second half of the 20th century, a century of considerable scientific achievement and growth of enlightened secular opinion. Do they not realise the diverse element inherent in these schools?

So long as the education of children is geared to a supernaturally-based religion—particularly one with a Catholic or Anglo-Catholic rituals—so long are we still a primitive people, a people with an immature mentality. No matter if we possess jet planes, cars, T.V. and the rest, we still have not emerged from the superstitious and priest-controlled world of antiquity.

Only a backward people, and this applies to other countries as well, would allow legendary ideas and practices to sway their opinions, control their policies, educate their children, and in some cases influence their election voting. It is to be hoped that the Brighton school is an isolated instance of intrusion by the Church into modern school building, or is it that in view of the fast emptying churches they plan to use "sanctuary" appeal to a trapped audience of the impressionable young? But of course so long as parents and public behave like conditioned and fearful sheep, and do not insist upon schools being used for their proper purpose—a secular education suited to the world which the child will have to face and live in, and not some hypothetical future of which there is no evidence—there will be little progress towards freedom of the mind and a mature civilisation.

ELIZABETH COLLINS.

MYSTICS AND THEIR-ISM

A. J. Lowry

IF 'atheist' was the dirty word of the last century, it is surely true that 'mystic' enjoys a similar notoriety today. An advertisement for the BHA on the back page of *Question*, for example, includes them in a list with windbags, authoritarians, apathetics, bigots, tearaways and nuts, as people this organisation can get along very well without.

Of what, then, does the heinous crime of mysticism consist? I would contend that the answer is nothing more complex than the fact that this philosophy of life appears extremely insensitive to its own limitations. As a solution to questions which science cannot answer, questions which are not scientific in their nature at all, mysticism, or something extremely close to it, remains the only way of reaching a conclusion. In this way it adds a new dimension, a new universe of discourse, to the human personality. The two-fold deficiency of the approach, however, lies in the fact that mystics rarely understand that their own conclusions are purely subjective, even within their field of enquiry; and in the irresponsibility with which such people extend their authority into fields which require a different, i.e. a scientific approach.

To take an example of the first abuse of mysticism, supposing that we ask the question 'Was William Blake a good poet?' Scientifically, there is very little we can do to answer this question. If we agree that 'good' poets should make their productions rhyme and have metre (a contention which itself would receive the strongest opposition from the modern writers), we may then examine Mr Blake's poems to decide if they contain these characteristics. But even if they do, these remain only necessary and not sufficient conditions for good poetry. Poetry must be judged finally upon such points as its imagery, and the only method of assessing this is subjectively, by the emotional make-up of the individual readers.

This non-rational approach is perfectly valid, but the limitations of its truthfulness must not be overlooked. Whether I decide that Blake's verse is good, bad or indifferent, is valid only for me: I have no right to accuse anyone reaching differing appraisals of his work as being either imbeciles or demons. 'Blake's poetry is good' is not the same kind of statement as the inverse square law—it is a statement about the private world of my personality (meaning really 'I admire Blake's poetry') and not about the outside world which we all have in common.

The second, and even greater abuse of this intuitive method is in its application to questions of a scientific nature. To say, for example, that Blake's "Tyger" is good, is perfectly valid; but to maintain on this authority that the cerebral hemispheres of *felis tigris* are formed in furnaces, is quite absurd. To go further, and to organise inquisitorial bodies to rack and scorch those preferring a more naturalistic interpretation of events, is simply to indulge oneself in perversity and wickedness of the basest kind.

Though Pythagoras created a philosophy embracing both mathematics and reincarnation, and Swedenburg wished to extend the natural order to include the spirits; the majority of the greater mystics have not been blind to this second abuse, and have, for the most part kept their pronouncements away from the fields of knowledge relevant to scientific enquiry. Such a position is fair enough, but unfortunately it is not shared by their lesser brethren. The

Fundamentalist, for example, who informs you that he *knows* that Genesis 1 is a precise and historic record of the creation of the world, and that the basis of his certitude is concerned with an experience attributed by him to the agency of the Lord Jesus, stands as a classic example of this muddle-headedness. The way the world was created is a scientific question demanding a scientific answer, and mysticism is irrelevant to the solution of it, except in so far as it persuades those who misuse it in this manner, that the mythologies of archaic Judaism stand as serious pronouncements upon subjects requiring specialised and modern knowledge.

Almost all mystics, however, appear totally insensible to the virtues of mystical systems differing markedly from their own. It is in this that one of the greatest drawbacks to the whole mystical system is to be found. For if two scientists disagree, they at least usually retain a common language in which they may express their disagreement, and seek to find its solution. Mysticism, however, with its all too easily made claim to be the word of the living God, can seldom tolerate, or even understand, a view of the world differing from its own. Because its terms of reference appear all too often as a language known only to the mystic himself, communication becomes extremely difficult, and it is indeed rare that anything constructive is achieved.

We each have within us the poet and the logician, the rationalist and the mystic: indeed it is beneficial that we do so, as without these varieties of world-views life would fast become unspeakably dull. But if we are to avoid muddled thinking, and a form of 'creeping absolutism' whereby we slowly become convinced of the impeccable correctness of our views, in contrast to the weakness and folly of those of our neighbours, we must at all cost avoid confusing the two, and must refrain from giving mystical answers to questions which are not themselves of a mystical nature. That way madness lies.

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95 THESES FOR A SECOND REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH

continued

Part 17: Assistance

92. On the whole, churchgoers are good people, who uphold and aspire to virtue, and the clergy devote their lives to what they conceive to be the moral perfection of humanity. Intellectually honest clergymen and laymen will acknowledge the need for a New Reformation and will welcome its advent. The clergy and hierarchy of all the world's present religions are invited to undertake, in all candour, to examine reality, to repudiate error, to embrace truth, to labour diligently for the good and to initiate these reforms in the Churches under their charge. Those who want this Church should help its progress by attending its services. Laymen should volunteer to assist the clergy in the great tasks that lie ahead.

93. There should be instituted an international organisation to help the people of the whole earth and of all present persuasions to establish this New Reformation in their Churches.

94. Schools of theology and divinity faculties of universities should teach the principles of this New Reformation and thus prepare students for this ministry. Such courses should also be made available to the clergy and hierarchy of the present Churches. Divinity schools should no longer concentrate on teaching the aspirant for the ministry to translate the New Testament out of Greek; rather, they should teach philosophy, law, science, sociology, economics, to equip clergy to deal with problems of the present world. Faculties of theology should not consist wholly of staff prejudiced for a religion; rather, instructional staff should be as open-minded as the faculty of any other academic discipline. Students preparing for the ministry should be allowed freedom of thought.

95. The successful advancement of the Second Reformation will require not only personal help but also funds. All who appreciate the progress of humanity that may be gained by advance to rationality and the better world that can be created for all mankind are invited to contribute. But the Churches, organisations or individuals who join this Reformation are not indebted in any way to its founders; all contributions are wholly voluntary and will be used faithfully.

NOTES

In the 16th century, after over a thousand years of blind acceptance of old ideas and customs imposed by the authority of the Church of Rome, new inventions, exploration and the Renaissance awakened in Europe an interest in new ideas. Earlier, at the close of the 14th century, John Wycliffe, an Englishman, who translated the Bible from Latin to English to be read by common people as well as by scholars, preached religious doctrines so contrary to Church dogmas that the Pope summoned him to Rome on a charge of heresy, but Wycliffe did not obey. Later, a Bohemian priest, John Huss, heard of Wycliffe's teaching and preached against the authority of the Pope. He was tried by a Council of the Church, condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake. The Church's authority went unchallenged for the next century.

Then, Martin Luther, Professor of Religion in the University of Wittenberg, attacked certain doctrines and practices of the Church. On October 31, 1517, he nailed on the door of the Church at Wittenberg a list of 95 THESES against what he considered wrongs in the Church. Luther

was summoned to Rome, but he refused to go. A Council of the Church in Germany offered him a chance to recant and to apologise, but again he refused. Then he was excommunicated from the Church. The Pope ordered the Emperor, Charles V, to punish Luther. In his trial, he refused to rescind any of his statements and it was feared that he would be condemned to death. But the Emperor, then engaged in a hard struggle against the Turks, dared not to do anything that might cause the people to fight among themselves, for many were convinced of the truth of Luther's views, and he simply declared Luther an outlaw. Those who agreed with him broke away from the Roman Church. They came to be called "Protestants" because of their protest against the Emperor's order to enforce all laws against heretics. The bitter feeling between Catholics and Lutherans led to the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), ostensibly a war over religion, actually used by various rulers as an excuse to seize territory. This cruel war ravaged Germany with blood and destruction and so delayed unification of Germany as to sow the seeds of the later Franco-Prussian War and of World War I.

The Protestant Reformation spread to other countries. In England Henry VIII founded the Anglican Church. John Calvin preached reform in France and Switzerland, and his disciple, John Knox, formed the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. Holland and Scandinavia turned away from the Mediaeval Church. John Wesley founded Methodism. To stop the Protestant revolt, the Church at Rome instituted a programme of reform and reorganisation known as the Counter-Reformation, and the Pope convened the Council of Trent which restated Catholic doctrines.

450 years later, in 1968, the needs of our own times require a Second Reformation upon which we now embark in England with these 95 THESES. Let us hope it will be considered reasonably and quietly, without the turmoil that attended the First.

The present headquarters of the Philosophian Church: 6 Hilltop Road, Caversham, Berkshire, England. Tel. Reading 72014.

(Concluded)

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.

FREETHINKER FUND

Donations received: April 1—June 30, 1968

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Total: £164 8s. (Total, previous quarter, £80 15s 6d.)

COINCIDENCE AND VERSE

THE verses printed below are associated with—and by—a number of happy coincidences which may prove interesting to record. Each poem was composed by a woman; each writer is a frequent contributor to the FREETHINKER; neither is personally acquainted with the other though familiar with the other's writings; each has employed a pseudonym; Mrs Dora Bentley writes under the name Isobel Grahame; Miss Phyllis K. Graham, the ex-nun, and author of *The Nun Who Lived Again*, until recently con-

A SECULAR PRAYER

O God, the scourge of ages past,
Who yet has power to maim,
Your spectre's still o'er reason cast
To our eternal shame.
Beneath your shadow's sheltering gloom
Crazed prophets dwell secure,
Weaving neurotic webs of doom
Whence no escape is sure.
Before the dawn of reasoned thought
Ere man gave Earth her name,
He feared all ills by Nature wrought
And dreamed up YOU to blame!
A thousand sages sold this dope
Till half the world was hooked.
Short was the shift from Priest to Pope
When reason's goose was cooked.
Mind like an ever-questing beam,
Revealed your feet as clay,
But threats of Hell like night's bad dream
Have scared our wits away.
O god, the scourge of ages past,
Go back to your Unknown,
And then—content to rest at last—
PLEASE LEAVE MANKIND ALONE.

ISOBEL GRAHAME

tributed articles under the nom-de-plume Freda Bentley. Earlier this year each was inspired to write a poem; independently, each decided to parody a well-known hymn; appearing together below, they break the long absence of poetry from these pages.

"Hallelujah Chorus" (a parody of "All Things Bright and Beautiful" won a five guinea prize for an irrereligious hymn recently in the *New Statesman*. "A Secular Prayer" is, of course, a parody of "O, God Our Help in Ages Past".

HALLELUJAH CHORUS

All things vile and horrible,
All creatures that appal,
All things mad and terrible—
The Drol Dog made them all!
The worm in the intestine,
The cancer in the womb,
The jolly mob of viruses
That hustle man to doom:

(Chorus as above, and after each verse)

The gnat and the mosquito,
The louse, the wasp, the flea,
The maggot and the tse-tse fly
And all the bugs that be:
The dust that chokes the nostril
The mud the filth the grime,
The dung that haunts the days of man,
The rot, the worms, the slime:
The flames that burn and torture,
The fire beyond control,
The everlasting bonfire
To roast the damned soul . . .

PHYLLIS GRAHAM

JAMES AND WHITEHEAD ON MIND AND MATTER

Douglas Bramwell

UNTIL William James wrote, philosophers generally agreed that there was a type of event called 'knowing'. In such an event the 'knower' was in a special relation to the object 'known', whether that object was inanimate, another person's body, the knower's own body, or another mind. This accepted doctrine carried the implication that the 'knower' was a mind or soul and made of a different 'stuff' from physical things. There were, it implied, two distinct types of 'stuff' in the world, namely, 'matter' and 'mind'.

Although this doctrine of two substances accounts for the difference between physical and mental events, the advance of scientific knowledge has made any such ultimate distinction between matter and mind difficult to maintain. At the same time materialism, the philosophy most in accord with the single-substance assumptions of science, encounters problems in trying to account for the obvious difference between physical events and mental events, between the objective world and our subjective experience of it.

William James held that there is 'no aboriginal stuff of quality of being, contrasted with that of which material objects are made, out of which our thoughts of them are made'.

James called his single substance 'pure experience', but did not develop his philosophy in detail enough to show how 'experience'—with which we associate the subjective or 'knower' side of things—can also be interpreted to give the objective, 'known' world.

Somewhere in his writings Bertrand Russell siezes this weakness. Whereas, argues Russell, a child who has been once burnt fears the fire, a poker, however many times it is thrust into the flames, does not come to be afraid. The child is an experiencing organism; the poker is inanimate non-experiencing matter.

But Russell is, I think, unfair to James. Although James did not develop his philosophy fully, he was certainly not sufficiently unsubtle to think that the 'experience' of a poker is on a par with that of a child.

Russell's friend and collaborator A. N. Whitehead held, like James, that the universe consists of experience or, rather, centres of experience. These centres may be the electrons and other elementary particles known to science today, or they may be even more fundamental. Let us, like Whitehead, call them 'actual entities'.

Needless to say, Whitehead did not hold that elementary actual entities have conscious experience. But these elementary centres of experience are such that, when organised in sufficiently complex ways, they give rise to the high-grade experience of animals and man. Analogously, the 'behaviour' of an elementary actual entity is not as complex as that of an animal, but gives rise to animal behaviour when organised, with other actual entities, in sufficiently complex ways.

Both James and Whitehead can be said to be exponents of the double-aspect theory, which holds that matter and mind are two aspects of a single substance or stuff. This theory offers a possible way of overcoming the difficulties

of traditional materialism without falling back into two-substance dualism. The origins and contrast between the physical and mental, between the objective and the subjective are, in fact, the springboard for Whitehead's whole metaphysics.

Every actual entity is aware, in an elementary way, of the world outside it, and this awareness is the entity's subjective or mental aspect. But the outside world, of which it is aware, consists of other actual entities which are, to it, physical and objective.

Similarly, the animal organism is aware of the outside world, and its awareness, now at conscious level, is its subjective or mental aspect. The animal's physical body and its behaviour is the objective aspect of which other entities, or organisations of entities, are aware.

In short, mental events are the subjective aspects of the units, simple or organised, of the stuff of the world. Physical events are the objective aspects of those same units, as experienced by other units.

THINK, OR JUST BELIEVE!

Gonzalo Quiogue

THE article of Mr Julio Manalo Cueto, *Think (Philippines Free Press, July 13, 1968)*, would have been enlightening had it not been full of "mysteries". It is easier to believe than to think. This is axiomatic. And for this reason most of us have chosen to just believe. How many of us care to think and can really think? Mr Cueto quoted ancient man-made Proverbs 1 : 7, thus:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction".

To secular scholars and scientists, the first part of this quotation is a new high in ignorance and stupidity. It should be rewritten thus:

"The fear of the Lord is the superstitious fear of primitive man who believed there was a God. The fear of the Lord is in a pious mind padlocked by the clergy against the influence of naturalistic Humanism or atheism. A mind too tender and sensitive for free thought articles. A mind narrowed and conditioned to feed the clergy!"

The second part of the quotation, "but fools despise wisdom and instruction", is very true, indeed!

Mr Cueto wasted much space in writing many quotations from the article, *Mysteries of the Atom*; quotations irrelevant to the essence of the article, *Dearly Loved Beliefs*. He believed there was a God, although he did not know His nature. It is but natural that he cannot know such nature; for God is neither matter nor energy, nor a vacuum. God is therefore nothing. And Mr Cueto, naturally, knows nothing about nothing! But religious people call God an "unfathomable intelligence"; not nothing, but something; an empty, but a *dearly loved belief*.

In the second paragraph, among other things, Mr Cueto said:

"To assert that, 'nobody created the universe' is the height of of atheistic bigotry".

The preceding *italics* is not assertion, but a conclusion deduced from the foundation of physics: Matter cannot come from nothing, nor can it be reduced to nothing. A universe of matter, therefore, cannot come from nothing. It has no beginning like time and space. It was not created. Condemning the so-called "assertion" is the height of religious bigotry!

In his last paragraph, Mr Cueto said:

"In case Mr Quiogue is outraged by the use of the word

'mysteries', let me recall for him what Bishop Fulton Sheen once said of certain 'mysteries' in the realm of faith. The sun is like a mystery—we cannot look directly at it, that is, comprehend it the way we look at a table or chair. But in the light of the sun the world is revealed. Might it not be that the mysteries of science point to greater mysteries in the spiritual world of which we would have no knowledge at all without the light of God?"

Mr Cueto can learn much more by reading Bertrand Russell, than by reading Bishop Fulton Sheen. Russell is a great scientific philosopher, mathematician and scholar. On the other hand, Bishop Sheen is only a theologian. And theologians can give us only poetic nonsense that floats between the "divine" and the profane. Theology is regarded by secular scholars and scientists as a quasi-pseudo-science used to make "God" look real. The mind of the religious has been conditioned by the clergy to love "mysteries". These "mysteries" are close relatives of "the divine", "faith", "spiritual world", mumbo-jumbo and abracadabra. To use faith instead of reason is to be religious. And yet the clergy insists that reason was given to us by God to be used for our own good.

The sun is not like a mystery. We cannot look directly at it, on account of its strong glare that hurts our eyes.

Science has no "mysteries". Its findings or ideas are classified as: hypotheses or possibilities, theories or probabilities, and natural laws or facts. What science does not know, it does not claim to know. It does not put words into the mouth of God, like ancient Biblical writers did. Science admits what it does not know. But from time to time it pushes back the boundary of the known to the unknown to enlarge our known world.

What "light of God"? Presumably, the so-called "divinely inspired" words of the Bible. Dr Jose P. Rizal (Rizal and Cosmic Religion, FP, December 30, 1967), in his letter to Father Pastells, said:

"I do not believe revelation impossible. Rather, I believe in it. Not, however, in the revelation which each and every religion claims to possess. If we examine, compare and scrutinise such revelations impartially, we shall detect in all of them human claws and the stamp of the age in which they were written. No: man makes his God in his own image, and then ascribes to Him his own works in the same manner that the Polish magnates used to choose their kings, and then impose their will on him." Give us more light, Mr Cueto!

A RHETORICAL QUESTION

Phyllis Graham

"Who killed Jesus Christ?"

The correct answer is "You did", "I did", "We did", but chiefly, for oratorical purposes, "You did." I learn this from a lurid article in *The Plain Truth*, "a magazine of understanding" spawned in the USA and published here by a concern called "Ambassador College". The stuff is pushed through my letter-box at monthly intervals, free of charge and no obligation. The only reason I don't send it back with love from a confirmed atheist is, that I like to keep an eye on its goings-on, while gleaning here and there among the horrendous rubbish a tip or two about the American scene. This is noble of me, because the religious tripe really does nauseate; and the size, glossiness, colour-photography and general excellence of turn-out infuriate me. Why can't the poor FREETHINKER trap an amiable millionaire?

To return to the demise of JC. The article started an illuminating train of thought (No, I am *not* coming forward to be Saved). What struck me afresh—having encountered it, shudderingly, in other pious connections—was the wallowing in gory physical details, giving a macabre impression of personal gloating. It reminded me, among a host of similar memories, of a Lenten radio sermon by a Scottish parson, whose account of the Scourging was delivered with the obvious relish of a commentator at a juicy boxing bout. At the risk of offending good taste, I quote one or two extracts (punctuation, etc. exactly as printed).

"Therefore, I repeat, by the authority of Jesus Christ, **YOU KILLED JESUS CHRIST!** *Your wicked hands crucified the Saviour just as surely as if you had been there thrusting the spear in His side!*

"... **YOU** and I are *personally* guilty of condemning Christ to death, of spitting in His face, of striking Him with our fists until we bludgeoned His face, turning it purple and red. You haven't realised yet that you didn't stop until His face was raw and swollen, until His skin parted, ruptured and bled!

"... slowly, methodically, you began the hammer blows that drove the square-cut nails deep into the red, raw flesh of your Saviour and mine, pinning His hands and feet to that stake.

"The blood that spurted out of those nail holes at Golgotha did not all run down the stake onto the ground—some of it spurted in your face, on your clothing and on your hands!"

But that's enough, and I apologise for inflicting this on readers. If there isn't here the sort of sadistic pleasure excited by any form of brutal sport from bullfights to prize-fights, I don't know where it's to be found.

One wouldn't want to deny the Christians their little pleasures, but isn't there some profound significance in their evident enjoyment of human disintegration at its bloodiest and nastiest? Habitual brooding on shameful torment and agonising death, the staple of Christian meditation for centuries, is not conducive to a healthy view of life or the sane conduct of society: a piece of psychological reasoning amply supported by the facts of history. It is a twofold identification: with the sufferings of the Victim, and with the guilt of the executioners: thus a sado-masochistic complex festers at the core of the Christ-

ian personality. From this arise two outstanding psychopathic symptoms. Firstly, tendencies to callousness, cruelty and violence, inevitably resulting from mental and visual familiarity with crude presentations of a barbarous spectacle. Secondly, a form of aggression over and above the natural aggressiveness implanted in man for survival purposes: namely, the psychological reaction to guilt-consciousness, aggravated by unconscious resentment against guilt unjustly imposed from without.

If the actions and attitudes of Christians have always been, like the ways of their god, hard to understand and harder to stomach, the source of their abnormality is surely this perpetuated *Grand Guignol* of blood and brutality, fixated in the central Symbol of the Christian faith.

"The crucified Christ is a terrible sight," writes Suzuki, from the viewpoint of an oriental mind, "and I cannot help associating it with the sadistic impulse of a physically affected brain."

Neither can I. It seems to explain an infinite amount of lunacy. It sheds some light on the mystery of a "redeemed" world chock-full of unredeemed humanity. It may even have some bearing on the constant resurgence of violence and aggression in the bosom of civilised societies, such as we have seen too often in our lifetimes and are still witnessing today. It may be the reason why the dark roots of cruelty in human nature, which all the pious platitudes of "Gentle Jesus" failed to eradicate, send up their malignant growths twined with the flower of wisdom from the brain of Homo Sapiens. And indeed, why shouldn't he continue to gorge on gore like his savage forefathers, when the cult that made him what he is equates Salvation with a Precious Bloodbath, and sanctifies its worshipers with a meal of Blood?

The Cult of the Crucified—in the words used by Baron de Pounat indicting the most ancient form of it—"was born in blood, has quenched its thirst in blood, and is in letters of blood that its true history is written."

Unhappily its history is still being written. So long as the vampire exists to batten on impoverished humanity, so long will the world be a stage for the drama of disintegration under the Sign of a Gibbeted God.

Surely it is up to us to see that the performance is curtailed as soon as possible. "Who killed Jesus Christ?" remains a rhetorical question while the corpse is an unconscionable time dying. Happy that day for humanity when those who follow us will answer, for all the fighting generations of Freethought: "WE DID!"

NOTE FOR NEW READERS

THE FREETHINKER may be ordered through any reputable British newsagent. The newsagent may order it through most of the larger wholesalers and distributors (Marlborough, Menzies, W. H. Smith, Wyman, Marshall, etc.)—though some newsagents are not yet aware of it and may need it to be pointed out to them. If you wish to order through a newsagent (rather than subscribe to the publishers) please notify your newsagent of this; you will be helping yourself, and helping widen the FREETHINKER'S circulation.

Letters to the Editor

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

Apologies

YOUR report on the NSS Annual Conference (July 12) included the totally inaccurate statement that Mr W. Collins and Mrs E. Venton were re-elected Vice-Presidents only after considerable debate. In fact, they were the only nominees, and their re-election took place without debate of any kind.

WILLIAM McILROY, *Secretary, NSS.*

[After such a meeting, I am not surprised my memory let me down on at least one point (but I take it all other points were entirely correct?). Of course, I am very sorry for the error, and grateful for this opportunity to apologise to Mr Collins and Mrs Venton very sincerely.—Ed.]

Securitanism—key to world politics

I THINK it is a great pity that Mr J. J. Thompson should overreach himself by suggesting that he has discovered an ethical principle which cannot be refuted or faulted. This simply isn't true, and Mr Thompson is simply ruining some otherwise very fine writing by including these ridiculous notions, which cannot be sustained in rational argument.

Although I would voluntarily accept Mr Thompson's Securitanism (and actually have done for some years, having been brought to this idea by my own thinking and independently of Mr Thompson) I see no sense in overstating the case for it. Securitanism is no more than a well-educated, generous and optimistic guess about the social purpose which people might adopt in place of older forms of religion, and, thus, nationalism.

If we somehow succeed in having the bulk of human beings in the world voluntarily accepting Securitanism as an expression of their basic social concern, then I am certain many of the current social frustrations will disappear. (Here, I am wholly in support of Mr Thompson.) But if he insists on this talk about having found an Absolute he may not only drive people away from Securitanism but figuratively 'throw away this key to world politics'. For humanity's sake let us be truthful at all costs and admit we are as much in the dark on ultimate questions as the most humble shepherd who ever chewed a piece of grass.

E. G. MACFARLANE,

Convener, The World National Party.

'Jests a truth'

IN a short letter published in the July 12 issue of the FREETHINKER C. M. C. Dowman succinctly, pertinently and with quite remarkable perception discovers and defines what is probably the most important aspect of my battle against censorship of art.

Suggesting that FREETHINKER readers might assume that I had succeeded in creating a rival to *La Vie Parisienne* and that further letters on the subject of my work if accompanied by illustrations would place a 'heart transplant in the breast of the circulation manager' he jests a truth that is the very essence of my cause—that words are constantly failing to make the communication bridge that the intellectual presumption of their authority has for so long assumed to be possible.

JEAN STRAKER.

Pity!

PERMIT me space in your columns to express my profound sorrow at losing you as our editor. As a freethinker, and as a regular reader of the FREETHINKER for many years, I believe I have come to recognise a genuine freethinker, and that it is what I have recognised you to be.

Contributors have told me of the freedom they have found you have permitted them, and the variety of views expressed in the FREETHINKER'S pages since you became Editor is a tribute to your open-mindedness and your refusal to toe-the-line.

My sorrow at your leaving (and my misgivings for the future of this valuable journal) are not in the least diminished by David Tribe's meaningless verbosity and tastelessness.

My impression is that there was much more you could have said which courtesy prevented you from expressing—pity! There is something wrong somewhere.

(Miss B. KNIGHT.)

Plea (verbatim)

CAN you possibly give Mrs Winifred Roux (PO Box 11221, Johannesburg) a plug for her *The Rationalist* publication? She needs more subscribers, and her South African publication is only \$1.50 a year. Probably there are some FREETHINKER subscribers who can also afford to help this Rationalist Association of South Africa from going further in the red. I'm told they have only 22 overseas subscribers and 76 local ones! Mrs Roux, as you no doubt know, lost her husband and has carried on the SA association's work under difficulties that you and I don't experience. Please help her, if you can. I enjoy her *Die Rationalis—The Rationalist*.

WILLARD E. EDWARDS (Hawaii).

Conversion to atheism

PETER CROMMELIN, in another fine article, "Conversion to Atheism", illustrates the necessity and urgency of all 'idealists' to be constantly alert and active against 'any' form of 'religious resurrection'. Already, the barricades and structure of the Roman hierarchy, and indeed on every 'religious front', there are signs of 'rumblings and mumbblings' inside the gates of repressive establishments.

Karl Marx's never to be forgotten parody, 'Religion is the opium of the people' puts us on our guard against fairytale philosophy!

People of every creed and belief have got to unite themselves against the destroyers of social and economic security and happiness.

As a professed idealist, I hope the time will come when the whole human race is sufficiently self-reliant and intellectually minded to view life as a planned and constructive adventure.

ERNEST CLASPER.

Patron

HOW condescending can David Tribe be? I don't need him to tell me of your 'excellent qualities', and you don't need his patronage either.

No wonder you are resigning.

R. GRAHAM.

A monthly

I HAVE no wish to join in the affrey of the editorship of the FREETHINKER, but as one reader I must make my point on one issue.

A thinking that 'the FREETHINKER has always been a weekly and by the Lord it always shall' can conserve our little tanner's worth for heaven—but not for earth.

I see no reason why we should not have a grand monthly at 2/6. It could contain something for all the family—not just the ones who make their articles so interesting that only they understand them. There is too much of this in our movement.

The FREETHINKER is that little joy to me each week; some matter my brainless skull can allow entry. But it is not a book for all. We do press for advantages for all.

My suggestion is not that we publish a new *Comic Cuts*; there can be sensible balance; its propaganda value would not diminish; its circulation could increase.

But the present weekly suits only the converted; and I am converted to the view that the present arrangement is not suitable.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

Cheers

WHEN Kit Mouat took over the editorship from David Tribe I cheered; when David Collis took over the editorship from Kit Mouat I cheered twice; finally, when Karl Hyde took over from David Collis—three cheers! Despite the FREETHINKER'S shortcomings under his editorship it has been the best since Colin McCall's.

Being far from omniscient, he has been far less didactic (many voices on many subjects—*people talking*—making for a variety and a liveliness unknown to the paper for some years). Having thought that Karl Hyde's FREETHINKER showed great promise—though I had my share of wincing—I am sorry to see him go. I would not normally allow my name to appear under such laudatory gush, but—who knows?—I may soon be writing to David Reynolds telling of my mighty roar when he took over from Karl Hyde, etc. etc.

BRIAN KHAN.

A lesson!

I GATHER you are resigning (or getting the push!). I hope you have learned your lesson. The fact is, we freethinkers have a job to do: to spread freethought. We can't have people like you coming along and letting every Tom, Dick and Harry say just what he likes.

D. CATCHPOLE.