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SUBSTANCES

THE REPORT of the Advisory Committee on Drug Dependence has come out strongly in favour of a relaxation of the laws with regard to cannabis. The Committee, chaired by Baroness Wootton, has taken nineteen months to reach its conclusions, during which it has reviewed all existing literature concerning the drug and the laws connected with it. Also the committee has invited evidence and heard the oral testimonies of sixteen witnesses. The witnesses represented all the existing shades of opinion on the question and perhaps the most significant sentence in the report is: "All our witnesses were agreed that cannabis smoking in the U.K. was a social rather than a solitary activity—casual and permissive like the taking of alcohol". The report also says, "All in all, it is impossible to make out a firm case against cannabis as being potentially a greater personal or social danger than alcohol. What can be said is that alcohol, with all its problems is in some sense the devil we know".

Thus the committee, though acknowledging that cannabis is no worse an 'evil' than alcohol, are not prepared to recommend its legalisation, and indeed they urge that its use should continue to be discouraged by law. The argument behind this is extremely reasonable. That we already have one 'evil' is no grounds for instituting another. A view in some way contrary to this was expressed by David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society, in a press release which followed the publication of the report. "However one may deplore the taking of drugs and urge schools and local authorities to educate the public on their hazards, at the end of the day the individual must be allowed to judge what he takes into his own body." There is not space here to discuss the old argument as to whether society has a duty to protect the individual from himself. What does matter in practical terms is whether society will benefit from cannabis becoming a household commodity.

Steve Abrams, an Oxford postgraduate and director of the Society for Mental Awareness, the leading group lobbying for the legalisation of cannabis, reacted to the report by saying, "the report is preparing public opinion for the legalisation of cannabis, which is now inevitable. There is no realistic possibility of defending the law when cannabis smoking is increasing." Perhaps Mr Abrams is convinced that cannabis has benefits that alcohol lacks. He may well be right. Cannabis may indeed be beneficial (in a way reminiscent of the 'moksha medicine' in Aldous Huxley's quasi-utopian last novel *Island*). However, the committee themselves, Mr Callaghan, the Home Secretary and the vast weight of medical opinion are convinced that in the words of the Committee, "there is a grave and urgent need for further expert study of all aspects of cannabis use, and its consequences for the individual and society".

This research will reveal that cannabis is either a drug similar to alcohol, in other words a means for the individual to escape from his everyday life, or that cannabis has powers in excess of those of alcohol—powers at present expressed by terms such as 'mind-expansion' and 'increased self-realisation'. In the case of the former, we will have to ask ourselves whether humans need the escape provided—whether to have on tap a ready means of inducing a hallucination is desirable or not. Medical and more particularly psychiatric opinion must determine whether as a whole we

benefit from alcohol and cannabis, because they help to reduce such ills as the degree of neurosis in society, or whether in fact men would be better off to be continually in their right minds. If it is found that it is good for us to escape occasionally then cannabis must be encouraged alongside alcohol. However, if it is proven that in general it is disadvantageous to escape from one's real self, this would amount to an equal indictment both of alcohol and cannabis, in which case we should be trying to curb the use of alcohol rather than encourage the use of cannabis.

But if, as Mr Abrams appears to suggest, cannabis really has something to offer in terms of "self-realisation", then of course it should be legalised and certainly encouraged. The whole argument is full of 'ifs' and will not be resolved until the essential research is done. It is thus encouraging to read that Mr Callaghan is likely to act on the recommendation in the report calling for the amendment of the laws in order to allow qualified people to study the drug in laboratories and by social experiment and observation. However, it is sad to learn that he is not likely to reduce the existing penalties, which as the report suggests are far too harsh. It has now been firmly established by the report that cannabis smoking is not an anti-social activity. Thus even if Callaghan does take it upon himself to protect individuals from themselves, for him to continue to threaten people with imprisonment and empower the police to invade our homes looking for 'substances' on the flimsiest of grounds is to engender disrespect both for the law and the police.

AFTER YOU ARCHBISHOP!

THE RECENT CONFERENCE of the Student Humanist Federation at Loughborough sounds like a drop of Grand Marnier served in a tea-cup with British Railways written on it—unostentatious, rather empty but containing a small amount of something fiery and to be savoured. *The Observer's* reporter, Cyril Dunn wrote: "There are few hair and dress rebels among those present, including one or two brilliant female peacocks. One of them rolls her own cigarettes in black paper. But they are outnumbered by chaps in neat suits and by girls who incline only modestly towards the fashion". The conventional exterior of the

(Continued overleaf)

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The views expressed by the contributors to FREETHINKER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

SHF covers something distinctly more interesting. Dunn quoted a sentence from that famous (or infamous—according to taste) pamphlet by Kensit and Buchanan, first published in the FREETHINKER, "We feel that no useful purpose is served by treating copulation as an activity for which a registered licence is required".

The students were discussing, 'Is it a sin to be different?' Nevertheless, one can't help wondering whether Kensit, Buchanan and a few others are not firebrands struggling to ignite a decidedly wet haystack. Certainly one would not

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

At Central Hall, Westminster: Friday, January 24, 7.15 p.m.: "Parliament, the Labour Party, and the Struggle for Socialism"—Debate between Tribune (including Michael Foot and Eric Heffer) and The Black Dwarf (including Tariq Ali and Bob Rowthorne). Admission 2s 6d. Tickets available in advance 3s post paid from Tribune, 24 St John Street, EC1, or The Black Dwarf, 7 Carlisle Street, W1.

Belfast Humanist Group: Conway Hotel, Dunmurry: Annual Dinner (including entertainment by John Windrum, the Irish folk-singer and Sean Maguire, violinist). Tickets 30s from Mr K. Graham, 5 Kingsway Gardens, Belfast BT5 7DQ.

Bristol Humanist Group, Folk House: Tuesday, January 21, 7.30 p.m.: "Science Fiction and Society", Ian Milroy BA.

Cardiff Humanist Group: 32 The Rise, Llanishen: Sunday January 19, 7.45 p.m.: Wine and Cheese Party (Tel 756891 if lost en route).

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group: 6 Chestnut Grove, East Barnet: Wednesday, January 22, 8 p.m.: "Divorce Reform", Members' discussion.

Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, January 19, 6.30 p.m.: "Charles Southwell and Matilda Roalfe", David Collis.

London Young Humanists: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace London, W8: Sunday, January 19, 7.30 p.m.: Bottle party. Please bring bottles and records. Members and guests all welcome.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, January 19, 11 a.m.: "Robert Ingersoll—Freethinker", Richard Clements, OBE. Admission free. Tuesday, January 21, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion "Art and Culture (India Today)", D. Banaji. Admission 2s. (including refreshments. Members free.

Sutton Humanist Group: Friend's Meeting House, 7 Worcester Gardens, Sutton: Wednesday, January 22, 7.30 p.m.: Annual General Meeting—to be followed by a speaker on a subject connected with television.

expect humanists to pay attention to such frivolities as fashion, but equally one would not expect them to conform to the extent of wearing suits on Sundays. They weren't on a protest march trying to gain the confidence of the British people in which case, as I wrote some time ago,



they should wear suits. They were taking part in a conference where the only attention they were likely to get was from the press. One gets the impression that were it not for the black cigarette paper, Dunn's editor would have given him far fewer column inches. I wonder what she puts in those cigarettes anyway.

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

FROM AUSTRALIA, where Freethinkers and humanists tend to be termed Rationalists encouraging news has been received from Ron Marke, the honorary secretary of the Rationalist Association of New South Wales. The first edition of a new journal, *The Australian Rationalist* is to be published this month. A bi-monthly, its editor is Mr W. Glanville Cook, the secretary of the Rationalist Society of Australia which is financing the project.

The Rationalist Association of South Australia is being reconstituted under the leadership of Mr L. Bullock and Mr J. Cambell. A Rationalist organisation is also being founded in Tasmania.

Of his own association Mr Marke is pleased to report that their numbers are increasing and that their activities are to be expanded.

MUST THE DEAD COME FIRST

THOSE WHO consider that religious superstition is no longer an important evil in society and that therefore religion can be permitted to die its own death unaided, may be interested in an incident, which shows that however little people may go to church or indeed even admit to believing in a God, basic irrational superstitions remain and can cause suffering. The Greater London Council wishes to build a new dual-carriage highway known as the 'C' Ring Road which is to run through Welling, Kent, amongst other

(Continued on page 24)

THE FAILURE OF TWO GREAT WORLD RELIGIONS

DENIS COBELL

IN A PREFACE to his book *Why I am not a Christian* Bertrand Russell wrote: "I think all the great religions of the world—Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Communism—both untrue and harmful". This superb introduction to freethinking agnosticism requires some examination in the light of the modern confrontation between two of the great world religions: Christianity and Communism. Let me say at the outset that I am mainly concerned with the empirical means used by each religion to achieve its objective, although these cannot be divorced entirely from the tables of stone upon which the Holy Writ is inscribed.

A collection of writings, bound together under the title *Holy Bible*, forms the basis of the Christian religion; but it takes only a casual observer to note the variety of its followers, from Aquinas to the Bishop of Woolwich. Communism is founded on the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and likewise there have been many recent innovations, from Mao to Che Guevara. The world is divided into two antagonistic camps by the force of these religions. In both the major power blocs, there is an enormous gap between the idea and the reality. America's motto 'In God We Trust' and Russia's 'Hammer and Sickle', are largely hypocritical emblems, that nevertheless symbolise mutual exclusiveness. The Church of Rome, whose tentacles all but strangle many of the so-called free countries, adamantly refuses to compromise her condemnation of countries held under the totalitarian grip of jealous communist neo-imperialism.

One common characteristic of each religion is the proliferation of interpretations emanating from the original source, each claiming a closer adherence respectively to Marx's or Christ's teachings. There are many small cells formed by obscure groups of fanatics, on both sides of the ideological fence. Here, is a certain complacency; the daily affairs of the world are often considered insignificant, apart from their illustrative value in enhancing choice quotations from well-thumbed tomes of their masters. Within these religious groups there is an internecine hatred that each sect or cell, in its own sphere, adopts towards its ideological neighbour. This hatred absorbs more energy than either opposition to outsiders, or the search for positive goals.

The theories of Christianity and Communism have undoubted similarities; the late Hewlett-Johnson found them quite compatible. I have a certain admiration for the Red Dean, not because of the truth of Communism or Christianity, but because anyone who seeks to bring differences of opinion down to a tolerable level is reducing the amount of tension and hatred existing in the world. Unfortunately this kind of amelioration is seen only in isolated individuals, since most people find it difficult to tolerate another man's views when they contrast so sharply with their own rigidly held opinions. The youthful idealism which asserted itself in expressions that reverberated for many days after the October 27 demonstration, "Viva Che" and "Smash the Bourgeoisie", is akin to the mob hysteria at evangelisation crusades.

Surely this is an area where the freethinker should spread his gospel of the foolishness of religious dogma more persistently; when, as so often the outcome shows no positive assets, the only gain is the negative one—fear of opposition.

Although a belief in the devil and hell do not feature prominently in the creed of many churches today, the fear that accompanied damnation was formerly the greatest inducement the clergy possessed, to remind Christians of their duty. Those positive aspects of Christian faith, that are said to have inspired the saints, have always been left in the shade. How else could a man fight in battles, when he belonged to an organisation that ostensibly preached 'Peace on Earth'?

Within the Communist sphere of influence one finds the same phenomenon, only this hatred is directed toward the capitalist system. This is individualised by seeing the leaders of capitalist countries as devils. The fault of these two religions does not lie in their social and political ambitions. It is the process of integrating these ambitions into an unchallengeable authority that destroys their right to be accepted. Having reached a position of intolerance towards deviation, they proceed to set up the apparatus of cruel and vicious retribution, which has characterised the history of religion.

The zealous religious aspect of Communism drove the scientist Edward Teller toward believing that his discoveries in atomic physics must be used to build an ultimate weapon—the H bomb. It was Albert Camus who wrote "Politics is not religion, or, if it is, then it is nothing but the Inquisition". Camus also observed that Marx was buried mistakenly in the unbelievers section at Highgate Cemetery!

Bertrand Russell's denunciation appears absolutely reasonable when examined against the backcloth of hatred, that is the hallmark of these two world religions.

There are clearly two quite different ways of looking at the world problems created by Christianity and Communism. Firstly, the ideal, that is Russell's approach, and I feel the rational manner. The political management of mankind's affairs are at present subjected to an immutable set of laws that have been established on a religious basis, and the alternative must be posed. As Russell has described in many of his other works, this entails the breaking down or the majority of our institutions of authority, management and control, as they now exist. The question is: how can this be achieved?

Secondly, there is the pragmatic approach: this is by far the easier method, but also the least successful. Examples of this attitude are seen in Hewlett-Johnson, and the moves for social reforms by other churchmen, which, though they deserve admiration, seem only to be of temporary value.

Freethinkers cannot avoid this issue by refusing to mix religious and political opinions; the facts of our contemporary world situation show that the two are inextricably joined. Our purpose must seek to find a path that can effectively disentangle man from his pre-historic notion, of needing an external 'prop', and surviving to know that he can be master of his own life, without inflicting another man-made religion on his fellows.

A Humanist Choral Society is to be started this year, aiming at a standard of performance high enough to perform publicly. The inaugural meeting will be held in mid-January at a time and date to be arranged. All those interested in joining as singing or non-singing members should contact Christopher Macy at 88 Islington High Street, London, N1. Further details and copies of the draft constitution will be sent to all inquirers in due course.

GREECE

G. L. SIMONS

GREECE, the "cradle of Western democracy", is now in the grip of a military junta. The best sons of Greece are exiled or in jail; freedom of speech, freedom of assembly are non-existent; and the bulk of the Greek people live in unrelieved and needless poverty. How did this come about? We can start with the Second World War.

In the early forties the Germans occupied most of Greece and faced, as they did in much of Europe, a stubborn resistance movement. The main resistance group was the EAM, or National Liberation Front, which by 1944 was in control of most of Greece. The EAM numbered two million members out of a total population of seven million, and it was reasonably assumed that the EAM was a left-wing, popular organisation; its leaders were radical liberals, social democrats and communists. It was again reasonably assumed that in any conflict with the discredited monarchist forces the EAM, with its thorough organisation and vast popular support, would be an easy victor. *However, the leaders of the EAM had not reckoned on the machinations of international capitalism.*

As the Germans were forced out of Greece, mainly by the Greek resistance movement, the British Army entered Greece and fought the exhausted Greek people to preserve Greek capitalism. In *The State of Europe*, Howard K. Smith writes that, "The decisive factor in the ensuing struggle for power was the British Army, which entered the country as the Germans left", and Hugh Seton-Watson writes in *The Pattern of Communist Revolution*: "This was a defeat for the Greek Communists, and it was not due to factors within Greece, but to British intervention: without British action Greece would have had the same regime as Yugoslavia".

On December 2, 1944, the British commander, General Scobie, ordered the EAM—the organisation that had so heroically resisted the Nazis—to disarm. On December 4 monarchist police fired on a legal EAM demonstration, and a number of people were killed. Soon after, the British—reinforced by two divisions from North Africa—mounted an all-out offensive against the Greeks and used planes and tanks to crush them. On February 12, 1945, the Greek people surrendered. Smith writes that "one is forced to conclude that the British were determined to break EAM and install in power the discredited monarchy and its blindly vengeful rightist supporters". The British military commission installed monarchist officers in the Greek armed forces and allowed the pro-Nazi police organisation to continue in power. In circumstances of desperate social misery King George was restored to the Greek throne—and the civil war began.

In the first three post-war years the British gave the Greek rightists over £200 million worth of supplies. It is significant that at this time over 75 per cent of Greek children suffered from malnutrition. The British-supported Tsaldaris Government increased the tax burden on the poor and allowed the Greek ship-owners and land-owners to increase their fortunes. Half the government's expenditure was on the army and the police, and six per cent was on reconstruction. The labour unions were castrated: in the immediate post-war period, union elections were held and leftists swept the board, but the royalist government removed the entire elected administration and installed its own appointed men—Fotios Makris, a wartime Nazi quisling, was made chief of the Greek Confederation of Labour.

Inevitably the role of bolstering up Greek capitalism was taken over by the United States, just as they took over from France in Indo-China. Between 1946 and 1958 the United States sent \$1,593 million to Greece in economic aid, and military aid amounted to another \$1,238 million. The use to which this aid was put was entirely up to the right-wing government which the British and Americans had installed. On May 2, 1958, the *New Leader* reported:

"Economic stability and fortunate circumstances have not . . . had the same meaning for all Greeks. So far, the circumstances have all favoured the interests of the privileged classes, whose sole care has been further self-enrichment. The interests of the workers, artisans and employees have been constantly sacrificed to 'stabilisation'. The Rightist regimes in power have given the former all they want, while demanding only sacrifice from the latter."

And *Amnesty* (No. 4, 1963) noted:

"About 60,000 political exiles have had their citizenship taken away from them. Public meetings are restricted and the press can be prosecuted for 'slander', a term widely interpreted. The radio is entirely controlled by the government . . . all those who have engaged in any protest against the Government have to have 'Certificates of Social Opinion', issued by the police in order to get work. This applies not only to work in the public service but private firms as well."

Between October 1955 and June 1963 Karamanlis led the rightist government. During this period the infant death-rate was one of the highest in Europe and illiteracy (1961) was about 20 per cent of the adult population (8 per cent among men). In November 1963 Papandreou was elected to office but without an overall majority. On February 16, 1964, Papandreou's Centre Union Party was returned with a comfortable majority. With a clear mandate Papandreou, a radical social democrat, proposed legislation to help the vast majority of the Greek people. The wealthy classes, however, saw this as a threat to their privilege and power, and with the support of the army put pressure on Papandreou. Finally the king (now Constantine) clashed with Papandreou and forced him to resign. In September 1965 Stephanopoulos formed a cabinet which proved to be impotent. A caretaker government was formed in December 1966 and elections were specified for May 1967.

It was clear, however, that Papandreou would be elected with a large majority, and to prevent this the army took control of the country on April 21, 1967, a month before the elections would have returned a leftist (and overwhelmingly popular) Papandreou government. In February 1968, to create the illusion of civilian rule, the army chiefs who were running the country resigned their commissions: soldiers were no longer governing Greece! But no-one was impressed by the ruse.

The rest of the story is simple, and sadly familiar. By fascist police methods reminiscent of the Nazi Gestapo the Greek government has crippled the power of organised labour, exiled Greeks who complain of brutality and injustice, and systematically tortured others (communists, social democrats, liberals) who refuse to be cowed. Early in December 1968 fresh evidence of torture was presented to the European Human Rights Commission at Strasbourg: Michael Doulgarakis was beaten on the soles of his feet and on the genitals, left without food for six days, and kept in a basement cell without a blanket or other covering; George Daminakis was chained to his bed for 30 days; Panayotis Tzavellas, a cripple, was beaten with his own crutches. Many other cases could be cited.

(Continued on page 23)

J. M. ROBERTSON THE ELIZABETHAN

MARTIN PAGE

J. M. ROBERTSON (1856-1933) was one of those rare humanists who have had the posthumous distinction of being compared with both Shakespeare and Voltaire. Robertson, after all, was a myriad-minded freethinker who was also a poet, with a profound interest in the "little world of man"; and his musical ear, poetic feeling and immense literary culture were instrumental in making him one of the greatest Shakespearean scholars of his time. Of Shakespeare's "religion" beside that of the other Elizabethan dramatists he said: "The Elizabethan drama was not wholly secular; Shakespeare, and Shakespeare alone, after Marlowe, is persistently non-religious in his handling of life. The vital clues to Shakespeare's thought on religious problems are to be found in the great speech of Prospero in the *Tempest*, predicting the ultimate dissolution of the world and the evanescence of its life as "stuff that dreams are made on", and again in the absolute Naturalism of the speech of Polixenes to Perdita in the *Winter's Tale*. Here the thought outgoes alike that of Bacon and Montaigne" (*History of Freethought*, 1936 edition, Vol. II, pp. 552-6).

Robertson was apparently the first British critic to suggest that "the extent of Shakespeare's obligations to Montaigne is greater than is commonly supposed", and in *The Upshot of "Hamlet"* (1884), from which these words are taken, he pointed to numerous echoes, in Shakespeare's works, of Florio's translation of Montaigne. In *Montaigne and Shakespeare* (1897; revised and enlarged 1909), Robertson developed this theory—now generally accepted—of the influence exerted by the French sceptic and essayist on the supreme English dramatist.

Confronted by gross incongruities and contradictions within the plays attributed to Shakespeare, JMR subjected the texts to tests of diction, phraseology, vocabulary, metre, rhythm and dramatic construction. In this way he detected in the plays the presence of various dramatists contemporary with Shakespeare: particularly George Chapman and that "hard and gemlike flame", Kit Marlowe, though also Kyd, Greene, Peele, Ben Jonson, Heywood, Middleton and Drayton. As a result of his investigations, Robertson put forward the dramatic paradox that the greatest playwright of all was a man who, after his opening years in the theatre, never wrote a whole play of his own: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was Shakespeare's "first, and indeed only complete work". JMR later cited the *Dream* as an example to rebut the fallacious allegation that he was always looking for Shakespeare at the top of his achievement: he recognised that Shakespeare underwent artistic development.

Consistent with the known facts of Shakespeare's life, Robertson's explanation of his achievement is perfectly cogent: coming to the theatre for a livelihood and becoming a producer of plays for his company after learning his business as an actor, he developed his powers and fulfilled his genius in doing so. In an age when writers were unprotected by copyright, Shakespeare adapted or substantially revised plays by his predecessors and contemporaries, "by way of freshening their appeal to the public, or giving new opportunities to actors"; and although he could not remove all blemishes, he transmuted into gold the coin of lesser dramatists. Shakespeare's indebtedness to these dramatists elucidates "the otherwise occult process" of the production of such a mass of magnificent work in a few years by an actor of no great culture, who had "small Latin

and less Greek", and who presumably lacked the leisure for such a variety of reading and knowledge required to initiate such a multitude of plots. For the poetic declamation which the age and the blank-verse form demanded, he was trained by his years on the boards. "Call him worldly if you will, he is still the heavenly singer".

With characteristic thoroughness, Robertson rejected the Imitation Theory, i.e. that Shakespeare sedulously aped half a dozen or so contemporary dramatists for no compelling reason; and "in what known case of literary progression do they [the traditionalists] profess to find a parallel or precedent for such a zig-zag of slavish mimicry and artistic mastery?" (*The Shakespeare Canon*, Part III, 1925, p. 92). But even the most orthodox always acknowledged Shakespeare's debt to others for his plots; composite authorship of plays was accepted theatrical practice in Elizabethan England, and most dramatists of the period wrote in collaboration at one time or another. Moreover, plays of doubtful parentage were fathered upon Shakespeare in his own lifetime (e.g. *Lochrine*, *Sir John Oldcastle* and *Thomas Lord Cromwell*); and other plays of uncertain authorship, such as *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *The Troublesome Raigne of John King of England*, were published after his death, bearing his name as sole or joint author.

Robertson's life-long admiration for Shakespeare permeated his literary criticism: in Act II of *As You Like It*, for example, "we pass into the forest of Arden and into poetry, the poetry culminating in the scene in which Orlando, touched by a kind answer where he had offered menace, craves pardon and goes on: 'But whate'er you are/ That in this desert inaccessible/Under the shade of melancholy boughs,/Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time'. It is as if an enchanter has smitten the earth with his wand and the whole action become music. And that is but a minor kind of effect, for Shakespeare, belonging to his first period". But *Coriolanus* is "a great drama, great as only Shakespeare is great, in poetry, in portraiture, in power, in completeness of seizure, in its burden of tragic inevitableness".

Indeed, at the height of his powers, he transcended the popular prejudices of his time by lifting Lear's Fool into tragic air no less than by transforming "the mad Ophelia of the old play, who was actually a theme for laughter to the old audience". "No man could so clothe madness with pity and tears as could Shakespeare". In the finale to *Hamlet* as played under Elizabeth and James, the maestro had clearly scored for full orchestra: "the panting duellists, with every nerve and sinew alert and tense, fencing, it is to be supposed, as our actors do not now; the intent audience, knowing that there is death in the cup, poison on the foil, and two villains in the plot counting on one or other infallibly succeeding; and over all, at every hit by Hamlet, the boom of the "cannon", as it were the advancing stride of death: till the crashes of sound are swallowed up in the moral lightning-flash of fourfold doom" (*"Hamlet" Once More*, 1923, pp. 111-112).

In an aside in his monumental study *The Baconian Heresy*, Robertson declared: "Probably the whirligig of Time will cast up yet other fantasies. I do not despair of seeing seriously advanced the theory that the Plays were written by Queen Elizabeth, who was a good classical

scholar" (p. 592). Forty-three years later this prophecy was fulfilled with the first detailed and serious presentation of Elizabeth Tudor as William Shakespeare. The man who gained literary distinction in transcending the limitations imposed by his own plebian origins subscribed unequivocally to the orthodox view of the tanner's son from Stratford rising from obscurity to seize the heights of dramatic genius. It is therefore ironic that JMR's *Marlowe* (1931) paved the way for Calvin Hoffman's *The Man Was Shakespeare* (1955).

Robertson's arguments for the probability of Peele's share in *Titus Andronicus* convinced the distinguished Shakespearean W. W. Greg and have since been corroborated by Professor Parrott, Professor Dover Wilson and J. C. Maxwell. His arguments for Chapman's presence in *Timon of Athens* received the weighty support, once again, of Professor Parrott, editor of Chapman's works; and even so orthodox a Shakespearean as Terence Spencer acknowledged, as late as 1953, that there were "valuable observations" in JMR's *Shakespeare and Chapman* (1917). In 1919 T. S. Eliot wrote an essay that became famous in which he declared his adherence to Robertson's theory on *Hamlet*, expounded only a few months before. Eliot (who came to know JMR personally) wrote: "The upshot of Mr Robertson's examination is, we believe, irrefragable". JMR's "*Hamlet*" *Once More* (1923) evoked a highly eulogistic review from the critic George Sampson, who, eighteen years later, included a sympathetic notice of Robertson the Shakespearean in his *Concise History of English Literature*, declaring: "His arguments can be followed with great profit even when his conclusions are not accepted".

Robertson's volumes on *The Shakespeare Canon* were highly esteemed by men like Gilbert Murray, Chapman Cohen and Sir John Squire, and his literary criticism influenced such diverse Shakespeareans as Professor Dover

Wilson, Dugdale Sykes, Augustus Ralli and the German translator Hans Rothe. In 1923 William Wells corroborated JMR's contention—expounded only the year before—that Marlowe had a hand in *Julius Caesar* (notably in Antony's oration). Thirty years later, Professor Feuillerat of Yale said of our self-educated Shakespearean: "It must be recognised that Robertson had qualities which started him on the track of incontestable truths. I know nothing more just or more penetrating than Chapter 10 of *An Introduction to the Study of Shakespeare Canon* on versification as a means of investigation".

JMR's *Elizabethan Literature* (1914) is a masterpiece of compression, written with undeniable grace and charm; and in 1959 that doughty freethinker Herbert Cutner (an Oxfordian in matters Shakespearean) still regarded it as "the finest short introduction to its fascinating subject in the language". In 1905 Robertson edited Bacon's philosophical works, and the permanent value of his *The Baconian Heresy* (1913) has long been recognised. As Professor G. W. Keeton reminded us in 1967: "It has become very difficult indeed to establish a case for the Baconian authorship of the plays since the ruthless and exhaustive examination of the whole question by J. M. Robertson".

In view of the tremendous growth of the Shakespeare industry in the twentieth century, such tributes, over so many years, are eloquent indeed. Directly and indirectly, Robertson's works must have stimulated countless men to think critically about the plays attributed to Shakespeare: that, in itself, is no mean feat in the world of literary criticism. Nor should it be forgotten that in the case of Shakespeare, as in others, Robertson set out to fathom the workings of genius—and that is surely a most arduous and fascinating task for any critic. But for the man whom Professor Dover Wilson credited with "the power of genius", it was a labour of love.

THE NEW MORAL PESSIMISM

MICHAEL CREGAN

THE SCOPE—and title—of this article was prompted by reading Michael Gray's "Is man moral?" in the *FREETHINKER* (November 23). While I think that a great deal of what he says is correct, his statement, "It is my own reluctantly arrived at belief that all man's actions, or rather the motivations behind them, are selfish and cannot be described as moral", indicates that his gloomy synopsis of man's moral evolution has led him into the old fallacy of *egoistic hedonism*, the belief that, in the last analysis a man can act only for his own selfish ends; this is how he must act.

This position must seem to have gained a powerful ally in the comparatively recent arrival on the scene of psychoanalytic ideas, ideas which seem to back up the view that *all* moral sentiments can be traced back to quite natural sources—selfish sources.

We must conjecture that early man was totally a-social, with no guilt or feelings of obligation to deter him from seeking immediate gratification of his desires. Anything barring the way was simply pushed aside. Probably the most effective barrier, with strength to equal his own, was the existence of other men, and in time a crude system of mutual respect emerged with agreed rules of conduct. Social behaviour began to be imposed upon the children by means of reward and punishment, and, being more at the mercy of the environment, particularly the parents or

elders, the children felt these prohibitions and urgings so deeply that they acquired the status of unbreakable commandments—categorical imperatives. The restraint of appetites necessary for this arrangement to work was met by the mechanism of sublimation, whereby the thwarted instinctual drive comes to accept another goal as satisfactory; love/respect/admiration as a gratification of sexual urges, etc.—and of course the satisfaction of the impulse in its normal form where approved by society. (Sexual satisfaction within marriage, as an example.) Where the individual still pursued outlawed goals, society took up coercive measures. Of course, this process would not have been smooth, but it eventually got under way, and it is still the basis of our moral behavior. Moral considerations are but the remnants of childhood fears, the search for "pure" love is just side-tracked eroticism, and so on. It is a gloomy picture, and one which the egoistic hedonist must surely see as confirming his attitude. Yet in spite of this, I do not consider his position tenable, even in the light of the above considerations.

For example, does Russell's point that there is the world of difference between pleasure as a product and pleasure as a motive lose its validity? Even if the idea of behaving in a certain way produced a "pro" response in X, does it logically follow that whenever he is acting in that way, he is in reality seeking his own pleasure? Surely it is possible

(Continued on page 23)

(Continued from page 22)

for a man to say: "This is how I ought to act here. If I derive some instinctual/unconscious satisfaction from such an action all well and good. But that is not my concern"?

Mr Gray cites the mother who sacrifices herself for her child, and dismisses it as "purely instinctive behaviour". What, I suppose one could ask, became of the self-preservative instinct at that moment? Presumably it went into abeyance to allow "purely instinctive behaviour" to take over. If there are difficulties when unconscious or instinctual gratification is involved in every action, there is even more when there are two contrary impulses operating over the same action. Let us take the example of a soldier who, against all inclination, goes to the aid of, and rescues his comrade. It is clear the effort cost him a lot. But the position of the hedonist demands that there be *some other and more potent factor* operating in favour of the action in question. Perhaps the soldier in question came from a military family, and is merely obeying the strictures of his father. So we search our list of citations to find someone who does not have this operative factor, and yet performs a similar action. But still, the hedonist maintains, there must be another factor somewhere . . . and so it goes on. The hedonist in the end dies from timidity, the death of the "thousand qualifications". He will not chance a throw on his hypothesis—he will not make a falsifiable prediction. No matter what soldier we drag up before him he will never give way—and will not state, *in advance*, what would make him give way.

And what of the rescued comrade? Suppose, on being brought back he were to say: "I have no intention of thanking my rescuer. Since he acted as he did for some gratification of his own, why should I? Why be grateful for an act of selfishness which just *happens* to be of service to another?" Such a response would lead us to wonder whether he was suffering from battle-fatigue. Yet, on the hedonist's assumption, he is perfectly justified in reacting in this way. We cannot have it both ways.

Finally, how is it that genuine moral innovation can take place? I can see how a given individual could be led to kick back against conventional morality—it happens all the time—but I am thinking more of the man who, so to speak, doesn't mindlessly go to the other pole, but who ignores both and envisages a different, and what he considers to be a *better* society altogether. From a given theory of morality, any real change should be impossible. But it is here that all mechanistic theories of moral consciousness stumble.

Mr Gray would be right in stating that some moral behaviour is no such thing; but to go further and declare that *all* moral behaviour is fake is to go beyond a reasonable limit.

BOOK REVIEW

ISOBEL GRAHAME

OUT-OF-THE-BODY EXPERIENCES by Celia Green (Proceedings of the Institute of Psychophysical Research, Oxford—Volume II, price 27/6).

IN FEBRUARY 1963 a correspondent wrote to *Humanist* that whenever telepathy rears its head humanists should hit it hard. In the March issue I suggested that as sane normal people seem to have experiences which they refer to as telepathy it is reasonable to want to find out about it.

I don't have telepathic experiences, but when during September 1966 the IPR appealed for data about out-of-the-body episodes (which I do have) I contributed as much information as I could.

Celia Green is Director of the IPR and her book is divided into 26 short sections dealing with various aspects of the ecsomatic state. As with telepathy it is obvious that many people have out-

of-the-body experience too. We were asked during the investigation if we could account for them, but the survey does not attempt to draw conclusions, and judging by the matter of fact way most people reported I should think that few, if any, attributed the sensations to either the Occult or the Divine.

With its limited resources, I don't think the IPR is capable of doing more than draw attention to the fact of this type of experience being comparatively widespread. To make a detailed clinical analysis of even the 300 or so subjects who responded with case histories would entail very costly data collection and processing, for the experience is complex and difficult to explain because there is no scientific terminology as yet, the subject having been repeatedly rejected by 'rational' people and left to the mystics. I sometimes wonder if secular people fear scientific evidence that there actually is another level of consciousness!

I think Celia Green's findings show that even the most rabid religion basher can be sure that unaccountable human experiences are quite respectable aspects of this life, but none the less interesting for being so.

I must confess to enjoying my ecsomatic (nice to know the right word) experiences which I can induce deliberately provided conditions are right and non-interruption is guaranteed. This is so seldom possible that one gets little practice, but I am convinced that my sort of trance is therapeutic and stimulating. I wish I could achieve it at least once a week—perhaps this will be possible for more people if researches continue?

FILM REVIEW

AL SCHROEDER

BOOM! (Odeon, St Martin's Lane).

That's Show Biz!

LIZ TAYLOR, Dickie Burton, Noel (dear Noel) Coward, Tennessee Williams, Joseph Losey. Put them all together on an island in the Mediterranean with a camera and some film and what do they deliver? A really neat piece of entertainment. Proclaimed decadents all, they have managed to set down a loving testament to cosmic superiority of their mutinous libidos. Or something like that.

Tennessee's screenplay gives us an island in the Med owned by a beautiful lady who is dying (Liz). To this jagged little isle, one sunny day, come two visitors, one unexpected, "a professional house guest" (Dickie) and the other an old friend, a "witch" from Capri (dear Noel). They all have a super time together talking about their pills and injections and their blood transfusions and the beautiful dying lady's six dead husbands. But on the second day the "witch" returns to Capri and the beautiful lady invites the professional house guest to get into bed with her. Well, the guy refuses and makes her a bit mad, but she quiets down and lets him tuck her into bed and tell her a story. It sure is some story because before he's finished telling it the beautiful lady is dead. And that, apparently, is how the guy gets his kicks! So he takes a mouthful of wine from a goblet, throws the goblet into the sea, laughs about something and goes off into the world to find the next dying lady whom he can help to make the big scene.

Pop decadence, Where even the word "kiss" takes on lurid connotations. But great fun. As harmless as a cube of sugar without the drop of acid. Sweet enough to add a taste to your coffee but not enough to add up to a mind expanding or a mind degrading experience.

With Joseph Losey behind the camera a visual extravagance is assured and in *Boom* he is at his most inventively baroque. Elizabeth Taylor gives a performance which suggests she would indeed make an excellent Lady Macbeth. (*Macbeth* is the Burtons' next venture.) And Richard Burton and Noel Coward give intriguingly accurate pictures of their decrepit alter-egos.

(Continued from page 20)

Greece today is a land of brutality and suppression: no further comment is needed. But it is worth stressing again that these inhumanities have been made possible by the deliberate historical and modern policies of Britain and America. The American arms still pour into Greece to equip its fascist army against the Greek people; the pattern of Vietnam, Latin America and elsewhere is repeated. The Greek people continue to suffer in deprivation and oppression, but Aristotle Onassis—and his brother capitalists and landowners—are doing very nicely.

LETTERS

YOUR PRAISE of Renee Short's Commons immigration speech shows lack of depth and seeming unawareness of other things said in Parliament on the subject.

Powell's speech (from a Christian gentleman) was a ploy in a wider plot for Tory leadership. Mrs Short's was a panicky half-thought-out affair disowned by most experienced Labour colleagues. I told her we rejected the Chinese Wall around Southall theory years ago.

The main weakness of your remarks assume there has been nothing between the 'starry-eyed' and Enoch Powell until Mrs Short.

Powell newspaper stimulated sensationalism was supported by the main tenor of Mrs Short's remarks. The policy of the Government (now) mostly supported by the Tories, is the realistic one. One wonders if you have even bothered to look at it. Mrs Short's attitude (as partly shown in your remarks) would keep families apart. For a humanist journal your piece was grossly unscientific.

SYDNEY BIDWELL, MP, Southall.

Powell

F. H. SNOW's article on Powell is superficial and irresponsible nonsense. It is based on false premises and is badly argued. On an unimportant subject this would not matter, but on the subject of immigration it is deplorable.

It is *not* true that coloureds are received in Britain more cordially than whites. Every study carried out has revealed extensive prejudice and discrimination against coloured people, in the fields of housing, education, industry, insurance, etc. It is *not* true that immigrants threaten Britain with "dire consequences". Such consequences are only likely if people listen to racialsists such as Powell and his disciples. Of course F. H. Snow will rush to protest that he is no racist. It's amazing how the word upsets people who propagate racist views. Even Vorster and Wallace do not admit to being racialsists. F. H. Snow belongs to the insensitive and ignorant group of people who invariably prefix their bigotry with the phrase "I'm no racist but . . .".

I would unhesitatingly prosecute Enoch Powell under the terms of the Racial Incitement Act. Free speech should never be regarded as an *absolute* moral principle. When it demonstrably incites people to racialism (or to war, murder, rape, etc.) it should be curtailed. I was disappointed to see Snow's ill-informed and squalid sentiments in the FREETHINKER columns. I seriously suggest that he do some reading and some thinking before attempting another offering.

G. L. SIMONS.

Space

I CANNOT agree with your editorial 'Space Euphoria' (January 4), in which you decry the view that the resources spent on orbiting the moon might have been put to better use on earth. I am certainly not opposed to space exploration, but the basic needs of the living should come first. Moreover, genuine collaboration between the East and the West for space exploration would not only be far more economical but would eliminate the haste, and, more important, the military and strategic implications.

As for your idea that "we may find that the homeless could live on one of the planets"—well, I'm simply appalled! At present, instead of making full use of the buildings we have and modernising and rebuilding them with anything like the urgency given to reaching the moon, we condemn many families to appalling housing conditions or actual homelessness, often "solved" by splitting up families, or at least uprooting them from their own neighbourhoods, if not their homeland. Now, it seems they can look forward to being deported to Mars, for life imprisonment in an oxygenated capsule.

BARBARA SMOKER.

OBITUARY

It is with regret that we announce the death of Louis John Alexander, at the early age of 56. He was a member of the National Secular Society and a FREETHINKER reader for many years. The cremation ceremony at Golders Green was conducted by Mr McKay who gave an appreciation of the deceased: ". . . He loved truth and hated hypocrisy in all its trappings. He was an atheist and a republican and saw in the combination of working men the hope of better things. He worked for the causes he held to be true. He believed in laughter and his gentle merriment could dispel the gloom from the most bigotted opponent. He loved life, but faced death with serenity". Our deep sympathy is extended to his wife and daughter.

(Continued from page 18)

places. The GLC's scheme, announced about twelve months ago involved the demolition of seventy homes in Dryden Road, Welling, Greenwich and Bexley London Borough Councils were asked for their views. The councils supported the residents, who came up with an alternative route which would save the homes. Recently, however, Mr M. Coker, the secretary of the Dryden Road Owner Occupiers Association has had a letter from the GLC, which greatly regretted the destruction of property in Dryden Road, but pointed out that the adoption of the alternative scheme would mean that "2,500 to 3,250 bodies would have to be exhumed and reinterred. As many of the graves contain recent burials, the adoption of this route would no doubt cause distress to relatives, and the committees therefore felt unable to accept it".

The seventy families who are to lose their homes are no doubt distressed already, but probably see the official reason as valid. One wonders how many living people would have to be at risk of losing their homes, before the GLC would consider moving 3,000 dead people. Though it is heartening that since the war the cremation rate in this country has risen from approximately 20 per cent to 48 per cent, superstition cannot yet be regarded as a force with no power.

Profile on

RACE RELATIONS

Speakers :

JOAN LESTOR, MP

(Labour MP for Eton and Slough)

JOHN LYTTLE

(Chief Conciliation Officer, Race Relations Board)

Dr DAVID PITT

DAVID TRIBE

(President, National Secular Society)

Chairman :

JOHN ENNALS

(Director General, United Nations Association)

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