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Friday,
August 9, 1968**THE POPE AND BIRTH CONTROL**

TUESDAY, July 30.—By the time this item is published, Pope Paul's declaration on contraception, sterilisation and abortion, will not longer be news. At the time of writing, the press has devoted hundreds of column-inches to it, and the world seems to be in an uproar against Paul's decision. Between the time of writing and the date of publication, further communications will tell us, perhaps, of growing dissent in the Roman Church, of individual priests and bishops breaking free of papal authority, of young Catholic couples' determination to continue taking the Pill, perhaps of Norman St John Stevas' decision to join the Anglican Church, or of the Pope's retirement to hospital with cerebral breakdown. But I wager the world will be back to normal by publication date.

Communications may also tell us how many thousand unwanted babies have been born into famine-stricken areas, and of the thousands who have died from slow hunger. The anger and distress created by Paul's declaration is understandable, but what we may yet find difficult to grasp is why the declaration met with such 'surprise' and 'dismay'.

Despite the bland and optimistic assurances of Christendom's left-wing minority, it was obvious to humanists and secularists that the Pope couldn't stay silent on this issue much longer, and that he wouldn't make any statement which declared his church's previous teachings to have been in error. His recent reaffirmation of his infallibility and of other Romish romances were clearly a pilot scheme for something to follow; what else but a firm line on birth control?

Perhaps the priests and bishops, at present stunned by Paul's declaration, really did feel their Pope would do a complete *volte-face* showing himself and the Vatican to be genuinely concerned with people's sufferings and for mankind's well-being. The gullibility of the laity in theological matters is sometimes equalled by the suggestibility of the clergy in higher ecclesiastical matters. But, whatever adjustment in their thinking is now called for, it is fairly predictable what it will be: a palsied shift to re-align with papal pronouncements and Vatican vapourings.

POPES, PILLS AND ALL THAT

POPE Paul VI is entitled to have any views he likes on artificial contraception or any other subject and proclaim them to the world. But his latest encyclical provokes a number of comments.

Firstly, the world was invited to rejoice at the appointment of a humane Pontiff in the tradition of Pope John. But Paul has all along been a hawk in dove's feathers, a true disciple of pro-fascist Pius XII. As some of us pointed out at the time, while liberals danced for joy in the streets of Rome when the holy smoke went up, Curia conservatives showed a beatific calm, no doubt the result of private

assurances. The new Pope has consistently followed what he sees as the material interests of his church and not human needs. One is forced to wonder whether his sponsoring of Caritas undercover intervention in Biafra is really dictated by selfless concern for the plight of starving children, for which the Biafrans are probably more responsible than the Federal Nigerians, or by support for a Nigerian Katanga especially rich in oil and church missions.

Next, the Pope has a unique religious position. The issue of family regulation is not normally regarded as one of religion but of personal choice and private conscience, while the utterances of other spiritual leaders do not command the same blind obedience. That puts special responsibility on the Pope to see the question not simply as one of dogma or tradition, but humane concern for present and future generations. For this is an issue of sociological ramifications. It concerns poverty and social welfare, maternal health and sibling wellbeing, the population explosion and the limited resources of this planet. Any pronouncements in this field directly concern Roman Catholics but indirectly concern every other inhabitant. World poverty is something we all have a responsibility for, and already outside Biafra, without publicity, millions die every year because we have failed to combine reason and humanity in adjusting the numbers of people to the availability of food.

Finally, non-Catholics are *directly* affected by papal utterances of this sort. Through a curious hypothesis known as the moral law, this teaching is held to be binding on all human beings. Ever since the founder of the National Secular Society, Charles Bradlaugh, pioneered the organised family planning movement in 1877, Catholics have been its bitterest and most widespread opponents. They have consistently intrigued in the United Nations, World Health Organisation and the Freedom from Hunger Campaign to obstruct adequate measures—and sometimes even discussion. In Westminster they have done their best to keep contraception outside the National Health Service, and in town halls to prevent the establishment of council or Family Planning Association clinics. So firmly entrenched are devout Catholics in the media of mass communications it is much to be doubted whether this press release will be quoted anywhere.

The responsible majority have had quite enough of sectarian obstruction. Fortunately there are today many Catholics who are defying their church on this and other social questions. We hope their numbers will rapidly increase.

DAVID TRIBE.

A protest meeting, following the Pope's statement, is being organised by the National Secular Society to be held at Caxton Hall, London, SW1, on Thursday, August 8, at 7.30 p.m. Speakers will include Renee Short MP, and David Tribe.

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Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

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PAT AND MIKE ON REINCARNATION

From the American freethought publication *The Voice of Freedom* (March 1968).

PAT became interested in reincarnation after reading the book *The Search for Bridey Murphy*. But he wasn't quite sure what reincarnation was, so he asked his friend Mike.

'Reincarnation is when you die and come back to Earth in some other form' explained Mike. Pat still looked dubious, so Mike said: 'Let me give you an illustration. Suppose you were to die, be buried, and then be reborn as a patch of green grass. While you're a patch of green grass waving away in the meadow, a cow comes along and eats you'.

Pat nodded his understanding.

'In due time', Mike continued, 'you pass through that cow and are deposited in a neat round pile in the middle of the meadow. One day I come walking through that meadow and almost step in the neat round pile. But I see you just in time. So I step back, look down at the pile and say: "Hello Pat, you aint changed much"; well, that's reincarnation'.

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THE MYTH OF DEMOCRACY

A. J. Lowry

LIKE the names of the saints in the Middle Ages, the sacred chant 'Democracy!' is used today as the battle-cry of those latter-day crusaders, who have not yet wearied of waging war against the unbelievers of the east. But like most appeals to the masses, the excitement invoked by this slogan is hardly warranted by a logical analysis of its substance, and the inhabitants of the far and steaming quarters of the world in which we attempt to promulgate such doctrines, would be justified in pointing out that we do not even attain the consistency of adopting the system of government which we attempt to defend.

A true democracy exists only in communities where the legislative body is comprised of all, or at least the vast majority, of the individuals subject to its dictates. Rousseau, therefore, was perfectly correct in maintaining that the British system of government was not a democracy but an elected aristocracy; and the extension of the franchise since his day, though in itself good, has done nothing to detract from the relevance of his original criticism. The modern British legislative assembly, for example, consists of 630 members, who may rule in Westminster for up to five years in comparative disregard of the wishes of their subjects. For this reason, therefore, Britain, like America, France, and the other 'democratic' nations of the world, is not a democracy at all, and the continued misapplication of that term says little for either the honesty or the competence of those who continue to use it.

A strong case could, of course, be made out against the practicability of governing a population as large as Britain's according to the strictest tenets of democracy. The expense of and inconvenience of holding referendums on every item of legislation, justifies the abandonment of the democratic ideal, and provided that everyone understands the true nature of the system of government employed, and that the elections whereby the legislative power is transferred from the people to their representatives in parliament is conducted in a just and responsible manner, it would not seem that anyone was the worse off. But as I have shown, it is a matter of empirical observation that the first of these conditions do not obtain. Further, it is a matter of logical deduction that the second also fails; for the process whereby our elections are conducted can no more be defended than the serious claim that our nation is governed in a democratic manner.

It is, for example, an obvious truism that the representative process will only operate fairly if the populations of the constituencies are of at least approximately equal size. Otherwise it will follow that an individual living and voting in a constituency whose population is small, will have a disproportionately greater control of the machinery of government than will one inhabiting a larger constituency. But in Britain, the enormity of these discrepancies make a wholesale mockery of the principle of 'one man, one vote'. Whilst Orkney and Shetland contain a population of 23,000, the constituency of Billericay contains close on 100,000 inhabitants. Each, however, returns one representative to parliament, so that the exercise of a vote in the former constituency is approximately equal to the exercise of four votes in the latter. It would probably be unfair to accuse any of the successive governments of deliberately exploiting such electoral anomalies, but the fact remains that the over-representation of the rural districts (because of geographical considerations) has produced a number of unfortunate results—the worst of which occurred in the election of 1951, when the Conservatives obtained a

majority of 17 seats in the House of Commons, whilst the Labour Party obtained a majority of 200,000 votes in the country.

The principle of legislative representation is further endangered by the refusal of any government to instigate a system of proportional representation in subsequent elections. It must be remembered that the proportionate party strengths exhibited in the House of Commons, represent only the number of constituencies in which the respective parties are successful, and not the proportion of support for those parties amongst the electorate of the country. Thus a minority party may come a close second in a large number of constituencies, and command considerable support throughout the country, yet may fail to have even one of its members represented in parliament. Even such small parties as are represented, are not given anything like the number of seats in the Commons which their support throughout the country would demand. In the general election of 1964, for example, the Liberal Party, though it secured 11.2 per cent of the votes cast in the country, obtained no more than 1.4 per cent of the seats in the Commons. Upon this matter, it is however, a little more difficult to believe in the innocence of the various governments concerned. Certainly, the present system, unjust as it doubtless is, nevertheless benefits the two major parties by over-representing their strength, and since the power to institute new legislation lies almost exclusively in their hands, it is, perhaps, hardly surprising that they display no enthusiasm over this proposed reform.

The amount of money expended in advertising the ideologies of the various parties also varies beyond all the bounds of rationality. Though extremely strict legislation govern the expenses of the parties during the election campaigns, in practise such restrictions of expenditure mean almost nothing. Because they control only the amount spent in the campaign itself, the wealthier parties run up large credit accounts for their posters, etc., which they pay off with impunity once the campaign is over. The slender resources of the smaller parties make them unable to compete on an equal footing with the extravagant advertising of their more affluent competitors, with the result that not all voices are heard with equal strength. As with the discussion of proportional representation, one may perhaps again be excused for pondering on the possibilities of a correlation between the extreme profitability of such procedures to the two major parties, and their reluctance, when in office, to amend such anomalies in our legislation.

It is clear that true democracy does not exist in the organisation of any large community, anywhere upon the face of the earth. The system commonly mistaken for such is one in which legislative authority is delegated to a comparatively small number of men for a stipulated maximum term of office. Such a system, though it could be made to work well enough if operated in an ideal manner, nevertheless falls far short of this description for a multitude of reasons, the most outstanding of which I have outlined above. Whilst being aware that there is a pro as well as a con side to the present procedures, and whilst admitting that some, at least, of their number, might be counted as necessary evils, it must not be forgotten that evils they certainly remain, and that it ill behoves us to set up our parliamentary institutions as candidates for imitation, when we have made such poor efforts to institute improvements into a system of government which we choose to falsely describe as 'democratic'.

JOHN MORLEY AND VICTORIAN DISSENT

Eric Glasgow

IT has become so customary nowadays to decry the Victorians, their ideas, their implicit values, and their society, that it is easy to overlook what was great and memorable, in the products of their thinkers, and the permanence of the significance of the best of their intellectual leaders. Perhaps, the prevailing notion of Victorian society is still one of timidity, conventionality, and an arid sort of placid acceptance, some massive submergence of sincerity beneath a sea of expediency and social cohesion: certainly, the outward habits and attitudes were then a great deal different from those of today, and in certain ways, particularly as regards the emancipation of women, we may well be only just beginning to emerge from the bad effects of the old, restrictive Victorian attitudes.

On the other hand, I am inclined to think that even the vaunted certainty of the Victorian era was, actually, a great deal less assured, and less unchallenged, than we have often supposed. It might have resembled, I suppose, the apparent unity of ideas and thought, which was supposedly imposed by the Roman Catholic Church, during the Middle Ages; but which was, in fact, constantly broken and enlivened by the courage and the sincerity of such thinkers as Peter Abelard and Roger Bacon.

At any rate it must be obvious, from even the most cursory reading of the history, that the crust of Victorian orthodoxy did conceal very much legitimate and valuable dissent, which was, often, presented by thinkers of quite exceptional power and brilliance. It is interesting, too, to notice both the limitations, and the unintruding pallidity, of what was once regarded as very radical, trenchant, or daring, in the facets of Victorian thought. There are limitations, because no Victorian thinker could divorce himself, or his ideas, completely from his own climate of opinion, the social and economic circumstances of his time; and there is an unruffling pallidity, because even the most incisive of the Victorian thinkers still worked in a mental context which must seem to us, nowadays, to involve some definite and unconscious assumptions, about both the morals and the organisation of society. Nevertheless, despite their apparent anchorage in their own period, many of these huge Victorian thinkers should still be considered, and it is surely important that the accident of their dating should not continue to obscure the merits of their ideas, whether as literature or as social philosophy.

We still have a great deal to learn from the giants of the nineteenth century, even though we may be, at this stage in history, in reaction against much of what they represented, or not so vitally concerned with their major mental pre-occupations. In recent months, I have, for various purposes, re-read books by several prominent Victorians, such as Leslie Stephen, Herbert Spencer, T. H. Huxley and James Drummond. All of them have brought home to me, often with an abiding force, the large stature, both in intellect and in character, of the best of the Victorians; and, in the process, I have been reminded of others, too, of whom I still keep some vestigial, unpursued memories.

I confess that I have, so far, read little by John Morley, since I left University. There I did not overlook his memorable biographies of Walpole, Cobden, Burke, Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot: I did not pass his solid literary achievement as editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, from 1867 to 1882, and as editor of the extensive *English Men*

of *Letters* series; nor was it possible to ignore the importance of his work, as an active Liberal politician, in the Gladstonian interest.

On another more academic plane, I can still recollect, although with some wisp-like nostalgia, cool, spacious summer evenings, of some twenty-five years ago, when, in the Mill Lane Lecture Rooms at Cambridge, Harold J. Laski would use John Morley's works extensively, to gild the incisive eloquence of his own discourses, about French thought of the eighteenth century; despite the fact that he had been largely brought up on John Morley, when he had been a student at New College, Oxford, Laski was, at that time, fond of using him, less as an authority and more as a catalyst for the exhibition of his own somewhat mordant and tendentious wit. Always, it was very entertaining and stimulating; but its value, at any rate for those of us who had examinations to pass, could be more than dubious.

John Morley (1838-1923) has stuck in my memories partly because, coming from Blackburn, he shared my own Lancashire roots. His early radicalism may be traced back to his youthful intimations of the distress in that part of Lancashire, a centre of the cotton-weaving industry, during the "hungry forties" of the last century, and later. He was educated at Cheltenham and Lincoln College, Oxford, and he became a barrister; although his basic interests, apart from politics, were always literary. Like many Victorian intellectuals, Morley turned away from the Church, for reasons of conscience, and he began his working life as a free-lance journalist in London, where he came to know closely George Meredith. His other associates included Frederic Harrison and Frederic Chapman the publisher.

Morley also owed a great debt to J. S. Mill until the latter's death in 1873; and he never ceased to venerate this "saint of rationalism". Morley's work, as a writer and reviewer in the progressive camp, quickly won for him recognition, amongst the somewhat limited ranks of those who really mattered, in the literary life of the time; and his great opportunity came, to do something enduring for creative thinking in Victorian England, when he was appointed as editor of the *Fortnightly Review* in 1867. During his ensuing period of fifteen years, as editor of that receptive and far-sighted publication, Morley made a very memorable and enduring contribution to the development of English thought and letters, and he managed to assemble a galaxy of original contributors, including Meredith, Trollope, Huxley, Spencer, Matthew Arnold, Mark Pattison and Leslie Stephen. The journal thus became, essentially, the foremost organ, the generative nursery, for the new ideas of agnosticism, humanitarian rationalism and liberal ideas, alike in politics, religion, morals and literature. Morley himself always remained as the fountain-head, the constant source, of these seminal ideas, and of the whole school of thought for which the *Fortnightly Review* came to stand.

He was drawn into active politics in the summer of 1868, exactly a century ago, chiefly as a result of his appreciation of the grievances of Ireland, with the land question and the unjustified privileges of the Established Church. He failed miserably in an attempt to be elected as MP for Blackburn, in 1869, and since intimidation by the local mill-owners had helped to ensure this failure, he became a strong supporter of the Ballot Act, which was passed in

1872. This failure may, however, have been something of a blessing in disguise; for it enabled Morley to plunge more deeply into his studies of the French eighteenth-century "philosophers", and his celebrated literary style, earnest, eloquent, and often vibrant with emotional conviction, was soon shown to be a very effective instrument for that purpose, incongruous as the combination may, in some respects, have been.

It is certain that Morley's studies in the thought of Voltaire and Rousseau did not make him any less persistent, or more wary, as a critic of Victorian society and institutions. Already an agnostic and a repudiator of what he thought to be the excessive privileges and properties of the Established Church, he began to turn to attitudes towards the British Constitution which were not far short of Republicanism, and he also advocated, sometimes with more vigour than judgment, a national system of education, organised on a completely secular basis. To a large extent, this was no more than we have today; but, at that time, it was an issue which aroused fierce and bitter controversy, and Morley's support of it, as it became one of the central themes of his message, drew him resolutely out of the sweet, green meadows of literary studies, and into the dusty, corrosive battle-grounds of political argument and strife.

There was loss as well as gain; for no such sharp intrusion into practical politics, no matter how urgent or necessary it might be, could evade the blunting, blinding necessity for some compromise of principles and idealism with the limiting requirements of power, and the restrictive dictates of expediency. Nevertheless, by so plunging into the maelstrom of affairs, Morley was rescued from any desultory, useless, or arid pursuit of the literature of isolation, his abilities could not be stultified on some exalted, futile "ivory tower" and he was brought out into the main stream of public life in the England of his day, where he could be in alliance with Joseph Chamberlain of Birmingham and even the extreme, eruptive radicalism of Charles Dilke which then included disestablishment of the Anglican Church, secular education and heavier taxation for the rich.

So it was that the *Fortnightly Review* under Morley's guidance became, after 1875, the organ of a political radicalism which was in many respects too severe and thorough-going even for Gladstone himself. As such it became exceedingly influential even though Morley himself failed repeatedly to gain election as an MP. But it did serve to emphasise, in retrospect I think quite fruitfully, the political power of the writer in Victorian times and the political prescience of John Morley in particular; whilst his absence from the House of Commons enabled him to render more copious and significant the swelling tide of his own biographical and other literary work.

Morley did enter the House of Commons, for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in 1883, as a fellow-member with Joseph Cowen the radical editor of the *Newcastle Chronicle*. There he became a strong supporter of Home Rule for Ireland, was entrusted with the heavy task of writing the official biography of Gladstone after the latter's death in 1898, and served as the Secretary for India from 1905 to 1910. To the last, Morley, with John Burns, opposed the war with Germany of 1914 thinking it to be a bad result of the British embroilment with France of 1904. After the war, Morley observed the decline and fall of the Liberal Party with less chagrin than he might otherwise have done

had this occurred when he was still in the full vigour of his manhood. He had been Viscount Morley of Blackburn since 1908 and the fierce political duels of the House of Commons—as acid and heated then as they can sometimes be today, although the basic sources of disputes are now so very different—were no longer for him. Indeed, he played scarcely any part in Parliamentary life after 1914, except for a brief intervention in the House of Lords in 1921 on the occasion of the preliminaries of the peace-treaty with Ireland.

Thereafter, until he died on September 23, 1923, John Morley lived in a placid retirement in Wimbledon. With the onset of age his opinions mellowed, his mind lost its earlier asperities without losing also its acuteness. The gradual approach of the final, irrevocable reality of death made his judgments deeper and less facile without in any way destroying their sincerity or their fearlessness. "All passion spent", John Morley was still an agnostic, a liberal and a "freethinker", in one of the best meanings of that much-abused term: he was still, incurably, attached to the abiding epithet of "Honest" which was, indeed, to accompany him to the grave.

To the end, John Morley remained as he had been when he wrote his book *On Compromise* (1874) which, as one commentator said, lost its last trace of any compromise as soon as the title-page was turned. Perhaps the only change which did occur as John Morley grew old, was his increasing reluctance to indulge in arguments about religion: some shrouding sense of the mystery of all existence then fell upon him, and the honest rationalist seemed to stop short before the final, inscrutable spectacle of life, its nature and its ultimate meaning. For the most part, as its final end loomed gently in front of him, he was content to accept it without speculation upon the fact, and on both sides of the intervening door he wished to rest in peace.

Otherwise, of course, the whole career of John Morley reveals a great consistency of moral purpose, in his pursuit of the liberal ideals of freedom, justice and integrity, and he undoubtedly made a very significant contribution to English political life in the last century; as well as leaving behind him an impressive number of books, some of which, such as his studies in the French eighteenth-century thinkers, and his biographies of Burke, Walpole, Cromwell and Gladstone, are still standard texts in the Universities despite the fact that they were first published between 1867 and 1903.

As a writer alone, John Morley more than warrants our remembrance and our appreciation: he stands for clarity of thought, decisiveness of judgment, literary fluency and perception, and that strong, pervasive pre-occupation with morality which, in the Victorians, was often intensified rather than diminished by the loss of what it has become customary to regard as "faith". As a thinker, he was typically Victorian; but if he did not still so appear, he would no longer be relevant today; for his books still reach us because of their Victorian qualities of solidity, thoroughness and moral earnestness.

Yet, it is not only as a writer that we should appreciate John Morley. He belongs to that select group of people, including Thucydides, Herbert Fisher and Winston Churchill who excelled in practical as well as literary affairs, and who were as much at home in the House of Commons, or on a public platform, as they were in a

(Continued overleaf)

library or their studies. After his first entry into Parliament in 1883, and until his final pacifist retreat in 1914, John Morley was a very active and effective factor in the fortunes of Liberalism in England, and a worthy successor to leadership for the generations which followed those of Cobden and Bright.

Morley's contribution to the public assessment of the major problems of Britain in the nineteenth century—about Ireland, education, the Church of England, the land question and the Colonies—may, in fact, seem to be more memorable—such is the hasty verdict of a busy and practical world—than what he did achieve, in the more removed and rarefied field of literature, with his books, his long editorship of the *Fortnightly Review* and his protracted friendships with other great luminaries of the Victorian age, such as Meredith, Trollope, Huxley and Leslie Stephen. But, it is as a writer, lucid, incisive and liberated, that I shall, myself, chiefly remember John Morley—and in so doing, I shall recollect also that writers, like poets, can still so gear themselves that they may become, in some meaningful sense, the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

There can be few better examples than John Morley and his work, whether literary or public, for the results of the operation of the moral imperative, of the belief in culture, ideas and education, and of the insistence upon the saving, necessary outcome of freedom, from amongst the varied, distinguished ranks of Victorian Dissent. That is surely why, in the last analysis, there is still some need to remember John Morley and to dip sometimes into his works.

SEXUAL MORALS - A Personal View

The following article is a preview of a pamphlet to be published by the Student Humanist Federation. Connaire Kensit and Ruth Buchanan are the married couple members of the SHF, who contributed an article ("Marriage and the Family") to the BHA which the 1968 Annual Conference recommended to be adopted as a discussion document, to be circulated to Humanist Groups for consideration and proposed amendments, which may, at the 1969 Conference, be proposed as a policy statement.

THIS article is about morals. Like other Humanists, we meet people who think Humanists want to do away with sexual morality. In fact, of course, we want to do away with certain sorts of sexual morality—the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and D. H. Lawrence varieties, for example—so as to get a chance of establishing our own, Humanist variety. People who are unfamiliar with our sort of morals are mistaken if they think we have no morals at all.

At present there is no generally agreed Humanist code of sexual morals. For this reason the point of view expressed in this leaflet must be a personal one. Our movement is still young, and many Humanists had a religious upbringing. Traditional prejudices are still widespread among Humanists, just as pagan ideas were among early Christians. It will take time for the full implications of a Humanist outlook to be worked out. This article is intended partly as a contribution to this working out, partly as material to give outsiders an idea of how Humanists approach such questions.

Some people can afford to have a completely open mind on sex and morals. Teenagers can experiment, the elderly can speculate, without coming to any conclusions as to what is right and what is wrong. But we personally *have* to have definite views on sex because we live in a household

Apart from the dubious resources of the many, shaggy secondhand bookshops which we have in this country, most public libraries of any size can yield something substantial by John Morley: thus, in my own Lancashire town, we have in the public library Morley's biographies of Cromwell, Cobden and Gladstone, and the four volumes of his *Critical Miscellanies* of 1877 to 1908; as well as Francis W. Hirst's *Early Life and Letters of John Morley* (2 Vols., 1927). It is more than enough, in order to recapture, over forty years after his death, what was the real greatness and message of John Morley: despite the effective liquidation of Parliamentary Liberalism, in this country, in the years which have passed since Morley's death, the importance of liberal attitudes, as we may find them in the works of that great Victorian, is surely as insistent today as it has even been, in relation to religion, morals, political organisation or social philosophy.

Perhaps, indeed, it has become the more necessary to heed the resolute, consistent gospel of John Morley, precisely because of the apparent decline of political Liberalism, at any rate in its Victorian and Parliamentary sense: if, as it now seems, Liberalism cannot survive as a major party, its economic basis having mostly gone, then there is all the more reason for us to encourage the diffusion, throughout our society, of the liberal attitudes and values, which were offered, with so much fervour and so little compromise, by such a pillar of the great Victorian intellect, such a beckoning summit of last century's perception and attainment, as John Morley whose career has, in its final result, brought so much credit and honour to his native Blackburn.

Connaire Kensit and Ruth Buchanan

and we have two daughters to bring up. We take note of new facts as they are discovered, and we are ready to make humble apologies if we are proved wrong. Meanwhile there are firm decisions we have to make every day. We can't wait for Royal Commissions or new findings in sociology before deciding on the best way to tell our eldest what adults have sanitary towels for; she wants to know now.

For those who wonder how typical we are, we can say that we find most other Humanists fairly sympathetic to our ideas, though only a minority have been lucky enough to have been brought up without non-Humanist inhibitions that stop them from putting these ideas into practice. We ourselves suffer from such inhibitions in some cases: for example, although we disapprove of the taboo against nudity we don't organise nude parties in our house, because we would find it embarrassing. As we both come from homes where all forms of faith were consciously rejected, we reckon that our morals are a fair sample of what Humanists arrive at with no religious heritage to mislead them.

For us the aim of morality is to make life as pleasant as possible for everybody. Morals are to serve human beings, as opposed to Gods, Beautiful Relationships, Evolutionary Progress, Aesthetic Ideals or other abstractions. And sexual morality is just an extension of general morality, not an awesome special field.

We have come to the following conclusions:

(1) Love-making (in which we include both copulation and the more preliminary forms) is a good thing and ought to be encouraged, just as one encourages sport or the arts.

It is good for people, especially teenagers, to have a large quantity and variety of sexual experience.

(2) The purpose of love-making is physical enjoyment. We know people do it for other purposes, such as to get pregnant, to make money, to express a relationship, or just to prove they can. But great harm is caused by people who kid themselves that one of these subsidiary purposes is the main, sole or "proper" purpose of love-making.

(3) It is right for people to have children when they want them and have realistic plans for looking after them. Otherwise it is wrong. To force people to produce children they don't want is an atrocity. Governments that do this are on the same moral level as those which in the past used ritual killing as a normal part of state policy. Unwanted pregnancies should be avoided by contraception or sterilisation, and ended, when they do occur, by abortion. The evidence we have studied has convinced us that abortion, even when legal, is in almost every case medically safer than childbirth, which is the alternative. Incidentally, abortion consumes far less medical resources than childbirth.

We would like to see male sterilisation as the usual form of birth control for people who already have the number of children they want. We used this method in our own case, after producing our planned number of two children, neither of whom we regard as replaceable. The operation (called *vasectomy*) is rather less troublesome than most dental fillings. In Britain it is more usual to sterilise the woman—a serious operation involving a period in hospital—because of the notion that a man's balls are holy. We regard this notion as pernicious and disgusting.

(4) We disapprove of all attempts to use the risk of pregnancy as an excuse for not making love. Incidentally we believe that unwanted pregnancies in married women are a bigger social problem than the same among unmarried women. People who try to scare young girls with the risk of pregnancy are hypocrites, unless they give similar advice to the harried mothers of large families, as well as declaring themselves in favour of abortion on demand. And they should be demanding a ban on other dangerous activities; why don't they demand a ban on *Outward Bound* and the *Sea Scouts*?

(5) A person's social role should not depend on their sex. Since muscle power is now insignificant as a source of energy for industry, distinctions between 'men's work' and 'women's work' are unnecessary, and we would like to see them broken down. Men and women should share housework and child care, and should have equal educational and economic opportunities. We actively oppose the prostitution of science to 'prove' that the woman's place is the home. We know it is a psychological strain for a woman to take on a 'man's job', just as it is strain for a negro to take on a 'white man's job', or for a labourer's son to be an MP. We want to make it easier for women, and to encourage them to make the effort.

(6) In present circumstances a very convenient way to have children is for a man and a woman to bring them up jointly in a common household. This arrangement may be called 'marriage', but it is an economic arrangement, not a sexual one. This child-rearing partnership differs from traditional marriage in that it is not life-long and both partners are morally free to make love with other people. Whether or not they wish to take advantage of this freedom is a personal matter, but we feel it is better for all concerned if they *do* take advantage of it from time to

time. We disapprove of any ban on 'adultery', as it causes so many people to break up their families in order to become 'free' to make love with some new partner. For us marriage has nothing to do with sexual morality. We think people ought to keep any promises they make, however daft these promises might be—and a promise to love, honour and obey till death do us part is pretty daft. We also think people ought not to make promises they won't be able to keep.

(7) We oppose the taboos on nudity, on pictures and statues of copulation, and on making love in public.

(8) Traditional morality is based on supernatural revelation, but ours is based on the observed effects of behaviour. Consequently traditionalists feel a moral duty to tell lies, particularly to children, if such lies help to uphold the revealed morality. For us, lies of this kind are always immoral, as they undermine the very basis of our morals. We think it important to tell children, before they are old enough to be personally involved, that people copulate frequently and because they enjoy it—like kissing only more so. Pregnancy usually begins during copulation, but you can get babies by artificial insemination, which is normal for farm animals but unusual with humans. You don't copulate because you want a baby; you do it when you feel like it, but when you want a baby you stop using contraceptives. To tell children about sex without mentioning contraceptives is wicked. Sex education largely consists of answering children's questions. The question *may* be 'How are babies made?' as the traditionalists always assume, or it may be 'Why does a man have a penis and a woman only a hole?' or 'Why are there so many stories about a man and a woman falling in love? I'm sure when I'm grown up I'll love another girl, not a boy . . .'

(9) Civilised life is impossible unless people repress certain impulses. One impulse we would like to see always repressed is sexual jealousy. To express sexual jealousy is socially harmful and personally degrading.

(10) The concept of romantic love has caused untold misery; we are opposed to it. We observe that people are attracted to members of the opposite sex and become fond of them. The term *love* has been used to describe many different relationships some which we would approve of and some which we look on with horror. It is meaningless, and mischievous, to say that one relationship constitutes 'true' love while another does not. We think that copulation between lovers is especially satisfying, but copulation between mere good friends is also well worth while, and if you reject the latter you are less likely to achieve the former. We have our own ideal of love, an ideal completely consistent with our sexual morals. We don't deal with it in detail here because for us love has nothing to do with the *morality* of sex. We are concerned with love when discussing how to get the best out of love-making, not when discussing when it is right to make love, and when not. Love is a matter of aesthetics, not of ethics.

Finally to avoid misunderstandings, we must point out that unlike most Christians we don't hold the moralist position that everything not forbidden must be compulsory. If you wouldn't want to be sterilised, there's no need to clutch your balls in fear of the knife; we don't insist. And you can agree with paragraph (7) above without being obliged to perform in public; we only ask you not to condemn those who can't or won't find a private place for a cuddle.

Letters to the Editor

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

An inseparable foursome

DOUGLAS BRAMWELL'S item ("The Physical Theory of Mind", May 24) was most interesting. To reduce *all*, however, down to an immaterial absolute of nothing will probably be found to be as impossible as to attempt to reduce, separate and and classify intelligence, consciousness, memory, knowledge, mentation, etc., from matter, energy, life, time and space.

If *all* is consciousness, as many scientists agree, then 'awareness' must certainly be related to this *all*.

Actually, psychological theories seem as baseless as theology or metaphysics when biophysical, genetical and biochemical studies are included as pertinent towards conclusions re human mentation.

Matter, energy, life and mind are now scientifically regarded as a not naturally separable foursome—even if we attempt to do it psychologically or theologically.

JOHN H. JONES (Arkansas, USA).

Race

To coincide with the new Race Relations Act it would be helpful if all FREETHINKER readers would show their solidarity with all people in this country, whatever their colour, race, creed or origin, in a tangible way. The National Council for Civil Liberties (4 Camden High Street, London, NW1) has produced SPEAK-OUT ON RACE forms, inviting signatures of citizens who are not Powellites and wish to assure all minority groups of their goodwill and neighbourliness. Please get forms from, and return to, NCCL direct.

DAVID TRIBE, *President, NSS.*

Rev. Thompson and Chapman Cohen

THE recent concurrence of an article on Chapman Cohen and the "95 Theses" by the Rev. Thompson compels me to quote a point (perhaps unnoticed by readers) from Chapman Cohen's *A Grammar of Freethought* (p. 75), which was published by the Pioneer Press in 1921.

"Thus it happens that we have a religion of Socialism, a religion of Ethics, etc., and I should not be surprised to find one day a religion of Atheism—if that has not already appeared."

I admire his sense of humour, and think he could be having a wry smile at current happenings.

A. GREGORY.

Executive Committee's Annual Report

AT the request of the Executive Committee of the NSS the President writes the first draft of the "world view" section of the Annual Report. This is discussed and amended and, like the other section of the Report (whose subject-matter is agreed between the Secretary and the President and whose draft is written by the Secretary), is presented to the AGM as the EC's Report. Probably since the Society began, the whole Report has been read to the AGM (within living memory by the Secretary), discussed and further amended and then becomes the Society's Report. Everyone knows the Reports consists of two (unsigned) parts as a matter of NSS policy (the *Almanacks* were slightly different and not really a good example), and the proper way to change this policy is by a motion submitted with due notice and put on the agenda. No "emergency" resolution can be brought forward to deal with the practice of decades, and no individual can "sign" something which has since been amended by other people. To save a little time at the AGM (and unappreciated presidential labours) I suggested to the last EC it might like to canvass a change, but it overwhelmingly preferred to endorse the present policy unless a future AGM makes a formal innovation.

Mr Collis and other critics imply that democratic processes would be helped if the EC issued a printed Report in advance. Those who have experience of other organisations, however, know that when this expense is undertaken it is well nigh certain that the Report will be accepted entirely as it stands and debates on specific objections are mere formalities.

DAVID TRIBE, *President, NSS.*

Correction

IN my short article "In Darkest Brighton" published in the FREETHINKER, July 26, the word *diversive* at the end of the second paragraph is mis-printed *diversive* which entirely changes the meaning which I meant to convey—a rather important one. Please publish this correction.

ELIZABETH COLLINS.

Stamps and Humanist Housing

THE Humanist Housing Association has recently been given 2 pillows, 2 single sheets, 4 pillow cases, a bedside lamp and 2 hot water bottles for the guest room of their latest project—Rose Bush Court. These were obtained with the collection of Green Shield and S & H stamps kindly donated by individuals and groups. Unwanted trading stamps will continue to be collected for further items or similar Humanist projects.

MARGARET SIDDALL,
2 Hutchins Road, Knotty Green, Beaconsfield, Bucks.

REVIEW

David Tribe

THE MOST CASUAL dipping into nineteenth century secularist literature will show the close links between the movement and the Liberal Party of that day. What precisely happened to the Liberal Party? Paul Thompson's *Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London 1885-1914* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 63s) gives the most convincing answer to date. The Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society and to lesser extent the Independent Labour Party, forerunners of the Labour Movement, were launched by NSS secessionists or freethinkers who had had some sort of relationship, even if hostile, with secularism. Why is the movement so pious today? Dr Thompson records this development without trying to explain it, but his work is rich in political and sociological insights into the period when the cloth cap turned into the trilby and the red flag got bleached.

Most controversial of his conclusions, a development of the researches of McBriar, is that the Fabian Society has completely distorted Labour history by upgrading the importance of its "permeation" and disparaging the SDF as an alien and transient phenomenon. Within his time scale he makes out an overwhelming case. The leading Fabians were, or became, fashionable communicators and anyway outlived their rivals. After the SDF was swallowed up in the Communist Party few professors or columnists wanted to give it much attention. But in the long run the Fabians can confront Dr Thompson with the undoubted fact, whether attributable to them or coincidental, that their dalliance with worthy fringe issues while the central economic and political facts of socialism passed them by, and a genius for high-sounding vacillation and compromise, were just those characteristics that have come to "distinguish" the Labour Party of today.

In his researches the author and his wife processed a huge pile of minutes and newspaper cuttings, as well as better known sources. Naturally they found more of this material than could conveniently be handled, and while the end-product is a *tour de force* of cross references and synthesis, chronology often suffers like one. Occasionally this whirlwind investigation leads to mis-interpretation, such as a repeated assertion that the NSS disappeared in 1897. Presumably this is a misreading of a FREETHINKER report of the liquidation of the National Secular Hall Society in that year, though this impression would have been strengthened by reading Stanton Coit, who tirelessly asserted that the NSS hadn't outlived Bradlaugh. It is interesting to note that Ethical Culture and the Fabian Society came of a common stock and Coit's puffing of the one perfectly parallels Shaw's puffing of the other. Another quite erroneous statement about the freethought movement is "Between Chartism and the radical revival of the 1880's secularism was largely apolitical". This was true only of the late 1850's under Holyoake and quickly changed when Bradlaugh became dominant after 1858. Even Holyoake had continued to press the Chartist demands under other names (e.g. Political Reform League) and support the French and Italian patriots. Otherwise the writer is perceptive for someone who has entered this field from broader Lib-Lab pastures.

Though rather fragmented his biographical sketches are for the most part excellent. Conclusions are generally plausible, probably correct, and are cleverly embedded in chunks of facts to mask their assumptive nature. The whole offering is liberally garnished with notes, maps, sources and other reference material.