

Freethinker

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BIBLE BAN

THE INDEPENDENT TELEVISION AUTHORITY is to be congratulated on its decision to ban advertising worth several thousand pounds for a forthcoming weekly publication about the Bible. On December 30 an ITA official said: "The 1964 Television Act says that no advertisement shall be permitted which is directed towards any religious end".

This small incident highlights the need for the regulations governing broadcasting to be rationalised. If in 1964 parliament decided that religious advertisements could not be permitted on one of our three channels during the small amount of time allotted on the air for advertisements as such, why five years later are we still bombarded with religious advertising for over an hour every Sunday evening and for a few minutes around midnight on weekdays? This would seem to be a gross anomaly. Cigarette advertising has also been ruled unfit for the ITA's advertising spots, and quite rightly no television authority would conceive of putting on programmes day after day, week after week, whose primary purpose was to demonstrate the benefits of cigarette smoking. If something is ruled wrong in one quarter why is it considered desirable in another?

The answer to this lies with tradition which seems to die particularly hard where there isn't much of it. When the BBC looks back to its inception it sees religious broadcasting and is therefore reluctant to do away with it. There is also the unpleasantness involved in offending Christians from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsay, to the Archbishop of Prejudiced Parlour Games, Malcolm Muggeridge. Had the Independent Television Authority been going as long as the BBC we would doubtless have a heavenly chorus of Latter Day Saints and Ian Paisley, interspersed with Fairy Liquid and Shredded Wheat. We must indeed be thankful for that minute mercy.

MARRIAGE AND ILLEGITIMACY

DAVID TRIBE, the President of the National Secular Society, has joined the chorus of voices on the question of the marriage laws. In a recent press release he applauds the Chairman of the Law Commission, Mr Justice Scarman's statement that in the future marriages recognised by the State should take place at State Register offices. He goes on:

"Increasingly the secular law and religious law (or religious laws, as God is a more fickle legislator than any political assembly) are growing apart. Divorce is now available in a wide range of circumstances that ecclesiastics do not recognise. British law recognises no more than one legal wife, while Islamic law recognises up to four. Other Eastern religions are fluid in this particularly. Anglican vicars function as State registrars for marriage, even though some of them refuse to marry divorced people, whether or not regarded, under the old divorce law, as innocent parties.

It is, further, unrealistic to expect registrars to go traipsing all over the country to every shape and size of ecclesiastical premises or even, in the case of Jews, to private

homes, simply to record signatures after the interminable curiosities of religious ceremonies."

These are all reasonable suggestions but depend for their relevance on the desirability of marriage itself. On this Tribe says:

"Whether or not a wedding contract is itself an anachronism is a matter of individual viewpoint. As divorce becomes easier there would seem less objection, but also less need, for it. Marriage has, in the past, led to the concept of legitimacy or illegitimacy which has rebounded on innocent children. But any informalisation of the concept of marriage must be accompanied by stringent attention to family planning, or the world's demography would be upset and its economy imperilled by a chaos of irregular spawning."

Everything is ultimately a matter of individual viewpoint. Organisations such as that of which Tribe is President exist to alter individual viewpoints. If Tribe is not prepared to condemn marriage for the anti-social institution it is, he might at least call for a law to make all children legitimate and thus remove one certain anachronism.

POLITICS IN SPORT

THOSE SPORT LOVERS and others, who claim that politics should be kept out of sport, and that protests, such as those we have seen against the Springboks Rugby team, are ineffectual anyway, have always been at fault in their first assumption since it was the South African government who initially brought politics into the sports arena by stipulating that their touring teams must be white skinned. Their second assumption was refuted this week when news came from Cape Town that officials in several sports have appealed to the government for permission to pick mixed teams to represent South Africa. Mr Alf Chalmers, the President of the South African Tennis Union, has issued a call for what he terms a "summit" meeting between sports officials and Mr Vorster, the prime minister, in order to discuss the increasing isolation which South Africa faces in the international sporting world should its touring teams continue to be chosen from the white population only.

Clearly this welcome development is largely a result of the excellent organisation of the Stop the 70 Tour Committee, which has been behind the demonstrations against the Springboks in this country. Their effectiveness has been proven and for those who still stubbornly maintain: "Keep politics out of sport", I would like to quote *The Times'* correspondent in Cape Town, who on December 29 wrote of the South African government's attitude to the question raised by Alf Chalmers: "What would, for other countries, be a straightforward issue involving sport alone is a major political issue in South Africa".

Freethinker

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

RIGHT OF THE VATICAN

THE REACTIONARY POLITICS of the Roman Catholic hierarchy was demonstrated recently. The Pope devoted three of his Christmas broadcasts to saying how "shocked" he was by the slum housing conditions in Rome's Prenestina district, which he visited on Christmas day. Shock of course implies surprise. So I should like to register my shock at the Pope's shock.

Despite the Vatican's reactionary tendencies it saw fit to support the Spanish priest, Father Mariano Gamo, who was on trial at the Madrid Public Order Court on charges of carrying illegal propaganda. However, despite Papal support and defence testimony from the Auxiliary Bishop of Madrid, Gamo was convicted and sentenced to three years. During the trial his non-violent supporters were on at least two occasions attacked and beaten by members of an extreme right-wing organisation known as Warriors for Christ the King. Whether this aptly named organisation has anything to do with Franco's government or not, the government has come out to the right of the Vatican, which is a considerable feat—particularly when it is appreciated that Franco's government depends for its existence on the Roman Catholic Church.

THE POLICE AND THE CITIZEN

LAST JULY, 167 MPs signed this Motion which was tabled in the House of Commons:

"That this House, aware of the concern which has been expressed by members of both the public and the police over the present method of investigating complaints against police officers under the Police Act 1964, urges the Secretary of State to amend this Act, with particular reference to the need for an independent element representing the public in conducting these enquiries; the publication of findings in appropriate cases; and to the circumstances in which any recommendations made would be binding on the Chief Constable of the force concerned."

The terms of this Motion reflect the growing public distrust of the way in which the Police Force acts as its own judge and jury in any complaints about police behaviour.

The National Council for Civil Liberties has recently published *The Police and the Citizen*,¹ a booklet which sets out an admirable case for independent investigations of complaints against the Police.

In 1968, the number of complaints received by the police was 9,998. Of this number, the police found themselves at fault in only 1,188 cases. It is possible that all the other cases were quite unjustified, but as long as police forces are judges in their own causes, it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that they find themselves innocent when

ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Humanitas Stamps: Help 5 Humanist charities. Buy stamps from/ or send them to Mrs A. C. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, RM7 8QX, Essex. British and African speciality. Send for list.

Christmas Cards—peace themes, many-language greetings, bargain parcels, excellent gift selection, generous discounts for sales. 24 samples 12/6 post free. List free. Proceeds to *Peace News*, c/o Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London, N1.

COMING EVENTS

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.

INDOOR

Belfast Humanist Group: NI War Memorial Building, Waring Street: Monday, January 12, 8 p.m.: "A Teacher's Vacation Course in Nigeria", C. Latchem (Strandmillis) Friday, January 23, 7.30 p.m.: Greenan's Lodge Hotel, Lisburn Road, Belfast: Annual Dinner—Tickets (30s each) must be obtained in advance from Basil Cooper, 46 Cadogan Park, Belfast BT9 6HH.

Luton Humanist Group: Friday, January 16, 8 p.m.: Social Evening (Members and friends).

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, January 11, 11 a.m.: "American Medicine and Social Responsibility", Dr D. Stark Murray, Admission free. Tuesday, January 13, 7 p.m.: Discussion—"Policies for Racial Equality", Anthony Lester (Barrister). Admission 2s (including refreshments). Members free.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

others would find them guilty. As this booklet comments: "We cannot forget that, in each of the (fortunately few) major police scandals of recent years—the brutality in the Sheffield CID, the corruption cases in Brighton and in London's Savile Row station, the frame-up perpetrated by Detective-Sergeant Challenor—senior police officers persistently denied that there was anything wrong until a public outcry arose. And in each of these cases numerous policemen, not themselves among the guilty, knew what had happened and kept quiet".

The Police and the Citizen groups the complaints into six main categories:

1. Violence.
2. Corruption.
3. Lying.
4. Motoring incidents.
5. Breaches of procedure.
6. Rudeness.

The Police themselves categorise complaints under two headings:

(Continued foot of page 15)

THE INFERNAL DOCTRINE

A. J. LOWRY

MANY PEOPLE, if not the majority, will commit almost any crime against their reason, provided only that the penalty for disobedience is sufficiently severe. It is obvious that the greater the crime these people are called upon to commit, the more violent will be the protest of their minds, and hence the more dreadful must be the punishment to invoke sufficient fear to overwhelm them. In view of this, therefore, it is not particularly surprising to discover that the most hideous, the most excruciating and the most prolonged torments with which man has ever been threatened have been reserved for such people as are unable to accept the particular doctrines of the Christian Church.

Though doubtless of strategic advantage in maintaining flocks of frightened sinners within its bounds, the doctrine of hell would appear too hideous to be of any permanent benefit even to its employers, and the alacrity and zeal with which sceptics have for centuries been threatened by its torments has resulted not only in significant and undesirable effects in Christian morality, but has exposed the whole fabric of belief to the ridicule and contempt of the intelligent, the compassionate and the just.

The most obvious of the objections to the teaching of hell is that it is simply the question of evil writ infinitely large. The statements that God, being benevolent, does not wish anyone to suffer in hell; that God, being all-powerful, can prevent what he does not like; and yet that the majority of mankind will find their destination in the place which God would least prefer them to be, simply cannot all be accepted at once. If God cannot prevent man from going to hell, he is incompetent; if he will not, he is sadistic; if he can and will, then man will not go to hell. It is an elementary exercise in logic to show that one of these three statements must be false.

Despite twenty centuries of Christian apologetics, the answer to this objection remains feeble in the extreme. It is said that God, wishing men to freely love him, created his mortals with free will, a poorly defined quality whose only specific application appears to be the ability to be employed by man for his own damnation. The fact that apostles and preachers threaten us with everlasting anguish for failure to love him is not apparently counted as coercion by God, whose *modus operandi* would seem to include any method, provided only that it was sufficiently useless to prevent the majority from employing it as a method to escape their impending doom.

It is not surprising that objections to such a witless argument are almost innumerable. It can, for example, be pointed out that the original paradox has not been circumvented, since it is still possible to ask whether, at the creation of each new soul, God is aware of whether it will employ its free will to go to heaven or to hell. If he does not, then claims of God's prophetic ability and omniscience can be no longer maintained, whilst if he does, we may ask what motives short of sadism or sloth prevent him uncreating the hell-bound on the spot, and replacing them with those of a more celestial inclination.

But besides retaining the old difficulty, this 'explanation' succeeds only in producing new ones. For in imposing 'free will' upon man, God has taken away man's right to relinquish it, and I am sure that I do not speak alone when I say that, were the Christian religion true, I would prefer to be a heaven-bound automaton than enjoy the privileged freedom of being allowed to go to hell. The reason for this gigantic imposition would appear to be that God desires

our spontaneous devotion, though precisely how we are expected to effect this under threat from a being so selfish that he is prepared to damn most of mankind for the gratification of his desires, is a dilemma upon which Christianity remains permanently mute. It would appear, therefore, that the originator of this doctrine was a man devoid of either the ability to perform elementary steps in reasoning, or the remotest understanding concerning the nature of love.

The argument is shown to be only more absurd by the fact that people simply do not go to hell of their own free will. I have never yet heard of any sane man who believed he was bound for those regions, so its future citizens would appear to consist exclusively of those who disbelieved in its existence, or who mistakenly believed that their creed ensured their salvation from it. Were anyone to freely choose between heaven and hell, he must, by their respective natures, choose the former; so that, having introduced free will to justify hell, Christians must then exclude it again to explain how anyone arrives there. For if I am damned, it is because I believed the wrong ideas, which no man freely chooses to do, and having thus excluded this vague freedom from the analysis, the point can again be made that no just and competent God would allow his charges to stray into such delusion, for which they were to be irrevocably damned.

In order to explain why a merciful God does not exercise the aforementioned predicate in excusing all men this monstrously inhuman punishment, the defenders of the Christian religion sink only deeper into confusion. The suggestion is that God, being just and holy, must throw sin into hell, together with all who cling to it, rather like flies on a flypaper which is thrown into the fire.

Of even greater relevance than this is the fact that the apologetics have made what philosophers refer to as 'a category mistake'. Sin, if it has any meaning at all, most certainly does not mean that. It is classically defined as disobedience to God's law, and is thus not a thing, but an activity which things (humans and devils) habitually do. That an activity should be cast into hell is meaningless, as can be observed if we substitute for 'sin', walking, breathing, or singing in the bath.

That the Christian religion should succeed in cramming so many errors into just one doctrine, is, in its own way, quite impressive. Atheists should perhaps be more tolerant of their Christian acquaintances, when they remember that many of them are attempting to lead blameless lives whilst labouring beneath a millstone of dogma as morally atrocious as it is blatantly absurd. That such conditions continue to persist must surely be a reflection on the intelligence of our society as a whole, and therefore let all who are concerned with promoting it do all they can to banish such grizzly nonsense from the minds still haunted by these teachings of terrifying lies.

VISION AND REALISM

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J. M. ROBERTSON AND COMPARATIVE HIEROLOGY

MARTIN PAGE

C. E. M. JOAD was right about J. M. Robertson "in *Christianity and Mythology* he startled his contemporaries". *Christianity and Mythology* (1900) contains a magnificent section on Christ and Krishna (issued separately in 1890) which established Robertson as the first British rationalist scholar to refute the claim that Krishnaism had borrowed mythological and theological data from Christianity. On the other hand, "it becomes conceivable that certain parts of the Christian Birth-legend are derived from Krishnaism". Robertson's thesis, however, was grossly distorted by Albert Schweitzer, who, in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1910), represented Robertson as claiming that "the Christ-myth is merely a form of the Krishna-myth"! Schweitzer's blunder notwithstanding, his book received a fine tribute from Robertson on its publication in England.

Christianity and Mythology established its author as the first British freethinker to argue that many anecdotes in the Gospels are based on misinterpretation of pagan works of art. Indeed, Robertson's "iconotropy" theory was developed, more than thirty years later, by Naomi Mitchison, by Professor Toynbee in *A Study of History*, by J. B. S. Haldane, and by Robert Graves and Joshua Podro in *The Nazarene Gospel Restored*. G. B. Shaw apparently drew on *Christianity and Mythology* (second edition, 1910) when he drafted his essay *On the Prospects of Christianity* (1915); and half a century after the first appearance of Robertson's book, Adam Gowans Whyte (Literary Adviser of the RPA) rightly said that it had "gained and retained an international reputation". As recently as 1956, the Biblical critic A. D. Howell Smith declared the work to be "of great value to the well-trained investigator"; and, in the same year, Archibald Robertson pronounced it the greatest of his great namesake's contributions to comparative hierology.

But *Christianity and Mythology* was quickly followed by another monumental tome: *Pagan Christs*, which was brilliantly summarised by C. E. M. Joad as follows: "in *Pagan Christs*, he distinguished as a phenomenon that arises in the history of religion the appearance of mediator gods between man and the cosmic process. These gods are at the same time victims and their existence is multiplied in the hosts of human victims actually sacrificed who are supposed to represent them. Jesus Christ, he held, was a god-victim of this order, a composite myth, combining and concentrating in his own person all the historical victims of the Jews. Inevitably such a view aroused opposition".

In *Pagan Christs*, the sections on Mithraism and The Religions of Ancient America originated in two lectures, both delivered in London in 1889. In the lecture on Mithraism—which was apparently the first ever devoted to that subject by a British freethinker—Robertson pointed out that it was the most widespread religion of the western world "in those early centuries which we commonly call Christian"; and little was Robertson or his audience to know that, as if in confirmation of his words, Mithraic sculptures would be unearthed, a few months later and again in 1954, only about a mile away from where he had been speaking! His lecture preceded by some seven years the first published work on Mithraism of the Belgian Franz Cumont, who became an authority on the subject; and JMR's section on that religion in *Pagan Christs* constituted the first competent and detailed study of Mithraism in the

English language. In his lecture on The Religions of Ancient America, Robertson drew attention to "the high probability—I do not call it more—that the American races did come from Asia not very many thousands of years ago by way of Behring's Straits in the extreme north". This thesis has been vindicated by subsequent archaeological and anthropological research.

A traveller in modern Greece once heard an old woman remark on Easter Eve: "if Christ does not rise tomorrow, we shall have no corn this year" (Jane Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, p. 73). Jesus is in fact the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua; and Jesus was commonly identified with Joshua by early Christian writers—an identification reaffirmed by Dr Teicher in his interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The son of Nun ("Fish") miraculously halted the sun and moon, successfully led the twelve tribes of Israel into the Promised Land and was buried at Timnath-heres ("Portion of the Sun"). In this voracious mythical hero, "latterly reduced to human status", Robertson detected an ancient Palestinian saviour sun-god, in whose name human victims were annually sacrificed in a "rite of spring" (pace Stravinsky!).

Joshua was probably "a variant of Tammuz", the annually dying and reviving Semitic saviour-god (Ezekiel speaks of "women weeping for Tammuz" in the House of the Lord, 8:14); and the human scapegoats of Joshua son of the Father doubtless received much the same treatment as the "pagan Christs" of the Khonds, Perso-Babylonians, Rhodians and Phoenicians. But just as in Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* the real immolation of men and horses to the god Weland evolved into symbolic and imitation sacrifices, so in the Joshua cult the human sacrifice was eventually superseded by a sacramental meal combined with a mimic crucifixion and resurrection embodied in a mystery-drama. Mystery-plays were indeed a notable feature of the religions of antiquity in Egypt, Greece and parts of Asia, the central episodes in the careers of redeemer-gods like Adonis (identified with Tammuz), Attis, Osiris, Dionysos, Mithra and Krishna were depicted in dramatic form. Such shows brought vividly home to the illiterate masses the rudiments of their religions; yet the birth of drama from primitive ritual marked the decay of supernaturalism.

With the Joshua cult, however, the mystery-drama became "the very womb and genesis of the whole Christian faith". Robertson emphasised that many of the events culminating in the Crucifixion, as described in the Gospels, suggested lingering echoes of the ancient rite of human sacrifice: e.g. the purchase of the victim; the implicit proposal that Barabbas ("Son of the Father") should be slain instead of Jesus; the mocking of the victim adorned like a king; the offer of myrrhed wine as a narcotic; the leg-breaking; the spear-thrust; and the use of criminals in the execution progress. Moreover: "anyone who will attentively follow the account of the Last Supper and its sequelae will see that it reproduces a series of closely continuous dramatic scenes, with no room given to such considerations as would naturally occur to a narrator of real events, and no sign of perception of the extreme improbability of the huddled sequence set forth. . . . We are reading the bare transcript of a mystery-drama". Or as Karl Kautsky said: "Jesus dies, and the task is now to prove by a series of stage effects that a god had died." How did this come about?

After the Romans sacked Jerusalem in AD 70, the myth of the saviour-god Joshua (=Jesus) became inextricably interwoven with the haunting Jewish dream of a Messiah who would usher in the kingdom of God with the apocalyptic overthrow of Roman imperialism. The Joshua sect now proselytised in the name of 'Iesous Christos', i.e. Jesus the Messiah; and the introduction into the mystery-drama of the figure of Pontius Pilate, as a symbol of the detested Romans, was probably instrumental in the cult being cold-shouldered by the more cautious and orthodox rabbis. As a result, the "Christist" sect turned increasingly to the Gentiles for support; and as its position would clearly be consolidated by a corpus of literature (dramatic ritual preceded written legend), the mystery-drama was cast into the form of the Passion narrative, which became part of the composite structure of the Gospels. Pilate was made to wash his hands of guilt, and Judas ("the Jew") was created, so that the Jews would be held responsible for the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah (cf. John Allegro in 1966: "the whole rather pointless incident of Judas's betrayal of Jesus probably conceals in story form some crucial phase in necromantic ritual"). Seen in this light, the mystery-plays of the kind fostered by the medieval Christian Church and perpetuated at Oberammergau are immense projections of "an immemorial Semitic antiquity, when already the name of Jesus was divine".

In support of his argument, JMR drew attention to: the existence of ancient theatres at Damascus, Caesarea, Gadara and Jericho; the dramatic form of the Jewish feast of Purim; the known survival of symbolic sacrifices of atonement among the Jews; the dramatic elements in the Song of Solomon and the Book of Job; the production of dramatic Greek poetry on Biblical subjects by the Jewish poet Ezechiel (200 BC); and "the chronic pressure of Hellenistic influence upon Jewish culture for centuries". Indeed, Thomas Whittaker, who accepted Robertson's mystery-drama thesis, pointed to the affinity, noted by Celsus, between Christianity and the Dionysiac mysteries.

In 1930, Robert Taylor declared: "The whole story of the creation of the world, and the allegorical life, character, death, and resurrection of Christ, was acted as a play, or holy pantomime, in the ancient mysteries of Mithra and of Bacchus". Robertson gave flesh and blood to the bare bones of Taylor's idea; and almost twenty years after his thesis was advanced in *Pagan Christs*, his arguments were reinforced with the decipherment of some cuneiform tablets, which revealed that the death and resurrection of the Babylonian saviour sun-god Marduk (identified with Tammuz) had been enacted in an annually performed mystery-drama centuries before the Christian era. Marduk himself figures in the Old Testament, which contains numerous echoes of Babylonian mythology; and the great dragon who appears in the Revelation of St John the Divine is none other than Tiamat, the monster of chaos overthrown by Marduk. No wonder distinguished Assyriologists like Professor Zimmern in Germany and Professor Stephen Langdon in Britain believed that the Marduk mystery-play impinged upon the problem of Christian origins!

Robertson's lucid presentation of the similarities and indebtedness of Christianity to other faiths and cults has been heightened by the discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These discoveries have given a new perspective to Robertson's contention that "a teacher or teachers named Jesus, or several differently named teachers called Messiahs" may have contributed historical elements to the nucleus of myth; but, as he pointed out, this thesis is merely a restatement of the Myth Theory. At least ten times in his works,

Robertson postulated "the speechless crucified Messiah of Paul's propaganda" as possibly the Talmudic Jesus ben Pandira, who died about 100 BC; and this Jesus *may* indeed be the Teacher of Righteousness of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in which case the Wicked Priest *may* refer to Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC), a notorious persecutor of the Jews.

Rationalist scholars like Professor Gilbert Murray, Belfort Bax, Archibald Robertson, Herbert Cutner and Professor Homer Smith paid handsome tributes to Robertson's studies in comparative hierology. His thesis of a pre-Christian Joshua cult was corroborated and developed by Thomas Whittaker, Gordon Rylands, the Frenchman Edouard Dujardin and the German Arthur Drews, among the Mythicists. Drews, who was profoundly influenced by Robertson, convinced Lenin of the non-historicity of Jesus. Edward Carpenter's inclination to accept the Myth Theory was clearly stimulated by his reading of Robertson's works. Chapman Cohen believed Robertson's account of Christian origins to be "substantially true, and a valuable contribution to the subject". Robertson's views were popularised by Cohen himself, though also by Robert Blatchford, Vivian Phelps and Macleod Yearsley. In 1936 the Anglo-Australian Jack Lindsay, who became one of Britain's leading Marxian humanists, declared: "it was Robertson's books that converted me to the Myth Theory, and I owe him a great debt". In 1939 the French Mythicist Dr Couchoud dedicated his masterpiece *The Creation of Christ* to the memory of "that most noble man" J. M. Robertson for his pioneer work in perceiving "the real nature of Jesus". In 1942 the ex-Quaker R. S. W. Pollard admitted: "the writings of the late J.M. Robertson on Biblical criticism devastated assumptions which I had made theretofore".

A quarter of a century after Pollard, the American rationalist Miriam Allen de Ford pointed to Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, *Pagan Christ's*, *The Historical Jesus* and *The Jesus Problem* as "the cream and crown of his achievements" and hailed him as "one of the great founders of what will be the generally accepted understanding of the origin and history of the Christian religion". Indeed, Robertson was one of the first to undertake a thorough scientific analysis of Christian origins in the light of modern knowledge of universal primitive mythology. In this enterprise he owed a special debt to Frazer's *Golden Bough*; but his own contribution was distinguished by the originality, the persuasive and imaginative power, the infinite capacity for taking pains, characteristic of a great scholar.

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Book Reviews

NICHOLAS GRIFFIN

The Science of Freedom: Axel Stern (Longmans, 35s hardback; 18s paper).

THE HISTORY of this little book makes it quite a curiosity apart from anything else. It was written as a doctoral thesis between 1939 and 1943 in Switzerland where it was published in a limited and somewhat clandestine edition. It has recently been translated and is now published virtually for the first time. Dr Stern is now a lecturer in social philosophy at Hull. The book shows signs both of its date and the place in which it was written. It is far closer to most continental philosophy than to English philosophy, and it contains many opinions which appear eccentric, if not positively outmoded, today. Nonetheless, Dr Stern avows in his Preface that he still fully endorses its general aim.

It is divided into exactly 600 numbered paragraphs which make it very awkward to read, without any compensating advantage, for the paragraphs cannot be understood individually and have to be read in sequence. (References in this review will be to the paragraphs.) Although Wittgenstein is never mentioned the book seems to owe something to the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; for example, in the picture theory of meaning hinted at in paragraph 29. Like the *Tractatus* it is a self-consciously stylish little book.

The great trouble with *The Science of Freedom* is the speed with which difficult issues are dealt with and dismissed. With breathless speed Dr Stern whisks us through the nature of propositions and truth, psycho-analysis, the difference between the sexes, Kant, Marx, Hegel, Zeno's paradox, quantum theory and the analyticity of mathematics. It comes as no surprise when we read (§358) 'We shall, then, summarise briefly the beginnings of human history', and there follows an outline of primitive anthropology in six pages! Dr Stern is giddy with his own intellectual enthusiasm and, alas, the sheer haste of his progress makes us giddy too.

In his zeal for brevity and speed Dr Stern unfortunately sacrifices the supporting evidence and argumentation for his views. Thus the book seems to be a collection of unsupported opinions. If there was any analysis or argument which led up to them it has been almost entirely lost. Thus any constructive philosophical criticism of the book would entail rewriting and expanding large sections of it. Because of the large area Dr Stern covers this would require several volumes and I doubt if his book is worth it.

For example, he refuses to discuss the merits of psycho-analysis. Freud, he says, 'outlined the human psychological make-up' 'on the basis of exhaustive psychological research' (§97) and psycho-analysis is accepted hence forth as plain unvarnished fact. Of course, Freud was more of an authority in 1939 than he is today, but the naivety of this blanket justification is rather surprising. What makes Dr Stern's argument inconsistent is that having accepted Freud, apparently without reservations, he inserts non-Freudian elements (for his own convenience) into his system, without anywhere acknowledging that they are deviations from Freud. For example, Dr Stern accepts a threefold division of basic instinct: the sex instinct, the instinct for self-preservation and the aggressive instinct (§103); which is very different from Freud's division into the 'sex' instinct (*eros*) and the death instinct (*thanatos*). In fact the absence of the death instinct is a central part of Dr Stern's system.

His general argument is that reason should be the sole determinant of morality. This he arrives at by arguing that reason is the only source of (propositional) knowledge (the senses providing merely 'immediate experience') therefore moral knowledge must come through reason. This presupposes that there is such a thing as moral knowledge: about which I'm very doubtful. In the standard sense of 'knowledge' sentences which impart knowledge tell us how the world is; moral sentences tell us how the world ought to be. Dr Stern's own view of what is good is that an action is good 'in as much as it tends to enlarge the vital space of other individuals' (§224). The notion of a 'vital space' is the crucial one; it corresponds, I think, to 'personal fulfilment'. Dr Stern thus advocates a morality which seeks to allow (and encourages) everyone to develop their latent potentialities as much as they can. As a consequence of this eminently sensible view (which he very inadequately justifies) Dr Stern is led to wise remarks on education, punishment and sexual freedom. Although a number of the doors on which he bangs are now open (in theory if not in practice).

In social philosophy he is led astray. A few rather inadequate considerations on anthropology lead him into a doctrine of constant class struggle which he takes from Marx. Indeed he takes rather too much from Marx, for my taste, treating *Kapital* as a repository of proven factual information. As a result he urges us

—like some student revolutionary born before his time (even the concept of repressive tolerance appears in §474)—to join the revolution, once again only just beyond the horizon, whereby the oppressed workers will be liberated. This simple-minded view just doesn't seem to me to do justice to the facts. Show me the starving children and I'll join the barricades if barricades will help. But I refuse to accept that there is a grievance big enough to justify a revolution just because Dr Stern's system entails that there is one. Dr Stern's system just isn't certain enough to start killing people on behalf of it and to do so is to become (in practice if not in theory) a prey to the same type of absolutist fanaticism that Dr Stern set out, in the first place, to combat.

R. W. MORRELL

Rights of Man: Thomas Paine. Edited by Henry Collins (Pelican, 7s).

THE POLICY of several firms specialising in the reprinting of hitherto rarely obtainable works, to price such books rather highly has come in for strong criticism recently. Such criticism cannot be directed towards Pelican Books who with this edition of Thomas Paine's most famous work continue their programme of putting out important works at very modest prices. This should mean, in this case, that many students who might otherwise be unable to afford *Rights of Man* should have no difficulty in purchasing this edition.

Rights of Man was written in reply to Edmund Burke's bitter attack on the French Revolution, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (also available in Pelican), and of the many replies was by far and away the most effective. But *Rights of Man* is more than just a reply to Burke. Had it been just that it would have nothing more than minor historical interest. As it is it embodies within it some very concrete proposals concerning government, social legislation, international affairs, etc. These ideas and the reaction to them, as well as the influence of the book, forms the material from which Henry Collins constructs his valuable critical introduction to this edition.

As an economist as well as a historian, Dr Collins brings to the continuing discussion of Paine's ideas, particularly in economics, a refreshingly new approach. Unlike so many other writers on Paine he does not maintain that Paine's economic ideas are irrelevant in this day and age; on the contrary he demonstrates that they have, in many instances, a significant modern ring to them.

I take issue with Dr Collins over his claim that Paine was not a scholar, though here he is following people such as J. M. Robertson who makes a similar claim in his introduction to the Thinkers Library edition of *The Age of Reason*. I fail to see why Paine's "ignorance of Latin" rules out the possibility of him being considered a scholar. I suspect that he managed to get a working knowledge of French through his years spent in France, so Dr Collins' further claim that Paine knew no foreign languages need not be correct. It is also well to remember that in Paine's day and age all the important Latin and Greek classics were available in translation. Paine expressed strong reservations as to the value of classical languages, however, he was by no means alone in holding this opinion for Benjamin Franklin, among others, voiced similar views.

Henry Collins' introduction should, one hopes, serve to prompt many of his readers into wanting to know more about Paine's life and work; the provision of a chronology and three pages of notes should help them. It is a pity that no index has been provided for this would round off a fine production. Pelican Books are to be congratulated not only on bringing out this edition of *Rights of Man* but also for their choice of editor. Perhaps it is not too much to hope that they will now give serious consideration to publishing that other Paine classic, *The Age of Reason*.

Film Review

BOB CREW

MIDNIGHT COWBOY: London Pavilion, Piccadilly Circus, London, W1.

MIDNIGHT COWBOY is a beautiful film about an ugly and sordid situation in New York's Manhattan where a young Texas cowboy, assisted by a crippled Latin-type Jew from the Bronx, makes an unsuccessful attempt to live the life of a male prostitute, in the naive belief that it will enable him to avoid a life of hard work and boredom and to cut corners on an existence of luxury and sexual excitement.

The premise from which the cowboy—played by John Voight—

approaches his ambition is a humorous and philosophic one: simply that he is a handsome, sexy young man with plenty of love and lust to share with any woman who is interested in paying for it. He figures that, in New York, there are plenty of lonely and wealthy women denied their quota of sex and that these women will be willing and able to afford the services of a fine Texan stud like him. Thus he makes the first of many mistakes which lead him into a life of degradation, homosexuality, ill-health and near-starvation, after he has drawn too many blanks with the female community and perilously under-estimated the cost of living in New York. Stealing from greengrocers in order not to starve and living in a slum with his "manager"—the crippled Jew from the Bronx, played by Dustin Hoffman, of *Graduate* fame—he becomes increasingly desperate and pathetically incompetent as the dashing young hustler he set out to be.

During a bitterly cold winter, his manager is dying from what appears to be a consumptive fever, so the cowboy picks up an old homosexual on a business convention from Chicago, in order to raise enough money to buy medical treatment for his manager and to get him out of the cold New York slum into the warm climate of Florida. In the event, the old man won't part with enough money, so the cowboy murders him to take it.

Ironically, having committed murder and got his crippled friend out of New York on the express coach to Florida where the sun is at last shining, the friend dies on the coach, surrounded by elderly all-American mums powdering their complacent faces and succumbing to the warmth of the sunshine.

Before the cripple dies, he wets his pants and gets a brief glimpse through the window of the coach of the millionaires' paradise in the sun which he has previously dreamt about, imagining himself the suave gigolo manager of the Texan stud.

The film is full of vivid and moving contrasts between different aspects of sex life, slum life and luxurious life in New York which are characterised with a lavish and masterly neo-Dickensian precision: sharply focused, brutally frank, tenderly sentimental, devastatingly descriptive and, apparently, powerfully realistic; never missing an opportunity to locate the humorous side of an otherwise grim and strictly serious situation, or to overlook the endearing and good to add a little strength to the defective characters of two young people on whom social environment, illiteracy and totally materialistic values had inflicted so many weaknesses.

The only occasion when the cowboy manages to get a woman to pay him, is with a wealthy female dilettante with whom he takes drugs at a party. Her decision to pay him is entirely "tongue in cheek", to humour him and to amuse herself and, in the event, he is unable to cum!

Eventually, she rapes him and there is a riotously funny and sexy scene as she descends on him in a fur coat—the only garment she is wearing—and eventually manages to squeeze a climax out of him!

Throughout the film, a fragile thread of beauty is picked up and traced, without being broken, through the rough debris of an otherwise ugly and unsavoury plot, to tell a very moving and sad story of the extent to which two human beings in latter-20th century New York degrade themselves to survive in a savagely materialistic society. To create beauty out of such debris and, to articulate a human problem of this kind, is, to my mind, a rare quality. As such, the film is likely to reach out and grab the viewer deep inside. It did me.

THE POLICE AND THE CITIZEN

(Continued from page 10)

1. Breaches of the law.
2. Offences against the Police Discipline Code.

Before one can get a complaint against the Police investigated, there are numerous obstacles to be overcome:

"To begin with, he (the hopeful complainant) is likely to be asked whether his complaint is formal or informal. If he simply 'wants the matter looked into', and if he recognises that it is not of vast importance, he may opt for the latter. In that event, all he is likely to get is a cosy chat in which he is told about the difficulties of police work. He then finds that he has forfeited his right to insist on an investigation."

Nor will the Police proceed to an investigation while the complainant faces prosecution, and if he is found guilty then his case is automatically not investigated. In 1968,

out of 3,409 complaints made to the Metropolitan Police, 375 were listed as "not proceeded with on the completion of the prosecution". This is hardly justified, as the booklet points out: "In logic it could be perfectly true, both that the complainant broke the law, and that the police treated him badly". This state of affairs is particularly iniquitous in view of the widespread police habit of planting drugs (usually cannabis) on innocent young people (for cases of this sort see *The Release Report* by Caroline Coon and Rufus Harris, published by Sphere Books).

Presuming, however, that one can overcome these hurdles, and that an investigation is held, it will normally be conducted by an officer brought in from another city or county. This officer will take separate statements from each of the people concerned—the complainant, the accused policeman and witnesses. "The complainant has no right to query or rebut or even to see, any of the other statements."

The investigating officer will then draw up his report which will come to one of four conclusions:

(a) That the complaint is unsubstantiated. A brief letter will be sent to the complainant informing him of this, but without giving any reasons for this decision.

(b) That the complaint is substantiated, but relates to a minor offence such as incivility. The complainant gets an apology.

(c) That there is a *prima facie* case against the accused under the Police Discipline Code. This leads to a hearing, which the complainant may attend and put questions, if he so wishes, to the accused policeman. Although it is in cases of this sort that justice comes nearest to being seen to be done, it should be noted that in 1968, investigation led to a disciplinary hearing in only 132 cases out of 9,998 complaints received.

(d) That there is a *prima facie* case for criminal prosecution, and the investigating officer must send the papers to the Director of Public Prosecutions. In 1968, out of 1,532 cases referred to the DPP, only 152 led to prosecution of the policemen concerned.

After a review of this situation, the booklet goes on to describe in some detail seven case histories of complaints against the Police. Far from justice being seen to be done, the booklet comments, it is usually the complainant who is seen to be done.

The Police and the Citizen concludes by stating the NCCL's proposals for reform. They recommend that complaints against the Police should be dealt with by independent regional tribunals, and the booklet includes detailed suggestions as to the composition, powers and duties of such tribunals.

The Police and the Citizen makes vital reading—particularly in view of the recent *Times* allegations concerning police corruption. In many ways this excellently written booklet bends over backwards in its attempts to be fair to the police—it is significant that it is still a damning indictment of the way the police abuse their powers and victimise the individual citizen.

¹ By Mervyn Jones, 4s.

LETTERS

BBC Radio Brighton

IN YOUR EDITION dated Saturday, 6th December, Kit Mouat gives a highly coloured version of her experience of working with BBC Radio Brighton. I feel that your readers would wish to know the other side of the case.

Kit Mouat states that she spent "some days preparing to appear in an 'Any Questions' type of programme". There is absolutely no justification for this statement as this is a discussion programme in which the speakers are not aware of the questions until they

take part in the recording. Detailed "preparation" would be pointless, certainly not "several days". Mrs Mouat complains that she was paid a guinea. The question of nominal compensation was discussed with her in advance, particularly as she lives outside of the editorial area of the radio station. If Mrs Mouat showed a willingness to take part in the programme at the figure suggested, I fail to see how she can now complain.

Local radio is community radio which means that people representing a particular viewpoint which they want publicised often take part in programmes for little or no fees. Kit Mouat was known to be an ardent humanist. BBC Radio Brighton does its best to reflect all forms of opinion in its programmes. As far as we were concerned, Kit Mouat who, as I repeat, lives outside our editorial area, appeared so keen that she wished to take part in our programmes so as to further her own cause. To turn round and attack the clergy who might well be doing exactly the same thing seems to me to be wrong. Is it a crime to put community spirit before financial gain?

ROBERT GUNNELL,

Manager, Radio Brighton.

Heythrop College

"IN THIS DAY and age", contends Mr Tribe, "no theological college should gain university status". If he thinks so, then he should clearly try and persuade Parliament to legislate to require universities to abolish their theological faculties. For the plain truth is that universities are prepared to accept theology as a field of learning and research which can properly be included in university activities. In admitting Heythrop, London was only following a universally accepted tradition of universities in the free world. No university can be expected officially to adopt atheism as its corporate view.

Mr McIlroy's comments on what he calls my "allegations" miss the point. Part of Mr Tribe's attack on London University was that, in the Heythrop affair, they made "a secret deal". On challenge, it became clear that what he meant was that the University had not given any public notice of the proposal before the Senate to admit Heythrop. I therefore pointed out that, as regards the NSS resolution at the annual meeting condemning the University, the NSS itself had not given any notice even to its own members of this proposal. I fully accept all the explanations why this was not done—but I still suggest that the NSS should not sponsor an attack on some other body for behaving in a manner exactly the same as it does itself. The rules of the NSS permit the annual meeting to reach a decision without all the members being given advance notice. The statutes of London University permit its Senate to reach decisions on matters like Heythrop without giving public notice. I accept both: what I do not see is how you can accept the first and reject the second.

I did not intend to suggest that there was any "ulterior motive" in holding the NSS annual meeting on a Sunday in August. As regards the Annual Report, I can only say that the NSS is one of five humanist organisations of which I am a member. It is the only one which fails to send me, as a matter of course, a statement of its audited accounts for the year and regular statistics of membership. Moreover Mr McIlroy's comments seem a little contradictory. The Annual Report does not contain the financial report because it goes to newspapers, radio, etc., and the financial report is "for members only". But the Annual Report, we are told, contains instructions about what to put in your Will because this is "often requested by members and friends".

I fully accept the somewhat unnecessary explanations why Mr Tribe's name occurs 12 times in the Report. The answer to the question with which Mr Byass ends his letter is therefore "No".

In answer to Mrs Mouat, my quotation from Voltaire was derived from *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, p. 237, which indicates that the words were attributed to Voltaire in S. G. Tallentyre, *The Friends of Voltaire* (1907), p. 199.

J. STEWART COOK.

Hanging

THOSE PEOPLE who clamour for the hangman could be cured of their sadism by a simple method.

Let one of the clamourers live with the victim after he has been sentenced till the time when the rope is put round his neck. After he has witnessed the agony during that period and then the extreme agony on the fatal morning I believe that the clamourer would then clamour to destroy the rope.

JOSEPH ALMOND.

Aid to underdeveloped countries

IT WOULD BE INTERESTING to know if your readers approve of Mr Simons' gutter debating manners.

Briefly to reply to his points: (1) Africans scratched the ground

surface, and found all the ore they wanted. The whites brought the brains and capital to sink the mines.

(2) Ore was exported to USA because Africans had less use for it than Americans; which is the reason for any export. To call this robbery is simply to misuse words.

(3) Any country that has sensible government will gradually grow richer, no matter how poor it is. Britain and USA received no foreign aid in their early history. Exceptional calamities aside, an honest government does not borrow unless it intends to pay the interest.

(4) Did any of the Communist countries compensate the people whose industries it took over? And I think that in no single case in which compensation was paid in non-Communist countries was the market price paid.

(5) Since 1945, USA has given or lent to the outside world more than 132 billion dollars—91 billions in gifts and 41 billions in loans. Only about 16 billions of the loans has been repaid; and I should have thought that if a country is getting a money gift free, the least it might do in return is to spend the money in the donor country. After all, the donor country taxes itself to provide the aid free, and it does not get back in profit more than a fraction of what it has given.

(6) It is lucky for Mr Simons that British business is concerned with profits rather than with people, and that his shopkeeper does not enquire into his customers' political opinions; otherwise Mr Simons might easily starve. If he were in Cuba and held opinions so obnoxious to the majority, he would find himself being educated in a prison or in a labour camp.

HENRY MEULEN.

One-sided?

IN HIS first letter to the FREETHINKER (December 13) Mr R. Deans has been favoured with one of the most striking misprints of the season—well up to the standards of the *Grudian*. He is made to ask whether it would be a kindness to a deluded person "to relieve him painlessly of the burden of loving". How often some of us have felt the same!

The rest of what Mr Deans says, however, calls for the comment that his letter, which complains of the printing of articles presenting a one-sided view, presented a one-sided view of the FREETHINKER, and therefore, according to his recommendations, should not have been printed. Fortunately the editor is experienced and tolerant.

MAURICE HILL.

I HAVE READ FREETHINKER regularly for the past 15 months and agree with R. Deans (December 13) that its title is a complete misnomer. Describing myself as a freethinker I use the simple dictionary definition of "one who refuses to submit his reason to the control of authority in matters of religious belief".

FREETHINKER, and apparently the Humanist societies, however, appear to commit us all to definite standpoints on all manner of honestly debatable questions, for example, capital punishment, immigration, homosexuality and other matters with a sexual background.

I am a member of NSS and also of BHA. The latter sees fit to offer me the option of associate membership, thus relieving me of full commitment to things I do not support. I much regret that this choice is not available from NSS as I am afraid I shall eventually be driven to throw up my membership and also my copy of FREETHINKER.

This will be a pity as I shall deprive myself of the great pleasure and stimulation of reading that small minority of contributors who apparently understand the meaning of the word.

JOHN BLYTHE.

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