

ANOTHER ROW OVER SEX IN THE CLASSROOM

'TREMENDOUS SUFFERING RESULTS FROM SEXUAL IGNORANCE'—DR CHESSER

The question of sex education is again being widely discussed, and one of the leading opponents of the idea, Dr Louise Eickhoff, said last week that sex education is responsible for an increasing number of children turning to violence and crime. Dr Eickhoff, a consultant of the Child Psychiatry Clinic at Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham, claimed that she had treated two girls, aged twelve, "one of whom was dumb and the other hardly able to speak after receiving sex education lessons". She also said that a boy of ten was put in a state of acute terror, and that two boys attempted suicide. A BBC spokesman says that films made at the request of the Schools Broadcasting Council had been shown in over 4,000 schools, and reports indicated that they were very successful. Grampian Television and Granada Television say they are producing their programmes in close co-operation with educationalists, and that they have been very well received. And the distinguished sexologist, Dr Eustace Chesser, says: "Certainly tremendous suffering results from sexual ignorance, and surely much of this can be removed by sex education in our schools. I feel that such education should emphasise the importance of contraception, and the fact that there need no longer be unwanted children".

Mrs Helene Grahame, the Family Planning Association's head of information services, does not share the views of the sex education critics. She told the *Freethinker*: "Ignorance about sex is all too often the root cause of much avoidable human suffering. It is reflected in marital breakdown, adolescent emotional distress and, in measurable terms, in abortions, forced marriages, venereal disease and unwanted children.

all have a part to play. But until sex education in the context of a broad programme of human relationships is a normal part of the school curriculum, new generations of young people will leave school unable to talk to each other about sex. More tragic still, they will be as incapable of communicating with their own children as many parents are today.

"The Family Planning Association, which has education for personal responsibility in sexual relationships as one of its declared objects, has a particular contribution to make in training teachers to help others with sex and contraceptive education."

Mr Julian Heddy, information and education officer of the European and Near East Region of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, says: "In Europe many young adults who have married, or are about to marry, go to clinics not just for family planning advice, but because of problems arising from inadequate sex education.

"Sweden and Denmark are well ahead of other European countries in the drive to incorporate sex education in the school curriculum. Both countries set up Royal Commissions which have made recommendations for the establishment and improvement of sex education in schools."

The Need to Communicate

Mrs Dorothy Dallas, a lecturer in Health Education at King's College, London, made the following statement: "Terrifying results of sex education—everything from teenage pregnancy, dumbness, terror and suicide—are claimed by Dr Eickhoff. One cannot disprove her findings, and emotional shock from ill-conceived sex education programmes is quite common.

"But correlation does not necessarily mean causation, and one must ask the question why twelve-year-old girls were rendered speechless and why a boy of ten was terrified? If sex is indeed a private and intimate thing then why



Helene Grahame

"Education for responsible sexual relationships is a priority task in which schools, parents and the mass media

(Continued overleaf)

had the parents of these children left them in such a vulnerable position? In agricultural communities where the facts of the life cycle are part of everyday working knowledge, one doubts if such shock would occur. But in industrial society with its conspiracy of secrecy, if parents are not communicating the knowledge and attitudes necessary for their children to deal with this explosive and dangerous aspect of life, who will? Are they to be left to discover everything for themselves from ill-informed friends and the sensational press, pornographic books and athletic films?

"Ideally, of course, sex education should not be in schools—it should be firmly in the hands of the parents. But why do so few parents assume this responsibility? The main barrier is lack of communication between parent and child—parents may feel guilty about their own sex lives, or unwilling that their children see them as sexual animals, or simply be unable to talk to their children, or they may even be ignorant of the facts themselves. Educating the parents to overcome these difficulties is an impossible task, except on the factual side—as for the other factors, years of conditioning are unlikely to be overcome by even the best-planned television programmes.

"Communication in depth is also essential in school sex education—most of the emotional troubles stem from didactic teaching by teachers unfamiliar with the class or its needs and attitudes. Unless sex education is based on the criteria for moral education it is superficial, damaging and sensation producing. A mere repetition of factual knowledge is useless—a good deal of sex behaviour is irrational and unless this is clarified, facts are irrelevant. Both American and Swedish sex education have erred on the factual side. Masters and Johnston have shown that there is little use teaching athletic techniques to two human beings who do not communicate, and that therapy in communication is the first essential.

"If moral education, namely equal concern for others, insight into their needs, social and verbal communication the ability to form principles of what is right for oneself for others and for society (and the ability to stick to them), is not the basis of sex education rather than physiology and anatomy, then it is worthless and deserves all that the Whitehouses and Eickhoffs say about it. The final requirement for the morally educated is that they be psychologically free—or at least aware of the chips on their shoulders; some sex educators are obviously not so aware, and nor are some of their critics.

"In British schools today there are all types and varieties of sex education, largely factual but with an encouraging increase on the behavioural side. It would appear that if this trend persists, we might have a generation of parents which would not only know the facts of life but be able and willing to communicate them to their children. Dr Eickhoff in her psychiatric clinic sees only the harmful effect of sex education on children whose parents had already failed them in some way. Others have seen the load of misery lifted from girls who thought they were going mad because of the effects of hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle, and the therapeutic effect on younger children when the distress caused by the dirty jokes of their classmates has been lifted. One suspects that the dumbness and terror of the children quoted by Dr Eickhoff has as a basic cause their unwantedness in the first place—maybe better education in contraception would prove a more effective way of getting violence off the streets than barracking for the end of sex education altogether."

THE SECULAR SEVENTIES?

ERIC WILLOUGHBY

In a year which has seen so many reversions, upheavals and internal disputes even within some sections of the freethought movement, it is gratifying to see that the National Secular Society is united and determined as ever to continue to make its mark. That is the impression I got from its annual report entitled *Into the Seventies* which has just been published.

Governments may fall, houses may divide, and even its own staff may change, but the NSS continues its important work for reform and social progress. The Society kept its feet firmly on the ground during this eventful year and made several definite contributions toward achieving the aims of freethought as a whole. But, as usual, this well-written and professionally produced document does more than give a pat-on-the-back account of the year's work in retrospect. To a great extent it points the way ahead, and can be taken as an indicator of the way the Freethought movement is going. It is not claimed that great battles have been won: rather campaigns in the one great battle.

It is boldly suggested in the opening paragraph that the world's attitude is coming round to the way it should be, inasmuch as the right questions are being asked. The report does not add that by and large they are being asked by a concerned minority. However, by the end of the seventies, with the disappearance of many of the older champions of reactionary opinion, this may become the majority. This statement in the report could, therefore, be called forward-looking.

The signs of moderation in some of the major world conflicts, which have, against overwhelming odds, materialised during the year, are welcomed. But the situation in Northern Ireland could easily turn from a cold war into a hot one, we are warned. It is pointed out in no uncertain terms that behind every great warmonger there is a religion-monger, and religion can be seen as a major factor in most of the serious conflicts today, whether in Ireland or the Middle East.

The short Parliamentary year, and the outcome of the General Election robbed Britain of many reforms for which the NSS had been campaigning. Voluntary euthanasia, Sunday entertainments, abolition of hare coursing and the obscenity laws are mentioned. It had its advantages too; attempts to "castrate" the Abortion Act, as it is so succinctly put, mercifully failed.

Although several attempts to achieve reforms failed, others succeeded. The NSS had campaigned for the abolition of capital punishment, and it was eventually abolished. The lowering of the age of majority to 18 was another step forward, and progress has been made on the question of equal pay for women. The cancellation of the '70 Tour by a white (minority) South African cricket team is described in the report as an illustration of the strength of public protest. But there were illustrations of its weakness too.

Questions regarding drugs, homosexuality, censorship and the poor are dealt with. Certainly we live in bureaucratic times, and this past year was one in which, perhaps

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TELEVISION

Since television entered the homes of the majority of people in Britain, there has been almost as much written about it by way of criticism, pro and anti, in the Press and in book form, as we have actually heard spoken on the magic box itself. Predictably, much that has been written has been edifying, informative and entertaining. The columns contributed down the years by such folk as Peter Black in the *Daily Mail* and Philip Purser in the *Sunday Telegraph* have been object lessons in how to deal with a form of entertainment which is so ephemeral that 90 per cent of its programmes are not repeated, and yet the viewing public has to be told the worth of the article after it has already formed its own opinion. So although television reviews might appear on the surface to be redundant, in the skilful hands of the very few who are sociologists, and not hack journalists, we are frequently treated to reports on programmes which bring them alive all over again in print. "Values" are also encouraged by people like Stanley Reynolds, Nancy Banks-Smith and Sean Day-Lewis who, writing in their respective papers, keep a standard for the telly which only the well-wisher and public educator desire. I would like to have seen dealt with by some of the experts in *The Effects of Television** a few of these simple facts. What we have instead are a number of learned scholars, many of whom appear to be anything but "provocative, stimulating and vital", which is what their writing and "close look at the impact on our lives of the newest mass medium" purport to be.

Admittedly, there is an attempt to examine the effects of television on contemporary society, politics, the Arts, other media and education, but it has all been done before (and done better in my opinion) by Paul Rotha, for some years BBC's Head of Documentaries, the brilliant Norman Swallow, executive producer of the BBC's best series "Omnibus", and Fred Friendly, who played such a large part with the late Ed Murrow in encouraging the growth of educated viewing in the American television jungle. There are many glaring faults in *The Effects of Television*, and one of the most striking omissions is the failure to mention the contribution made by that great progressive journalist / commentator / personality, James Cameron, who from the beginning has been identified in this country and abroad with the type of television educational entertainment associated with Ed Murrow, before that splendid personality died. It is not without significance that the only programme mentioned for approval in the "Omnibus" series (surely the one *dependable* quality programme on television?) was the duller of any of those screened. The Malcolm Arnold, Delius and other Ken Russell features shown in this series, the Wordsworth and the absorbing Raymond Chandler and J. B. Priestley episodes, to mention but a few, are ignored.

The Windsor Interview

To happier moments: a repeat of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor being interviewed, first shown over a year ago and now unearthed for the benefit of those who like their "Crawfie" served with a more grown-up finish. The programme (which was presided over formally, regally and quite authoritatively by the Duchess of Windsor) went along at a steady pace with the dashing little duke occasionally shooting a backward glance over his shoulder, fiddling with his pipe and answering questions deferentially put to him by Kenneth Harris. The editing of the programme by

PETER COTES

John House was expert; Mr Harris all that a safe interviewer should be, and the interviewees were quietly competent. One waited for a sign of controversy, a ripple on the surface to stimulate our interest after so much nostalgia had been aroused at the beginning by Mr Harris's references to one whom the world had known as "Prince Charming" during the first World War and as a modern Sydney Carton during that fateful period of the Abdication. It was only when the Duke nostalgically recalled hunting that, for me at any rate, the programme became alive. His Royal Highness regretted that he no longer rode to hounds in this country, and then came a moment, a word, just a mere insertion of an idea, slipped in by Kenneth Harris, which gave one great hope for Princess Anne of the eccentric headwear. Harris asked whether he had ever discussed hunting with members of the Royal Family, and the Duke, looking really mournful, answered in an aggrieved tone that Prince Anne had told him that *she* didn't ride to hounds for one very good reason which was summed up in two words: Blood Sports. This welcome fact for the viewer, which caused so much gloom on the screen and clearly so much disappointment in great-uncle Teddy's heart, was "instant television". Indeed, although a filmed programme, and therefore capable of being edited out, this is what television is all about, and that moment justified the prominent credit given the editor at the end. I hope the committee of the RSPCA, including its worthy chairman and secretary, will kindly take note. And, for an entirely different reason, the courageous Lady Dowding and her gallant band of crusaders who support Beauty Without Cruelty, should take heart from royal patronage of ideas on the side of our dumb friends—that vast army about which Bernard Shaw wrote so movingly in his mammoth preface to *Androcles and the Lion*.

"Glorious John"

And now, as a roving television contributor, perhaps I may be permitted to include a personal story as it affected me concerning the late Sir John Barbirolli. Sir John was a staunch friend, especially loyal to those with whom he worked, as all members of the Hallé Orchestra would be the first to testify. I had personal reason to be touched by his deep humanity some years ago, when privileged to produce and direct two Barbirolli programmes on television; one showing Sir John and the Hallé at work, and the other a potted biography showing Barbirolli at play as well as at work. The first programme was exceptionally well received by big viewing audiences, besides being hailed in certain sections of the Press as "the greatest advance made in classical music programmes on television" until that time (1958).

The other programme devised by me was a flop, being as adversely criticised as its forerunner had been highly praised. Shortly after reading a bleak Press the day following the transmission, I received by personal messenger in the very early morning a carefully wrapped parcel containing the book *100 Years of the Hallé*, by C. B. Rees, to which Sir John had contributed a foreword. He had also taken the trouble at this moment to inscribe the book to me in terms so warmly expressed that, as the recipient of the gift, I might have felt justified in thinking that it was the first of our two efforts in collaboration that was being

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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 St., 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.

EVENTS

Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds, 24 August—20 September. Exhibition of paintings and drawings by Oswald Blakeston. London Young Humanists, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 6 September, 7 p.m. Elaine Brace: "Nationalism, Catholicism and the Irish Language".

Sutton Humanist Group, Trinity Methodist Hall, Hill Road, Sutton, Surrey, Saturday, 12 September, 10 a.m.—1 p.m. Book sale. Information from Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton. Telephone: 01-642 8796.

London Young Humanists. Sunday, 12 September. Fungus Foray in Epping Forest. Meeting Nigel Sinnott on eastbound Central Line platform of Holborn Underground station, 11.15 a.m. Thursday, 17 September, 8 p.m. Coffee evening at Flat 4, 86 Church Road, London, SW19 (Telephone 947-2519).

GOOD CAUSE

Millions of people in Britain and other countries have been horrified by the newspaper and television exposure of the brutal annual slaughter of large numbers of seals. And of course countless other creatures are done to death every year to meet the demand for clothes, footwear and cosmetics. So it is encouraging to report that the work of an organisation known as Beauty Without Cruelty, which was formed five years ago, is steadily gaining support.

It now has a boutique at 49 Upper Montague Street, London, W1, where only simulated products are sold. There is to be a fashion show at which a selection of coats and furs will be on display at the Rembrandt Hotel, Thurloe Place, London, SW7, on Wednesday, 23 September at 2.45 p.m. and 6.45 p.m. The sessions will be opened by Peter Cotes (afternoon) and Brigid Brophy (evening); neither of them needs introduction to *Freethinker* readers.

Details of Beauty Without Cruelty—organisation and fashion show—are obtainable from Lady Dowding, 1 Calverly Park, Tunbridge, Wells, Kent.

NEWS

DEAR MR MAUDLING . . .

I wonder if you have had an opportunity of considering the request for an investigation into alleged "nun-running" as set out in my press release last week. Since then there have been further revelations in the Sunday paper which originated the anxiety, certain BBC radio and television programmes, a Roman Catholic weekly and other places. In pressing for an enquiry by your department, let me make it clear that I have no personal knowledge of the truth or otherwise of these allegations but my disquiet has not been set at rest by the precipitate denials of official church spokesmen. It is true that the worst abuses in the allegations have been located in Italy and West Germany, and it may be that the Indian novices in Britain are ecstatically happy. For their sakes I hope they are. But a doubt must be present which calls for investigation. Only then, if the stories are groundless, can the responsible authorities be exonerated.

As you know, through "benefit of clergy" in the Middle Ages clerics could not be tried in the ordinary courts of the land and a criminal element took advantage of this position. Though it does not obtain today the churches retain privileges in taxation, rating, education, broadcasting, hospitals, prisons, the armed forces, national celebrations and other matters that are enjoyed by no other bodies in the community. Because of tradition, political influence and an assumption that religion is synonymous with sweetness and light, the churches are assumed to be beyond reproach. Certain ecclesiastics, especially those belonging to organisations whose headquarters are overseas, appear to imagine that they are above the law. A suspicion exists that there would have been no investigation of the Church of Scientology if the judiciary had accepted its purported ecclesiastical status, and that if the present allegations had involved hippie communes prompt action would have been taken by the Home Office.

I wonder if you can inform me whether these Indian girls (and any foreign girls of other nationalities who may be present in United Kingdom convents) are classified as having the status of workers, au pair girls or fulltime students. If the last, are these premises subject to the overall surveillance of the Department of Education and Science like other educational establishments? If for any reason these girls are found not to have a religious vocation, are they reclassified? The precise employment position of lay brothers and sisters in monastic institutions remains something of a mystery, and injustices can easily arise in such a system. It may be said that if people like to renounce their civil liberties that is their own concern. It becomes however the more important to ascertain whether they have reached majority, been subject to undue influence or false inducements, and understand the language, customs and legal system of the country in which they work. These are the matters a Home Office investigation could look into.

Yours sincerely,

DAVID TRIBE, *President,*

National Secular Society.

S AND NOTES

HAIR

When are the educational authorities going to slap down these classroom corporals who dictate to pupils how long they may grow their hair? Once again we have the spectacle of senior boys being sent home because their headmaster—aged 55—does not approve of “long hair hanging over the collar and long sideburns”. Mr Glyn Rees, Headmaster of Lewis Grammar School, Pengaim, ordered 70 boys to get their hair cut or not come back to school. He added: “If they don’t, and refuse to have their hair cut, I shall respect their decision”. Bighearted Mr Rees knows perfectly well that the boys have no real choice; either they allow him to impose his standards, or jeopardise their careers.

It is time people like Mr Glyn Rees were reminded that they are being paid to do a job of work, not to set themselves up as adjudicators of hair styles. His generation is not particularly noted for taste or judgement in such matters.

Young people are frequently being criticised, and there is much unrest in schools and universities. So long as people with a short-back-and-sides mentality are allowed to act in petty, authoritarian way in Britain’s schools, who can blame young people if they react with a V-sign to advice or justified criticism?

RELIGION AND REGIMENTATION

In last week’s *Freethinker* Peggy Aprahamian referred to the diminishing appeal of youth organisations which are tied by loyalties to church or state. Now it is announced that the Boys’ Brigade is faced with a serious decline in membership, and that nearly 7,000 boys have left the organisation during the last year.

Various reasons have been advanced for the decline in interest in the world’s senior uniformed organisation for boys, and a working party has been set up to investigate. They may not have to look far; the object of the organisation which was laid down in 1883 is: “The advancement of Christ’s Kingdom among boys, and the promotion of obedience, discipline, self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness”.

The advancement of Christ’s Kingdom among British youth is a non-starter—despite years of religious indoctrination in schools. And there is a healthy dislike for uniforms and regimentation which makes the future for organisations like the Boys’ Brigade look rather bleak.

OBITUARY

Mrs Ruth Hooker, who died suddenly in London on 4 September aged 74, was born at Richmond, Alabama, where her father was a Baptist minister. She grew up in the America’s “Bible Belt”, and among the many fundamentalist visitors to the family home was William Jennings Bryant, who figured prominently in the celebrated Dayton “monkey trial”.

Mrs Hooker was a freethinker and a firm supporter of liberal causes all her adult life. She was a member of the National Secular Society on whose Executive Committee her daughter, Mrs Margaret McIlroy, has served for many years.

Mr David Tribe, president of the NSS, presided at the committal ceremony at Golders Green Crematorium on Thursday.

PUBLICATIONS

TITLE	AUTHOR	Price	Post
RI and Surveys	Maurice Hill	1/0	4d
Religion and Ethics in Schools	David Tribe	1/6	4d
Religious Education in State Schools	Brigid Brophy	2/6	4d
Ten Non Commandments	Ronald Fletcher	2/6	4d
The Cost of Church Schools	David Tribe	4/0	6d
A History of Sex	G. L. Simons	9/0	1/0
Humanism, Christianity and Sex	David Tribe	6d	4d
103: History of a House	Elizabeth Collins	1/0	4d
Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare	David Tribe	2/0	4d
The Necessity of Atheism	Percy Bysshe Shelley	1/6	4d
The Secular Responsibility	Marghanita Laski	2/0	4d
The Nun Who Lived Again	Phyllis Graham	6d	4d
An Analysis of Christian Origins	George Ory	2/6	4d
New Thinking on War and Peace	A. C. Thompson	1/0	4d
A Humanist Glossary	Robin Odell and Tom Barfield	3/6	6d
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The Bible Handbook	G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball	7/6	1/2
What Humanism is About	Kit Mouat	10/6	1/6
The Humanist Revolution	Hector Hawton	10/6	1/6
Pioneers of Social Change	E. Royston Pike	10/6	1/6
The Golden Bough	J. G. Frazer	20/0	2/6
Religion in Secular Society	Bryan Wilson	15/0	1/3
The Humanist Outlook	Various	35/0	2/2
100 Years of Freethought	David Tribe	42/0	2/2
Catholic Terror Today	Avro Manhattan	12/6	1/6
Materialism Restated	Chapman Cohen	5/0	1/4
The Martyrdom of Man	Winwood Reade	10/6	1/9
Morality Without God	Chapman Cohen	6d	4d
Catholic Imperialism and World Freedom (secondhand)	Avro Manhattan	15/0	2/2
From Jewish Messianism to the Christian Church	Prosper Alfarc	6d	4d
Man His Own Master	Archibald Robertson	2/6	8d
The Outlines of Mythology	Lewis Spence	2/6	8d
The Dead Sea Scrolls	John Allegro	5/0	1/0
Age of Reason	Thomas Paine	3/6	4d
Rights of Man (paper)	Thomas Paine	7/0	1/4
Police and the Citizen	NCCL	4/0	5d
The Hanging Question	Edited by Louis Blom-Cooper	15/0	1/0
Rome or Reason	R. G. Ingersoll	1/0	5d
Thomas Paine	Chapman Cohen	1/0	5d
Morals Without Religion	Margaret Knight	12/6	1/2
The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism	Bertrand Russell	6/0	1/0
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The Conquest of Happiness	Bertrand Russell	9/0	1/2
Marriage and Morals	Bertrand Russell	8/0	1/2
Bertrand Russell’s Best	Edited by Robert E. Egner	15/0	1/6
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BOOKS

THE DOOMSDAY BOOK

by Gordon Rattray Taylor. Thames and Hudson, 42s.

In recent years there has been a slow realisation that man is about to face an unprecedented multiple crisis. As the ever-increasing demands of an ever-increasing population exceed the earth's sustainable capacity to supply food and raw materials and absorb pollution, we shall only be able to forestall a sudden and perhaps final collapse by a drastic transformation of our economy to one appropriate to a closed system—Spaceship Earth.

Those who both recognise this situation and feel a sense of responsibility to the future face three problems; in ascending order of difficulty these are firstly, to demonstrate that our present course of action carries a substantial probability of disaster; secondly, to outline a different type of society compatible with man's long-term survival and providing sufficient human satisfactions to make it a desirable goal; and thirdly, to determine and put into effect a strategy for moving to this society from our present one without social breakdown.

The first eleven of the twelve chapters of *The Doomsday Book* are devoted to the first of these problems. The unforeseen and unwanted effects of expanding technology and population on the environment are illustrated with dozens of examples, ranging from loss of amenity to widespread destruction. These effects, however unpleasant, would not in themselves justify the title, and the book's importance lies in its extrapolation of current trends towards the two upper ranges of John Platt's classification of future problems and crises (*Science*, 1969, vol. 166): "great destruction or change (physical, biological, or political), and total annihilation". Are we, in fact, likely to exhaust the oxygen supply, change the earth's temperature until we perish from heat or cold, cause the collapse of the planet's ecosystems by pollution, or drive ourselves collectively insane by overcrowding?

To dismiss these prophecies simply because they are apocalyptic is quite unjustified; man's massive intervention in natural processes is without precedent, and there is no *a priori* reason why it should not terminate in the extinction of all life. However, in view of recent counter-attacks on doomsday prophecies, it is important to avoid inaccuracy, and here the present book is disappointing. Some of the errors are important; thus it is said (p. 15) that we consume about ten per cent of all atmospheric oxygen per year, when the true figure is about 0.001 per cent. Nuclear power stations produce only a few per cent more waste heat than coal-fired ones, not one hundred times as much, and there is no reason to suppose that fusion power would be worse (pp. 73-74). The calculation on page 74 is incomprehensible, with a claim of a four per cent annual increase in albedo (the proportion of incident solar energy reflected) followed by a prediction of heat death in 70 years; in fact an increase in albedo would lead to lower temperatures. Thermonuclear reactors would not be expected to produce vast amounts of radioactive tritium (pp. 171, 175) since the most likely reactions do not involve net production of this isotope. The figure for incident solar energy (p. 205) is too small by a factor of 100,000, and there are too many other errors for this book to be recommended as a reliable source of information.

How far do these errors undermine the credibility of

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the doomsday thesis? Before attempting to answer this question some important (but often evaded) points must be raised. Thus, it is not sufficient reassurance that a particular pollutant presents no immediate hazard if the inertia of social and economic processes makes a further substantial increase inevitable (e.g., the case of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels). Moreover, when the habitability of the earth is at stake the usual concepts of "acceptable risk" (and the euphemistic "calculated risk") break down, and an extraordinary degree of prudence becomes essential, particularly if the effects of a hazardous activity will persist long after its cessation. Finally, it must be remembered that optimistic technologists, like the Roman Catholic Church, may sometimes admit that they were wrong in the past, but never in the present.

Let us apply these standards to the dangers detailed by Mr Taylor. The danger of exhaustion of oxygen from the atmosphere can be dismissed, and the earth's temperature is unlikely to be significantly raised by direct addition of man-made heat before the indirect effects of energy use become limited. For example, introduction of carbon dioxide, dust, and water vapour into the atmosphere may affect the global climate; past climatic history makes it probable that "trigger" effects can be important and the rapid changes we are imposing may be sufficient. The situation is too complex for proof, but to assume that all will be well is foolhardy in the extreme. The same arguments apply with even greater force to the effects of pollution and environmental change on the ecological cycles on which life depends. Although we are unable to analyse fully the effects of a single pollutant on any but the simplest systems we are increasing the number and concentration of such pollutants throughout the biosphere. Finally, the rapidly increasing amounts of indestructible radioactive waste which are the inevitable result of our commitment to fission reactors will, however stored, constitute a threat of global disaster for centuries.

It is fair to say, then, that Mr Taylor's account, though not reliable on every point, is substantially correct in its picture of reckless change and exploitation, unpredictable in its effects, imposed on the planet without thought for the future.

In the last chapter the threads of the argument are drawn together in a brilliantly clear account of our plight. All the important points are covered: the need to limit technology as well as population; the inadequacy of the "technological fix"; the tragedy of the commons and the problems of regulation; the increasing subjection of human affairs to the imperatives of technology; and, perhaps most important, the clear necessity for a moral decision on our responsibilities as a species.

If the lessons of this final chapter were widely accepted and applied, there would indeed be hope that the prophecies of the preceding chapters might be falsified.

JOHN DAVOLL

FRAZER AND THE GOLDEN BOUGH

by R. Angus Downie, Gollancz, 36s.

In spite of, and also because of, the criticisms and corrections born of recent anthropological and mythological

REVIEWS

research, Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* was—and remains—a seminal work comparable in scope and impact with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*. Ironically, the richly deserved fame of *The Golden Bough* has occasionally resulted in an unjust neglect of other notable fruits of Frazer's scholarship such as *Pausanias's Description of Greece*, *Psyche's Task*, *Totemism and Exogamy*, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament* and *The Belief in Immortality*. It is commendable that the book under review does not ignore these works, though regrettable that more space is not devoted to them.

Thirty years ago R. Angus Downie attempted a biographical sketch of his mentor that was published shortly before Frazer's death. Now Mr Downie offers a more intimate and revealing personal memoir which certainly brings Frazer to life as a vulnerable and lovable human being. (Curiously, no reference is made to this earlier biography.) Outside his work, Frazer's life was thoroughly organised for him by his remarkable and indomitable French wife, whom Mr Downie clearly disliked and whose less endearing traits were probably aggravated by her deafness and childless marriage, though mitigated by her unquestioned devotion to her husband. She was suspicious of, and even downright hostile towards, many of his friends. She once declared: "Sir James is not hen-pecked; he is hen-protected"; and Mr Downie closes his memoir with the simple yet memorable statement that, after the great anthropologist had died, she "took to her bed, turned her face to the wall, and died the same night".

Achieving notoriety as an "armchair" anthropologist, Frazer had made his only encounter with a member of a primitive tribe when, as a boy, he had been terrified by "The Wild Man of Borneo" at a fairground: this was apparently something of a traumatic experience, for when William James later asked him about the natives he had known, Frazer replied: "But Heaven forbid". James, indeed, graphically described him as "a suckling babe of humility, unworldliness and molelike sightlessness to everything except print"; and after the aged Frazer had been struck down by blindness—dramatically, whilst he was making a speech—Angus Downie was engaged as his assistant and became his Boswell. Yet, as a result of Frazer's tragic blindness, Downie's candid and even unique memoir has enabled us to see the great scholar "warts and all"—and the Cromwellian allusion might seem particularly appropriate in view of his apparent descent, on his mother's side, from the great usurper. Perhaps the most striking contemporary tribute to the haunting power and enduring topicality of *The Golden Bough* was paid by none other than Malcolm Muggeridge.

If Frazer's encounter with "The Wild Man of Borneo" marked a climax in his emotional life—with conceivable repercussions on his intellectual orientation—his discovery of Tylor's *Primitive Culture* represented another turning-point in his spiritual development. His interest in the comparative study of religions was further stimulated by his friendship with Robertson Smith, whose heterodox classic *The Religion of the Semites* owed much to Frazer. According to Mr Downie, Frazer was a son of the Enlightenment "in his conviction that human reason was a sufficient tool to open all doors, answer all questions"; yet such a "conviction" might seem too crude and too unreasonable to

have been held by so perceptive an observer as Frazer. In any event, "Frazer attended church and took part in acts of worship for most of his life": perhaps he was too much influenced in his church-going by his wife, who was "a stickler for ritual" and dedicated to securing official recognition of his work. The author does not tell us that the man who, together with Bertrand Russell and Leonard Woolf, formed a brilliant unholy trinity associated with Trinity College, Cambridge, was given a religious funeral by the Dean. Mr Downie informs us that Frazer considered "the gradual evolution of human thought from savagery to civilisation" to have been the principal underlying preoccupation of *The Golden Bough*; yet, regrettably, he does not assess the impact of Darwinian evolutionism on Frazer's thought. Nor does he cite Frazer's admission, in his preface to the second edition of *The Golden Bough*, that his work "strikes at the foundations of beliefs in which the hopes and aspirations of humanity through long ages have sought a refuge".

Angus Downie refers to Frazer's conclusion, in the second edition of *The Golden Bough*, that the Passion and Crucifixion resembled the career of the mock king in the ancient Babylonian festival of the Sacaea. Yet he does not add that Frazer did much to prepare the ground for the mystery-drama theory of Christian origins developed by Frazer's contemporary, J. M. Robertson, a fellow Scot and no less erudite scholar. Frazer initially accepted Christ's historicity on the ground that "great religious movements spring ultimately from the conscious and deliberate efforts of extraordinary minds". So far as I know, Frazer never replied to Robertson's astringent criticism of this deceptively plausible statement. Robertson, who subjected Frazer's work to painstaking and acute analysis, also said that "Frazer's vast research in *The Golden Bough* may be described as a development of the principles laid down by the German Mannhardt"; yet neither Robertson nor Mannhardt is so much as mentioned by Mr Downie. No less amazing is the omission of any reference to the brilliantly gifted and generally neglected Robert Briffault, author of *The Mothers*, which received a splendidly deserved and deservedly splendid tribute from J. M. Robertson. Nor does Mr Downie discuss the sustained criticism of Frazer's ideas about the King of the Wood at Nemi—ostensibly the main theme of *The Golden Bough*—made by Joseph Fontenrose in *The Ritual Theory of Myth* (1966). Mr Downie's omissions unfortunately make a mockery of his publisher's claim that his slim volume provides "a full survey of Frazer's life-work".

MARTIN PAGE

TELEVISION

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referred to rather than the second. Such were the generosity and "timing" of the great artist that his junior partner's momentary disappointment vanished on the spot. Television has lost a popular dramatic conductor, and classical music, when heard on the box, will never be the same again in our life-time. This is where radio will now take over; despite its fewer adherents, it will transport us to Barbirolli's world should we fail to catch a repeat of one of those old Barbirolli films which will, no doubt, become the classics of the small screen as the early Chaplin films have become in the cinema.

* Edited by James Halloran, Panther Modern Society, 10s.

LETTERS

What's in a Name ?

The Gaelic transcription of my patronymic by Nigel Sinnott (*Freethinker*, 29 August) illustrates that the fundamental division in contemporary Ireland is religious and not racial. If some misguided ancestors of mine served James II (and VII) the forebears of many Cork IRA men were Cromwellian Roundheads. Mr Sinnott's reply evaded my principal point: that the Protestant majority in Ulster are determined to remain in the United Kingdom to which they have belonged for 169 years. They bitterly resent the attempt by the Roman Catholic minority to push them into Eire, a foreign RC country with much inferior standards of living, education and welfare.

Ulster's status as part of this country was in no way affected by the grant of autonomy in 1920. The claim in Eire's current—1938—constitution that Ulster is its territory is devoid of legal substance and, as Lord O'Neill remarked, a major irritant to Northern Ireland.

Yet the RC church in Ulster continues to encourage its people to regard Eire, and not the UK, as their country. This is the root cause of "the Ulster problem".

If the RC minorities in the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands were to try and put those places under Dublin and Paris respectively, a similar situation to that in Ulster would soon develop.

I mentioned that Gaelic was Eire's official first language because in Ulster Gaelic studies and sports are a sectarian RC interest linked with Irish Nationalism and Republicanism. Both earlier and latterday freethinkers regarded William III's Glorious Revolution of 1688 as progressive, and so eminent a freethinker as Avro Manhattan has addressed the Rev. Ian Paisley's meetings.

JAMES MACMAHON.

Divided Ulster

Under this heading in your issue of 22 August I feel that you have not given a sufficiently objective view for the following reasons:

1. You play down the murder of two members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and describe it as a killing.
2. You describe a fine body of men recognised as such by very many Roman Catholics, as probably the most brutal and vicious police force in the United Kingdom.

I suggest that this type of reporting, while looked on with favour by extremists of one side, is likely to alienate the majority of potential subscribers who are in general sympathy with the basic views of the *Freethinker*.

You take the *Daily Sketch* to task for asking why there are no Bishops and Cardinals walking the streets of Belfast and Londonderry trying to bring the people to their senses. You describe this as "mealy-mouthed inanity". I feel what was meant was the failure of the majority of clergymen of all branches of the Christian religion to use their influence to heal the divisions in the community, and I believe this is a valid criticism.

I agree that the remarks of Brian Faulkner and Rafton Ponder should not have been made, and I wholeheartedly agree with your condemnation of the Orange fanatics. D. C. GREENE.

Immigrants

If Philip Hinchcliffe (*Freethinker*, 22 August) really wishes to be taken seriously in his search for lessons to be learned from the integration of earlier immigrants, he must begin by taking a more objective stance.

He offers us not one word of criticism concerning the practices of the immigrants; the tendency to barricade themselves in bus-conducting and other lower-paid occupations whilst trying to mix as little as possible with the host population. Perhaps because it is simply not respectable. GERALD SAMUEL.

Investigation Needed ?

This is an era of official enquiries, and in view of the unhappy events in Northern Ireland, India and many other places, is it not imperative that an independent, scientific investigation be made into the nature and functions of basic ideologies (including religions), and into the conditions in which their propagation does more harm than good. G. F. WESTCOTT.

Sunday, 13 September, 1970

Visit to
PEMBROKE LODGE, Richmond
(Home of Bertrand Russell)

and

DOWNE HOUSE
(Home of Charles Darwin)

COACH LEAVES CENTRAL LONDON 10 A.M.

Cost (coach fare, lunch, admission to Downe House) 27/6

Bookings to the Organisers:

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

Telephone: 01-407 2717

THE SECULAR SEVENTIES ?

(Continued from page 290)

more than ever before, the NSS fought against bureaucracy, turning a little, perhaps, from religion. Religion, however, does come under fire in the report, but for a large part with the half-mocking tone which tending to find its way into a lot of NSS pamphlets. It is entertaining and justified, but not altogether the right way to get people on your side.

The National Secular Society started the new campaign against the religious provisions of the 1944 Education Act so it is not surprising that the annual report includes a section on the campaign. It concludes that the concensus of opinion among teachers has a distinct leaning on the secular side, and hope there is justified.

The second part of *Into the Seventies* is a detailed record of the Society's work during the period under review. And a very impressive record it is. Bertrand Russell is of course mourned by the Society, and the publication of a memorial edition of his famous *Why I am Not a Christian* is reported.

The National Secular Society enters the seventies with many notable achievements to its credit, and some golden opportunities ahead. It can be trusted to make the most of them. Free copies of *Into the Seventies* are obtainable from the NSS, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

Next week

Philip Hinchliff reviews

COMPUTERS, SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

by F. H. George