

# Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 24

Saturday, June 14, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

## HAVE A HEART!

THERE CANNOT be many people, who knowing they were soon to die would not willingly give their heart, kidney or any other organ to prolong the life of another human being. It would seem that this simple fact is being forgotten amid the current wranglings over the ethics of transplant surgery. In view of the fact that this type of surgery has now been going on for some years, it is frustrating that there should still be severe controversy over the procedure involved. There are two main reasons for this continuing lack of agreement on the subject. First, it was not until hearts began to be transplanted that the full attention of the public and the press was drawn to the activities of the transplant surgeons. Secondly, public and press opinion still shows the same emotional uncertainty when confronted with the transplantation of an organ, as it showed and is showing when faced with such questions as euthanasia and abortion. The first cause of alarm can only be resolved by detailed legislation, the formalisation of transplant procedure, and by the government's providing proper facilities for those who are prepared to donate organs. The second factor will, as always, have to be overcome by reason and the spread of enlightenment.

The present argument would appear to centre round the behaviour of the doctors who are treating a potential donor. It is argued that their decision as to whether the patient is dead may be influenced by their knowledge that other doctors are looking for an organ or organs to transplant into someone else. However, no one has suggested that any donor—at least in this country—has died who would not have died anyway. Nor has any criticism been levelled at the methods used to acquire the consent of the donor's relatives. The 'controversy' is thus reduced to a quibble over whether the fact that a doctor knows that a certain organ is urgently required would cause him, either to turn off a heart respirator slightly earlier than he would have done in normal circumstances, or to declare someone dead, whose heart hadn't actually stopped beating though it was clearly going to.

It is on this score that certain sectors of the national press, who saw fit to publish the names of recent donors and recipients against the wishes of both hospitals and relatives, maintain that their actions are safeguarding the public. If it were at all likely that there are doctors in our midst, who would kill someone who has a chance of living in order to acquire one of his organs, there would be some justification for this talk of safeguards. That we have long ago passed the age of Frankenstein makes the utterances of certain pressmen nothing more than flimsily-coated sensationalism. And having heard some of the recent 'its for the good of the community as a whole' talk, one would not be surprised if before long they publish transplant details alongside the births, marriages and deaths, under the guise of rendering a public service.

Not only has this unnecessary and repellent publicity caused concern to the transplant patients, their relatives and friends, but it has also caused one man, badly in need of two new kidneys, to lose the opportunity of a transplant, because the relatives of the projected donor were understandably frightened off by the prospect of publicity. That same man's wife has, perhaps by dint of her personal involvement in the situation, put the case for a cessation of publicity very convincingly indeed: "Doctors are not vultures waiting for someone to die. They fight desperately to

28 6461 48 8216	but in a present general rightful place. For date in the rebirth of Britain. Contact Simon Lyons, 1 Greenwood Rd., London, N.W.11.	<b>Elecra</b>
<b>AGES</b>	<b>TRANSPLANTS</b>	<b>BIRTH</b>
15th, Kent, Roberts. 1 May, esburg, r. and Jon. to e Roux nesburg.	<b>EDWARDS.—don, THOMSON.</b> recip.—On May 16th, 1969, after severe brain damage and a brief illness in St. Andrew's Hospital a heart, beloved of the late Moira Edwards, (nee Frost) miraculously recovered. No flowers but donations if desired to the new Dennis Thomson dear husband of Doris and much loved father of David and Caroline.	<b>MACDON.</b> Hospital and H. Ruth). <b>PEMBER</b> and B. Trinity <b>SYMIN</b> (nee <b>WOI</b> (n d.

save people's lives. There have been few transplants in the country because the press are frightening people".

Of course whenever the press behaves irresponsibly the results are never all destructive. In this instance the benefits of the press' activities are manifested not only in the sudden rush of individuals offering their organs should they suffer brain damage, but also in the sudden realisation in parliamentary circles that the situation must be rationalised, and as a result a committee has been set up.

To return to the first sentence of this piece, there is one consideration which has received, as yet, little attention in the press or on the air. Since we are now in what has recently been described as 'the age of transplants' and since the government through the National Health Service is largely in control of the purse strings, it would seem reasonable to suggest that those of us who are prepared to have our organs used in spare-part surgery—and surely in a

(Continued overleaf)

# Freethinker

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

Editor: David Reynolds

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

(Continued from previous page)

secular society we are in the vast majority—should be easily enabled to sign a form stating that if our death should ever become inevitable preparations for transplantation may start at once. A computer could be put to good use storing the relevant data. Forms could be made available at post offices and what should be considered a great advance for mankind could begin to get under way in its proper perspective.

## A REVOLUTION IN THE CHURCH

IN THE religious press recently there has been an increasing amount of attention given to the need for a revolution in the church. In an article in which he describes this need as a desperate one, the Rev. Anthony J. Wesson, MA, BD, wrote in *The Methodist Recorder* (June 5): "Tish, tish, you naughty Communists, you have been changing history while we Christians have been sitting on our backsides moaning." With these words, Dr Joe Matthews of the Ecumenical Institute Chicago, at a conference held recently in Southport, was able to throw into relief something of the irony of the present situation of the Church.

"The Church of Christ, that community which claims to exist by the revolutionary values of faith, hope, and love,

## 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.

### INDOOR

Bristol Humanist Group: 22 Hampton Park: Sunday, June 15, 11 a.m.: Walk arranged by Mrs Lester.

London Young Humanists: At Nigel Sinnott's, 5 Kew Gardens Road, Kew, Richmond, Surrey: Sunday, June 15, 7.30 p.m.: If its fine—a party in the garden. Bring a bottle whether its fine or not.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: "The Evolution of Ethics", Professor John Fremlin.

has in recent days exhibited that it lives by a faithless conservatism, a hopeless apathy, and a loveless moralism. In allowing this to happen the Church has been unable to prevent the initiative for creating change and revolution to pass into the hands of Communists and other unsavoury characters!"

Wesson goes to give his view that broadly the 'revolution' must not be a revival of evangelism but a spreading of the doctrine of love: "In its social expression love is the search for justice for all men". He then makes the point that: "significant Christian action today must be political in the widest sense of the term, that is it must be concerned with all that affects the *polis* (the city). The Christian who has not yet seen this is really an anachronism".

Clearly Wesson does not mean the church to support any political system or ideology, but rather to concern itself with the spread of love in a political fashion, meaning taking the doctrine of love to the people—altering their attitudes to one another and so on. In this sense such a policy would be distinctly revolutionary, since 'love' is the doctrine of the 'underground', the hippies, and serves as an ideal for most of the left wing political groups.

However, as Wesson says: "It could be objected that what I have written is simply a statement of what all concerned people ought to be doing, and that there is nothing distinctly Christian about it". Acknowledging the existence of "good, idealistic, committed non-Christians" he answers this predictably by saying that the Church must preach Christ to such people "as the key to their concerns".

This is precisely where the concept of a revolution in the church falls down, for in effect Wesson's 'revolution' amounts to condoning and encouraging current aware attitudes, but at the same time preaching Christ as the saviour. Christ is the focal point of the church and because of this a 'revolution' worthy of its name is impossible. All that can be done in the theological sphere is being done by the Bishop of Woolwich and the 'Death of God' philosophers. That this is left unmentioned by Wesson in his views on revolution would seem to indicate that, the new theologians have rejected Christ to the point where most Christians are unable to recognise their faith. This is not surprising since an involved semantic quibble is required to distinguish the New Theology from humanism.

CAXTON HALL, CAXTON ST., LONDON, SW1

Wednesday, 2nd July, 7.30 p.m.

**ROGER MANVELL**

introduces

**HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR**

Directed by ALAIN RESNAIS

Presented by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

# THE TESTIMONY OF JOSEPHUS TO JESUS CHRIST

THOMAS W. HOGAN

FREETHINKERS AND CHRISTIANS are, of course, aware of the celebrated passage in *The Jewish Antiquities* concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since the time of Eusebius in the fourth century the witness of Josephus has exercised a fascinating influence over Christians. Josephus was, of course, a Jew, and the *Testimonia Flaviana* as it is called, is widely regarded as the most precious jewel the Church possesses, for here supposedly is secular corroboration of the truths of the Gospel story.

The present writer can recall sundry members of the Christian world glibly quoting Josephus when the historicity of Jesus is brought into debate; consequently it should prove interesting to review the whole matter of the testimony in the light of modern scholarship.

Joseph bar Mattathia Kahana, or to give him the name which is more familiar to our readers, Flavius Josephus was born in AD 37 in Jerusalem. He came, it is claimed, from Royal stock on his mother's side; he evinced signs of intelligence at an early age, and in his later years he boasted, how as a boy, he answered his teachers on the finer points of the Law. In his youth he wavered between the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. For a while he associated himself with the Essenes, his companion being Banus; later he committed himself to the sect of the Pharisees.

At the age of twenty-six he went to Rome to plead on behalf of some Jewish prisoners; securing their release, he returned to Jerusalem only to find the extremists (Zealots) bent on war with the hated Romans. Seeing, as he had, the might and magnificence of Rome at first hand, he was reluctant to comply with their plans. But on incurring their suspicions he pretended to agree. He was appointed a General in the field at Galilee; but later went over to the Romans. For the remainder of the war he acted as a mediator and interpreter against his own people. Later he wrote, to discourage further revolt, an account of the war. This was given the Imperial signature and placed in all public libraries. About AD 94 he wrote *The Jewish Antiquities* and two pamphlets: his life and an account of Judaism. He died in Rome at the end of the century.

It is true to remark that to this day he is regarded by his own people as a traitor. This is, no doubt, justified.

As is well known the earlier work *The Jewish War* is silent concerning Jesus of Nazareth. The text, in fact, shows some remarkable omissions. The commentary appears to have been based upon official records. Pilate's governorship is referred to: the affair of the standards and the disturbance about the aqueduct which led to the deaths of many Jews. Josephus then jumps over an incident which occurred in Rome shortly before the death of Tiberius in AD 37. Pilate's recall is not referred to, and Josephus supplies no further information, whereas in *The Antiquities* the period is marked by the appearance and death of Jesus.

The silence in *The Jewish War* is enigmatic. One wonders why Josephus waited twenty years to pen the *Testimonia Flaviana* in the eighteenth book of *The Jewish Antiquities*.

It reads as follows:

"Now about this time arose Jesus, a wise man, if indeed he may be called a man. For he was a doer of marvellous acts, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with delight. And he won over to himself many Jews and many also of the Greek nation. He was the Christ. And when on the indictment of the principal men among us, Pilate had him sentenced to the cross,

still those who before had loved him did not cease. For he appeared to them on the third day alive again, as the divinely inspired prophets had foretold—these and ten thousand other wonderful things—concerning him. And until now the race of Christians, so named from him, is not extinct."

If Josephus wrote this passage as it now stands he must have been a Christian. We have, as has been previously noted, an account of his life, and nothing to indicate that the Jewish Historian saw fit to abandon the faith of Judaism. A further consideration commends itself to us. The *Testimonium* in the Greek text of *The Jewish Antiquities* stands in palpable disconnection from the remainder of the narrative. This alone is sufficient to arouse suspicion.

There is one fact, however, which decisively proves the *Testimonium* a Christian forgery or a re-rendering of a previously hostile passage. Before we give it, it may be significant to note that Bishop Barnes assented to our general exegesis.<sup>1</sup>

That the present passage is not as Josephus wrote it, is attested to by the statement of the celebrated Christian scholar Origen in the year 250 AD. For, quoting *The Jewish Antiquities*, he remarks "although he (Josephus) did not believe our Jesus to be the Christ, he nonetheless gave witness to so much righteousness in James" (Jesus' brother who succeeded him at the head of the movement). And again: "disbelieved our Jesus as the Christ". James, in the tenth book of the *Jewish Antiquities*, is referred to as the "brother of Jesus who is called the Christ". Thus we may conclude that the *Testimonium* was not in Origen's text. Eusebius quotes the famous passage as it now stands, which proves that the misrepresentation was affected between Origen and Eusebius, i.e., between 250 and 350.

Seeing that a Christian scribe saw fit to revise the text of Josephus it follows that the original contained an uncomplimentary account. It is interesting to hazard a shrewd guess as to how the Greek copy stood in Origen's time. A number of scholars have reconstructed the passage; below we give Eisler's re-rendering of the *Testimonium* as it left the pen of the Jewish Historian about AD 94. Professor Brandon has this to say of it: "Something like the reconstruction made by Dr Eisler would be necessary to fit the requirements demanded by Origen's remark and what we otherwise know of Josephus"<sup>2</sup>. The restored text reads:

"Now about this time arose (an occasion for new disturbances) a certain Jesus, a wizard of a man if he may be called a man who was the most monstrous of all men, whom his disciples call a son of God, as having done wonders such as no man hath ever yet done.

He was in fact a teacher of astonishing tricks to such men as accept the abnormal with delight.

And he seduced many Jews and many of the Greek nation, and was regarded by them as the Messiah.

And when, on the indictment of the principal men among us, Pilate had him sentenced to the cross, still those who before had admired him did not cease to rave. For it seemed to them that having been dead three days, he appeared to them alive, as the divinely inspired prophets had foretold—these and ten thousand other wonderful things—concerning him.

And even now the race of those called 'Messianists' after him is not extinct."<sup>3</sup>

Although the above is, of course, conjectural, the reader may see from the standard text how the forgery was affected.

<sup>1</sup> Barnes: *The Rise of Christianity*.

<sup>2</sup> Brandon: *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*.

<sup>3</sup> Eisler: *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*.

# RUSSELL'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

G. L. SIMONS

## FOURTH OF NINE ARTICLES

THERE IS a clear sense in which Russell has sympathy with the *feelings* of certain religious people. It is only when they try to erect an epistemology or a metaphysics on those feelings that he takes issue with them. To Russell, mystical feeling can be profoundly moving and has the capacity to enrich human life. In 1910, in *Mysticism and Logic*, he talked of "the true union of the mystic and the man of science—the highest eminence, as I think, that it is possible to achieve in the world of thought". Muggeridge was not being entirely facetious when he entitled his review of the second volume of Russell's *Autobiography*—"Russell: Mystic without a Faith" (*Observer*, 28/4/68). But if Russell's sympathy with religion starts with a degree of identification with the emotions of the mystic, it also ends there.

He attacks religion for both its practical consequences and its theoretical tenets. In *Marriage and Morals* (1929) he scorns the perverted sexuality of the early Christian fathers; in *Religion and Science* (1935) he attacks the historical obscurantism of the Church in opposing scientific advance and social progress; in *The Scientific Outlook* (1931) he outlines in detail the Galileo case, and includes the text of the sentence of the Inquisition delivered against the famous scientist. And religious presumption has received its just quota of the biting Russellian wit; in *The Scientific Outlook* he writes (pp. 112-113):

"Sir Arthur Eddington deduces religion from the fact that atoms do not obey the laws of mathematics. Sir James Jeans deduces it from the fact that they do. Both these arguments have been accepted with equal enthusiasm by the theologians, who hold, apparently, that the demand for consistency belongs to the cold reason and must not interfere with our deeper religious feelings."

And again (p. 115):

"Theologians have grown grateful for small mercies, and they do not much care what sort of God the man of science gives them so long as he gives them one at all. Sir James Jeans's God, like Plato's, is one who has a passion for doing sums . . ."

And in *The Prospects of Industrial Society* (1923) Russell cannot resist an example from religion to illustrate the stultifying effects of propaganda:

"If you wish to persuade people that, because Adam ate an apple, all who have never heard of this interesting occurrence will be roasted in an everlasting fire by a benevolent Deity, you must catch them young, make them stupid by means of drink or athletics, and carefully isolate them from all contact with books or companions capable of making them think."

Russell's intellectual doubts about the theoretical tenets of religion started in adolescence, as they have done with many of us. When he was sixteen he wrote in his diary: "It is extraordinary how few principles or dogmas I have been able to become convinced of. One after another I find my former undoubted beliefs slipping away from me into the region of doubt". Soon he came to doubt the central "proofs" for God's existence. The first mature and systematic objections are recorded in Chapter 15 of *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (1900) and the last reasonably full treatment is contained in *Why I am Not a Christian* (1957). In *My Philosophical Development* (1959), religious belief is scarcely mentioned.

In Leibniz there are four distinct arguments that purport to prove the existence of God. Russell notes (p. 172): "Only one of these, so far as I know, was invented by him,

and that was the worst of the four". The four "proofs" are—the Ontological Argument (the traditional 'philosopher's proof'), the Cosmological Argument, the Argument from the Eternal Truths, and the Argument from the Pre-established Harmony. Russell remarks that Leibniz's religious philosophy is the "weakest part", the part "most full of inconsistencies". Russell works his way through the Ontological and Cosmological Arguments in a manner that has been echoed by many later writers, and a not dissimilar approach is found in the radio debate on God which Russell had in 1948 with Father Copleston (the debate is recorded in *Why I am not a Christian*). Here Copleston advances in turn the Argument from Contingency, the Argument from Religious Experience, and the Moral Argument to prove God's existence. Russell objects to the "proofs" in predictable fashion, and then they are discussed. This is a rewarding debate to read, but I personally find Russell unnecessarily diffident in places, particularly in the debate on morality. For the rest of *Why I am not a Christian* there is little philosophy *per se*. The opening essay, originally a talk bearing the title of the book, deals with the First Cause and Design Arguments, etc., and such random pieces as defects in Christ's character, and fear as the foundation of religion. This is all grandly readable but necessarily superficial.

In his comments at the end of the edited *Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* (1944), Russell remarks that his own religious attitudes are to be found in their "least unsatisfactory" form in Chapter VII, 'Religion and the Churches', in *The Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1916). Here he surveys the historical development of the Christian Church and looks for the reasons for the harm it has done and continues to do. He states that "If religion is not to be harmful in a world of rapid change, it must, like the Society of Friends, be carried on by men who have other occupations during the week . . . such men, because they know the everyday world, are not likely to fall into a remote morality which no-one regards as applicable to common life. . . . Except in a quite stationary society, no religious life can be living or a real support to the spirit unless it is freed from the incubus of a professional priesthood."

He concludes the essay with these words:

"The life of the spirit has suffered in recent times by its association with traditional religion, by its apparent hostility to the life of the mind, and by the fact that it has seemed to centre in renunciation. The life of the spirit demands readiness for renunciation when the occasion arises, but is in its essence as positive and as capable of enriching individual existence as mind and instinct are. It brings with it the joy of vision, of the mystery and profundity of the world, of the contemplation of life, and above all of the joys of universal love. It liberates those who have it from the prison-house of insistent personal passion and mundane cares. It gives freedom and breadth and beauty to men's thoughts and feelings, and to all their relations to others. It brings the solution of doubts, the end of the feeling that all is vanity. It restores harmony between mind and instinct, and leads the separated unit back into his place in the life of mankind. For those who have once entered the world of thought, it is only through spirit that happiness and peace can return."

Here then is some of the incredible complexity of Russell, the passionate sceptic who does not mind using the language of the mystic to convey his meaning. The militant rationalist who identifies Russell with a superficial 'anti-religion' does him a disservice. Russell is often militantly anti-theological and anti-clerical but he knows the feelings that motivate the mystics. To have created a per-

sonal philosophy which includes a life-enriching 'mystical' component and yet which excludes the stultifying and distorting effects which historically have sprung from mystical attitudes—is part of the genius of Bertrand Russell and part of the genius of many great scientists. Russell's rationalism is courageously and uninhibitedly irreverent, but he is rightly reluctant to suppress 'spiritual' feelings of awe and mystery in contemplation of the universe simply because

some religious believers have also known such feelings.

Russell is a great rationalist because so much of human potential is so highly developed in him: he has married instinct and spirit and intellect in a unique combination. Those rationalists who represent him as the champion of negative and restricted philosophies, without depth or vision, are unworthy disciples.

## SITUATIONAL ETHICS APPLIED TO ABORTION

IAN T. PETERS

THERE ARE TWO prerequisites for any modern system of ethics. Firstly it must be based on science in its broadest etymological sense of knowledge. Argument must be on the firm basis of ascertainable fact. That this will result in some fluctuation in the precepts so derived, due to the continuing increase in knowledge and the constant improvement in scientific theory, is acceptable and indeed desirable since my second prerequisite must be an absence of absolutism. A glance at even known history will reveal the errors of the authoritarian approach to morals. Honest human judgements, even if arbitrary, are likely to be more humane and constructive than absolute moral judgements given by people who are perhaps remote from the situation and are abiding by the book.

A modern ethical system must enhance human dignity; it must provide a maximum degree of personal freedom, especially of choice and opportunity; and it entails the corollary: maximum personal responsibility to ensure that the freedoms of others are not encroached upon.

Previous systems of morality have tended to promote the double standard which has bedevilled women's rights. On the above criteria such a double standard is unacceptable and the equality of women is a *sine qua non* of any modern ethical system. Professor Garrett Hardin, the biologist, of the University of California, in a public lecture entitled

"Abortion and Human Dignity" (1964) said:

"The emancipation of women is not complete until women are free to avoid the pregnancies they do not want. Ethical systems that deny women this freedom are the product of men, the residue of an ancient world in which women were, quite literally, put in a legal class with children, idiots and slaves . . ."

Jaquetta Hawkes has put it even more succinctly:

"A woman must be mistress of her own womb."

Compare these ideals with the Old Testament exhortation:

"I will multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children' and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee."

The gulf that exists between these two outlooks is wide. I submit that a similar gulf exists between the old and new laws governing abortion.

The Offences against the Person Act 1861 categorically makes abortion, whether self-inflicted or not, a criminal offence subject to harsh penalties. Section 58 states:

"Every woman . . . who, with intent to procure her own Miscarriage, shall . . . administer to herself any poison . . . or . . . use an instrument with the like intent and whosoever, with Intent to procure the Miscarriage of any Woman, whether she be or be not with Child . . ." shall do likewise . . . shall be liable to be kept in Penal Servitude for Life or for any Term not less than Three Years . . . with or without Hard Labour and with or without Solitary Confinement".

In view of the prevalence of abortion as utilised by women in every country and throughout history, such a law

inevitably meant the attempted enforcement of the morals of a minority upon the majority of people in this country. That the maximum penalty of life imprisonment was never to the best of my knowledge applied would seem to indicate a different attitude to abortion even among the judiciary. No woman has even been prosecuted for self-inflicted abortion. It is, I think, significant that the 1861 Act came in at the height of the Victorian religious revival. Strict anti-abortion laws have seldom been relentlessly enforced. The prime modern example was Nazi Germany where the status of women was systematically degraded, birth compulsion was a State slogan, abortion was made a criminal and even capital offence, rigidly enforced and hospitalisation under duress was utilised to prevent threatened abortion.

The new 1967 Abortion Act is the antithesis. It is permissive (now unfortunately almost a bad word in some circles) in that it merely *allows* women to seek abortion, doctors to recommend it and surgeons to perform it. No compulsion is applied to anyone. The conscience clause contained in the Act insists that no medical staff shall be compelled to participate in such an operation if they have a conscientious objection to it. The Act thus conforms to my ethical criteria since freedom of choice is increased and the exercise of responsibility encouraged. That society should also benefit is another compelling argument in its favour.

What is abortion? It is essential to determine exactly what we are discussing using wherever possible ascertainable fact and not opinion, religious or personal. I would like to briefly examine abortion in its medical, anthropological and social aspects.

Abortion occurs in two forms, spontaneous and induced. By far the commonest is spontaneous abortion. One of the most startling findings of recent research is the high rate of natural abortion. Depending on age, fertility, etc., figures vary between 10 and 20 per cent and some workers consider it may be even higher. Even more startling is the finding that only 42 per cent of fertilised ova live beyond the 12th day. It thus happens that many women must abort spontaneously with no other sign than delayed menstruation. If the Roman Catholic hierarchy was consistent in its attitude to abortion, its insistence that conception produces the soul would necessitate increased respect, even reverence, for the delayed menses. Such a high rate of natural abortion must have a biological significance. It has been found that the aborted embryos/foetuses have a vastly greater percentage of defective genes. The "normal" chance of any conception resulting in the birth of a defective child is 1:40 (the defects ranging from the very mild to the crippling). Every year in this country 50,000 defective children are born. Should a drug be discovered that could prevent spontaneous abortion the percentage of defectives born would rise to 1:10 or even 1:5, many being grossly

(Continued overleaf)

(Continued from previous page)

deformed and incapacitated. There has been much talk about "natural law" whenever Catholic theologians discuss contraception but the laws in question have never been defined. The findings regarding spontaneous abortion may represent such a "natural" law, namely, that an animal species uses the mechanism of abortion to maintain its physical integrity and conformation.

Anthropologists and historians have found abortion used as a means of control of population and family size throughout history in all parts of the world, not excluding the present. Devereaux examined 400 primitive societies, in only one of which he was unable to establish this use of induced abortion. Perhaps the exception made a virtue of mendacity. Women are on the whole very law-abiding citizens, indeed there is a move afoot to close down Holloway due to lack of demand. Infanticide is comparatively uncommon, a murderess a rarity. Yet abortion is accepted and utilised among women of all nationalities and periods (generally speaking). It is logical to conclude that woman, who is after all most involved in the situation, distinguishes between murder, infanticide and abortion, and is not wracked by the controversies that stultify the deliberations of theologians. One rather startling example will corroborate this point. It so happens that Hungary and Piedmont, in Italy, have the same birth rate. Piedmont is of course Catholic and has strict anti-abortion and anti-contraception laws. In Hungary contraception is legal and abortion is virtually on request, resulting in 134 legal abortions to every 100 live births. I refuse to believe that the Hungarians are more prolific than the Piedmontese, which indicates a high illegal abortion rate in Northern Italy. It does seem to be a fact of human nature that the stricter the laws against abortion the more prevalent the practice. All Roman Catholic countries have high abortion rates partly due to the ban on contraception. Even so the figures point to the most formidable campaign of civil disobedience in history.

The sociological aspects of abortion will be touched upon later. Mankind is a social animal, it is in our nature to attempt to improve the quality of life of our immediate descendants. If spontaneous abortion is nature's way of improving or at least maintaining the physical quality of life then perhaps it is possible to regard induced abortion as a means of exerting some conscious control over the social quality of life.

Any attitude to abortion which ignores embryology is worthy of but passing interest. The ovum implants in the wall of the womb seven days after conception; it is then called an embryo until the twelfth week and is a foetus until the twenty-eighth week at which time it becomes viable, i.e., can survive outside the mother should it be born prematurely or by caesarian section. After 28 weeks it must therefore be looked upon as an unborn child. Note that the Abortion Act does not apply to this period which is governed by the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929. To begin at the beginning, it is important to put the ovum in its biological perspective. It is genetically unique but then so is every cell in each human body. Every sperm is equally unique, indeed "the nocturnal emissions of one celibate man in one year will provide the genetical material to replace the population of the world" (Potts, 1969). Not only is it possible to manipulate ova by microsurgery, e.g. by dividing it in two, joining two together, transplanting them into alien hosts, etc., but it has proven possible to grow entire new plants from single cells without recourse to sexual reproduction and a new generation of frogs has been produced from intestinal cells surgically injected with

nuclear material. It is difficult to apply strict ethical criteria to such a malleable and insecure organism especially when one considers the 42 per cent death rate. Implantation is the next landmark. Thereafter the embryo undergoes the process of recapitulation, a sort of potted evolution, passing through the various stages of mammalian evolutionary development, the invertebrate, the fish, amphibian, etc. We are therefore dealing with potential life rather than actual human life hence it seems logical to apply different "rights" to different stages of development. An embryo with gills for instance can hardly have attributed to it the same value as the woman in whose womb it grows.

The main distinguishing feature between man and the higher apes is the difference in the number of cells in the grey matter of the brain. The activity of the brain is becoming increasingly important in defining death, as witness the furore over transplant donors. At 10 weeks when the majority of legal abortions are performed, the embryonic brain is poorly developed, even primitive, when compared with that of a chimpanzee. Further consider that the oxygen pressure in the embryonic blood is very low, similar to that of a man flying in an unpressurised plane at circa 30,000 feet, hardly conducive to consciousness as we know it. Consider also that the myelin sheaths, the "insulation" of the nerve fibres, which alone allows them to function efficiently, does not begin to develop until 16 weeks and it will become obvious that at this early stage we are dealing with a very different creature from a new-born baby. The later the pregnancy, the more developed the foetus, the more rights accrue to it until when viability is attained full human rights are attributable to it in accordance with the UN Charter of Human Rights. But in each and every case the rights of the mother, the recognisable personality, must have prior claim.

Does the Abortion Act benefit society? Abortion is safe; ill-effects, physical or mental, transitory. Not so the effects on society of unwanted pregnancies forced to go to term. In such cases the injuries are indeed visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. A twenty-year survey in Sweden of unwanted pregnancies (those that were not illegally terminated) found that the children, compared with carefully matched control, had more mental trouble, drunkenness, marital problems, criminal conviction and poorer education, etc. In Poland infanticide has decreased from 1,000 indictments before the law was changed to 20-50 afterwards. Czechoslovakia has a very liberal abortion law and is the only country in Europe with a falling illegitimacy rate. In Aberdeen where a liberal policy has been possible for many years due to the difference in Scottish law and the genius and humanity of Sir Dugald Baird, only 7 per cent have more than five children compared with 12 per cent in Scotland as a whole.

Recent investigations into the nutrition and IQs of large families have given cause for concern.

I conclude that the present Act is capable of great benefit to society and hence worthy of support and proper implementation. I further conclude that many of the extravagant claims regarding the rights of the foetus are unsupported when the facts, demonstrable and ascertainable, of biology and embryology are considered.

### THE BOUND VOLUME OF THE **FREETHINKER for 1968**

is now available at 30s (plus 4s 6d postage)

From THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP

103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1

## UN-COLOUR THE MINSTRELS

'THE BLACK AND WHITE MINSTREL'S SHOW' was recently quoted at my place of work by one of those men, whose jaundiced mentalities are only too apparent, in order to deride, mock and ridicule a new coloured employee who had just been shown around. In the long history of this branch of the firm at Southampton the new employee was the second coloured man to be accepted for employment. A suggestion of a previous colour-bar policy cannot therefore be entirely avoided. In fact, as will be shown by what happened at the time of the interview of the writer himself, the suggestion is a strong one.

But here the article is extended to deplore all the incidents, arising from colour prejudice, encountered by one who is far from being ashamed of having skin of a brown outward tincture. Shame should solely be assigned to those who think that their skins determine their superiority over the rest of mankind, a myth demolished by scientists long ago.

Proud to be what I am and feeling malice towards no man, but rather civility, friendship and brotherly feeling to all, I live in an area where some people think otherwise and their indifference is expressed through their children. I cannot recount the occasions when my little boy has come home feeling despondent because 'his playmate' has told him that we became coloured by covering ourselves with mud at the beginning of our existence. Insults have been cast at him from time to time on his way from school because of the appearance of his skin and that of his parents. Only a few weeks ago, a relatively grown-up girl aged about nine, one of our good neighbours, told him, in my earshot, that all black or coloured people are dirty. My boy had to answer that we have seen 'white folk' who are worse than pigs or American coyotes. These can be dismissed as simply childish incidents, but it should be remembered that children are always the products of their parents.

But let us look at incidents concerning mature adults, where doubt cannot linger. In November 1968 I went for an interview with my present employers. I shall refrain from naming or describing the interviewer—suffice it to say that after a protracted rigmarole he came to the point and caught me completely by surprise.

"Mr Busaidy," he said, "the job is yours but there is only one thing against you so far."

Enquiring as to what this might be I received the reply: "Your skin." He explained to me that with the exception of a coloured woman employed long ago who had left, the company had never employed a person of my kind. "The question", he said, "will be put to the present employees as to whether they would like to work with a man of brown skin and we will let you know by post accordingly."

Thoroughly disgusted with this outrageous degradation of human dignity, I wrote a short article to the *Southern Evening Echo* which never saw the light of day. Perhaps the editor thought I was some sort of nutcase with persecution mania. After a week I got a letter offering me the job. I accepted hoping thus to show up the policy pursued. I was determined to demonstrate the fallacy of the belief in skin—to expose the warped mentalities of those who cannot see beyond a man's skin.

And in mid-April 1969, another coloured worker has just been taken round and a man saw fit to express his disapproval with wild prejudiced gestures and the words:

"We shall soon be like 'The Black and White Minstrels Show'". His mates laughed with him. Why cannot a man start work and be accepted as a human brother? Should human dignity be relegated to the status of a television show? If the remark was intended as a satire, then it was as weak as the brain of its creator. And as mankind is one—we should say: "uncolour the minstrels".

## REVIEW

JEROME GREENE

WILLIAM JAMES AND RELIGION: Gabriel Richard Mason, PhD, and Arthur Burton, BA (Diana Press, 140 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011: 50 cents).

THOUGH this is only an eight-page booklet, Mason and Burton manage both to demolish William James' restricting doctrine of pragmatism, which is often used as an intellectual defence for religion, and to put the secular humanist case. The former is done efficiently. The latter efficiently and to an extent glamorously—this last representing no small achievement.

James' doctrine: "If a theory or belief works, it is true", is ably destroyed with logic. This process is best summed up in the words of the authors: "Though what is true may be useful or expedient, yet it does not necessarily follow that what is useful or expedient must be true". The effects of James' pragmatism were it to be put into practice, are subjected to a somewhat degrading analysis, for as the authors point out the theory provides "an inadequate role for the scientific enterprise".

It is here that the authors find reason to extol scientific humanism, though logic alone is sufficient to show the futility of James' doctrine. In this context the authors put one of the most convincing arguments against religion and for humanism, in an unusually eloquent way: "Was it the world of science, then in its swaddling clothes, that attempted to silence doubters and opponents with persecution and murder? Weren't the guilty ones the so-called Holy Men consecrated to the idea of the supernatural? James has his relations wrong side up. Science has never been sectarian. Whether you advance a hypothesis or doubt one that is current, science just says: "Prove it". Theologians, having a different approach, threateningly command: "Believe this or be damned!"

Again eloquence is apparent in a passage which effectively provides reasons for a belief in science, or humanism: "Man, being imperfect at the present time, cannot hope to create a Utopia immediately. However, by joining with others in the persistent and courageous use of intelligence, he can certainly make the world a better place to live in. An improved environment in turn will provide changes for the better in people. Thus, we can reasonably hope to spiral upwards and create a milieu which will encourage the development of such attributes as kindness, sympathy, love and understanding. This faith in the power of human intelligence is warranted by evidence, the evidence of what some men have been able to achieve within their own lifetime. It is a rationally humanistic faith to live by, as urgently recommended by such humanists as Felix Adler and Corliss Lamont which should be tried, tested and used universally. Why should we neglect a faith in the possibility of success for the human intelligence in getting the job done here and now? Supernatural faith has been tried for 5,000 years and found wanting".

Finally, a sentence which could well be used as a motto by the FREETHINKER or any of its sympathisers: "The protagonist for tested truth is intellectual freedom".

And as a post-script to add substance to the assertion that scientific humanists do not consider persecution an apt reward for belief, let it be said that though James' pragmatism is of no worth, some of his work in particular his 'radical empiricism' is of great value.

## FILM REVIEW

LUCY DANSIE

THE KILLING OF SISTER GEORGE: Prince Charles, Leicester Square, London, WC2.

AN INTRICATE, very real, though very bizarre, situation superbly acted and directed makes this a most exceptional film. The three central characters are all lesbians, but—thank humanity!—the film is far removed from the commonplace 'raw exposé, and is in no way sordid. Only one of the women (Susannah York) is young and beautiful, and in this film her attributes are only displayed

(Continued overleaf)

in a boyish way. Each character represents a finely drawn study and provides plenty of material for the amateur psychologist that lurks in most of us.

Despite a superlative performance from Susannah York, the film is dominated by Beryl Reid, whose performance alone makes the film worthwhile. Playing a very complex but easily comprehended character, she succeeds to an almost heart-rending degree in conveying the pathetic state of a woman who somehow has ended up middle-aged, unattractive, lesbian—a woman who lives much of her life in a dream world, who is at the same time hard, aggressive, boozy and masculine yet strangely dependent for her sanity on her young companion. That none of us is completely sane makes films about people who are by conventional standards decidedly odd or even mad, perhaps more revealing than the film which shows us ourselves, namely the kitchen-sink drama. Sister George's dream world may be indicative of her need for psychiatric treatment, yet we all possess dream worlds to a greater or lesser extent. Sister George's dream world is obviously far more real to her than a 'normal' person's, but because of this the cause of her illusions and failure to face reality are the more apparent. Thus, one can gain insight into the 'conventional' human character by observing the 'unconventional'.

The inter-relationship between Sister George and Childie is fascinatingly complicated yet is made abundantly clear. Sister George being a good twenty years older generally dominates her young, initially devoted, 'flat-mate'. But on occasions Childie takes the upper hand and provides the comforting shoulder. This of course supplies a revealing insight into the lesbian relationship, which is in itself a social phenomenon worthy of study.

The intrusion of the third woman (Coral Brown) supplies us with another totally different character, who is less overtly masculine than Sister George but much more domineering and self-sufficient.

This clever interplay of personalities is enlivened with some excellent scenes and supporting acting. A scene in a homosexual club will prove an eye opener for many, while some good slapstick results from the various occasions on which Sister George gets drunk—in a taxi with two nuns—in a television studio where she plays a leading part in a soap opera. Sundry scenes in a brothel, where she finds sympathy from a friendly prostitute are at the same time moving and realistically nasty.

*The Killing of Sister George* is not to be missed, even if only because it lasts well over two hours and you believe in getting your money's worth. A final enticement is the appearance of Ronald Fraser (Abthorpe in the BBC's Waugh trilogy *The Sword of Honour*) as a distinctly upper class actor playing a rather less elevated publican along side Sister George in the soap opera.

## LETTERS

### Ideas of Love and Brotherhood

MRS KNIGHT writes with her usual clarity on RI in your issue of May 31st. In two paragraphs however this characteristic facility appears to have failed her.

She says, *inter alia*, that the Christian ideas of love and brotherhood were not introduced into the world by Jesus but were proclaimed by Humanist philosophers in China in sixth century BC and later in classical Greece and Rome. But did Jesus pick up these ideas from the Chinese and was he truly original? If so then he would be much more admirable than he appears in Mrs Knight's pamphlet, *Christianity The Debit Account*. The third and more obvious explanation is that these ideas were and had been current in Judaism. Why then does Mrs Knight, like her Christian 'sisters', so laboriously avoid this observation?

Since these ideas of love and brotherhood appeared in Judaism about the same time as they appeared so ephemerally among a handful of Greeks it is possible that the Jews borrowed these ideas from the Greeks. It is equally possible—horror of horrors—that the Greeks borrowed these ideas from the Jews! After all, later Greeks, as Mrs Knight may know, 'borrowed' 'Aesop's' fables from the Jews of Alexandria.

It is sad that a much respected figure in contemporary Humanism like Mrs Knight should use the word Oriental in the insular, racist way she does in the phrase, "other-worldly Oriental religion". It is inconsistent since the Chinese Humanists do not, in her view, come in for this adjective. Since the cultures of Judea, Egypt and Greece were closely interwoven at that time and subsequently, due to trade, conquest and settlement any attempt to describe one as Oriental and another as Occidental is in any case historically invalid.

Finally, what evidence has Mrs Knight for her statement that, the "subject . . . people looked forward with considerable confi-

dence to the approaching end of the world"? The New Testament? Perhaps Margaret Knight is herself a victim of the RI which she (and I) so heartily deplore.  
GERALD SAMUEL.

[Mrs Knight replies: I think Mr Samuel is a little severe. The article he criticises was not written originally for the FREETHINKER but for a local evening newspaper with an unsophisticated readership and strictly limited space. Some simplification was therefore inevitable.

I do not know why Mr Samuel sees racial implications in my reference to Christianity as an Oriental religion—I was using the term in a purely factual sense. But I agree that some qualification is needed to my phrase about Christianity originating among people "who looked forward with considerable confidence to the approaching end of the world". To be accurate I should have said something like "looked forward to the coming of a Messiah who would be the herald of the end of the world, or at least of some cataclysm which would transform the existing order to the advantage of the Jews". But I do not feel the point was important in the context, which was Jesus' advice to his followers to let tomorrow take care of itself. In any case there can surely be no doubt that Jesus himself, and his immediate followers, believed that the end of the world was imminent.

Mr Samuel's strongest criticism is that I did not point out that the ideals of love and human brotherhood were current among the Jews of the pre-Christian era, as well as among the Humanist philosophers of China, Greece and Rome. I realise that this omission must seem monstrous to a Jewish reader, and I apologise for it; but I assure Mr Samuel that it was not due to anti-Jewish prejudice. When I am speaking to Humanist audiences I always make this point, and mention that the injunction to love one's neighbour as oneself is to be found in the book of Leviticus. But I have found from sad experience that this cuts very little ice with Christian (or predominantly Christian) audiences, whose reaction tends to be "Leviticus—but that's the Bible! What do you mean, non-Christian?" And by the time one has straightened this out, and reminded them that the Old Testament is a pre-Christian document, the original point has usually been lost sight of.]

### A brothel brained nitwit

FIRST LET ME assure Maurice Hill I did not have him in mind as I deplored 'brothel brained nitwits'. Actually on an Australian train journey of hundreds of miles all through the night—such a character got into my compartment, boasting of the brothels he had been in all over the world including many from Brisbane to Perth.

At every stop when he could buy from the station's bar, he would return with bottles and regale all disposed to listen of his prowess as a two-legged ram—all very boring to me trying to sleep, but excellent material for a first-class psychiatrist.

When two nuns boarded the train, and walked along the corridor, he leered and laughed: "They've had nun and won't get nun". All the time he was cold sober as he boozed and talked obsessively about sex—mentioning his second wife could be passed off as his daughter.

Knowing it would be useless talking ethics with him, I ask Maurice Hill, as a better educated man how he would respond to such types, who are convinced sex is the only thing to live for and gloat over—mostly on the F key—harping on nothing admirable.

Finally, if we tolerate homosexuals till they bankrupt brothel keepers, we will still be living in a sick world. Can anyone tell me in fair or foul vocabulary how it is people can be so crazy about sex—either in a pious or a sordid fashion.

BOB TINDALL (Australia).

#### FREETHINKER subscriptions

and orders for literature . . . The Freethinker Bookshop  
01-407 0029

Editorial matter . . . The Editor, The Freethinker  
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 01-407 1251

#### POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

12 months: £2 1s 6d    6 months: £1 1s    3 months: 10s 6d

#### USA AND CANADA

12 months: \$5.25    6 months: \$2.75    3 months: \$1.40

The FREETHINKER can be ordered through any newsagent.