

# Freethinker

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## PUBLICITY: RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR

IN A lengthy article published in *The Times* of February 19 and entitled "Problems of Publicity for the Church", Cardinal Heenan went a long way towards resolving the quarrel he has been having with that paper. The trouble began last September when *The Times* published the working papers of a private Catholic meeting. This and subsequent articles in *The Times* about his church provoked the Cardinal to express the view in a public speech that *The Times* was biased against Catholics. However, in the article mentioned above he retracts this view and indeed deserves our admiration for his honesty—a quality lacking in politics where unfortunately it would be far more valuable. One is also prompted to extend the wish that Cardinal Heenan will one day become Pope. His confessed lack of infallibility could not but begin a new era.

Heenan does not however, fully accept the line taken by many journalists that they have a right and sometimes a duty to publish any information that comes into their hands as long as it was not obtained by trickery. The Cardinal calls this "a tenable but not a palpably valid principle". One would not contest that journalists have a moral duty to consider the effects on the general public of their publishing confidential information. However, their right to do so must surely remain beyond question. For the government, the churches, and the innumerable pressure groups, including the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society to be in a position where only the official word was made public would surely be an irretractable step towards the institutionalised bureaucracy that most Britons are trying to avoid. The majority of members of a given group are often considered wrong by the country at large. In such cases it is essential for the public to know that they have allies inside the group in question. And if, as in the case which initially angered Cardinal Heenan, a member of a group considers it expedient to communicate information which is held by the group as a whole to be confidential, it is not for the editor to consider the informant's motives but to consider the interests of his readership as a whole.

The Cardinal began his article by quoting the findings of Alistair Cooke's "one man pole of the press" which listed the subjects which were most popular with newspaper readers in the United States: "sex, the weather, money, women's fashions, sport, disasters, disease, politics, sex, crime, marijuana, sex, good works". The Cardinal remarks of this list, "It is not strange that sex tops the list and that its pretty head constantly reappears. What seems odd is that religion is not listed at all". There is probably a greater link between his two sentences than the Cardinal realises. Further on in his article he remarks how religion seems only to appear in the popular press when there is a row, a riot or a scandal. This will remain the case as long as religion is looked upon as something morally puritanical, and as the most backward in this sense the Roman Catholic church suffers most. Of course a priest who throws up his career to get married is newsworthy. The public see his celibacy as something rather quaint. For him to give up his priesthood which the public imagine he took after some other-worldly revelation in order to cease being celibate amazes and thus will interest them time and again. The Dutch priest who hopes to marry and remain a priest, was

given space in the quality press as well as the popular press, because his attitude is yet another sign of the need for the Catholic church to modernise itself or die a slow death. As long as the Pope can stand between a man, the



woman he loves and his career, religion can never be accorded the serious attention, which Cardinal Heenan wants. The celibate Catholic priest will continue to be considered some sort of freak or only half a man.

It is of course impossible for the church of Rome ever to bring itself in line with the life of the average man and thus protect itself from the type of publicity it receives at the moment. To do so would involve recanting so much dogma that the Roman church would no longer be a church. In this light it is interesting to reflect that the National Secular Society and the British Humanist Association receive only the serious press attention that Heenan vainly wishes for his church—publicity of their campaigns and aims for reform. And the press know what their readers want to read about.



# Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

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

## SUNDAY ENTERTAINMENTS

THOSE READERS who do not take the *Sunday Times* will be pleased to hear that last Sunday that paper published a letter organised by the National Secular Society in support of John Parker's Sunday Entertainments Bill, which comes up for its second reading on February 28. The signatories to the letter were Alfie Bass, Edward Bond, Brigid Brophy, William Gaskell, Peter Hall, William Hamling MP, Joan Lester MP, George Melly, David Mercer, Warren Mitchell, John Mortimer, Lord Raglan, Renee Short MP, David Tribe, Nicol Williamson, Lord Willis and Baroness Wootton. The letter put the case for the bill on much the same lines as the bill's sponsor put it himself in a recent issue of the *FREETHINKER*, and called upon the *Sunday Times*' readers to respond by writing to their MPs. The Sabbatarian lobby

## COMING EVENTS

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, March 2, 5.30 p.m.: "Ethics and Morals", Mrs Avil Fox.

Bristol Humanist Group: Room 3, Colston House, Colston Street: Sunday, March 2, 7.30 p.m.: "Label-less Man", R. Billington, MA, BD, Dip. Theol.

Cardiff Humanist Group: Glamorgan County Council Staff Club, Westgate Street, Cardiff: Wednesday, March 5, 7.45 p.m.: "Drug Addiction", Roy Hunt (Pharmacist and Chairman of Cardiff Humanist Group).

Chelmsford Humanist Group: Lecture Room, Library, Civic Centre, Chelmsford: Tuesday, March 4, 7.30 p.m.: "Anarchism IS Humanism", Philip Sanson (Co-editor of *Freedom*).

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group: 10 Denewood Close, Barnet: Saturday, March 1, 8 p.m.: Annual General Meeting to be followed at 9.15 p.m. by Wine and Cheese Party. 4s members—6s non-members.

Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, March 2, 6.30 p.m.: 88th Anniversary Meeting, "Freethought Yesterday and Today", Richard Clements, OBE.

London Young Humanists: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8: Sunday, March 2, 7 p.m.: Dr David Kerr, MP.

Friends' Meeting House, Rainsford, Chelmsford: Thursday, March 6, 7.45 p.m.: George Allen speaks to the Quakers on Humanism.

New paintings by Oswald Blakeston at the BH Corner Gallery, 34 Cathedral Place, London, EC4 (opposite St Paul's Cathedral), March 3 until March 17. Monday-Friday 10.30 a.m.—6 p.m.: Saturday 10.30 a.m.—1 p.m.

has naturally been very active during the past few weeks. This impressive show of support for Mr Parker lends yet more weight to the need for the unjust aims of the Sabbatarians to be thwarted. The type of filibuster which the last Sunday Entertainments Bill met with and which held up the Abortion Bill is both a sorry reflection on our Parliamentary procedure and an unethical obstruction to progress.

## THE LORDS

A SPEECH of interest more for its humour than significance was made by Mr Reginald Paget, Labour MP for Northampton during the Commons debate on Lords reform on February 19: "Neutral peers should be appointed by a panel consisting of the Moderator of the Free Church Council, the President of the Secular Society, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, the secretary of the Communist party, the senior steward of the Jockey Club, the secretary of the TUC, the President of the Masters of Foxhounds Association, the President of the League against Cruel Sports, and perhaps the Chief Rabbi. A condition should be that all appointments were unanimous".

Mr Paget's mad hatter's tea party is a good measure of the mess into which the government has got itself with the bill. It seems extremely likely that they will either have to drop the bill or face a defeat, due to the opposition of many Labour back-benchers and the mounting opposition of the Conservative front-bench to the guillotine measure which seems to be inevitable if there is to be a division on the bill. In the face of this one hopes the government will take the advice proffered in the Commons on February 20 by Mr. Stanley Orme, Labour MP for Salford West: "We should drop the Bill and produce a measure to restrict the delaying powers of the House of Lords and abolish the hereditary principle. If the Government did this they would unify the party". It is of great importance that the excessive powers of the Lords be curtailed as soon as possible. Though government action on Mr Orme's suggestion would effect this and is therefore desirable, the matter must also be taken up again in the next session, when the issue of the constitution and power of the reformed Lords must be re-examined, in order to ensure that the Commons, and therefore the government and the prime minister do not become over-powerful.

## KINGSLEY MARTIN

THE DEATH of Kingsley Martin in Cairo last week will be deeply regretted by all those with radical tendencies in any direction. The importance of his contribution to the political left and his distinguished career have been admirably reported in the papers over the last few days. In addition to this *Freethinkers* will be glad to be reminded of his staunch humanism. He supported Secularists on various issues. He sent a message of support to the National Secular Society's 'Secular Education Month' in November 1964. Last August he made a most witty and hard-hitting speech at the NSS Protest Meeting against the Pope's encyclical. His message to the National Secular Society on the occasion of the society's centenary in 1966 fittingly commended a quality for which the writer himself will no doubt be remembered: "In this irrational world it is a pleasure to hear that the National Secular Society has completed a century of trying to make people think".



# THE GLORIOUS TRINITY

F. H. SNOW

THE ASTRONAUTS are down, honour has been done to the intrepid stellar adventurers, American space prestige has been enhanced. A modern miracle has been achieved, the Russians passed in the sky race, and the United States of God's Own Country now plan to place a man or men on the moon within months of this astounding feat of sending three humans rocketing round the orb and returning safely to earth.

Religious folks, including the heroes themselves, appear assured of God's acquiescence in their ambitions regarding his universe. They are to go ahead with schemes mighty and marvellous for finding out what, a few centuries ago, Christendom considered he didn't want them to inquire into, and indeed, punished through its agency, by sword, fire and torture, overt curiosity about it, and outspoken opinions on that matter.

Only the religious do not allude to those unhappy times in terms save those of eulogy of an Age of Faith, when the Church—none other than the Roman—was the sole and self-appointed arbiter of Christian doctrine, and saw to it that no scientific theorising was allowed to disturb the divine privacy of the heavens.

With all that safely tucked away in the mists of the past, Christian America—and Christian Britain—could enjoy the thought of man's Pagan-named Apollo, containing three brave men from the West, shooting towards the moon whilst another projectile shot, in fancy, towards Bethlehem, heralding (also in fancy), the birth, two thousand years ago or thereabout, he who was to be the Saviour of mankind, and bringing three Wise Men from the East to worship at his crib. Of the Almighty's approval of the act commemorating his son's nativity, no doubt is possible, but what is his mind about man's invasion of the ball he, according to Genesis, installed to light our globe of nights? And, *ipso facto*, of humanity's unsaintly wish to contact and explore other luminants in his celestial realm?

Should it not have justly offended him that a man-made, man-inhabited capsule was sent whizzing on the secular errand of moon-ringing on the anniversary of his Son's birth? How he would have requited such a desecration in Yahweh days! Sodom and Gomorrah would have been repeated for the castigation of the rocket-shooters; the wrath of Jehovah would have visited them, to the destruction of themselves and their planet. The insult of being thanked for the astronaut's safe return would not have been made, if God was what he had been.

Was he so different, of old? He wasn't. His voice was not heard any more than it is now heard. He didn't send down fire and brimstone on the Sodomites, instigate the slaughter of the Children of Israel's adversaries, hold back the Red Sea for Moses, perform any of the other fantastic, barbarous or miraculous deeds the Bible imputes to him, in the guise of holy, righteous acts. He was the same mute, inter non-entity that all history, seen through Reason's eyes, shows him to have been. Were he a reality, he would have evidenced the power and character he permitted Old Testament scribes to invest him with, and gnashed his holy teeth at those of his creatures who dared use the inventive faculties with which he had endowed them, to invade his preserves.

Mark that a unitive resentment of the Apollo's orbiting of his moon would be unreasonable in a deity who was

and is no more communicative than Buddha, and allows believers to take his muteness as indicating acquiescence in the cosmological projects of mortals. He had no cause for dudgeon because they didn't wonder whether those projects would displease him. What wonder if "His chariots of wrath, the deep thunder clouds" signify to progressive Christians no more than storm harbingers? His people were so used to deciding his Will for him that they never asked his opinion, knowing that they wouldn't get it. In fact, they told God what to do. "Bless this and that; grant this and that" they enjoined him, through the medium of prayer. They blessed this and that for him, including the space-rocket venture, and got the astronauts safely back by their devout instructions.

Mark that projectors of future and still bolder stellar enterprises do not crave the boon of divinity's knowledge as to how humans may reach higher stars than Moon, Mars and Venus, assuming, with reason, that if they fail to invent the means, Heaven will fail to vouchsafe it. They don't even know if God wants them to know, which should be their first consideration. They don't conceive that they might meddle so much with his astral handiwork that he'll take umbrage. We could tell them, but they'd be shocked at the suggestion that he's as incapable as their acts imply, of wanting anything, approving or resenting anything, and displaying the faintest interest in things earthly or heavenly.

It affronts intelligence that the heroic occupants of Apollo, hurtling at incredible speed towards, and round and round the moon, had any sustaining conviction of their Lord's great might, or gave it a serious thought. Rather, if cogitation on things irrelevant to their plight in that potential tomb were possible, would the author of the cosmos assume the least significance, indoctrinated though the fearless trio were in his credal actuality and power. What thought, other than that concerning the operation of their mechanical monster, engaged them, other than of their wives and children, was surely of the marvellous feat for America and science that would be the result of a successful end of their ordeal, with the promise of still greater spatial accomplishments.

A greater achievement than that of encircling the moon or setting foot on its cruel and useless crust, would be that of dissipating the abysmal ignorance and infantile credulity, where the inept deity called God is concerned, of the teeming population of the land of millionaires, nuclear rockets, napalm, arrogant ambition and world power policy.

The Three in One beyond the farthest star, for all their ostensible worship by a vast number of earth's inhabitants, are in danger of eclipse by a new and dynamic god that spews rockets to the heavens and elevates a trio of intrepid astronauts to the status of a glorious trinity.

## FREETHINKER FUND

THE FREETHINKER is the only weekly Secularist-Humanist paper in the country. It is still only 6d. How much do YOU care how many people it reaches? To advertise we need money, and our expenses are ever-increasing. Whose copy are you reading now? Have you got a subscription? Couldn't you contribute something to the Fighting Fund, say 6d or 6s or £6 or £60? How much do you really care about Freethought and helping other people to hear about it? Do, please, help if you can. The FREETHINKER, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1



# THE FAITH OF THE HUMANIST

ENID ROB

IN THE BBC series *An Inquiry into Humanism* the playwright, Ted Willis, in answering Kenneth Harris's question, "What Humanism means for you" replied that it was "a faith by which it is possible to live . . . this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and it is our job to improve it . . ."

I agree with Lord Willis's view. If the humanist tries to live in accordance with the highest ideals he can realistically manage in his situation, his faith should be as satisfactory as any religion. But humanism—putting man at the centre, striving towards the promotion of human happiness and the quality and dignity of human life—implies more than a rejection of religion. It implies support for causes which give some promise of helping to make the world a better place in some particular or other—or at least in preventing it from getting any worse.

Professor A. J. Ayer, President of the British Humanist Association, thinks the constructive side of humanism should be stressed. "All I have been saying implies an attack on privilege and on the situation where only a few people can live worth-while lives. And in as much as the left wing is against this [inequality] and also more likely to do something about it, I should expect a Humanist to be a man of the left."

It seems to me also that the humanist must be in favour of human rights, of social justice, of equality of opportunity and fair shares for all, whatever the complexity of political and international affairs may be and however difficult it may be to know what to do in practice.

Kenneth Harris, the interviewer in the BBC series, is of the opinion that "being a humanist is a thing few people are capable of. It requires . . . maturity of personality and a great deal of study". This seems to be saying that to be a humanist is more difficult than to be a religionist, that one lacking in religious faith needs more character than a conventional believer. Perhaps it is true at present though it need not necessarily be so. Having no invisible means of support one needs the support of other people—and failing them, one needs to be able to stand alone. But there are in the movement housewives, lacking the advantages of an advanced education, well-adjusted and mature, who could put their more intellectual sisters to shame.

Nevertheless, if moral and social education were to be given in schools instead of religious instruction, more people would automatically become humanist. Some Christians have contended that humanism not only banishes God, it also banishes man. This is not so. For the humanist, man is at the centre of things, not animals and not material things.

Humanism must not make the Christian mistake of failing to get its priorities right. It must try to assess what is important and what unimportant or what more important and what less important in the world in which we live. Humanism at least does not need continually to look over its shoulder to ask: how does this square with "God's commandment"? i.e. with the view of some Jewish prophet or early Christian living centuries ago in a small middle eastern country in an under-populated world? It can ask: is this good or bad, better or worse in the conditions we live in today? Is it relevant *now*?

Someone has said: For evil to flourish it is only necessary for good people to do nothing. What is constructively, positively good is more important—and more difficult of achievement—than what is negatively not bad. Religion is

always weighted in favour of "Thou shalt not" rather than "Thou shalt" and "How?"; in favour of a superior-inferior relationship rather than one on terms of equality. It ignores the importance of self-respect, the feelings of the victim of the do-gooder. It fails to realise that if good is done, it is a co-operative venture in which each takes part and that each contributes to the success of the undertaking. The victim is traditionally expected to feel gratitude towards the rescuer—he is under a constant feeling of obligation, of owing a debt. But people prefer to be able to give as good as they get and not to be in a position where this is impossible.

They also need to be accepted as they are. This adds to their confidence and happiness and creates the conditions which allow them to develop. Not to be accepted is to be sent deeper into the mire.

Of course, in practice temporary help may be needed to create the conditions where self-respect is possible which is why the Edinburgh Humanist Group founded a Youth Home to provide a family background for some deprived boys; why the Humanist movement supports the Indian Radical Humanists in their training scheme in some villages in Bihar; and why individual humanists often support Oxfam.

Christianity is concerned with the salvation of souls and the Kingdom of Heaven, with private virtue. But it has to be recognised that private virtue in people favourably placed can and does co-exist with indifference or hostility or even ineffective sympathy to those in unfavourable or intolerable conditions. It is public virtue that is needed to save civilised human values. Private virtue has a very powerful effect on the personal happiness of our closest intimates. But the virtue and happiness of the fortunate few do nothing to lessen the intolerable conditions of the unfortunate many. If mankind is to solve his problems, men must become more rational or alternatively be indoctrinated with the values likely to lead to the survival of civilisation. The "haves" must recognise that "fair shares for all" is a necessity if the "have-nots" are not ultimately to rise up and destroy them. Everyone with a good standard of living needs to make financial sacrifices in the interests of a more equitable distribution of the good things of life.

What is important today it seems to me are (1) attitude to money; (2) attitude to war; (3) attitude to population problems; (4) to hunger and disease, cruelty and suffering; (5) to race and class and national differences; (6) to freedom of thought and speech.

What can the ordinary person do in these connections? Virtually nothing except support such organisations as are trying to do something about individual problems such as Oxfam, or Anesty International which is concerned with the human rights of prisoners of conscience who have not advocated violence.

He can write to his MP, to newspapers, journals trying to get the Government to support adequately the United Nations organisations dealing with food and health and education problems in the under-developed countries and to see that those in power do not misuse the help given. But it takes many voices to alter the climate of opinion. And the individual has time for only a little.

How can one express disapproval of the actions of other governments? By sanctions? Refusing to trade or have cultural relations with them? Refusing to eat South African oranges? Burning yourself to death in protest against the



Vietnam war as some Americans have done? Cancelling a Polish trade exhibition as Glasgow virtually did? Refusing to listen to Soviet musicians at the Edinburgh Festival? Distributing leaflets in Moscow or Budapest expressing disapproval of the invasion of Czechoslovakia? Do these things do any good? Does one say: Humanism and trade don't mix? Humanism and politics don't mix? Or does one have the Christian dichotomy: Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's? Does one retire to Fort Augustus to watch the rain and look for the Loch Ness monster?

The number of countries whose Governments maltreat their political opponents is terrifyingly large. What does one give priority to? Space research? The relief of poverty? Birth control? The prevention of famine? Bigger and better bombs, biological and chemical warfare? These are the problems relevant today not whether you go to church on Sundays or say your prayers. Of course, in sheer despair at the immensity of the problems and one's personal impotence one returns to the pursuit of private virtue in defence of sanity. As Bertrand Russell says, "If the contemplation of the world is too painful, the wise man will contemplate something else". In any case, in choosing what to do with one's time and energy one inevitably sacrifices somebody or something.

## FROM FOREIGN PAPERS

OTTO  
WOLFGANG

IN SEPTEMBER 1965 a Congress of the World Union of National Socialism (WUNS) met in a private house in Southend; on this occasion a German, Friedrich Lang, suggested "something ought to be done about this man, Simon Wiesenthal, whose Documentation Centre in Vienna has been foremost in running to earth Nazi criminals like Eichmann, Verbelen, Franz Stangl (former commandant of Treblinka Concentration camp) and others. No wonder, the surviving Nazis put a prize of 120,000 dollars on Wiesenthal's head.

*Le Droit de Vivre*, the French magazine which claims to be the "oldest anti-racialist paper of the world", had an exclusive interview with Wiesenthal (who himself had been held in several concentration camps and finally left behind for dead) on the occasion of a French edition of his book *The Murderers are Amongst Us* in which he tells of his efforts to track down Martin Bormann, Dr Joseph Mengele and E. Rajakovitch; the latter, after being sentenced in 1965 in Vienna to two and a half years imprisonment was soon after tacitly released. He had enriched himself on Jewish money and, as Erico Raja, had started in Milan an Export and Import business specialising in commerce with the Soviet Union and the Eastern People's Republics. In the course of this interview, Wiesenthal affirmed:

One may say that today, apart from former Nazis who are working with the Secret Services of the 'People's Democracies', there are no important Nazi criminals in the East. The survivors, however, go out of their way in denouncing war criminals in the West; for evidently political reasons, they take care not to mention those installed in Egypt and Syria of whom I have already published a list last June with details which cannot be contested. *Israel and the Vatican*. As is well known, the Vatican Council's Declaration on the Jews had to be watered down to please the Arabs; talking of this ambiguous document, Abbe Laurentin—according to *Le Monde* on June 14—wrote: "It is absurd to talk of *deicide* for a God cannot be killed." He added that Mary was referred to as *theotokos*—she who bore God and Christ therefore had to be

The humanist considers that man *can* solve his problems. But certainly the state of the world today holds out little hope that man *will* in fact solve his problems. In Yeat's words "The best lack all conviction And the worst are full of passionate intensity".

The world is divided into "haves" and "have-nots", the slayers and the slain, with millions of human beings living at almost the level of the beasts of the field, dying prematurely of starvation or disease or denied—at the point of the sword or the tank—elementary rights to freedom of opinion. Mankind is perched on the edge of annihilation either by nuclear, biological or chemical warfare or by over-population.

But if children the world over, instead of being indoctrinated in the various religions of their countries, were indoctrinated in the things that matter, in the sort of conduct that would solve disputes by civilised means instead of by war, that would accept the necessity of some financial sacrifice in the interests of the less fortunate—and ultimately in one's own interests—would accept population control as essential to give adequate food and living space for a civilised life and to prevent the need for *Lebensraum* sowing the seeds of future wars—if this indoctrination in humanism were given then a great evolutionary step would have been taken, a step towards maturity and the solution of world-wide problems.

considered a god. If Princes of the Church are governed by political considerations unconnected with ecclesiastical principles, they act like Pharisees.

The same issue of *Le Monde* prints a letter from Father J. P. Lichtenberg (Strasbourg) on the situation of Christians in Israel who, some people claim, were treated as second-class citizens. If so, it is not because they are Christians but because of their being Arabs. If the Vatican at long last would recognise Israel *de jure* and *de facto* and, at the same time, openly condemn anti-Semitism, Arab Catholics would no longer be discriminated against. The lot of the Christian Arab in Israel is still far better than that of Jews in Arab countries.

*Remedy against the 'flu*. The Rev. Failing, Burbank near Los Angeles, warned his flock in their parochial broadsheet: "Avoid crowded places—come to the church." (*Der Spiegel*.)

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE  
LONDON, WC1

THURSDAY, MARCH 6th, 7.30 p.m.

## BLOOD SPORTS

Speakers include

ERIC HEFFER, MP

DAVID TRIBE

RAYMOND F. ROWLEY

DENIS DUNCAN (*Chairman*)

and two films

Organisers

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

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## PUBLIC MEETING ON RACE RELATIONS

NIGEL SINNOTT

A CAPACITY AUDIENCE filled the Alliance Hall on Thursday, January 30, for a public meeting under the title Race Relations organised by the National Secular Society. The chairman, John Ennals (Director of the United Nations Association) regretted that Joan Lestor, who had been billed to attend, was unable to attend owing to bronchitis.

The first speaker was John Lyttle, who compared the high birth rate of immigrant communities with those of new towns, as in both cases the populations were nearly all of working and child-bearing age. Immigrant men tended to arrive first, and their families then followed when they were established, and the distribution of immigrants in this country was in accordance with labour demands—a hopeful sign as compared with the United States, which had the additional problem of a history of slavery. Our National Health Service was now highly dependent upon immigrant workers; more than a thousand doctors came here last year alone. In order to foster better race relations, Mr Lyttle advocated a society affording equal opportunity, cultural diversity, and an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.

Speaking next was David Tribe, President of the NSS and himself an immigrant from Australia. He mentioned that the Executive Committee of the Society also included an Irishman and an Indian, and that it had a significant point of view on race relations as the NSS had always stood for the rational discussion of problems. Mr Tribe explained that there was an ingrained conservatism in British culture, and anyone going to live in more remote country areas still tended to be regarded as a stranger for

some little time. People complained about the brain-drain from Britain, but there was also a very valuable one to it. Dealing with the question of race and delinquency, criminal statistics tended to show that immigrant communities from the Republic of Ireland had the highest crime rate, not West Indians or Pakistanis. In any case one should deal with people as such, and not according to any general group label.

Dr David Pitt, a West Indian who had lived for many years in the United Kingdom, said that the black population of the country was less than 2 per cent at present; more than half the junior doctors in non-teaching hospitals were coloured, a third of the nurses, and a quarter of the domiciliary midwives. English society had been intensely class conscious and had had to justify its imperial history by assuming that the people of the colonies were inferior. The cure for racial intolerance today was to decondition society; for every prejudiced person there were fifty who deferred to the prejudices of others. Dr Pitt finished by saying that we had a splendid opportunity to solve the race problem in Britain, but to seize it we had to do something about our political leaders.

Question time, which came next, was largely dominated with Dr Pitt's defence of reform as opposed to revolution, advocated by a group of Black Power supporters in the audience. Dr Pitt had obviously jostled with these particular men and women before and his patience and kind humour, together with that of the Chairman was greatly appreciated by the rest of the meeting.

## HERBERT CUTNER 1881-1969

WILLIAM GRIFFITHS

HERBERT CUTNER, one of the few remaining British militant Freethinkers and Secularists of the Foote-Cohen period, has as announced in last week's FREETHINKER, just died at the age of 88.

He became well known in the Secular movement through his contributions to the FREETHINKER and other Free-thought and Secular periodicals published in the English speaking world, and also through his numerous published works.

He commenced contributing articles to the FREETHINKER in 1920 and continued to do so fairly regularly until the early 1960s. For many years he enjoyed writing those satirical and sometimes amusing paragraphs which were published in the FREETHINKER under the title of "Acid Drops".

Like most writers and contributors to periodicals he had his pet subjects, among which were "The historicity of Jesus Christ" and Spiritualism. His knowledge of both these subjects was quite considerable and nothing gave him more pleasure than to come across opponents who were prepared to cross swords with him on these subjects.

He was very well known at one time to the Spiritualists on account of his constant attacks on their activities both in debates carried on with the Editor of the *Psychic News* and of course in the FREETHINKER. As an enthusiastic photographer with professional knowledge and experience he found pleasure in pouring ridicule on the supposed "authentic" spirit photographs produced at seances.

Before becoming an assistant to Chapman Cohen in the preparation and production of the FREETHINKER he was a

successful free-lance commercial artist. He specialised in pen and ink work and etchings—a good example of his work was the etching of Chapman Cohen—a signed copy of which I have.

Being a great admirer of Charles Dickens his seasonal greetings cards which he sent to his friends were often of his original etchings of some of the famous Dickensian characters.

HC produced an excellent work on the subject of *Commercial Art* in the "Teach Yourself series" published in 1949. This illustrates very well his natural ability both as an artist and writer.

An interesting aspect of his character was his views on politics—they were distinctly "right wing". It was puzzling to many of his colleagues in the Secular movement how on the one hand a person could be such an enthusiastic and sincere advocate for Secularism and Free-thought with all that this philosophy implies and on the other be so reactionary on political and economic matters. Psychologists would no doubt give us the answer.

However for all that, he was greatly appreciated by many readers in Great Britain, the Dominions, and the USA for his sincerity, candour and courage in expressing his own opinions both verbally and in writing quite regardless of what other people thought of them. He was a great worker for the cause of secularism. Despite his ill-health during the last few years of his life he continued to maintain an active interest in the work of the Secular movement to the very end.



## BOOK REVIEW

SIMON HAMMOND

CANCER WARD: Alexander Solzhenitsyn. (Bodley Head, 30s.)

SOLZHENITSYN'S LIFE rather resembles the tidal behaviour of the sea in that his acceptability by the Soviet government seems to vary from repression (at low tide) to acceptance and emancipation (at high tide) to repression once again. In the years of Stalin he was imprisoned for ten years in a labour camp during which he wrote *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, eventually to publish it when Stalin was succeeded by Khrushchev in 1953, Solzhenitsyn now finding favour with the government. However, on the removal of Khrushchev and the arrival of Brezhnev and Kosygin in power he once again fell out of favour. Consequently *Cancer Ward* has been banned from publication in Russia though fortunately has found its way to the West.

Just as 'Ivan Denisovich' is written with a basis of personal experience so *Cancer Ward* also reflects a part of his life. After returning from a labour camp he contracted cancer and personally experienced a cancer ward, eventually recovering to lead a normal life. *Cancer Ward* is not really a complete story in itself since there is in fact neither a beginning nor an end to it. The book takes you through the experience of a few weeks of life in a cancer ward of a provincial hospital, and the action centres around the inter-relationships of the diverse characters in the ward. (The experience of one of the main characters, Oleg Kostoglotov, is largely similar to Solzhenitsyn's own except that Kostoglotov had come to the cancer ward from exile rather than from a labour camp.)

There is a "representative" in the ward from most every walk of Soviet life, for example the party official, whose ideology closely follows that of the government, the worker, the student, the exile whose activities as a student quickly brought that phase of life to an end, etc. Delving into the lives of these people, the author not only gives an insight into each one's personal philosophy and experience of life, but also places them in the particular structure of Soviet life from whence they came to the cancer ward. The book, thus, reveals much about the contemporary Russian picture and how it has evolved through the people who together constitute its various parts; the cancer ward is in this case the device that Solzhenitsyn uses to give a focal point or basic structure around which the integration of these various ideas can take place.

It is very hard to think of another more feasible device which creates not only an opportunity for examining the various facets of Soviet life as separate entities but also for showing how they interact; in other words, how the inmates react to each other. The factor that they all have cancer in common, bringing them into the same hospital ward removes any question of position in Russian society being an inhibitor of free exchange of thoughts and of opinions. Thus again the device of the cancer ward is ideally suited for Solzhenitsyn's purpose.

Cancer is one of those diseases that still presents much of an enigma to the majority of people. Patients who contract it react in many ways, and in most cases the way a person reacts to it tells you much about the individual. Solzhenitsyn, having examined his characters under normal circumstances shows how they face up to this awful knowledge, how it affects them as individuals, and how it affects their opinions of each other. Thus the situation increases further our insight into these people, but perhaps on a more personal level rather than merely reflecting a way of life.

I think it is Solzhenitsyn's personal experience of cancer that makes this book the vivid piece that it is—his knowledge of the various types of cancer and the methods of treating them is apparent throughout the book and together with his understanding and portrayal of the problems that doctors must face when confronted with cases of cancer, his description of hospital life and its internal stresses, his examination of the doctor-patient relationship, the cancer ward becomes not only a very convenient device but also a very meaningful reality in its own right. On the very basic principle that if the foundations of a structure are faulty then the remainder of the structure is liable to collapse as well, Solzhenitsyn has created the basic situation with great strength.

Reading the book I think I can understand why it was banned; not because it is anti-communist or pro-West—in fact neither of these feelings emerge at all from the book. Solzhenitsyn's "mistake" is in relating the truth about Soviet life, the good and the bad of the present society and its past. He comes through as intensely sincere, a Russian who believes that society should reveal its evils in order to overcome them, rather than to dust the dirt under the carpet and merely talk in terms of the great Russian society and its wonderful future, which the government seems intent on doing. That Solzhenitsyn believes deeply in Russia seems

evident—that he shares in common with the Russian government. That he believes in revealing the whole truth is also evident—that he doesn't share in common with the government who seemingly will hear no adverse criticism nor admit to any mistakes in their country. Hence, I suppose, the banning.

Solzhenitsyn himself considers this to be the most important of his works and frankly, to anybody who finds the Russian way of life at all interesting, this book is intensely readable and very revealing (this book is the first of two self-contained parts under the same title).

## MAN IN STONE

I. S. LOW

THE MOST consciously humanistic work of art I know is the Vigeland group of sculptures in the Frogner Park, Oslo.

Its essence is the theme of Man in all his moods and phases—joy, anger, love, youth, age. These are expressed by statues of naked human figures.

Gustav Vigeland (1869-1943), Norway's greatest sculptor, first thought of the idea in 1899. He started work on it about 1906 (it's difficult to say exactly when; his ideas tended to change) and it took about thirty years to complete.

This artistic complex starts with the gates of Frogner Park. Behind them is a stretch of green grass with high trees on each side. The work stretches before you, with the Monolith towering up.

First there is a bridge with naked human figures (about fifty-eight of them) along it. The most jovial shows a man lifting a woman. At each end are pillars with statues of men struggling with monsters.

Then comes the Fountain. It was the first part of the conception that Vigeland thought of. Four figures hold a great bowl from which water pours. On a calm day this water is amazingly beautiful—really like glass. Around are sculptures of trees with figures of boys and girls. The most famous is called "the Swallow"; a young girl diving through the Tree of Life—about to plunge into the world of love.

The Monolith is the artistic climax of the work. It is a column about fifty feet high made up of intertwined human bodies. (One hundred and twenty-one altogether). Round the base are groups of figures—a woman carrying a child on her back, girls with their arms round each other and so on. Vigeland said that "Everyone could interpret the Monolith as he wished".

Finally there is the Wheel of Life. This is a bronzed wheel formed of human bodies. To me they seemed to have a gay, abandoned look!

Vigeland came from Mandal; a small town on the south Norwegian coast—in the Bible Belt of Norway! He says that, on one Good Friday, his father thrashed him and his brother because Jesus had been whipped on that day. He also wrote of his youth "I thought the Greeks were better and more beautiful people than those I read about in the Bible". It seems a fundamentalist once objected to his early sculptural works on the grounds that they were "idols". When the Fountain was made a clergyman wrote: "the Fountain will have a demoralising effect. The project as a whole is far removed from the spirit of Christianity" and called the work "an open air temple to Astarte".

I know little about sculpture. But I could see Vigeland had something!



# LETTERS

## Happiness and an After-life

I MUST OPPOSE the pessimistic view of Michael Gray (The Pursuit of Happiness, February 8). It is a pity such elementary errors and unscientific philosophies spoil his life. (He "will not be reconciled to the fact of personal death" and is "angry that the pointlessness of life should be exceeded only by the futility of death".) Perhaps he would do well to concentrate on living his own life.

He is quite wrong to suggest that we cannot influence our state of happiness or misery. I can point to numerous examples in my own life. For example one may work toward an achievement and gain deep satisfaction from it, or one may choose not to do so and may consequently feel sad. Surely in such an article one should at least quote references to recorded evidence or to generally accepted psychological hypotheses.

While many of us can cope very well and steer our lives along happy paths, circumstances make this very difficult for vast numbers of others in deprived societies and for handicapped people in our society. The magnitude of this problem is a cause for pessimism, but do not imagine it cannot get worse, and do not forget the great amount of success man now has.

As science develops, as religion recedes and as population is subjected to more control, our prospects are of improvement at least.

M. J. O'CARROLL.

I CANNOT IMAGINE where Michael Gray finds grounds for his idea that there can be an after-life. To my mind it is only wishful thinking, with no foundation whatever for such a belief.

It is amazing how man dislikes the idea of an end, even when he has had a good run for his money. Life is itself so wonderful that it is quite sufficient to make us thankful for what we have had. And now it seems as if "happiness" has become a dirty word. No one seems to think we should be allowed to have it.

Of course the knowledge of so much injustice in the world must be a shock to all of us, but here is where optimism is so important it helps us to go on fighting even when things look grim. Man is quite able to get himself out of the mess he is in if the wish to do so is great enough.

With regard to the after-life, I agree with Bernard Shaw that we shall in time get back to "Methuselah" (if we can control births) already we live much longer than we did 100 years ago, then I am sure the thought of an after-life won't worry us much.

LILIAN MIDDLETON.

## Immigration

HOW FORTUNATE that Renee Short's "intelligent" view of immigration corresponds with that of the more bigoted elements amongst the electors of Wolverhampton, who, incidentally, also agree with Enoch Powell.

TONY SMYTHE,

General Secretary, National Council for Civil Liberties.

## Kosher Meat

TURNING AND TWISTING, Gerald Samuel in his garbled rejoinder insinuates, "Herr Wolfgang (!) attacks me for being Jewish". In fact, I did not particularly mention him but my long experience that many of our Jewish brethren are 'secularists' only as long as their own superstitions are left out. In this connection I quoted the passage about the "beam in your own eye", since if Mr Samuel's claim to be a secularist is to be taken seriously, he ought to put his own house in order first.

But in his original letter he attacked Freethought because according to him 'free' ought to mean 'vague'. And now he writes of the "humanistic character of Judaism as compared with its debased Greek-orientated deviation—Christianity". Right or wrong—my religion! He then goes even so far as pretending Freethought 'attacked' people, not religious "tyranny and ignorance". You can see the chip on his shoulder when he writes: "The Christian case against ritual slaughter rests on alleged cruelty. Your contributor, Otto Wolfgang, rests his case on its being ritual." Is ritual not religious ignorance and tyranny?

However, what I wrote in my reply was: "... ritual slaughter stems from a primitive blood superstition in which we nowadays no longer believe; consequently we could logically dispense with this atavism".

Or in other words: Cruelty or no cruelty, it is a survival from pagan superstitions, therefore in modern life it has no *raison d'être* (even not in a religion that considers itself superior to paganism).

Is this clear or is there to follow another spate of distortions?

OTTO WOLFGANG.

## Free Speech

AT YULETIDE I was so shocked by some repulsive racist propaganda that I seriously considered giving up the FREETHINKER and even resigning from the NSS. However, I realised that that would be too drastic. I quite enjoyed the rebukes the author got from more decent readers, especially from G. L. Simons.

Now, I am reading an article by G. L. Simons. He here tries to convince me that "Free Speech" is really a nasty tool of the baddie-baddie capitalists. Presumably if we want Free-Thought we must first rid ourselves of Free Speech. It is getting curiouser and more curiouser.

EWALD CYBART.

NO ONE ELSE has done it, so I must: Mr G. L. Simons, Sir, your article on "Free Speech" (February 1), was excellent!

It is a great testimonial to your freethinking.

H. FAIRHURST.

## Short and RI

MR SHORT'S calculation that Britain may be a pagan country in two generations, errs on the side of over-estimation. A country, in which barely 12 per cent are practising Christians, can hardly be called "Christian".

Some progressive teachers may have found out that the New Testament is, in the main, RC dogmatism and do not like to indoctrinate their charges with fabled accounts of mythical persons.

When, in later life, the children discover that they have been misled, they will throw out the whole bag of tricks. Ethical precepts and good citizenship can be taught without a denominational slant, in fact, humanists prize them most highly.

GEORGE R. GOODMAN.

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