

Freethinker

Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 41

Saturday, October 11, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

THE 1944 EDUCATION ACT IS SHOWN TO BE UNWORKABLE

ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4 the National Secular Society and the Humanist Teachers' Association jointly published a pamphlet entitled *Religious Discrimination in Schools*. In a statement to the press on that date David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society, described the purpose of the pamphlet:

'Now that the Secretary of State for Education and Science is proceeding with the new Education Bill and has not yet announced a change of heart over the religious clauses, we think it right to bring to his and the public's attention a few examples of what is happening under the present Education Act.

The conscience clauses he makes so much of are plainly not working. It might almost be said that although the incidents in this pamphlet should not have happened, these clauses are, on the face of them, unworkable.

For every cause of complaint that has come to our notice there are probably a hundred we have not heard of, while there must be a million times when parents or teachers would like to have taken action or spoken out but thought better of it. If these incidents were occurring in a subject which was academically respectable it would be bad enough. When the whole subject of religion is based on dubious philosophy and bogus history, the situation is deplorable.'

It might be added to this that a reading of the pamphlet gives one the unmistakable impression that Mr Edward Short, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, has been none too scrupulous in his efforts to, in his own words, "man the barricades" to preserve compulsory religious instruction. Witness the following extract: 'He has wrongly informed anxious correspondents that children have the right to opt out, when in fact only their parents have rights in this matter. On another occasion he called for more democracy in schools and greater responsibility for the pupils themselves. Such confusions and prevarications cannot conceal the fact that children and teachers who do not believe in a deity are liable to be victimised, and that cases of this occur frequently in our schools'.

In this situation it is not surprising that in many ways this pamphlet is the most hard-hitting to appear yet, despite its subject matter being restricted to illustrating how the 1944 Education Act is palpably failing to work. This is done with the use of a number of case histories, of which many would make entertaining reading were they the fiction they ought to be. They appear in three sections: 'Pupils', 'Teachers', and 'Colleges of Education'. The authors first quote the relevant part of the 1944 Education Act and then give case histories of instances where it has not been put into practice. For example under the heading, 'Pupils', we find: 'If the parent of any pupil in attendance at any county school or any voluntary school requests that he be wholly or partly excused from attendance at

religious worship in the school, or from attendance at religious instruction in the school, . . . then until the request is withdrawn, the pupil shall be excused'. (Education Act 1944). This is followed by a number of case histories including one from Worcester College for the Blind where: '. . . 88 per cent of the sixth form asked that attendance at chapel be made voluntary. The Head refused, and said that any violation by members of the sixth form of the tradition of compulsory chapel might result in their expulsion. If he had carried out this threat, it would have been virtually impossible for these blind boys to continue their educations elsewhere and to proceed to university'.

Under 'Teachers' we find: 'No person shall be disqualified by reason of his religious opinions, or of his attending or omitting to attend religious worship, from being a teacher in a county school or in any voluntary school, or . . . ; and no teacher in any such school shall . . . receive any less emolument or be deprived of, or disqualified for any promotion or other advantage . . . by reason of his religious opinions or of his attendance or omitting to attend religious worship'. And amongst other case histories is the following: 'A teacher writes: "I have stated my wish to abstain from assembly at my primary school, but my Head has insisted that I attend" '.

The pamphlet ends with the following paragraph: 'The Humanist Teachers Association and the National Secular Society hope that the conscience of the people will no longer permit such an immoral state of affairs to continue. We call upon all teachers who cannot in conscience support such persecutions, to withdraw from religious activities. And we call upon all parents to withdraw their children, *provided the children are willing*, from all religious activities, and to make every effort to persuade Parliament and public to remove these immoral compulsions from our schools.

At the Press Conference held to launch the publication of the pamphlet members of the press were invited to question Michael Duane, former principal of Risinghill School and lecturer in education, David Tribe, Maurice Hill, the Secretary of the Humanist Teachers' Association, and Mrs J. R. Miller, a teacher. Both the last two mentioned figure prominently in case histories described in the pamphlet. The three teachers between them re-emphasised beyond dispute the point that the 1944 Act is unworkable. Mrs Miller, who lost a teaching post at a primary school because she was not prepared to teach religion, demonstrated this

(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.

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.

Buy British and African Stamps from Humanitas Stamps and help Swaneng Hill School, the Agnostics Adoption Society, and the Humanist Housing Association. Send for list to Mrs A. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, Essex RM7 8QX (sac please).

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

All Ireland Humanist Conference, Hotel Nuremore, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan: October 25 and 26: Brochure from Mr S. Potter, Swains Hill, Ballykeel, Holywood, Co. Down. Tel. Holywood 2863.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group: Regency House, Oriental Place, Brighton: Sunday, October 12, 5.30 p.m.: "Humanism and the Permissive Society", Hector Hawton (Managing Director, Rationalist Press Association, and Editor of *Humanist*). Saturday, October 18, 6.30 p.m.: Annual Dinner, at The Bull House, Lewes, Sussex: Tickets 23s 6d each from Mrs K. Pariente, 97 Valley Drive, Brighton, Tel. Brighton 504007.

Cardiff Humanist Group: Bowchier Memorial Hall (Cardiff Institute for the Blind), Newport Road, Cardiff: Wednesday, October 15, 7.45 p.m.: Public Forum on Moral Education. Speakers, Peter Price, The Rev. B. Duckworth—Chairman, Robert Presswood (Director of Education, City of Cardiff).

Chelmsford Humanist Group: Public Library, Chelmsford: Thursday, October 16, 7.30 p.m.: Brains Trust on "What is Humanism?"

Leicester Humanist Society: Vaughan College, St Nicholas Square, Leicester: Thursday, October 16, 7.45 p.m.: "Moral Education", David Tribe (President, National Secular Society).

Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate; Sunday, October 12, 6.30 p.m.: "50 Years of Freethought", F. J. Corina.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, October 12, 11 a.m.: "Is Psychology the Study of Man?", Professor T. H. Pear. Admission free. Tuesday, October 14, 7.30 p.m.: Conway Memorial Lecture, "The Alternative Society", Dr James Hemming. Tickets 2s 6d from the Society.

Sutton Humanist Group: Public Library, Cheam: Tuesday, October 14, 7.45 p.m.: A meeting.

Worthing Humanist Group: 43 Downview Road, West Worthing: Sunday, October 12, 3 p.m.: Garden Party (if weather unsuitable, indoors)—'Bring and Buy' Stalls, Side shows, Competitions. Entrance 2s 6d (including tea). Proceeds to Worthing 'Samaritans'.

(Continued from previous page)

particularly when she was asked whether it was not inevitable that if a primary school teacher was unable to instruct her class in all subjects that were required, she would have to be replaced. She replied: 'Yes. It shows that the 1944 Act does not work'.

CASE AGAINST COMPULSORY RE

IN THE WEEK of the publication of the above-mentioned pamphlet comes very encouraging news from CASE, the 10,000 strong Confederation for the Advancement of State Education. CASE, the pressure group made up of parents, who are widely acknowledged to be from the more informed circles of society, has called for the abolition of compulsory religious education and the compulsory daily act of worship in the forthcoming Education Act. The decision was taken by 100 delegates from local branches at their annual conference in Liverpool. The vote for the motion was carried overwhelmingly.

Mr Maurice Plaskow, the retiring Chairman of CASE has said that the Confederation hopes to submit evidence their case against compulsory RE to the government during November.

Mrs. KIT MOUAT

MRS KIT MOUAT, the former editor of the FREETHINKER, journalist and author of *What Humanism is About*, will be in hospital for a period as yet uncertain. She will therefore be unable to send out her forthcoming book catalogue or to deal with The Humanist Letter Network. She regrets this and craves your indulgence. We all wish her a speedy return both to full health and her valuable activities.

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

A Wide Range of Books

Can Be Obtained

From The

FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET · S.E.1

FREETHOUGHT AFTER RELIGION

A. J. LOWRY

FREETHINKERS are people who tend to collect enemies, and of these, it is still true to say that, in the Western world at least, the most numerous and dangerous of such foes are still found within the ranks of organised religion. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that so much of the freethinkers time and energy is employed in attempting to limit the influence of this adversary, and sceptics of all hues and labels are doubtless to be congratulated upon their unwearrying attempts to convince the faithful of the absurdity of their beliefs.

The length and ferocity of this war, however, tends to mislead many, both amongst the general public and within the freethought movement itself, into believing that religion is not just an enemy, but *the* enemy of freethought. This theory, when allowed to take root, interprets the movement as a wholly parasitic attack upon the churches, whose destruction comprises the entire *raison d'être* of freethought. Were this the case, it is clear that in destroying religion, the movement could only destroy itself, as, having once cleared the world of piety, and having accomplished the mission for which it was intended, it could be allowed to rapidly withdraw into a well-deserved oblivion and death.

The basis of this mistake lies in confusing atheism and freethought. Whilst 'atheism' is a label applicable to any person whose ideology excludes the likelihood of the existence of God, freethought itself is not an ideology, but an attempt to explain how any individual might justify the ideology which he holds. Thus atheists are distinguished from theists on the grounds of their attitude towards the concept of God (rejection or acceptance), whereas freethinkers are distinguished from dogmatists on the basis of how they would justify their beliefs (by appeals to reason, authority, tradition, etc.). It is clear, therefore, that freethought is not really an ideology at all, at least in the sense in which such atheistic philosophies as Humanism can be so counted, but can best be understood as an attitude of mind, or a 'meta-ideological' belief in the way in which conclusions should be reached.

As freethought and atheism are not synonymous as logical categories, so it is hardly surprising to find that the subscribers to each are by no means always identical. In states in which censorship and restrictions on educational facilities are employed in the interests of the ruling class, it is by no means impossible that any citizen, approaching the world with a completely open mind, might nevertheless reach highly peculiar conclusions because of the ideological bias of the only sources available for his scrutiny. In Spain and South America, for example, it would be easily conceivable that any person of limited means, attempting to reach a rational conclusion concerning the nature of the universe, might decide, without swerving from the principles of freethought, that Catholicism provided the best explanation, simply from the fact that his understanding of all other ideologies was incomplete and distorted, because of the nature of the state in which he lived.

Conversely, it is a point worthy of emphasis that describing oneself as an atheist by no means implies that one is a freethinker. Were I, for example, to proclaim my disbelief in God on the grounds that my grandmother told me he didn't exist, or that I wished to seduce my neighbour's wife, and hence was loath to believe in a divinity which I

thought would disapprove of such action; then, although my atheism would be beyond dispute, my claims to be a freethinker would be tenuous in the extreme.

Now, although it is clear that in the Western world, if not elsewhere, organised religion provides the greatest sanctuary for authoritarian dogmatists, this by no means excuses a confusion of these two classes. The true enemy of freethought is unreasoned opinion, and whatever may be the justification for concluding that the majority of the culprits are found in the churches, freethought must not limit its activities to their conversion. Rationally-held opinions rather than atheism should be the end in view, and whilst it is my belief that a high correlation exists between the two, I would personally prefer the existence of a Christian who made serious attempts to justify his position, than an atheist whose only claim to disbelief lay in dogmatism and slipshod thinking.

Christianity is not the disease, and can never be more than a symptom. It is true that whenever this symptom takes sinister and anti-social forms, then it is the duty of responsible citizens to attempt to thwart its progress, but the fact remains that unless there also exists a wider and more enduring programme, to change the attitude of people towards their own beliefs, then Christianity, even if vanquished, will only give way to some movement such as National Socialism, the stupidity of whose tenets are in no way less obvious, and the result of whose ascendancy in our society would be very much worse.

To maintain that there exists a peculiar virtue in believing the right ideology, even if accidentally, and for very bad reasons, is a view for which I find it difficult to excuse the wilder Christian sects. For atheists to subscribe to the same belief is even more disreputable, since not only do atheists maintain (with varying degrees of justification) that their's is a belief in which reason must play a vital part, but it would be even more difficult to know what that virtue would mean, as this belief deliberately denies the existence of a happy hunting ground in which the 'faithful' might be rewarded for their lack of faith. Though the deployment of funds from the Vatican to the NSS would doubtless produce beneficial results, the aim of freethought should not be to fill the world with atheists, without reference to the quality of the atheists it produced. Whether or not people continue to fear God, the need for freethought will persist as long as man is mentally lazy, or prefers social acceptance to justifiable belief. Religion comprises no great part of the opportunities man has for muddled thinking, and so long as these opportunities exist, in religion, philosophy, science or the humanities, then freethought will have meaning in opposing the naive acceptance of the most fashionable ideas, and indicating the way back to truth, from which man appears to possess an enduring predelection to stray.

TOWARDS HUMAN RIGHTS

Free copies from

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

Annual report of the

National Secular Society

PATTERNS OF LIVING AND LOVING

MAURICE HILL

The concluding part of a two-part article in which Maurice Hill outlines the thoughts and plans of himself and a small group of people, who are hoping to establish a commune.

3. Personal relationships: Adults

Not everyone is naturally monogamous. Indeed, the "serial monogamy" of American society, and the growing acceptance and frequency of divorce here, to say nothing of the incidence of adultery, indifference, unhappiness, and the breakdown of relationships within many of the surviving marriages, tend to show that the exclusive permanent one-to-one bond is less than satisfactory.

Within the commune, no two adults need be isolated or obsessively pre-occupied with each other. The tendency might be to reduce the emotional strain of constant company by sharing one's time and affection with several other people. These various associations need not be sexual. On the other hand, there is no reason why they should not be.

It is a fact that human beings sometimes fall in love with more than one person. For many, it may be a drive the satisfaction of which is vital to their happiness, and therefore to the happiness of those closely associated with them. If such an occurrence gives rise to frustration and unhappiness on the one hand, and to jealousy, anger and mistrust on the other, what has been achieved? It might well be preferable to accept this new situation gladly. It is better to share someone's love than to have none of it. If all the persons involved are fond of one another, a new dimension of happiness may be added to their lives.

If it is indeed possible to love more than one person at once (children as well as a husband, for example), then it would seem wrong to try to avoid doing so. This applies to either sex. Moreover, whereas the family often breaks up over such occurrences, the commune partnership might well survive, since it is no longer necessary to abandon one's first love if affection develops for someone else. Sometimes, of course, the partnership will break. This is what happens in life, in or out of formal marriage, and we must face the fact and organise ourselves to minimise the effects of such misfortunes.

Illegitimacy may be thought a problem if some members do not approve of the pseudo-Christian ceremony of marriage. The answer is not to abandon principle and accept the ceremony, but to abolish the concept of illegitimacy. 8½ per cent of all babies born in Britain in 1967 were illegitimate. It is not surprising that the rate is increasing, since the average age of marriage for males is 24, while one third of the male population have copulated by the age of 18, and we continue to treat the question of contraception as a secret.

It is not possible, even if it were desirable, to prevent young people copulating before marriage. To remove the immoral victimisation of children labelled "illegitimate" and of "unmarried mothers", two things are necessary: to make contraception free and universally available in order to reduce the number of unwanted children, and to alter those laws and customs which draw distinctions between children according to the magical rites performed by their progenitors.

Among the many advantages for adults is the fact that most of the women most of the time will be able to pursue a career if they want to, knowing that their children are in the best of care at home.

4. The Old and the Single

At present, the old are often alone and discarded. Sometimes they are accepted into households as supernumerary parents for babysitting duties; but they are often seen as a burden and an interference.

The single, either widowed or never attached, often live in solitary despair, without love, and without children to whom they may devote their care and affection.

For both groups, the commune provides a purposeful setting. A large community can better afford to "carry" a few old people, and there will be many ways in which they can contribute to the multifarious needs of the community, and thus know that they are useful persons.

The unmarried will never need to be solitary, and single or childless women will not be deprived of the presence of children for whom they can care.

5. Children

"From the moment of birth, the baby is subjected to those forces of violence called love. These forces are mainly concerned with destroying its potentialities. The enterprise is on the whole successful. By the time the new human being is 15 or so, we are left with a being like ourselves; a half-crazed creature, more or less adjusted to a mad world."—R. D. Laing: *The Politics of Experience*.

A major function of the family is to promote respect, obedience and conformity. In return it provides "security" and indoctrinates the children with the required responses. All this is damaging to the child if it restricts his free development as an individual. Creativity, always a kind of non-conformity, is now commonly suppressed in order that the child may fit into a pre-conceived pattern. But it is possible to have safety without servitude.

Infants in their helpless state need the care and devotion of a mother. However, it is necessary for their development towards maturity that they be weaned from this state as soon as possible. Another basic need is association with other children of roughly the same age. The traditional family usually fails in this respect. The commune would provide a peer-group for each child.

After the nursing period, children would sleep together in their own room, and would become the responsibility of the whole community. Not only does this release parents from the permanent supervision of their offspring, it also releases children from the emotional stresses of being possessed by one or two supreme adults. Socialisation becomes easier and more rapid.

When a child and its parents are fed up with one another, it will now be possible for them simply to move out of range. Because of the high adult-child ratio, food and care and attention are available all round the child. Parents can then recover from the strain (or the anger, or the desire to hurt) without fearing that the child is abandoned. Each child has the security of his peer-group, and the certainty of the presence of adults it can trust to look after its welfare, without suffering from the emotional disturbances or temporary aberrations of a particular parent. Even if one of the parents leaves altogether, the child does not necessarily suffer as it must in the conventional family.

The diversity of interests and activities in the community would tend to draw out latent abilities and keep the curiosity of youth in operation. Growing up, the child need never be without contemporaries to play with or adults to

talk with; and full participation in the democratic processes of the community would ensure rapid linguistic and social development.

In some districts, parents have difficulty in finding suitable gang activities for their children; the Boy Scouts are a religious organisation demanding oaths of loyalty to God and others, and youth clubs are not always inspiring or available. Within the commune, this problem does not exist. It is its own nursery, play-group, gang and club.

It is our view that religious creeds are incompatible with reason, and that moral codes based on them are irrational and corrupting. Konrad Lorenz, in *On Aggression*, suggests that primitive man was instinctively endowed with patterns of behaviour leading to responsible morality. Man's only "commandment" at the time was "Thou shalt not strike thy neighbour with an hand-axe even if he angers thee". The process of evolution has enlarged this into a modern morality common to all mankind.

It is distressing to see, from recent events in Ireland and elsewhere, that intensive religious training in so-called "Christian morality" leads modern man to the use of axes, bricks and petrol bombs in his anger with those who disagree with him. We consider the imposition of irrational fanaticisms on the young immoral, and we hope that such reversion to primitive barbarism will be impossible in a society based on reason, evolutionary humanism, and freedom to think. It may be objected that we are substituting a new kind of conditioning for the old religious, nationalist, conformist training. This is true; it is inevitable that the young should be affected by the environment in which they grow up; but it is our intention to substitute questioning for blind acceptance, independence for dependence, cooperation for competition, and participation for obedience. In doing so we shall be conditioning the children to freedom.

6. Sex

Something has been said about this in other sections, but it is a topic deserving special comment.

Adults should be free to do as they please, provided they do no violence to another's integrity. They must be efficient in the practice of contraception, since they must not produce unwanted children. It is also their duty to see that the young members of the community, particularly the girls, are similarly protected by the time they reach puberty.

The children should also be free to do as they please.

They should be accustomed to nudity, so that they will not only be able to face the sight of pubic hair without hysteria, but will also be released from the guilts and repressions which make sex an obsession for so many adults today. We hope they will discover that sexual activity is normal, healthy and pleasurable, and a means of communicating delight between human beings.

A. S. Neill, from his vast knowledge of children, concludes that "heterosexual play in childhood is the royal road to a healthy balanced adult sex life". It took us hundreds of years to accept universally practised masturbation as harmless and inevitable. We still have the same struggle in accepting homosexual (or bisexual) behaviour. Leonard Williams, in *Man and Monkey*, notes that for full adult heterosexual adjustment the juvenile human must be free to engage in every type of sexual activity. When possessive authoritarian parents try to prevent this, they are damaging the personality of the child.

The children of the commune will have this freedom. We believe that this will enable them to love and be loved without fear or guilt, to judge commercialised sex and pornography on their merits, and to escape the neuroses that increasingly afflict society. They may well shock some of their conventionally reared contemporaries, but this cannot be helped. We do not conceal the story of evolution in case it shocks Jehovah's Witnesses.

Conclusion

In view of the difficulties which may be encountered by adults brought up in family traditions when they try to adapt to a life of freedom, we feel that a commune like this should be begun only by people who already know and like one another, and agree on the general principles to be followed. Given this, we foresee no insuperable difficulties, no disadvantages, and a host of advantages in the realms of economy, psychology, education, social and political awareness, mental and physical health, happiness and love.

It is not our wish that anyone should live like this who does not want to. But we hope many will try it, for we see in this way of life the possible future happiness of mankind.

We hope to set up such a commune within the next 18 months, and would be pleased to hear from others who are interested. For further comment on these matters we recommend the BHA discussion document *Marriage and the Family*, which also contains a useful bibliography.

ROBERTSON AND NIETZSCHEAN ICONOCLASM

MARTIN PAGE

J. M. ROBERTSON (1856-1933) was one of the first scholars, born and bred in the British Isles, to appreciate the genius of that much maligned thinker Friedrich Nietzsche. In 1897, during Nietzsche's own lifetime and when he was little known in England, Robertson hailed him as a "stricken man of genius" and as "so often the most stimulating of thinkers".

Nietzsche was a super-Christian who lost his faith but never ceased to be religious; his great grudge against God was that "God is dead". Robertson therefore showed appreciable acumen when, in 1897, he said of Nietzsche: "his book [*The Antichrist*] is little better than an attempt to wreak on Christianity, as a kind of personified abstraction, a verbal revenge for all the intellectual irritation it has ever caused him. Thus it comes about that there is hardly

a single charge in his indictment that does not rebut another". If Robertson was one the keenest critics of Christianity in his ability to mount devastating batteries of fact and argument, Nietzsche was well nigh unequalled in the violence and power of his denunciation. Fully aware of the triumphs of modern science in its assaults on the "truths" of Christianity, Nietzsche concentrated his fire on what remained of Christian morality, which he regarded as "slave morality" and as "the most malignant form of all falsehood". "Higher than love of your neighbour is love of the most remote future man" (1, pp. 69-70). "Christian is the hatred of the intellect, of pride, of courage, freedom, intellectual *libertinage*; Christian is the hatred of the senses, of the joys of the senses, of joy in general" (2, p. 150).

(Continued overleaf)

(Continued from previous page)

Before Freud, Nietzsche observed: "Christianity, with its fundamental resentment against life, made something obscene out of sexuality: it flung *filth* at the very basis, the very first condition of our life" (3, p. 119).

Robertson, however, criticised Nietzsche for "often identifying Christianity as a whole with one or other of the elements which have at times arisen in it—as those of asceticism, abasement of energy and joy, recoil from beauty and health, and consequent glorification of poverty and disease". Said JMR: "Because Christianity has been called 'the religion of sympathy' he runs amuck against sympathy. Elsewhere he notes, rightly enough, that 'hatred against those thinking differently, the will to persecute', is Christian. Why then concede that Christianity is the religion of sympathy? The true criticism would be that Christianity has *not* promoted sympathy; that it has been the means of creating more numerous and more profound antipathies—antipathies of sect, of church, of creed—than can be traced to any other institution. . . . He charges it as a vice on Christianity that it represents the 'revenge' of the weak on the strong, after laying it down that all is good which 'increases the feeling of power, will to power, power itself, in man'. As if any revenge were not thus a good".

Nietzsche retained a profound respect for Jesus Christ, whom he apparently regarded as the personal founder of Christianity and whom he called "the most loving of men". Yet he also remarked: "The attempts with which I am acquainted to extract from the Gospels even the history of a 'soul' seem to me the proofs of a detestable psychological frivolity" (2, p. 164): in Robertson's words, "this condenses the whole argument against the pretence of piecing a real Jesus out of the Gospel mosaic of myth, anthology, fable and forgery". Nietzsche, like Robertson, was about twenty when he "discovered" the work of Strauss; but it was Robertson—not Nietzsche—who was among the first to present the case for the non-historicity of Jesus in the light of the immense knowledge secured by the progress of anthropology, Biblical criticism and comparative hierology during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Robertson quoted with approval Nietzsche's remarks on the Christian saints: "How can legends of saints be called 'tradition' at all? The stories of saints are the most ambiguous literature that exists; to apply to them scientific methods, when no other records are extant, seems to me wrong in principle—mere learned idling" (2, p. 163). But JMR disagreed with Nietzsche's estimate of Pascal: "If ever there was a case where pietism was the expression of intellectual collapse resulting from physical decay, his [Pascal's] is one. Yet in this very case Nietzsche ascribes the collapse to the pietism instead of the pietism to the collapse". Certainly, in Nietzsche's case, it is significant that the cult of the "hard" Superman—Nietzsche's substitute for God—was the visionary concept of a highly sensitive man who suffered continually from stomach disorders, migraine and eye trouble. In Robertson's words: "It is the sufferer's passionate desire for strength that inspires these stamping protests against anything that savours of self-effacement, these shouts for a purely 'physiological' ethic".

According to St. Paul: "neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11 : 9). According to Nietzsche (who failed to enjoy satisfying sexual relations with women): "Man shall be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior: all else is folly" (1, p. 75). Robertson was fairer to the fair sex,

declaring in 1904: "If the capacities of women can be thus vindicated in the branches of histrionic art, fiction and poetry, it would seem a little arbitrary to assume that in any other branch of intellectual or artistic effort they are generically incapable of success". With his creed of the Superman as the guardian of spiritual and cultural values, Nietzsche took as his premise the natural inequality of men. Yet his Superman—like Mohammed's proverbial coffin—was suspended in a void, without visible means of support: the social mechanism by which he would secure his pre-eminence was never really explained by Nietzsche, of whom Robertson was quick to remark: "We rectify his intuitions or *naïvetés* by an economics which he did not even attempt to understand, and by an *a posteriori* sociology which he did not take the trouble to build up".

Even so, the German thinker critical of the Christian morality which prescribed "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" pointed to the limitations of the principle of reciprocity enunciated by "that blockhead, John Stuart Mill" and accepted by J. M. Robertson. Speaking of Mill, Nietzsche declared: "I abhor the man's vulgarity when he says 'What is right for one man is right for another'; 'Do not to others that which you would not that they should do unto you'. Such principles would fain establish the whole of human traffic upon *mutual services*, so that every action would appear to be a cash payment for something done to us. The hypothesis here is ignoble to the last degree: it is taken for granted that there is some sort of *equivalence in value between my actions and thine*". With his gospel of individual salvation ("flying on one's own wings into one's own heaven"), Nietzsche adapted the Protestant tradition of his forefathers; through his emphasis on the value of leisure, idleness and even boredom, he freed himself from the Protestant ethic to a greater extent than Robertson the ex-Presbyterian.

For Nietzsche the collective messianism of the democratic and socialist movements reincarnated the Christian values he despised. "Socialism may serve to teach, very brutally and impressively, the danger of all accumulations of State power" (4, p. 344); and Nietzsche's warning (echoed by Robertson) reaped a bitter harvest in the twentieth century. Perhaps one reason for Nietzsche's hostility to democracy was voiced by Robertson when the latter declared in a debate: "If you are going, by some vote of the majority, to settle what forms of art and literature are to be produced, you will have a lower condition of art and literature than you have had yet; that is all. Do not think I am saying this to taunt the populace. I am simply putting the plain fact. If it is by a mere vote that it is to be made possible for a man to paint a great picture, to make a great invention, to think out a theory—then there is no security that any of these things will be done at all". For Nietzsche culture and the State were likewise antipathetic.

Possibly because of his aristocratic leanings, Nietzsche was "instinctively" certain that Shakespeare never wrote the plays attributed to him, and that Bacon was their true author. If only Nietzsche had lived to read *The Baconian Heresy*, in which Robertson demolished this piece of Nietzschean iconoclasm! If only Nietzsche, for once, had followed the advice contained in his own definition of education, unreservedly praised by Robertson. Said Nietzsche: "People have to learn to see; they have to learn to think; they have to learn to speak and write: the object of all three of these pursuits is a noble culture. . . . To defer judgment, to survey and comprehend each case from all sides. This is the first preparatory schooling of intellectuality: not to react immediately to a stimulus, but

to get the checking, the settling instincts in hand" (3, p. 57).

Declared Robertson: "When Nietzsche denounces socialism and democracy and the spirit of equality, we know what we are dealing with—the half truths of the neurotic thinker, the antidote to which may often be found in his own saner work". In their aim to foster greater opportunities for the more extensive flowering of creative individuality, democrats and socialists were closer to Nietzsche than he realised; and he approved of their efforts to remove national animosities. During Nietzsche's own lifetime, before the juggernaut of Sarajevo shattered the supposed unity of the international socialist movement, Robertson wrote: "There is hope that the very horror and hideousness of modern war, once the people are taught to realise what it means, will drive the workers to revolt against it. One of the great merits of the Socialist movement is that it is really destroying the spirit of national enmity, as between the workers of the different nations".

A decade after the Versailles Treaty, Robertson said of Nietzsche: "Insofar as he helped to create the temper which moved Germany to precipitate the World War he has evoked the due rebuttal". But in making this statement, JMR appears to have given insufficient weight to the following facts: (1) Nietzsche was a strong critic of the German Reich; (2) he hated imperialism and nationalism; (3) he had immense admiration for the cultural achievements of the French, who "may always lay claim to the highest honours"; (4) he stressed the positive role of the "good European"; and (5) doubtless influenced by Heraclitus, Nietzsche often spoke of war metaphorically, to mean the interplay of cosmic forces, or psychological conflict. Robertson was no less thought-provoking when he said of the German thinker: "That 'Christianity has taken the part of all the weak, the low, the ill-constituted', is not nearly so true as that Nietzsche himself, in his higher and saner moods, has taken their part". Indeed, it was Nietzsche who condemned "the brazen fraud of racialism", praised the heroism of Jewish freethinkers and exclaimed, "We must have a goal, in view of which we may all love each other!" (5, p. 271). Thus Robertson said of him: "His assault on 'sympathy' is the rebuttal of his attacks on the anti-Semites, who may now claim to be applying his principles". And this was written by JMR decades before the advent of the Nazi régime!

Through his pre-Freudian emphasis on the primordial Dionysian impulses surging beneath the surface of rationality, Nietzsche pointed to the limitations of what Pareto subsequently termed the class of logical actions, and to the previously much underrated role of the non-logical. Militarists of Imperial Germany and later of the Nazi variety were able to manipulate Nietzsche's teaching for their own ends, partly because of his Schopenhauerian "will-worship" (for which he was censured by the rationalist Robertson); partly because of the deliberate perversion and downright forgery of his work by his own sister (who married a leading anti-Semite); partly because of his Voltairean weakness for exaggeration and audacious paradox and epigram, which were weapons in his revolt against bourgeois-Christian civilisation.

Robertson rightly acknowledged him as a master of style—Nietzsche has few rivals among German thinkers for the sheer beauty of much of his writing—but, added our scientifically minded Scot, "the assumption to reduce all problems, all inquiries, to the scope of the sentence and the aphorism, is in the end a fatuity". Robertson might have explicitly observed, however, that Nietzsche's aphoristic

style largely resulted from his suspicion of philosophic system-building and from the work methods forced upon him by his well nigh continuous illness and restless personality. As JMR said: "We can but treat Nietzsche finally as a pathological case; a brain powerful even in incipient disease; perhaps owing much of its passing power to its very state of commencing dissolution, in which it knows such strange vibrations; but, because of that state, incoherent, contradictory, overweening, systemless".

Writing in 1897, Robertson pronounced *Thus Spake Zarathustra* "a collection of essentially disparate discourses"; at the same time he acclaimed it as "a really great book". A Bible of nineteenth century Romantic individualism, *Zarathustra* contained not only the essence of Nietzsche's thought, but also a prophetic glimpse of his tragic transfiguration: "Mine enemies have grown strong and have distorted the face of my teaching, so that my dearest friends have to blush for the gifts I gave them" (1, pp. 95-96). Significantly, Robertson's lifelong friend Ernest Newman was instrumental in exposing the Nazi-fication of Nietzsche perpetrated chiefly by his sister, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche. "Nietzsche remains, even for opponents, an object of compassion": thus spake Robertson. The thorough-going iconoclasm of Robertson and Nietzsche was a powerful reason why their merits were not so widely or so cordially recognised as they deserved. to be. Their enemies alas! were human, all-to-human.

¹ *Thus Spake Zarathustra*; ² *The Antichrist*; ³ *The Twilight of the Idols*; ⁴ *Human, All-Too-Human*, Part I; ⁵ *Notes to Zarathustra*. The page references are to the Oscar Levy edition, though in many cases I have given my own translations of the quotations from Nietzsche.

SECULAR EDUCATION APPEAL

Sponsors:

**Dr Cyril Bibby, Edward Blishen, Brigid Brophy,
Professor F. A. E. Crew, Dr Francis Crick,
Michael Duane, H. Lionel Elvin,
Professor H. J. Eysenck, Professor A. G. N. Flew,
Dr Christopher Hill, Brian Jackson,
Margaret Knight, Dr Edmund Leach,
Professor Hyman Levy, A. S. Neill, Bertrand Russell,
Professor P. Sargant Florence,
Professor K. W. Wedderburn, Baroness Wootton**

All donations will be acknowledged

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

OBITUARY

WE REGRETFULLY announce the recent death of Joseph Walsh of Manchester. He was 80 years young and had been a member of the Manchester branch of the National Secular Society since it was resuscitated after the war.

Walsh, formerly a Roman Catholic, was a freethinker by conviction. At branch meetings he declared that years ago he had come to see that Roman Catholicism was one of the most evil things which existed, its worst facet being that it enslaved the minds of children and therefore it was only the very thoughtful who escaped the clutches of the church. At outdoor meetings he helped Mr Woodcock in the dissemination of literature.

Mr Bayford, who addressed the gathering at Blackley Crematorium, said that Walsh was a genial and lively man, a man of probity and principle, sympathetic upright and sincere in all he undertook. During his illness he was visited in hospital by relatives and friends and it was obvious that he was a man held in high esteem. Sympathy is extended to all his relatives. W.C.

LETTERS

Bichaysus

I WISH Denis Cobell (September 20) and others would not use the term "Eire" when referring to 'Southern' Ireland. Eire is simply the Gaelic word for Ireland and appears on stamps and coins of the Republic (Poblacht na hEireann) because of the Dublin government's claim to speak for the whole of Ireland.

Strictly speaking, Northern Ireland should not be called Ulster, as three counties of this province, Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan, were included by the partition treaty into the original Irish Free State (Saorstát Eireann), now the Republic.

Southern Ireland is also rather an anomalous term as the Republic includes the northernmost county, Donegal (Tír Chonaill). How Irish can you get!

NIALL HUGH MACSAINOID or NIGEL H. SINNOTT.

Moral Education

MR HILL'S letter (September 13) does not quite meet my comments. I have read two of the books he quotes, and others. Also the pamphlets, of which, incidentally, I have distributed a few scores amongst humanists and sympathisers. My position is that, and I am open to correction on the point, with a majority of school teachers religiously inclined, any moral teaching they impart to their scholars will be slanted likewise, no matter what the curriculum says should be taught as morality. One can only hope that with an increasing number of Humanists in the teaching profession this state of affairs will be suitably modified. Until then, my fear is the danger I described. I have even heard a humanist teacher extolling the virtues of Christian ethics as a basis for teaching humanist morality. What then can we expect from dedicated Christian teachers?

R. ROBSON.

Heythrop College

I WAS ASTONISHED to return from holiday to be confronted by J. Stewart Cook's letter on Heythrop College. Clearly the enemies of secularism can go on perpetual vacation and leave it to be sold out by its friends.

The thing that impresses me on re-reading my original statement is how moderate it was. After all, in its four centuries of history Jesuitism has at one time or another been outlawed in most Catholic countries for alleged intrigues and intellectual dishonesty, and it is with this religious order that the old adages of 'give me a child until it is seven' and 'the end justifies the means' are most firmly associated. At the risk of being again denounced as a Paisleyite by Mr Cook, I must point out that in academic terms Anglicanism, Methodism and Congregationalism are, by comparison, models of intellectual impartiality.

But none of this appeared in the original statement. It conceded that other denominations already enjoy academic status and merely pointed out that in a post-Christian age the way to ensure justice was not to extend religious privileges but to remove them. This was also the basis of the resolution overwhelmingly carried at the NSS AGM. It did not appear on the agenda paper because it was an emergency motion. The first I knew the matter was even at issue was on reading a report of the outcome in the *Universe* for July 25, long after the agenda was sent out. Mr Cook is the only secularist I know of who had prior knowledge (though he does not state whether he was aware of the matter before the Senate meeting of July 16 to approve the report), and with statesmanlike and ecumenical magnanimity he found nothing to complain about.

Had not inspectors visited the college and been impressed by its efficiency? (When, by the way, has anyone ever accused the Jesuits of inefficiency?) Heythrop was a hive of activity; no trace of medieval monastic indolence here. And there was the library, all 160,000 volumes. What could be more satisfactory? Who would be churlish enough to tot up the combined verbiage of prevarication, obfuscation, double-talk, evasion, special pleading, tendentious interpretation, calculated omission (if it isn't 'irrational' to compute an omission) and downright lying to be found inside this array of tooled covers? Certainly not J. Stewart Cook. For not only does he deem theology academically respectable—it might be generally agreed that part of it at least is important in the history of ideas—he finds nothing strange about the fact that it should be taught by vested interests whose decrees claim recognition by the community at large; as if political economy were to be dis-

pensed in colleges set up by the political parties and given academic status.

The full financial benefits to Catholicism of this move I am unable at present, and maybe permanently, to compute. One thing is certain, that Archbishop Beck, the man who amazed even Catholics by managing to extract from the public 80 per cent of the building costs, on top of full maintenance, of church schools, was not deputed to stage-manage 'the working party which formulated the proposals and made the application' (*Universe* cited) unless material as well as prestigious benefits were anticipated. What I referred to in the statement was not direct grants to the college but guaranteed support from the rates for Heythrop students as members of the University of London and not of some private institution.

Apart from being president of the NSS and receiving many documents in that capacity, I am a professional writer and lecturer in current affairs and consider myself reasonably well-informed. Yet I had no inkling at all that the Heythrop negotiations were going on. Neither, it seems, had anyone else at the NSS AGM. I therefore make no apology for the use of the word 'secret', though I am happy to replace 'deal' with 'concession' as more fully revealing that the benefits are entirely one-sided. If the NSS were to set up an institute of atheism and seek academic status for it, I have no doubt that interested parties like the churches would be informed and the whole thing would become a national scandal long before it reached any university senate. I also have no doubt that the proposal would be thrown out and that Mr Cook would be writing letters (which are more prolific even than my press releases) to anyone who would publish them about the 'narrow, bigoted' and tendentious attitude represented by the approach. Yet Jesuit instruction he regards as a normal part of 'a regular and liberal course of education'.

It is unimportant that in his letter Mr Cook reveals personal contempt for me and sneers at any suggestion that I should have been personally informed, though this was not part of my original complaint. What he further shows is contempt for anyone not 'entitled to receive' this information, presumably all outside the charmed circle of the Catholic Hierarchy and the University of London Senate. I must remind Mr Cook that universities in this country are not private but public institutions, that the respect accorded to their degrees is a privilege and not a birthright, that in a time of economic squeeze which is grossly depriving many other institutions (e.g. hospitals and primary schools) they are consuming large sums of public money for the direct benefit of a privileged minority, and that questions of their status are of public concern. The arrogant attitude of Mr Cook will merely serve to fortify the ratepayer and taxpayer backlash which is already apparent.

I hope I shall never contract that mental illness which results in seeing a Jesuit under every gooseberry bush. But there appears to be abroad a strange eye infection which make it impossible to see a Jesuit in a Jesuit college.

DAVID TRIBE,

President, National Secular Society.

VISION AND REALISM

Annual Report of the
NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Free copies from

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

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.