

# Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 88, No. 43

Saturday, October 26, 1968

Sixpence Weekly

## I SWEAR BY . . . ?

HAVING distorted the truth once, a man is unlikely to have any scruples about distorting it further. To proclaim "I swear by almighty God", is for the majority of people a distortion of the truth.

In 1888 Charles Bradlaugh brought into parliament his universal Oaths Act. This is still in force today and gives the right of affirmation to "every person upon objecting to being sworn, and stating, as the ground of such objection, either that he has no religious belief, or that the taking of an oath is contrary to his religious belief". The form of words used in affirmation harks back to the Quakers and Moravians Act of 1833. (Quakers and Moravians, being religious people, had long been allowed by Act of Parliament to affirm rather than take the oath.) The affirmation begins "I, A.B., do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm" and continues with the words of the oath "omitting any words of imprecation or calling to witness".

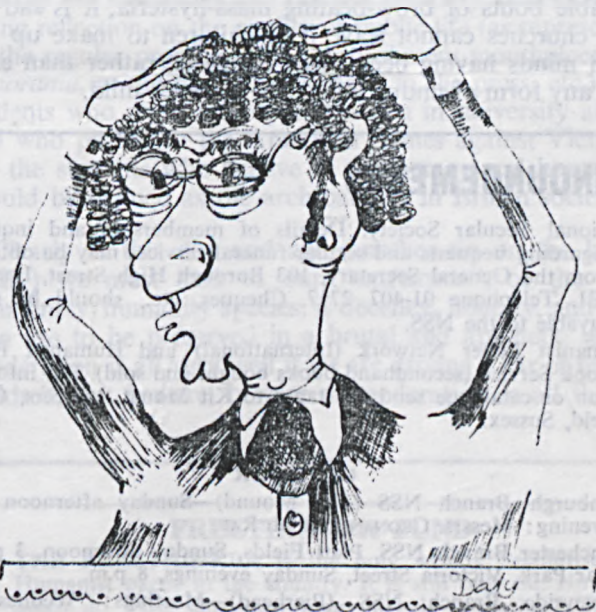
This then is the position today and at first sight it may not seem unreasonable. However, atheists, agnostics and those with religious beliefs which make the oath a mockery, are often reluctant to affirm, and with good reason. They feel the jury, magistrate or judge may become prejudiced against them, and in fact there have been many incidents over the years of judges warning juries to be wary of evidence given on affirmation rather than on the religious oath. Indeed, on November 8, 1961, George Clark's witness Trevor Hatton was not allowed to give evidence at all when he asked to affirm. This was quite illegal and Clark's appeal was upheld as a result. To affirm then, has always been a risky procedure. Now the position is still worsened by the recent upsurge in immigration, which has brought into Britain adherents to nearly every religion that exists in the world. Often a court will not have the scriptures of certain religions and the whole procedure can easily deteriorate into a farce, which can understandably unnerve a foreigner. Here too, though, prejudice is the main cause for concern. Perhaps the use of head coverings and old testaments for Jews can serve as an example of the possibility of prejudice being brought into play. Anti-semitism is unhappily still rife and to draw attention to a Jew is to increase the possibility of a prejudiced juror. In the same way any other religion is liable to cause prejudice. It is also conceivable that an atheist could be prejudiced against a Christian, just as the corollary is the most probable and common prejudice of them all.

So Bradlaugh's Act, though a considerable advance eighty years ago, because it requires any individual who wishes to affirm to declare his true colours, serves as a breeding-ground for unwarranted prejudice. This makes the resolution passed by the Magistrates' Association on October 11, which called for the abolition of the oath and the substitution of a simple promise to tell the truth a much welcomed proposal and one which must be acted upon as soon as possible.

The case against the oath is strengthened further by the proposer of the motion Mrs Patricia Knight, who is reported as having said "Must we put up with this contempt of our God? It is unnecessary, distasteful and goes a long way to lower the respect due to our courts". So it is not

just non-Christians who want to be rid of this impediment to justice.

On October 15 a letter, signed by three general secretaries, Michael Lines of the British Humanist Association, Tony Smyth of the National Council for Civil Liberties



and William McIlroy of the National Secular Society, was sent to Lord Garner, the Lord Chancellor, and the Honourable Mr Justice Scarman, Chairman of the Law Commission. The letter calls for prompt action along the lines proposed by the Magistrates' Association, to put into effect "a change which would operate to the considerable benefit of all sections of the community and the Law itself."

More significant than the fact that the Magistrates' Association have called for the abolition of the oath, is the fact that a body, such as this, symbolising the judiciary and the establishment—in fact a body which could be described as the very core of traditionalism—can pass a resolution of this nature. This is undeniably an indication that superstition is falling away and the rationality of secularism is taking a firm hold at the very roots of our society.

# Freethinker

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

Editor: David Reynolds

## BYE BYE BILLY

THE National Assembly of Evangelicals, which includes Baptists, Anglicans and many Free Churches, convened on October 16. The main outcome was an overwhelming snub for Billy Graham and others of his ilk. A report, which centred round the result of a questionnaire, revealed a diminishing confidence amongst churches and ministers in winning confidence with crusades like those conducted by Graham. The report stressed that this method succeeded most with young people in their teens, but the conversion was made of an individual, who did not fully understand what he was letting himself in for, and the conversion having been accomplished inadequate counselling was given afterwards. The report recommended that children under the age of fifteen should not be admitted to such meetings and that other means of getting them into the churches must be found.

This is a step in the right direction and was unanimously welcomed by the assembly. However, though the "other means" will no doubt be less odious than Graham's despicable bouts of brow-beating mass-hysteria, it is sad that the churches cannot leave it to children to make up their own minds having been given the facts, rather than exerting any form of undue influence, however mild.

## 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.

### INDOORS

Glasgow Humanist Group, Langside Hall, Sunday, October 27, 2.30 p.m.: "Freud and God", Dr H. BELOFF.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, October 27, 11 a.m.: "Health—Right, Duty or Privilege?", Dr D. STARK MURRAY. Admission free; Tuesday, October 29, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion—"Aggression", JOSHUA FOX, MA, MSc. Admission 2s (including refreshments) members free.

Worthing Humanist Group, Morelands Hotel (opposite the pier): Sunday, October 27, 5.30 p.m.: "Humanism in 20th Century Drama", CHRISTOPHER DENYS (Artistic Director of Connaught Theatre).

Leicester Secular Society, 75 Humberstone Gate, Sunday, October 27, 6.30 p.m.: "Conversations in Budapest", Alan Bates.

## SCHOOLBOY STRATEGY

THE chaos into which the Pope's encyclical has thrown the Catholic church has become still more apparent. There has come into my possession a document entitled *Pastoral Letter of the Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Scotland on the Encyclical Humanae Vitae*. While it contains the usual double-talk, the bishops manage to make clear that in this particular proclamation of the "Roman Pontiff" his "teaching is not in doubt". They therefore exhort their congregations to obey the teaching, but surreptitiously they open a small escape-hatch. "Those who accept with humility the teaching of the church, even though at times they fail through human weakness to live according to it, need have no fear of meeting Christ in the sacrament of forgiveness".

Now, at the other end of the dissenting scale it was reported on October 14 that Monsignor Jan Bluysen, the Dutch bishop of Hertogenbosch which diocese contains 1,300,000 Catholics has been thoroughly hauled over the coals by the Vatican for his liberal attitude towards the encyclical. Bluysen was to have taken a key part in an international congress on "the liturgy", held in Rome recently. Before being allowed to take his place at the conference he was brought before "the Head of the Congregation", Cardinal Seper of Yugoslavia, and forced to undergo a humiliating "complete self-criticism". Afterwards, however, he admitted "My explanation did not satisfy them entirely".

It is a measure of the general Catholic uncertainty that on the one hand a presumably dignified and revered member of the Roman Catholic church should be treated as though he were a schoolboy, while on the other it seems that in order to avoid such treatment the Scottish bishops had to behave like schoolboys—the less brave schoolboys, who butter up "Sir" as much as they can without making it obvious, before making a heavily camouflaged confession.

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## MODERATION IN SOME THINGS

G. L. SIMONS

AT the recent Tory Party Conference, Quintin Hogg quoted the principle "moderation in all things" to admonish Enoch Powell. Now while I agree that Powell deserves admonishment—and more—I suggest that Hogg's "gem of perennial wisdom" is superficial, self-contradictory and dangerous. The principle sounds good but is in fact one of the stock clichés employed by lazy thinkers to create the illusion of profundity.

The principle is supposed to apply to "all things", and it is the "all" that gets it into trouble. Do we, for example, want *moderately* good health or *very* good health? Do we want a *moderate* amount of rape and child murder in society or none at all? Do we want a *moderate* number of hydrogen bombs detonated over London in the next few years? Do we want a *moderate* number of children dying of starvation in the underdeveloped countries? Do we want a *moderate* number of Jews and Negroes to be victimised, persecuted, tormented, lynched? I suggests that in all these things Hogg and his co-thinkers are extremists—they want *all* or *none* of something, depending upon whether it is nice or nasty.

"Alas", they will protest, "you do not understand! It is important to apply the principle only where it is clearly relevant!" Or in other words—the principle "moderation in all things" must only be applied where it can be shown that the extremes of the case are undesirable, i.e. moderation is good where it is good—a self-evident tautology that can scarcely serve as a guide to action. In every case where a moral decision has to be taken we have to examine the circumstances and then judge accordingly. There is no facile rule-of-thumb such as the moderation principle.

The principle is moreover self-contradictory. If we are to believe in moderation in all things we must believe in moderation in the application of the principle "moderation in all things". Or in other words we should be moderate in moderation, i.e. we should only be moderate sometimes. But clearly the principle relates to "all things", so the contradiction exists.

It is clear that the principle would overcome the charges of inapplicability and self-contradiction if it were recast as "moderation in *some* things!" But what a weak rallying cry! Clichés often depend for their force on their extreme nature. Such gems of popular wisdom as "You can prove anything with statistics" and "You can't change human nature" would be less evocative in the more accurate forms "You can prove *some* things with statistics" and "You can't *always* changes human nature". And not only would "moderation in some things" be less forceful, it would be useless. "*Some* things!" What things? How are we to decide when moderation is to be applied and when it is not. Clearly the decision has to be taken on principles other than the moderation principle, however it is cast. And again the moderation principle cannot serve to show in what circumstances it is to be applied. In avoiding self-contradiction it simply pops into another swamp of uselessness.

If the moderation principle can be so easily criticised why is it so perennially popular with Hogg and company? There are two reasons; one general, one particular. The general reason is the reason why all clichés are popular—that the effort of thought is avoided. The average mind is well-stocked with its larder of clichés, and it is thereby

provided with a ready-made philosophy. No need for thought! No need for the painful acquiring of knowledge! No need for the tribulations of judging with care! How useful is the cliché! And so next to the tins of "You can prove anything with statistics" and "You can't change human nature" the average man carefully places "moderation in all things" on the larder shelf.

The second reason why the principle is popular—and why in particular it appeals to such public figures as Quintin Hogg—is that it is politically useful. Modern political jargon has made the "moderate" the goodie, and the "extremist" the baddie. Thus Heath and Wilson are goodies (insofar as they are "moderates") and Powell, Wall, Sandys, Foot, Allaun, and Mikardo are baddies. And of course all the politically active students are baddies. Clearly if one has "extremist" political opinions oneself there are two kinds of baddies; good baddies and bad baddies. The good baddies are ones we share one's own political outlook; the bad baddies are the extremists at the other end of the political spectrum.

As far as the general outlook goes, in our society the baddies are usually left-wing, although Powell is trying to change this. Student demonstrations tend to be left-wing so students have been defined as baddies by almost everyone else (by the moderates and the bad baddies). It is an interesting reflection on the quality of public life (as represented by the regular procession of Establishment mouthpieces on *Panorama*, at the Party conferences, in the press, etc.) that students who want more participation in university affairs and who protest at the American crimes against Vietnam, i.e. the students who believe in democracy and humanity, should be defined as the arch-baddies in British society.

Clearly in this day and age (another tin on the larder shelf!) we must look to our "extremists", of the left/democracy/humanity species, if decency, honesty, and concern are to be preserved in a brutal and apathetic world. Moderation is all very well if we are driving a car or having children, but beware, beware of moderation in all things!

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## THE HUXLEYS

H. J. BLACKHAM

SOME modern novels, like John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*, take as their hero an entire family. The spotlight switches from one to another of the principal members, their marriages are all-important, and the reader is helped by the full spread of a 'family tree'. The publishers of *The Forsyte Saga*, nearly fifty years later, here<sup>1</sup> give the public the story of another upper-middle class English family. Only the Huxleys are larger than life, and are real life at that. The materials are rich and rare, the tailor has professional knack, and the publishers have turned out a large, handsome volume for this composite biography of an *élite*.

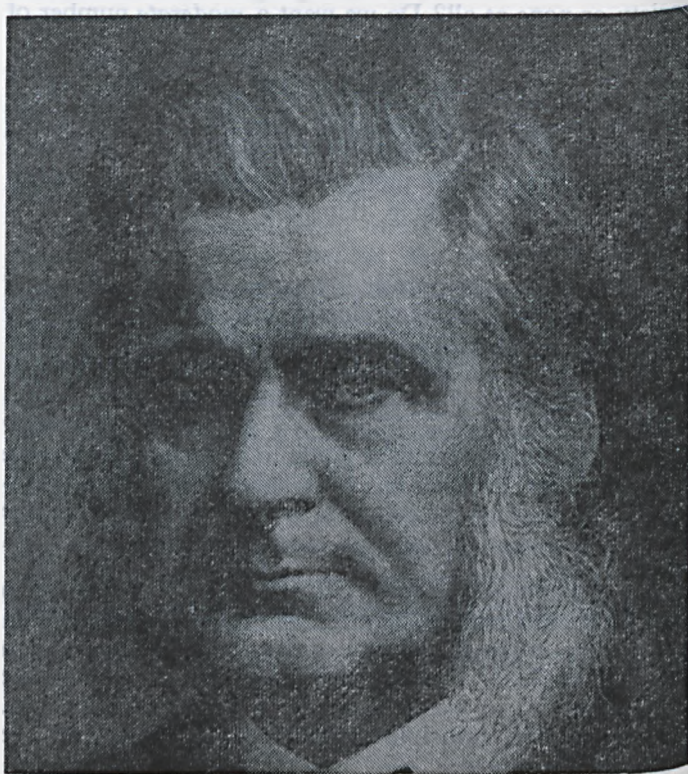
Ronald Clark, at home in writing about scientists and mountaineers, gives the first quarter of his book to a rounded portrait of T. H. Huxley, not least as founder of a family with a famous name and a recognisable stamp. The story continues with the careers of Julian and Aldous, and side glances at more than a score of the Huxley tribe as they make their way in the world, acquiring distinction and achievement as the Forsytes acquire property. The book ends with a rather tiresome brief section entitled 'Prospect', tiresome because there crops out here in full view the author's underlying journalistic interest in 'eugenics', the breeding, the performance, and hence the 'form' or prospect for success of this famous stable. On the assumptions of his 'eugenics' he is corrected in the Preface by Sir Gavin de Beer, one of the most eminent living biologists.

This book, then, is a journalistic job, not a critical study, telling the story mainly of three lives in the context of family history and solidarity. The story is well-proportioned, authentic, and graphic; and it is of great interest to have these three major Huxleys placed in juxtaposition. Ronald Clark not only makes telling use of his sources and gives his readers a sense of living with his subjects, he is also perceptive and discerns sympathetically the inner lineaments of these very different men of common stock. But two dominant interests were shared by all three, a sense of the unity of science and art as two sides of the same coin, and a moral preoccupation with 'man's place in nature'.

T. H. Huxley had his share of British pugnacity and chose his part as 'Darwin's bulldog' when *The Origin of Species* was published. Without his skilled and forceful advocacy, conservative and religious resistance to the theory of evolution and the descent of man from an ape-like stock would have prevailed far longer. He already had a popular audience for science. He had a polemical temper when the battle was for the truth. He developed a mastery of argumentative debate which he could put on paper and maintain to a finish. He had eminently the integrity and rock-like character that Victorians admired. With all these qualifications on top of his own scientific attainments, and the revolutionary theory of evolution for a cause, he could not fail to make history and establish his own name. He did more than facilitate public acceptance of the theory of evolution, for in various capacities he was the educational statesman who did more than anybody else to lay the foundations of scientific education in England. His agnosticism (for which he coined the name) was strict: he made some study of philosophy, especially of Hume, and never pressed the claims of science further than was justified. Beyond the reliable knowledge which science gave there could be no confident opinions about what was possible or impossible, since there could be neither proof nor disproof.

To see no reason for believing but have no means of disproving, was agnosticism. This strict intellectual conscience combined with a stoic fidelity to duty was the faith of most of the best characters of the age.

Leonard Huxley, the surviving son of TH, married Julia Arnold, a grand-daughter of Thomas Arnold of Rugby and niece of Matthew Arnold, herself a vital and brilliant scion of the Arnold stock. Julian, Trevenen and Aldous were the sons of this marriage. Trevenen, as gifted, attractive, and promising as the best of them, came to grief and death in his early twenties. The other two fill most of the pages of the book, although the interest includes more than a mention of their wives and sons and other lively, some



Thomas Huxley, Founder of the Clan.

celebrated members of the clan. And the text is embellished with photographs that help to make the difference between fact and fiction.

The offspring of the Huxley-Arnold marriage represent, whatever the reasons, a rich interfusion of science and literature. Julian followed his grandfather's pursuits: biology, scientific education, religion without dogma, above all, evolution, the master idea of all his thinking. But he wrote and published verse, abandoned early a professorial chair to find time for writing about the things that interested him, and was more interested in general ideas than in particular problems. At the same time, apart from his specialised research, he has always been a first-rate field naturalist, an accurate observer and graphic recorder of bird behaviour, a pioneer in the science of ethology and the cognate field of ecology. There is rooted in this concreteness, this love and first-hand knowledge of the natural world, a zestful questing interest in almost everything, and a craving for synthesis. He has written a major book on the synthesis of ideas which make the modern concept of evolution. Ecology is itself a study of synthesis which man must enlarge as the basis of his management of his own relations with his environment, the conservation of nature

<sup>1</sup> *The Huxleys* by Ronald W. Clark. Heinemann: London, 63s.

and resources so that they are used to meet human needs but are not destroyed by human recklessness. Above all, there is the religious synthesis of ideas and ideals which must take the place of traditional religions as the guide to persons and societies in the conduct of life, bringing all the arts and sciences into the service of human fulfilment. This grand synthesis, as the outcome of biological and psychosocial evolution and as the outlook of man now in conscious charge of his own destiny and the future of the planet, he has called 'evolutionary humanism'. Ronald Clark says:

"The exposition and advocacy of scientific humanism—on the radio, in books, at the First International Congress of Humanism and Ethical Culture which he chaired in Amsterdam in 1952, as President of the British Humanist Association—was by the 1950s becoming one of the most important of Julian's activities. It certainly had a greater impact, and will probably have a more lasting one, than that of the other matters with which he concerned himself—the conservation of wildlife, the world's population explosion, the multiple scientific interests into which he was drawn." (p. 333.)

This is not a judgement in which Huxley's scientific colleagues are likely to concur, since most of them regard his 'evolutionary humanism' as more or less an aberration. But Clark goes on to recognise that all that Julian is interested in and strives for is bound up together in a unified policy.

This zestful range of interests combined with a passion for synthesis would suggest that Julian Huxley and UNESCO were made for each other, yet when he was offered the job of Executive Secretary to the preparatory commission he was disinclined to accept because he had other irons in the fire. His enthusiasm was soon engaged, and he committed the characteristic gaffe of issuing an ambitious statement of policy in which he made evolutionary humanism the philosophy of UNESCO. He survived this indiscretion, and his stimulus and initiative were invaluable in the dubious first two years of the difficult enterprise. After leaving the helm he did not cease to maintain his interest and contribute his service.

Aldous, youngest of the three brothers, was regarded from the first as of different clay. His rare gifts were to be severely handicapped. At Eton he was stricken with blindness, from which he only slowly and partially recovered. The death of his mother in his adolescence, and three years later of his brother Trev, were heavy blows. He went to Oxford, doing very well, and drifted into journalism in spite of painfully feeble sight. With his first novels he established a reputation as an *avant garde* writer, of great influence with the young. His influence after the first world war was comparable with that of Sartre after the second. He was the intellectual *par excellence*. Of course they were as different as French and English, but an English intellectual is rather rare. Actually, Aldous had one of the most interesting minds of our time—a Byzantine mind, stored with things new and old, items of odd information. These he brought out unexpectedly and inexhaustibly in the course of his always provocative performance on a theme. He shocked and disgusted because he himself was shocked and disgusted; and he amused and fascinated his more sophisticated readers because he himself was erudite and subtle, curious and exploratory. He observed the behaviour of men and women as accurately as his brother observed the behaviour of birds, but with less pleasure. Indeed, he had curiosity but none of his brother's extrovert zest. In the most interesting essay 'One and Many' (*Do What You Will*, 1929), he scornfully castigates the high-minded refusal of life; but his humanism was defiant, and he withdrew from the position, feeling his way with the help of Gerald Heard into the acceptance of a different tradition, the out-

look of the 'perennial philosophy', the cultivation of non-attachment, the pursuit of reconciliation and union with all that is: in the end choosing the One, refusing the Many. Even to the end, however, his writing went on, and lost none of its edge nor power. His strange mind found congenial subjects, and his preoccupations persisted. But his sensitive and serious nature shone more steadily. His brother had the greatest admiration and affection for him. From the beginning they were remarkably different, yet it is not bizarre to take them, as Ronald Clark does, as variations on a single theme: the unity of man and nature, and the consequence for the life of man. In the earlier section on TH, Clark quotes A. O. J. Cockshut in *The Unbelievers* on Huxley's Romanes Lecture:

"The last articulate sound made by the old guard of English agnosticism, those strong, simple, immensely energetic, confident moralistic men who had never heard of Freud, and ignored Marx and Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, the makers of the world we know."

Aldous Huxley lived in the world we know—and did not have the immense physical energy of his grandfather or his brother. His commentary on the world we know—such footnotes as *Brave New World*—is as wise as it is pungent, and liable to be misunderstood. All three Huxleys have been widely misunderstood, which is a fairly reliable indication of their forceful relevance and originality.

Altogether, this informed and intelligent narrative of the Huxley family is well justified for its own sake. Nobody will take it seriously as a thesis of any kind, but many will be glad to read the story, and to go back or go on to some of the works of the Huxleys with renewed or new interest. The bibliography is a comprehensive guide, but not exhaustive nor scholarly.

As chapters in cultural history, the book prompts one or two reflections. Although TH had towering influence as a propagandist for the theory of evolution and its corollaries, it by no means followed that his own agnostic outlook was widely accepted. The battle over, the church definitively gave up opposing scientific theories, but the new views subsisted with the old dogmas. Science won battles but not the war; there was hardly mass conversion to a scientific outlook. And although Julian Huxley has been an outstanding and respected public figure who has never neglected an opportunity to proclaim his evolutionary humanism, it is questionable whether many have adopted his views. There has been no cult of evolutionary humanism comparable to the cult of Teilhard de Chardin and his evolutionary philosophy, although Teilhard was not a propagandist and a public figure, and, ironically, was 'discovered' and introduced into England by Julian himself. Secondly, yesterday's climate of opinion may look ludicrous today. 'When, in the autumn of 1926, Huxley mentioned the subject of birth-control during a radio debate on "Is Science Bad for the World?" there was an almost national outcry. Huxley himself was reprimanded by Sir John Reith, Managing Director of the British Broadcasting Company as it then was; while, through the columns of *The Times*, the company protested humbly that "this reference was entirely inadvertent and was at variance with our policy. The necessary action has been taken to prevent its recurrence"'. Such changes of opinion are probably irreversible. One is reminded of Tom Paine: 'Ignorance is of a peculiar nature: once dispelled, it is impossible to re-establish it . . . though man may be kept ignorant, he cannot be *made* ignorant'. The faith of the Enlightenment was founded on that fact. The divergence between the two Huxley brothers shows both that the faith survives and that it has been shaken. The foundation stands, but the superstructure needs to be rebuilt.

## A TRIBUTE TO THOMAS PAINE

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL

ONCE again Thomas Paine's birthplace, Thetford in Norfolk, has honoured its greatest son. A few years ago, a gilt statue of the great writer was unveiled there, now a new pub, called *Rights of Man*, has been opened on the Brandon Road to the north and west of the valley of the Little Ouse.

Michael Foot, MP, President of the Thomas Paine Society, performed the opening ceremony on Wednesday, October 16, telling the guests that the question of the brewers, Watney Mann (East Anglia), to call the pub after Paine's best seller was a stroke of genius. *Rights of Man*, he continued, was the greatest democratic manifesto in the English language, and it had a bigger sale than any other book in its time, except the Bible.

He praised the décor of this single-storey building with its reproductions of a number of Paine's books, portraits of Paine, and the enlargement of an original lithograph of a group of reformers of the period, that greets customers on entering the Tom Paine Lounge.

Then, in the tradition of the opening of a new public house, he drew the first pint of beer, assisted by the resident manager of Anglia Taverns, Mr A. L. Goldstone. Afterwards, Watney Man presented Michael Foot with a silver tankard in commemoration of the event.

The local public library put on an excellent display, selected from the late Ambrose G. Barker's collection of Paine books, which particularly drew the attention of Michael Foot and Henry Collins, editor of the forthcoming Pelican edition of *Rights of Man*. The range of exhibits, including a number of early editions of *Rights of Man*, clearly reflected Ambrose Barker's freethought opinions, of particular interest being a rare edition of *An Essay on Dream* (part of Paine's *The Age of Reason*).

As Chairman of the Thomas Paine Society I was delighted to be a guest—if it does not sound presumptuous, I would say I was given honoured guests treatment. I take this as a tribute to the work of generations of men and women; who have been loyal to Paine's ideas, and who have tried to restore to him his rightful place in history. The Thomas Paine Society hopes to return the compliment to Watney Mann by organising a day trip to Thetford in the spring: if the idea appeals to FREETHINKER readers, it could make *Rights of Man* the main rendezvous with a conducted tour of the neighbourhood to see the gilt statue, Paine's birthplace, the Grammar School which he attended, and other sights of interest.

## FILM REVIEW

LUCY DANSIE

RACHEL, RACHEL (Curzon, Curzon Street, London).

A BEAUTIFUL girl, dominated by a selfish mother, meets a man, loses her virginity and at last thinks she has found happiness, until he disappears having pretended he is already married. There can be few more hackneyed plots, yet the film stands as a tribute to Paul Newman, directing his first film, and Joanne Woodward, who played Rachel, the heroine.

Beautiful camera-work, sensitive acting, a brilliantly subtle script coupled with expert direction and editing make this film, which will perhaps herald the return to romanticism in the film world, in the same way as romanticism seems to be returning, albeit slowly, to all branches of the arts.

*Rachel, Rachel* stands out above the run-of-the-mill tragic love story because Rachel, the oppressed primary school-teacher re-

mains superficially happy throughout. There is none of the, now expected, lunacy, neuroticism, or shows of bad temper. Not even when her lover shows her a photograph and tells her it is of his son, does she lose her air of serene calm. Whether this is born of resignation to the fact that she is doomed to an unhappy life and that the only thing to do is grin and bear it, or whether it stems from a genuine joy a just being alive is something for the viewer to decide for himself. To this viewer there was a tangible humanism to Rachel's way of life.

The film is greatly added to by the use of flashbacks and fantasy. Rachel frequently pictures herself as a little girl when she finds herself in a situation, which she has been in many years before, such as going into the embalming room of what became her landlord's undertaking business on her father's death. At the other extreme she has fantasies portraying what she would like to do in various situations, hugging at their first date the man who subsequently becomes her lover, or pushing a whole bottle of pills down her mother's throat.

A number of delightful scenes are depicted away from the central theme. Schoolroom scenes, where another fantasy shows Rachel's real desire to mother one of her young pupils; scenes at her mother's weekly bridge parties where Rachel is forced to play waitress to four middle-aged crows; and most significant a scene, where Rachel is persuaded by Calla, her best friend who teaches at the same school, to accompany her to a service of an unidentified Evangelical church. This is a magnificent jibe at religious fanaticism. A young man, who is said to have the very presence of God into the room with him on a previous occasion, whips up the familiar hysteria seen at Billy Graham's rallies and the like. The whole congregation shout "love" with maniacal smiles on their faces as clever camera-work admirably conveys the impression of a madhouse. Rachel biting her lips and longing to go is forcibly pulled to her feet by the evangelical and is compelled to hug him and repeat the word love endlessly after him. The whole lot then join hands and chant, reaching an almost orgasmic state. Here the action cuts to a scene where Rachel leans on a tree distraught and for a time is unable to speak, while one gathers from Calla's words to her that in the church she had screamed and fainted. Calla goes on "If you think God did that, he didn't". Thus Calla loses her faith.

This is a memorable film, a film which may prove to be remembered as pioneering another stage in the development of artistic cinema, and above all a film which must be seen.

1868

1968

100th Anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's first election contest at Northampton

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## BOOK REVIEW

MARTIN PAGE

ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND by Dr E. R. Norman (Allen &amp; Unwin Ltd., 35s).

"THE Council will vindicate its authority over the world, and prove its right, founded on a divine commission, to enter most intimately into all the spiritual concerns of the world, to supervise the acts of the king, the diplomatist, the philosopher, and the general—to circumscribe the limits of their speculative inquiries—to subjugate human reason to the yoke of faith—to extinguish liberals, rationalists, and deists by one stroke of her infallibility." These pontifical words (quoted by Dr Norman on p. 87 of his book) came from Canon Thomas Pope (!) of Dublin, who in 1871 produced a work interpreting the Decree of the 1870 Vatican Council, which had triumphantly proclaimed Papal Infallibility. Pope's brutal, honest words are significant if only because they openly expound the policy that the Vatican has constantly pursued throughout its distinguished career: to consolidate and extend its power and influence throughout the world, by all means at its disposal. A few centuries ago, the stake, the torture-chamber, and the Inquisition provided "the final solution" for those who dared criticise the Catholic Church; today, in a more sophisticated and "enlightened" age, the Church poses as a champion of liberalism, human rights and social justice, in a determined effort to retain its flock in a highly competitive and swiftly changing world, of which about one half subscribes—in theory at least—to atheistic Communism. But today, the Catholic Church—like the Soviet Empire—finds that its role is being openly questioned from within, and its moral authority has been even further weakened by the recent Papal encyclical on birth-control—an encyclical that is a classic vindication, almost a century later, of Thomas Pope's words. One of the countries in the modern world where criticism of the Catholic Church has been most pronounced in recent years is England, which not only is highly literate in comparison with many other parts of the world, but also has enjoyed a long tradition of anti-Catholicism. In these circumstances it is particularly appropriate to consider Dr Norman's recent book: *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England*.

The author begins by analysing the 'anti-Catholic tradition', which found expression in the voluminous 'No Popery' literature of the nineteenth century, though the tradition itself can be traced back to the Reformation and beyond. English Protestants believed the Church of Rome to be superstitious and morally corrupt, and mistrusted its political aspirations. This hostility could—and often did—take a violent form. Victorian working-men, in particular, frequently resorted to violence in their anti-Catholicism, their violence usually resulting from the passions aroused by the vexed Irish Question, by the influx of poor Irish labourers who undercut English working-men during and after the "hungry 40s". The most powerful catalyst of anti-Catholicism among the Victorian working-class was probably provided by itinerant preachers like William Murphy and Alessandro Gavazzi, who seem to have been embryonic Hitlers in their mastery of the art of rousing and manipulating the masses. In 1864 the Protestant mobs of Belfast (pace Ian Paisley!) engaged the Catholics of the city in several days of street-fighting. The resulting score was seven dead, 150 injured, widespread destruction of private property (the Englishman's God)—and a parliamentary enquiry, for their sins. Dr Norman rightly suggests a correlation between violence and religion in the nineteenth century.

Our author then discusses the outbreak of anti-Catholicism unleashed by the Maynooth Grant Question of 1845—by the proposal (which was finally carried in Parliament, despite the presentation of 8,922 petitions against it) for a permanent Government endowment of an R.C. seminary at Maynooth in Ireland. The British Government was doubtless motivated by the desire to strengthen their Roman Catholic support; Peel failed to foresee, however, the clamour of Protestant objection which his Maynooth policy would arouse and which Gladstone's resignation from the Government over that policy made well nigh inevitable. Maynooth united Protestant opinion so far as opposition to the State endowment of Roman Catholicism was concerned; but it also served to accentuate the difference between those Protestants who opposed the endowment because of their adherence to the old theory of the Protestant Constitution, and those who opposed all State endowments of religious institutions. (The historical significance of May-

nooth was surely that it not merely posed the whole question of the relationship between Church and State, but opened the way for the ultimate Disestablishment of the Church of England and the complete separation of Church and State.)

The remainder of Dr Norman's account is devoted to a consideration of the 'Papal Aggression' flowing from the Holy Father's decision in 1850 to create a Catholic hierarchy in England (under the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 the assumption of existing territorial ecclesiastical titles by Roman Catholics in England was illegal); the duel of Gladstone with the Catholic Church in general and with Manning in particular over the Vatican Decrees of 1870 "in their bearing on Civil Allegiance"; and the events leading up to, and following, the trial in 1890 of Bishop King of Lincoln (a pale shadow in comparison with Robert Grosseteste, his thirteenth century predecessor as Bishop of Lincoln), for "a campaign of ritualism which marked an epoch in the annals of Anglo-Romanism".

Dr Norman's highly competent survey is worthy of a Cambridge don at his best: it is marked, not merely by balanced and judicious exposition, but also by thorough research and profound knowledge within his chosen terms of reference. He wears his learning with a grace that is undeniably alluring: his account is finely written, with a sardonic humour and playful irony that would do credit to an Anatole France or a Voltaire, and it is no surprise that his contribution is substantially the essay that won the Thirlwall Prize for 1967. Listen, for example, to Dr Norman on Cardinal Newman: "Gladstone, he believed, had been 'misled in his interpretation of the ecclesiastical acts of 1870 by judging the wording by the rules of ordinary language'. Now 'ordinary language', as Newman had realised so potently when he had interpreted the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England in Tract Ninety, could be made to appear deceptive" (p. 101); or on Gladstone himself: "Maynooth was the test question, and it had sunk the vessel. As Gladstone stepped ashore, it was with a new vision of the future relationship of Church and State. 'I am far from professing to see my way to the end of it', he was able to vouchsafe to the trembling spectators of his survival, 'but I think it is likely to comprise great social changes'. He could not have been more correct" (p. 38).

It is indeed one of the merits of Dr Norman's book that he constantly relates the controversies, however theological, aroused by Victorian anti-Catholicism to their social and political environment. Dr Norman's canvas is a crowded one, but his sketches, even of the lesser figures, rarely fail to be colourful and life-like: one of Charles Bradlaugh's most bigoted opponents, C. N. Newdegate, who was also "an old campaigner against Popery", makes several furtive appearances; at the Protestant anti-Maynooth Conference, a Church of England clergyman drew loud applause by declaring that "neither Tractorians nor Infidels" should be permitted to enter Parliament (p. 46: remember Bradlaugh!); at the height of the Gladstone-Vatican controversy, the Pope, in the presence of visiting English Catholics, described the great English statesman as "a viper", but also admitted that he had not actually read Gladstone's pamphlet on the Vatican Decrees, as he had no desire to read "blasphemies" (pp. 96-97); and after his arrival in Oxford as Professor of Pastoral Theology, King spent a lot of his time in a little chapel in his garden, made out of a disused wash-house, which he called his 'Bethel', where he was joined by undergraduates ("the dear things") for devotions. Said King of these devotions: "We did the Seven Deadly Sins just like Cuddesdon; I enjoyed it immensely" (p. 111). King had earlier been chaplain of Cuddesdon, a training college whose curates enjoyed a reputation for effeminacy.

Dr Norman's immensely informative survey of 'Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England' is followed by a collection of 20 extracts from documents (many of them quite rare) of the period in question. Dr Norman would have been more thorough in his research, however, if he had given some space to discussion of the anti-Catholicism of Victorian secularists and rationalists, and if he had included extracts from works like Mrs Besant's *Catholicism and Rationalism* (1875) and Joseph McCabe's *From Rome to Rationalism; or, Why I left the Church* (1897). There have, in fact, been two notable McCabe Affairs in the history of Roman Catholicism in England: the first was over Joseph McCabe in 1896; the second was over Father Herbert McCabe in 1967. One would have thought that the first McCabe Affair would have been enough for the Church; but two McCabe Affairs within living memory is a luxury that only the Catholic Church could afford—and a tribute to its tenacity and ability to survive.

## LETTERS

### Uglier than a Tombstone

WHAT a curious mixture we sometimes get in the FREETHINKER! In the issue for October 5, we have F. H. SNOW railing against "graveyard masonry". I seem to remember that he has written on this subject before.

True, many headstones contain pious wishes inspired by Christian beliefs for which we have no use, but the memorials are there as emotional outlets of grief for the loss of loved ones and do not call for condemnation. The practice is centuries old and is not of Christian origin. I have been an atheist for about 45 years and when I lost someone very dear to me, my mother, I erected a headstone. It would have been her wish. I have the impression that Mr Snow, the freethinker, would have all such things swept away, if he had the power. I recommend him to seek other causes for the source of his youthful imaginings.

And then the film review of "A Long Day's Dying" which is recommended to us. Why do authors write such muck, such ugly muck. My question is rhetorical of course, they do it for money, to enable sleeping people to experience an emotional debauch which they could well do without. There is enough ugliness in the world without imagining it and parading the murky stuff. Here is a story which is apposite.

At the conclusion of the attack on Messines Ridge, in June 1917, two of us looked among the dead seeking a mutual friend. We found a clue, an empty open paybook, and then two shell holes away, our friend. He was still warm. A party of us had spent part of the day before the attack gambling with the few francs we had left, and our dead friend had won the lot, about 15 francs. While the shells and machine gun bullets were landing among us someone had seen our friend go down and had stripped him.

There are uglier things than the grief expressed by tombstones. War supplies enough ugliness without the need to concoct mucky stories.

A. E. SMITH.

### "Attention Atheists": A Response

I HAVE received the following letter regarding my idea set out in "Attention Atheists" (September 14).

"... it seems to me that the best kind of business for freethinkers to start would be a funeral business and in this I would be happy to invest at no interest.

"The ghastly racket of the undertakers needs reform, cutting out the Rolls Royce cars, the top hats and the 'man of God'. An orange box sort of coffin and cremation should bring down the cost of dying quite a bit and prove highly popular. Green stamps too, perhaps? It would do much to de-bunk religion. I hope you will seriously consider such a project. Yours faithfully, Ian Mackay."

My thanks to Mr Mackay for his suggestion for helping to found an income for the purpose of strengthening the voice of Free-thought. New ideas are certainly flowing in, and I invite any proposal.

F. H. SNOW,

67 Broadmead Road, Folkestone, Kent.

### Fear of Death

A five-year-old grandson said, "The boys at school all say that I shall die one day. I shan't, shall I?"

Death is as natural as birth, and old people free from clerical domination never fear it. They know that Man is part of the animal kingdom and that when he dies he is as dead as mutton. Most people fear, not death, but standing as a defendant before the ALL TERRIBLE; the hypothetical being with which priests, parsons and pastors terrify their dupes to extort wealth from them.

W. E. HUXLEY (Octogenarian).

### Guinea Pigs

REPLYING to Mr Crosby's criticism of "The Animals' Revenge" (FREETHINKER, September 28.)—

My reference to religious neurosis conclusion (NOT my conclusion), "Man is above beasts", was a permissible irony, not discerned by Mr Crosby, nor, apparently, by some other readers. The phrase, is, in fact, utterly meaningless without careful definition of the word "above". Mr Crosby refers to the "advanced cortical development" of mankind, but what does he mean by "advanced"? (This word is only a substitute for "above".) My own yardstick is the influence of a species' "cortical development" on its chances of survival in its environment. Ours builds hydraulic

dams to sustain life: it also brings us to the verge of extinction. A dog's olfactory development procures it more modest advantages, but no appreciable disadvantages.

Follows Mr Crosby's astounding statement that "Man is above beasts because . . . he has the greatest mental capacity to adapt himself to the environment on this planet". It is precisely because Man has NOT yet shown this capacity that we are, every day that passes, nearing journey's end.

Nowhere did I suggest that Man has a soul and is therefore "superior" to the apes. He differs from the apes, not supercially, but in detail, e.g. Man's apposable thumb (not possessed by apes) has facilitated the concrete realisations of his "cortical development", the dentition of apes is more complicated than ours. Likewise Mr Crosby's facile generalisations about "all mammals" are not valid: divergencies exist in blood temperature, to take only one example.

Mr Crosby mentions animal experimentation as being "exclusively directed towards the benefit of society". His comments on the post-war incidence of abnormal babies and births, and the recent facility with which drugs are being manufactured (and peddled) in all countries, are not given.

Of course the doctors are not "misguided fools" to use the words of Mr Crosby. They are overworked, competitive, professional men, and, as a body, are no better and no worse than other professional men, and, as a body, are no better and no worse than other professional men. Which is to say that, as much as any other workers, their jobs are their first concern: when they cease to be, other people will do them. Has Mr Crosby imagined himself hot on the trail of a new cure for some specific disease, with a rival doctor working in the same field and in the same direction? Would he be deterred from painfully sacrificing a few thousand animals per year by the thought that a Home Office Inspector (momentarily abandoning his arduous task of superintending, with perhaps a few score colleagues, the several million other experiments in progress, might drop in at his laboratory one morning?

And is it possible (in few cases, admittedly) that the habitual infliction of pain in animals may eventually induce unnatural pleasure reactions in certain individuals? (Many children exhibit these reactions, which sometimes persist into adult life.)

Concerning experimentation with living subjects, any surgeon (not just German surgeons!) will confirm that advances are made in wartime that could never have been made in peace, not deliberately, but because wartime conditions arbitrarily impose entirely new considerations on the doctors.

I fear very much that Mr Crosby believes this to be a genuinely scientific age and would refer him to "Is Ours a Scientific Age?" (FREETHINKER, May 25, 1955).

As regards my use of the phrase "unrestrained quantitative expansion", I would refer him to a series of articles published between 1954 and 1961 on this subject. He will find some predictions therein which have been subsequently confirmed by events, in particular, the reference in 1968 (Juvenile Crime, December 19, 1958) to an outbreak of violence by the young in 1968, and the further prediction in "Towards Journey's End" (August 23, 1968). Perhaps my "emotional arguments" are not entirely wide of the mark. Let us hope (perhaps for Mr Crosby's sake) that this latest one is!

R. READER.

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