

# Freethinker

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## CHRISTIANS UNITE!

THE WEEK OF PRAYER for Christian Unity, which has just passed, served little purpose save that it emphasised the extraordinary entanglements into which faith can lead both individuals and groups of people. We have long grown used to the phenomenon of these people who believe in the same God, but are unable to agree as to how this belief should be made manifest. The recent events merely displayed the lengths to which irrational fervour can lead people. The remarkable incident in Glasgow, which brought the BBC radio broadcast of a church service to a halt, and the equally unsavoury behaviour of the fanatics who called Cardinal Heenan "the representative of the Anti-Christ" and "a liar" amongst other things, could be put down as the actions of a lunatic fringe, which tend to discredit an otherwise worthy movement. (Certainly the repressed antics of the obnoxious Rev Ian Paisley outside St Pauls can be put into this class.) Nevertheless, the lack of enthusiasm displayed by these 'fringe elements' does seem to reflect the general attitude in the centre of the ecumenical movement. On January 22 the Pope appealed for restraint lest damage be done to the ecumenical cause by a too hasty or superficial approach to the subject and went on to give his view that there were dangerous elements in the sudden enthusiasm for reconciliation between his church and other churches. Cardinal Heenan seems to be no more optimistic. Preaching at Hinde Street Methodist Church in London, he said that there were within his church those who were 'less than enthusiastic' about the ecumenical movement. He thought that such people envisaged the Church gradually stripping herself of her doctrines and of her authority.

Dr Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury seems a little more enthusiastic and laid more stress on the progress already made, "In spite of their divisions Christians in the world are a single phenomenon, a community—Christians—who share so much that their united impact could even now be very great". Ramsey, one suspects, is no more optimistic than any one else but he realises enthusiasm is required to keep the movement alive and he has certainly more to gain, or less to lose, from Christian unity than have the Catholics. His church is comparatively small and made up of one national group. Thus he is both more vulnerable to the increasing influence of secularism and as leader of the church in England concerned to unite all English Christians. It is this nationalistic or ethnic aspect which points to the farce inherent in the whole gamut of debate, emotional outburst and petty wrangling that characterises the drive for Christian unity.

Heenan said last week, when speaking at the Methodist church, that most of the congregation were what they were because of the families into which they had been born, that if instead of being born in the West they had been born in the East they might have been Muslims, Hindus or Buddhists. He stressed that they had received their faith, that it was not their own virtue that had achieved it for them. Thus the majority of Christians belong to the church into which they were born. There is no question of taste, of people preferring one church to another for any reason other than that their parents went there. If all the palaver was aiming to reconcile people's tastes—to create a church which would satisfy everyone's considered opinion as to what was best then one could sympathise with the motives up to a point. However, one doubts if many British Christians have ever been to a church other than the one their parents first took them to. Thus a choice based on any kind of logic is not involved. The movement is merely an attempt by the leaders of the various churches to reconcile their differences, the logical reasons for which belong to the politics of bygone centuries.

Though the move towards a united church began in the last century, it is only in the last few years that it has really got under way. Why? For centuries the church has



been split. Why should there suddenly be this immense show of a desire for unity? Is it a coincidence that at one and the same time, there happen to be men at the head of each church, who see unity as something more worthwhile than the independence and consequent autonomy of their own churches. It seems unlikely.

The whole phenomenon is in reality a tribute to the spread of science and education and the resulting secularisation of society. Dr Ramsey in particular must be catch-

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# Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

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ing glimpses of the red light from time to time. His assertions on television that he is a humanist illumine the fear he has of humanism. A drowning man will clutch at a straw, even if the straw has barbs on it. Secularists have little to fear from ecumenism. If it is ever achieved it will not be for decades, while the ridicule contained in the process will probably lose more support than will ever be gained from unity.

## 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

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group: Regency House, Oriental Place, Brighton: Sunday, February 2, 5.30 p.m.: "Interpretation of Dreams", Paul Rom, L.es.L., D.E.S. (Sorbonne) (Member of Adlerian Society, Author and Lecturer).

Bristol Humanist Group: 45 Fernbank Road, Redland: Friday, February 7, 7.30 p.m.: Coffee and Chat.

Cardiff Humanist Group: Glamorgan County Council Staff Club, Westgate Street, Cardiff: Wednesday, February 5, 7.45 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group: Wednesday, February 5: Debate—"That this house considers is overrated".

Humanist Teacher's Association: Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1: Saturday, February 8, 3 p.m.: "The Ultimate Hypocrisy (Religion in Schools)", Edward Blishen (Author of *Roaring Boys*).

Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, February 2, 6.30 p.m.: "Secularism and Race Relations", David Tribe (President of the National Secular Society).

London Young Humanists: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8: Sunday, February 2, 7 p.m.: "Authoritarianism", Dr Henry Dicks.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, February 2, 11 a.m.: "Computer versus Man", Dr John Lewis. Admission free. Tuesday, February 4, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion, "Pakistan Today—People and their way of Life", Razia Sirajuddin. Admission free (including refreshments), members free.

## REASON VERSUS FAITH

"SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM stands for a reverence for man and a concern for his dignity, freedom and happiness, together with the belief that the advance of the sciences and the application of scientific methods will make the human race more efficient more happy, and also more moral. And scientific humanism looks for the disappearance of religion as it holds that religion opposes the scientific spirit and diverts people from their intelligent service of their fellows by false other-worldly preoccupations." Surely this must be Professor Ayer or David Tribe, or H. J. Blackham speaking. But then why the "scientific" before "humanism"? Therein lies the clue. It was in fact the Archbishop of Canterbury preaching in the City Temple.

It was very much his own assertions that he was a humanist that led many humanists to describe themselves as secular humanists. He chooses to call secular humanism scientific humanism, which is fair enough considering that he has at last said in a church what he ought to have said long ago on television. His attempts to bamboozle the uninitiated as to the nature of humanism, by saying just before programmes ended that he was a humanist are to a small extent redressed by what he said following this adequate definition of "scientific humanism": "We must share the humanists reverence for man. We can acknowledge that bad religion can be anti-scientific and can promote the wrong kind of other-worldliness. But we challenge the sufficiency of the humanist diagnosis of man's troubles and the humanist view of the answer to them. For immense advances in science and knowledge can leave men proud and selfish and cruel, and the desperate need is not just for more knowledge and more progress (good though these things are and demanding our concern), but for the putting right of a radical estrangement between man and his creator".

So the argument against humanism is that science can leave man proud, selfish and cruel, which state of affairs can only be put right by a substantial improvement in the relationship between man and his creator. One wonders how Dr Ramsey would describe the ebb and flow of these three evils in man over the past 1900 odd years. Would he claim that the more Christian a society was the less selfishness and cruelty were to be found? I think not. Christians have continually either been persecuted or exercised persecution. In recent times the form this has taken has tended to turn from physical to mental. Though in Northern Ireland Christians have been persecuting each other physically as well as mentally this very year. Many of the appalling wars being fought in the world today are caused rather than restrained, prolonged rather than ended by the influence of one form of creator worship or another. Our own school children are mentally assaulted every day in school by Christianity.

Such an argument just will not wash. 2,000 years is too long to wait for a reduction in man's pride selfishness and cruelty, and no amount of creator worship will ever improve the way men behave. As long as man considers that he is answerable to a creator, who must be loved and worshipped, so much the less will be his capacity to love his fellow man, for the hypothetical creator always comes first, thus reducing man to a contemptible second best.

Science is said to have caused much evil, but it is not science that has been in control. Man controls science and the blame for what sciences causes lies with man. If God

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# BRADLAUGH: THE INFLUENCE OF EMERSON

NIGEL H. SINNOTT

AT THE AGE of fifteen the young Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891), at that time a Sunday school teacher, approached his vicar, the Rev. John Graham Packer, over some doubts about the compatibility of the Thirty-nine Articles with the New Testament. Packer's reaction was to expell Bradlaugh from the Sunday school and inform his father of the son's heresy. Eventually through the influence of James Savage, a 'soap box' orator at Bonner's Fields, Bradlaugh mover from Anglican Christianity to Deism, and later, probably as a result of discussions with the common-law widow of Richard Carlile (the famous freethinking and republican publisher), progressed to atheism and was to become the Gladstone of nineteenth century Freethought.

Bradlaugh lost more than his Sunday school as a result of his inquisitiveness. Packer and his father eventually gave him the choice of recanting his heterodox views or losing his job (coal merchant's cashier) and leaving home. Bradlaugh took the second choice—a remarkably brave course of action for such a young man. Why?

At the age of fourteen<sup>1</sup> Bradlaugh had read and copied out extracts from the essay on *Self-Reliance* by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), and I would suggest that this, and other of Emerson's works, may have had a significant effect upon the outlook and attitudes of Charles Bradlaugh in later years. From my admittedly superficial reading of Emerson, he would appear to have been a very liberal Protestant whose philosophy exhibits the independence, individualism, and pioneering spirit of early nineteenth century America.

Emerson<sup>2</sup> concludes the essay on *Self-Reliance* with these words: "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles". I do not think one could wholeheartedly agree with this today in the light of twentieth century psychology, but it would probably have had quite an appeal to a young idealist in the nominally very moralistic Victorian age. Significantly enough, Bradlaugh was to choose as his motto the one word, "thorough".

Elsewhere in the essay Emerson says, "Prayer that craves a particular commodity—anything less than all good—is vicious . . . prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness". In another paragraph he writes, "As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect". He complains "Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say 'I think', 'I am', but quotes some saint or sage".

Perhaps the most beautiful passage in Emerson's essay are these words: "Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind". The appeal of these words remains strangely relevant to our modern world where men and women are beset by political mass-ideologies, the mass media of press and broadcasting, and the individual tends to be lost in the cogs of technology's machinery and administration.

Further on we read, "I ought to go upright and vital, and speak the rude truth in all ways. If malice and vanity

wear the coat of philanthropy, shall that pass?" It is interesting to note that Bradlaugh's National Secular Society adopted as its motto, "We seek for truth". Another significant passage from Bradlaugh's point of view must have been the rather drastic words, "I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me".

Emerson also gave his readers a word of warning, and Bradlaugh was to bear the brunt of its truth for the rest of his life: "For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure". Later on we read, "Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood".

I should not imagine that Emerson would have approved of Charles Bradlaugh's opinions on the subject of religion, but Bradlaugh certainly qualifies for greatness by Emerson's criteria, and few men have shown such self-reliance and continuous courage as Charles Bradlaugh did in the face of the Victorian Establishment. Whoso would be a man . . .

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, J. M. (1920) *Charles Bradlaugh*, p. 3. London: Watts

<sup>2</sup> Emerson, R. W. (1904) *Essays*, pp. 25-52. London: Grant Richards.

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## PROGRESSIVE SUPERSTITION

RICHARD BLOMFIELD

THERE IS a tribe which believes that thunderstorms are caused by a big black bird flapping its wings and spilling water which it is carrying in a bucket to its young. More advanced peoples can laugh at this, yet are largely unaware of the extent to which superstition haunts the daily lives of even the most civilised. There is a general idea of pattern or plan to which our lives are destined to conform or which will at some points interfere with us. Thus Thornton Wilder wrote *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* because the bridge broke and several people died. Why were they chosen to be whisked away? Because the bridge happened to have worn out at that time. Blame the Borough Engineer. There is no reason why Tom, Dick or Don Carlos should have been hurled into the chasm any more than there is any reason why similar people should die on the roads on Bank Holiday. But the idea appealed, so the book was written and read. It is so tempting to imagine that there was something more than frayed ropes behind so dramatic exit. So tempting to believe that one's luck must turn or that it's too good to last. But anything can happen to anyone. There are no golden rules, and it is equally mistaken to suppose that we are fated to be destroyed in a nuclear war as to suppose that some Power will see to it that we are not.

Superstitions have been only partly abandoned, although new and more elaborate beliefs have replaced the older and simpler ones. Medieval people thought of animals in terms of the animal's likeness to man: they referred to beasts as being loyal, treacherous, generous, moral or immoral. Today Christians who think this approach simple-minded cannot see that their own mythology is intensely anthropomorphic.

In Marxism we see anthropomorphic superstition taken a stage further in its development. Marxism is anthropomorphic in that it tries to impose upon history and society laws with which it would like them to conform. Marxists want to believe that capitalists squeeze their profits out of work done by others, therefore they exaggerate the importance of the labour theory of value. Because of the importance to them of the class war, they must fit the whole of history into this pattern. In principle, it is the same as inventing an escape to eternal life because we fear death. Some of the remarks in Trotsky's diary show how far Marxist ideas can distort reasoned judgement.

In 1935, he wrote that France, England and Scandinavia were about to go Fascist. Parliamentary democracy in Britain is about to collapse, he says, which pleases him because it bears out what Engels forecast. Universal barbarism would follow unless Trotsky acquired enough followers to save civilisation. "The correctness of the Marxist prognosis is bound to reveal itself." Thus man creates history so that it fits into his beautiful pattern. It cannot be wondered at, since the truth is complex, difficult and boring. At least the Marxist system is an advance on some previous attempts. There was, for instance, the curious case of the American community who worked out the day on which the world was going to end, got into their nightshirts and waited on a hilltop for the coming of the Lord. It must be admitted that Trotsky, putting on his revolutionary nightshirt and waiting for the coming of the Dawn, had made a considerable advance.

It is possible that Communist leaders will make some major blunders in the future as they have in the past,

through too strict an adherence to their faith. But these leaders also adapt themselves readily to the demands of the day-to-day struggle, and Marx can be called in to justify as many different policies as the Bible. If it were not for the continual intrusion of reality into the anthropomorphic dreams of men, mankind might long ago have walked clean out of existence while following some trail that seemed to lead to his dreamland. Modern leaders may be capable of jettisoning their beliefs when these become awkward, but this was not so in the case of the tribe in the Transvaal who followed the advice of their witch doctors. These people were dependent on their cattle, which were half starved and getting less and less capable of supporting their owners. So the witch doctors came to a decision. They decided that if all the existing cattle, the emaciated, bony beasts, were slaughtered, they would be replaced miraculously by fine, new, fat animals. So the people slew the old cows and found themselves with no cattle at all. Now we can see in perspective these three examples of humanity awaiting the New Dawn: the Christians in their nightshirts, the Africans round their festive fires and the Marxists waiting to put up the barricades. If he is sufficiently fanatical, Mao Tse Tung might order war to be launched just as the witch doctors ordered the cattle to be slaughtered, also believing that a brave new world would emerge.

What is so surprising about modern superstition is that it exists side by side with a highly practical and scientific outlook. During the devastating floods in Holland in 1953 the Dutch radio continually broadcast the following consoling message: "This comes from God". It is an interesting commentary that no British government would have dared to send out such a message—we would have cynically concluded that the government were trying to excuse themselves. How much sounder is the old Dutch saying, "God made the world but the Dutch made Holland". They should have taken as much blame for the floods as they do credit for keeping them out.

An interesting belief in our part of the world tells us that "each man's loss decreases me, for I am involved in humanity" which is also expressed as "seek not to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee". This seems to assume some mysterious spiritual bond between men, whereas where there is no physical bond there is no bond at all. At the time when Dr Donne wrote his pontifical statement, there were thousands of people in the world whose existence he was unaware of and whose living, dying and head-hunting went on unaffected by and unaffected the rest of the world. The extent to which we are decreased by the losses of others is in direct ratio to the degree to which they are able to 'decrease' us, for instance, by political or economic pressure. Thus it was possible to destroy the natives of North America and Australia without suffering ill effects, but today no power can move against a backward people without becoming involved in the wider struggle for power. Of course it is right to be concerned about other people: but if a million Chinese die of starvation this year, am I necessarily 'decreased'?

This belief raises the peculiar case of Dr Schweitzer, who certainly believed that he was involved in humanity. Reverence for life was his philosophy. Yet when James Cameron returned from a visit to Dr Schweitzer some years ago he reported that Schweitzer had made a slighting



reference to Cameron's profession of journalism. "So useless" he called it. One might have thought that the main purpose of Lambarene was to draw attention to Schweitzer and his work and so inspire others with a noble ideal of service. How much good would Schweitzer have done had he set up Lambarene in secret and no one had ever heard of it? We would not have been in the least involved with the devout Doctor and his poor blacks.

The second point to be made in this connection is that looked at objectively, the saintly work of Dr Schweitzer will do less good in the long run than the routine work being done in certain laboratories in search of a better contraceptive pill. With his medical qualifications, Dr Schweitzer might have chosen to join in this quest for a weapon which may save mankind from drowning in his own numbers. But it would have looked so much less dramatic, he would not have had the feeling of saving his soul, and he has no doubt done some good, thanks to the publicity which he affects to despise. It is not that we should despise loving-kindness, for that is what makes life on earth bearable, but why does Lambarene and its lepers overshadow equally self-sacrificing work being done by humble people in our industrial suburbs? Because Africa has become a focal point in the struggle for world power, the racial issue is news, and we are all deeply involved in black humanity.

How much truth is there in the idea that means determine ends? It would seem to depend upon how long has elapsed since the means were used. Every human society has some history of violence, but the extent to which violence and crime affect the present societies varies according to the remoteness or closeness of the evil past. Eventually a stable society is established subject to the constant moral turpitudes of human nature, but no more so than other communities. The Italians had more or less forgotten about their connection with Imperial Rome before a modern adventurer reminded them of it. If this is not so, how is it that the Scandinavian countries are such models of peace and decency? Surely they rival anyone in their history of conquest and slaughter.

"The best lack all conviction while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity . . ."

Can tolerant humanism stand up to men driven by the steam of absolute beliefs? Somehow we must "learn to bear the burden of incertitude", as Sir Julian Huxley has put it, and reconcile ourselves to the fact that "the truth is seldom pure and never simple". The humanists of Scandinavia have succeeded, in terms of human happiness, to a far greater extent than the Marxist dogmatists. It is people like the late John Foster Dulles and Mr Gromyko, hurling their holy superstitions in each other's faces, who are the torch-bearers of man's march towards the precipice of no return.

## FREE SPEECH

G. L. SIMONS

FREE SPEECH is one of the Good Things! Get Free Speech! Free Speech adds Brightness! Free Speech is Good for you!

The happy bourgeois, secure in his affluence, spends a regular proportion of his time proclaiming the ultimate worth of free speech. He and all right-thinking liberals unite in a fine chorus of acclamation. All praise to free speech! It is by the existence of free speech that the civilised and democratic nation is to be recognised: it is by its absence that the dictatorship, the oligarchy, the tyranny, the totalitarian state is to be defined. All praise!

However—dare I say it?—the position is less simple than the righteous liberal believes. In this article I wish to suggest a subversive and unpopular doctrine—that free speech, as it is usually conceived, is an overrated commodity, that the people who are most vociferous in its support often have a peculiar vested interest, and that in a just and humane value structure its worth must be re-estimated.

First of all, what is the text-book definition of the value of free speech? Free speech, we are told, is a manifestation of political equality: every man is entitled to express his opinions, and influence thereby the political climate and the formulation of policy. In such a manner is democracy safeguarded and progress assured. According to this view, free speech is nice to have around—for its own sake and because it leads to desirable consequences.

In what are hopefully termed the "Western democracies" the view persists that the organs that convey information and propaganda, i.e. broadcasting and the press, should be independent of government control. Only in this way, it is stressed, can the tyranny of the State be avoided. But this notion lands us in a peculiar paradox. For in a genuine

democracy the State cannot be set apart from the people: the State, in an important sense, *is* the people. Only in a State where real democracy is absent or weak do the people contrast themselves to the State. And yet we are told both that Britain is a democracy and that the State should not be allowed to run, for example, the BBC, as they may lead to tyranny. But how can the people create a tyranny against themselves? Clearly people are contrasting themselves to the government: the classic definition of democracy as "government by the people" is repudiated. Thus in one breath Britain is a democracy, and in another is not . . .

The paradox can be summarised in the curious idea that it is *undemocratic* for the elected representatives of the people to control broadcasting and the press but *democratic* for the control to be exercised by a small, tightly-knit, plutocratic group that is answerable to no-one except the handful of large shareholders. *That the mass of the people are prepared to take up arms in defence of this contradiction, in defence of their unalienable right to be exploited and misled, is one of the surest signs of the power of broadcasting and the press.*

And so we come to the accurate definition of free speech in a capitalist society. Free speech is the right of wealthy unrepresentative individuals to own newspapers and to run broadcasting for the perpetuation of social privilege and rank injustice: and free speech is the right of the masses to parrot the wealthy individuals as instructed.

Thus, far from protecting justice and favouring progress, free speech safeguards the *status quo* and underwrites the power and privilege of the ruling classes. Some people will

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argue that not all newspapers support the *status quo*, that there are provisions for the expression of non-orthodox opinions and that because of these facilities genuine free speech, as opposed to a facade, does exist. It is true that there are a handful of radical, and sometimes revolutionary, publications. But compared with the mass press they have a tiny circulation: they have no access to capital and cannot advertise nationally—nor, of course, will other advertisers place material in their columns to aid their financing. For purely economic reasons radical publications are excluded from the real possibility of enjoying a mass circulation and of having thereby a mass political influence. And what is also very clear is that if, by some miracle, a radical journal showed signs of significantly denting the established order then the journal would be banned as seditious. So the *status quo* is protected first by economic power and secondly by the power of the law and the police.

In general the law does not need to be invoked. The commercial climate is such that a persistent torrent of propaganda effectively inhibits any radical voice. Apart from the deliberate political comment in the press and in broadcasting there are a thousand ways in which the desirability of the *status quo* is reinforced in people's minds: television programmes telling us how to invest our money to profit; "objective" political discussions between "both" sides of industry, with people such as Woodcock, Robens and Aubrey Jones (Establishment figures all); news items highlighting the Soviet persecution of intellectuals (which is true) and never the spectacular development of the Soviet social services (also true); persistent commercial advertising informing us wherever we turn that free enterprise exists solely for our health, nourishment, happiness and comfort; regular advertising for royalty—royal societies for this and that, royal heads on stamps, banknotes and coins (what Hedley's or ICI would give for a place on every banknote!); the predictable efforts of employers to keep "politics" out of industrial disputes (note the odium attached to strikers who act through *political* motives); and the complete union of Tory and Labour leaders on the subjects of political violence, student rebels, the value of free enterprise, the worth of the monarchy, the evil Chinese, the well-intentioned Americans, etc., etc. The list could easily be extended.

It is worth noting also the widespread attitudes that have been cultivated towards the speakers at Hyde Park corner. The speakers are almost universally regarded as cranks and misfits. People go along "for a giggle" to see the soapbox orators. Note how important the *soapbox* is to the image of the dissident public speaker—not a banana box or vegetable box, but in particular a soapbox. So specifically has the comical image of the enthusiastic non-conformist been created!

Thus free speech is conducted by three social groups: the powerful economic elite, always concerned with its vested interest; the unthinking conditioned mass of the people, ready to die to protect the vested interest of the elite; and the dissident few, often politically articulate but always effectively stifled and represented as disreputable or ridiculous. In a well-run capitalist state free speech does not aid progress but cements the *status quo*. The masses are given an illusion of democracy, but they are manipulated into supporting policies against their own interest. Free speech, as represented in modern capitalist society, is thus a confidence trick. It gives any ignorant fool the right to shoot off his mouth in the name of democracy; it gives the conditioned majority the power to swamp the careful analyses of the intelligent radical; it preserves the form of

capitalist society, with all its stupidities, injustices and contradictions.

And the well-meaning liberal estimates too highly the value of free speech even when it is defined in a text-book fashion. To the liberal, India is preferable to China because India allows "free speech". The free speech it allows is the sort we have considered. That China is vastly superior to India in its provisions for mass education, health and physical nourishment is of little concern to the bourgeois liberal. Even though there is mass starvation in India, even though its children live in the gutters or are sold into prostitution, even though the maharajahs still get state grants and free electricity for their palaces, even though the landlords exploit cruelly and the capitalists hoard food to keep the price up—even though these things are so in India, and not in China, India has a "just" social system and China has not. For India allows "free speech".

That such absurd doctrines can be believed widely is some indication of the power of capitalist propaganda. Perhaps *genuine* free speech is worth having—and what *this* is deserves another article. But the free speech praised in the British press, on British broadcasting, and on the lips of the superficial British liberal is a hoax, a sham, and a front for injustice.

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controls man then the blame for what man does with science lies with God. But then we are told that God gave man free will. To this there is no answer since, as with the existence of God, there is no initial proof. It is just another bland assertion.

Science and man are realities. Man rules science with reason. As yet his reason does not reign supreme. Wars, hostility and selfishness ensue. But reason would never endorse a war against reason. It is where the element of unreason is manifested that even a supremely reasonable power could be induced to fight. Every iota of unreason is a step away from an end to pride, selfishness and cruelty. It cannot be denied that worshipping a God is something which lacks reason. There is no proof. A man, who worships a creator is guided by faith, which by definition is not reason. This is why a humanist "holds that religion opposes the scientific spirit and diverts people from their intelligent service of their fellows by false other-worldly preoccupations".



## BOOK REVIEW

G.N.D.

THE EVASIVE PEACE by John H. Davis, 113 pp. (John Murray, 25s).

DR JOHN H. DAVIS was born in America in 1904. He was Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) for many years and is therefore eminently qualified to write on the Israel-Arab problem. In the first 52 pages he gives the reader the essential historical details leading up to and ending with the June 1967 war. Two excellent maps show the original area allotted to the Jewish state in the UNO partition plan and the area occupied by Israel in 1948 and 1967.

In view of his position as Chief of UNRWA, his chapter on the Palestine Refugee Problem must be regarded as highly authoritative. He refutes the stories spread by partisans of Israel that the Arabs left at the behest of the Arab Governments and the Arab Radios. He ascribes the flight of the Arabs to panic and fear which became a stampede after the massacre of 254 Arab men, women and children at Deir Jassin. In support of this he quotes Menachem Beigin the commander of the Jewish terrorist organisation, Irgun. What is more (and new), is that he claims that "the extent to which the refugees were savagely driven out by the Israelis as part of a deliberate master-plan has been insufficiently recognised". The motive for such a plan, he proves by stating one significant fact, namely that the Partition Plan of the UNO had left the Jewish state with 495,000 Arabs as compared with 498,000 Jews. The Zionist Leader Yigal Allon is quoted from a translation from his Hebrew writings, to support the existence of such a plan. Dr Davis also counters the commonly held belief that the refugees have been deliberately kept unsettled, by pointing out that about 20 per cent of the working force which had some skills found jobs almost immediately in 1948. But the remaining, about 70 per cent, being farmers and farm-workers in an area where there is a large surplus of people in rural areas, could not be so absorbed. Even more tragic is the fact, that their sons who would normally learn farming by working with their fathers, have now no such opportunity. Despite these handicaps great efforts have been made by Arab governments and the UN Agency to provide education to refugee youth and the author gives a brief account of the achievements.

In another chapter the author analyses the relationship between the state of Israel and the World Zionist Organisation—he characterises it as a condominium—and this is of particular interest to secularists who would reject the concept of a nationality based on religion, as a dangerous and disruptive concept.

After taking stock of the situation, the author analyses the possibilities of the future. His long term solution envisages a dezionised Israel, living as a conventional state, willing to do justice to the Arabs and living at peace with its neighbours. It is interesting that these conclusions are somewhat similar to those of Uri Avnery, the one progressive member of the Israeli Knesset who has not been consumed by the new disease of anti-Arabism.

## LETTERS

### Immigration

THE LETTERS from Miss Lestor and Mr Bidwell, both Parliamentary colleagues, in your issues dated January 11 and 18 make me despair of ever being able to conduct a reasoned, humane discussion about the problems of immigration. If Members of Parliament cannot read and understand speeches correctly reported in *Hansard*, how on earth can we expect ever to educate the mass of the people who must rely on *intelligent* discussion of differing points of view?

For them both to talk of erecting walls to keep immigrants out of anywhere is utter nonsense and they know it. To imply that *voluntary dispersal*—which is what I propose—is impossible, is also nonsense. It has never been tried, and it should be tried. If jobs and decent homes are found in new towns, and in areas with less overcrowding and concentration of immigrant families than towns like Wolverhampton, Southall, Bradford and the rest, the evils of multi-occupation would be reduced, there would not be hundreds of children of school age out of school because there was no room for them (and the current figure in Wolverhampton is now 310 immigrant children of school age, all recent arrivals,

who cannot get into school—some of them of secondary age who have very little English) and the standard of living of *all* immigrant families in the town would be improved. What is more, Wolverhampton immigrant families would welcome such an opportunity to get a decent home—I know, because I have discussed my ideas with their leaders! And they support the phasing of entry of dependents too because they see that this will improve the living standards of those who are here and of those who will come in the future. If we can agree on a figure to be admitted annually with work vouchers, why on earth cannot we do the same with dependents? It is nonsense for Mr Bidwell to say this would "keep families apart". Of course it wouldn't! They may have to wait longer before they could come, but if they could come to a better home and if their children could start school as soon as they got here, they would be far better off.

Miss Lestor's naive remarks that many coloured immigrants come here with "a particular profession or skill" and are "not allocated a particular job" is a prime example of the woolly-minded refusal to face all the facts that has bedevilled Labour Party thinking about immigration for the past decade and more. Presumably she means the "B" voucher immigrants—those with special training and skill who are at present still allowed to come here looking for jobs. These include doctors, teachers and engineers. As a Socialist, I am horrified that an advanced, industrial, wealthy country like Britain still creams off people from poor, under-developed countries in whose education a large proportion of their national wealth has been invested. That 60 per cent of our junior hospital doctors are immigrants is an indictment of successive governments and the medical profession alike; that some of their engineers and teachers, unable to get the jobs they hoped for, are now working here on the buses and delivering the mail is a scandal. They would be far better employed working in their own countries, helping to raise the standard of living of their own people. As I said in my speech, we should be training far more of their students for first degrees or their equivalent, equipping them to return home and apply the training they have received here—this would be a far more valuable contribution to the needs of India, Pakistan and the West Indies than the present policy. That is why I say the "B" voucher system should be discontinued. Any reduction either of "A" or "B" vouchers would also reduce the numbers of families coming later and if a policy of voluntary dispersal is to be carried out, as I suggested, it would clearly be illogical to continue to issue "A" vouchers for industry in the towns we want to relieve!

What is needed now is a massive programme of house building, a more determined effort to reach the 500,000 houses a year that we fought the general election on, so that all our families, white and coloured, living in disgusting conditions, may be rehoused. We need to spend far more on building the social centres that are needed, especially for young adolescent immigrants who are finding difficulty in getting jobs when they leave school and we need far more social workers to work with the immigrant families and to help them to settle down here. It is high time industry played its part in contributing to the social care of the families it brings here. So far, industry has dodged this responsibility.

I have just spent some time in Holland studying the planning, care and investment they put into their repatriation programme after the war and I have returned even more convinced that the ideas I put forward in the House after a good deal of thought and after many discussions with teachers, immigrants, officers of my local authority and Parliamentary colleagues facing similar problems, are correct. It is not too late to improve the situation here, providing the woolly-minded do-gooders who never put forward any practical ideas at all and who are as dangerous in the long run as the Powellites, do not oppose every reasonable suggestion for relieving the problems caused by years of neglect.

RENEE SHORT, MP, Wolverhampton North East.

### That word again!

LILIAN MIDDLETON (FREETHINKER, January 4) is not correct in saying that "fuck" and "sexual intercourse" mean "exactly the same thing". The first term refers to a certain form of male action only, while the second covers various forms of action between male and female: some of these are mentioned in the review by G. L. Simons in the same issue of the FREETHINKER.

I have a theory that this short, single, unique, direct meaning of the four-letter word and its application to males only is one of the reasons why it is considered (especially by females) as indecent. It reflects man's activity and woman's passivity whereas the term sexual intercourse connotes a free, equal relationship between the sexes.

J. W. NIXON, Geneva.



### More evidence of a horrifying heaven

NOT ONLY does the Roman Catholic Church bless the bull-torturing team in the bullring chapel before the bullfight (wrongly named for this is no fight but a ritual slaughter) but I understand that the mother of Christ is called by bullfight enthusiasts "Madonna of the Bullring". And such blasphemy goes unpunished by the Vatican.

But this is not the only cruelty blessed by priests. In one area of France it is the custom for those about to enjoy a deer hunt to make a special trip to church to take the sacraments!

Christ taught love. Christian religion, what evils are perpetrated in your name!  
GWENDOLEN BARTER.

### Deviation and Dogma

"THE VIEWS expressed by the contributors to FREETHINKER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board."

Since you have now seen fit to point out the possibility of deviation (dare I say heresy) entering the columns of the paper, I now look forward to you, with corporate voice (i.e. an unsigned article), attempting to lay down dogma.  
BRIAN KHAN.

### Two Religions

WITH REGARD to "The Failure of Two Great World Religions" by Denis Cobell (FREETHINKER, January 18), the word "failure" is correctly applicable to religions that have been striving for thousands of years to elevate human nature to an unattainable and "supernatural" level of being. But "religion" and "failure" are words totally inapplicable to the political, military, social and other secular activities that go to the making of Russian and World Communism. We may disagree with one or any form of Communism, but it is surely premature to talk of the "failure" of Communism. World religions take centuries to evolve, and centuries more to decline and fall. But Communism is something very different. It is one side of a world conflict still very active. For some it is the Supreme Hope; for others it is the Supreme Danger. But even the authority of Our Lord Bertrand Russell cannot persuade me that Communism should be placed on the same level as "Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity or Islam".

PETER CROMMELIN.

### Space

WITH REGARD to your remarks on Space Travel, I also was one who deplored the money spent, when it was so urgently needed for so many more urgent things. Then I realised that if this money was not used for space travel it was still very unlikely that it would be used for the world's benefit. It is the same in wartime, whatever is needed is found somehow, whatever it costs. In peace time, everything must bring in a profit.  
LILIAN MIDDLETON.

### Abortion Law

I REFER to your leading article in the FREETHINKER, dated January 11, on Abortion Law. The article appears to condemn medical practitioners with conscientious objections to performing abortions as "required by the law".

The Abortion Law does not "require" anything, but is permissive, as pointed out by its advocates while it was going through Parliament.

Also, what difference is there between a doctor who refuses to perform abortions for conscientious reasons, and a school teacher who refuses to perform Religious Instruction for conscientious reasons? I presume you would support the rights of the teacher. Why not the doctor?

To reply that one law is just, while the other is unjust, is no defence, as such judgments are inevitably a matter of personal opinion.

To overstate one's case only makes it easier for anti-freethought forces to attack it. In any case, the thinking in the article does not appear very "free", but as dogmatic and prejudiced as much emanating from the other side.  
GEORGE D. RODGER.

### Papal popsong?

ALL HAIL to Pope Simons I and his Yuletide Encyclical, "Humani Victi"!

The absurd puerility of the theme; the monumental, asinine arrogance of the precepts; and the image evoked by the delightful meandering style—that of doddering fumbling self-interest and lunacy—make it absolutely indistinguishable from the original.

A disc recording should now be made of "Humani Victi", delivered in a quavering, rollicky singsong. It will outpop the pops.

R. READER.

I TAKE IT that F. H. Snow's defence of Enoch Powell was intended as a joke?

Recognising your right to print it, I would nevertheless question your taste in doing so.  
MICHAEL LINES.

### Enoch

MR. G. L. SIMONS' outburst on the subject of my 'Enoch' article causes me to ask what Freethought signifies. Whatever my ideas about his views I would not descend to the terms he uses about myself and my thinking on the immigration question. They were certainly not in accordance with the cool thought one expects from secularists. Christians of the unvirulent type will form an unjust opinion of the bulk of freethinkers, should his language come to their notice. I cannot see our cause favourably impressing unbiased onlookers through its medium.

Mr Powell's speeches have not been racially expressed, in my careful view. They have dwelt on the injustice of ignoring the long-standing appalling conditions of many of our own people, in regard to housing and employment, in trying to be fair to our dusky friends. As for my own statements, Britain extended a cordiality towards coloured immigrants exceeding that extended to whites. Our national hearth, by which I meant the State's, as Mr Simons' should have seen, was especially warm for coloureds, in obligation to former colonists. Our public could not be expected to take the same attitude, in view of the worsening of their conditions by an invading populace? Dire consequences, I maintain, are bound to eventuate from the introduction of a hard-breeding community in our overcrowded land.

Mr Simons says he would unhesitatingly prosecute Mr Powell, and, by inference, myself, were I similarly influential. I belong, he asserts, to the insensitive and ignorant type of person represented by Vorster, and deliver myself of 'ill-informed and squalid statements'. "I seriously suggest," he says, "that he do some reading and thinking before attempting another offering". I've never been so slated and rated. The FREETHINKER should have discovered my ignorance long ago.

Had Mr Simons read my article 'This Freedom', published under David Tribe's editorship, and in support of Rhodesia's dark majority, he couldn't have called me racist.

It is he, I suggest, who should do some reading and thinking.

F. H. SNOW.

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