

## NSS REPORT SLAMS RELIGIOUS SERVICES ON TV AND RADIO

### 'NO MORE CLAIM TO BE BROADCAST THAN WITCHES' COVENS'

"The Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949, which prohibits all broadcasting save that licensed by the Postmaster General, is rarely if ever mentioned when the subject of censorship is discussed, yet it is the most potent tool for censorship which exists in the United Kingdom", says the National Secular Society in its evidence to the Church of England General Synod's Broadcasting Commission. The Commission was set up under the chairmanship of Sir William Hart following the passing of a resolution by the Church Assembly in 1970. It will consider such questions as the structure of broadcasting in Britain, acceptable programme standards and religious broadcasting. The NSS was invited to submit its views and David Tribe, president of the Society, was requested by the Executive Committee to draw up a statement. This was submitted to the Commission last week and extracts are published below. Copies of the statement are obtainable free from NSS head office.

#### Structure of Broadcasting

Most British broadcasting is still controlled by the British Broadcasting Corporation. Its personnel and policies have broadened somewhat in recent years, but it is still on the whole establishmentarian and biased strongly in favour of "respectable" ideas, whatever their origin or plausibility. This is particularly marked in the area of religion. To a large extent this results from what we must assume to be the historical accident that a staunch evangelical, J. C. W. (now Lord) Reith became its first Director General. In the lobby of Broadcasting House is the inscription "In the year of Our Lord 1931 and in the Directorship of Sir John Reith the first Governors dedicated to Almighty God this temple of the arts and Muses . . .". What is true of the buildings has, inevitably, proved true of the programmes.

Commercial television grew out of the Television Act 1954 and a much less godly climate, and commercial radio will enter an atmosphere more pagan again; yet the religious bias of the BBC, by a process of analogy as much as by sectarian intrigues, has largely been inherited by the new outlets. Other features of "public service" broadcasting, good and bad, save provisions relating to advertising, have entered commercial broadcasting in Britain, which has a different flavour from that in those countries where private preceded public radio and television.

It is a serious matter when people feel they are unjustly denied broadcasting time or pilloried without an opportunity for reply, and suggests the need for a Broadcasting Council similar to the Press Council but with a majority of lay representation and effective sanctions. In a democracy we regard the free dissemination of ideas and the right to defend oneself as immeasurably more important than that agitation over "sex-n-violence" which dominates the minds of those who today are loudest in their call for a Broadcasting Council, which they would like to turn into a vehicle for censorship and petty tyranny. When we refer to "the Corporation's professional bureaucracy" and its opposite number in commercial broadcasting, we

do not mean the creative staff. As books like *The New Priesthood: British Television Today* (Joan Bakewell and Nicholas Garnham, 1970) show, they have little or no control over programme planning, or even the "slant" of individual programmes. All vital decisions in this key area of modern communications seem in fact to be taken by a remarkably small number of people who are, save in the nugatory sense outlined above, accountable to none. However conscientious or broadminded they may be (most of them would win awards for conscientiousness but substantially fewer for broadmindedness), far too much power is vested in them for the benefit of a modern democracy. For increasingly the medium is replacing attendance at political, trade union and public meetings, outdoor speaking sites, churches and secularist societies, as the average citizen's means of contact with current affairs. And, despite the claims of Marshall McLuhan, broadcasting is eminently a non-participatory medium. Because its output is ephemeral and it grew up under paternalistic direction without the tradition of a letters column, it is even less participatory than the Press.

#### Religious Broadcasting

One of the reasons why impartiality and academic standards in all fields are so widely ignored is that there exists in all broadcasting outlets in Britain the bad example of religious broadcasting departments which lay no claim, or can justify no claim, to either of these virtues. These departments are, of course, wrongly described. They do not attempt to present a balanced view of the world's religions, much less of the powerful arguments against religious belief itself, and are in effect Christian propaganda departments. This being so, they broadcast sermons whose dogmatic, unsubstantiated and unsubstantiable historical, philosophical and moral assertions go completely unchallenged, discussion programmes where, for the most part, everything is weighted in the cause of belief, and a general "soft sell" image which ignores "extremist" sects and plays down the political reaction and fundamentalist

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zeal which everyone knows to be common features of Christian sects in the world at large. In this way these departments contrive to offend everyone but a handful of Christian "liberals".

Not only are these probably a minority, they are a minority of a minority. Religious broadcasting has failed to notice that we are no longer living in the Victorian age, that there are substantial numbers of Eastern and African religionists in our midst, and that unbelief, informed or instinctive, is the dominant feature of our age. Christian theologians of different persuasions have not hesitated to describe the present as a "post-Christian age"; and only last month Cardinal Heenan publicly admitted that in Britain "few people are members of any Church". The ITA 1971 *Handbook* admits that large numbers of viewers switch off when the religious programmes commence.

We would claim that essential religious teachings are utterly exploded and that religious services have no more claim to be broadcast than witches' covens or Mau Mau initiation rites. This is, we know, a disputed position. Yet surely the case for having secular humanist broadcasting *pari passu* with religious broadcasting is overwhelming.

#### Sales Department for Christianity

The BBC has explicitly, and the ITA by implication, adopted the position that Britain is a Christian country and that it thus has an obligation to broadcast Christianity. Neither of these assertions is correct. The only thing which gives any support to the former is the fact that Britain has an Established Church, but the logic of this contention is that only Anglican broadcasts should be allowed and Roman Catholicism should be particularly eschewed. In *Bowman v Secular Society Ltd* (on appeal to the House of Lords in 1917), Lord Justice Sumner called the claim that Britain is a Christian country "not law" but "rhetoric". The only obligation laid on the BBC by its Royal Charters is impartiality. This the Corporation blatantly ignores in the expanding field of religious broadcasting. Not only are official programmes devoted to mainstream Christianity, but fringe sects that are denied time under these auspices now frequently appear in current affairs programmes. We do not object to their right to be heard, but whereas the rare secularist appearance in this area is always challenged if it is at all controversial, the most outrageous claims for spiritualist mediumship, witchcraft, faith healing and the like get by with as much unassailed dogmatism as if they were sermons on religious broadcasting, and frequently the interviewer adopts a specially reverent tone.

Apart from the record-plugging scandal recently brought to light by the *News of the World*, religious broadcasting is the most blatant example of advertising that any "public service" body, which ludicrously doctors drama scripts to remove brand names, could indulge in. This is admitted by no less an observer than Lord Reith: "The churches—all denominations and confessions—presumably exist to bring men to a knowledge of, and faith in, Christ; 'Come and see' their supreme commission. In business terms they have something to sell; and, as elsewhere, sales can be vastly increased by, and may to a great extent depend on, advertising. Here millions of pounds worth of advertising had

been done for them free" (Foreword to Melville Dinwiddie's *Religion by Radio: Its Place in British Broadcasting* (1968)).

It is clear that a department set up and manned under Christian auspices can never be an impartial department of religious affairs and should therefore be abolished. We are aware that, with current pressures towards "entertainment" and "ratings", little religious (or secularist) material will be broadcast by the other departments, and that a significant avenue for the cultivation of a philosophy of life and morality will thus be lost. Nevertheless we think this result preferable to the present involvement of these important aspects of life in an ideology which is at best contentious and divisive and at worst superstitious and persecuting.

#### The Religious Advisory Systems

It is anomalous that the BBC (and later the ITA) should be advised by a Central Religious Advisory Committee which was in fact "nominated and appointed by the BBC". But this is only one of the anomalies associated with religious broadcasting. Doubtless CRAC is, within its obvious limits, well-intentioned, but not only does it composition ensure that unbelief is almost entirely excluded, it also ensures that non-Christian religions are ignored or downgraded and even Christian denominations outside the mainstream ignored. Perhaps this policy excludes some rather nasty sects; yet it is a dangerous course to follow. Some of the excluded sects simply lack large numbers of adherents or historical "respectability", and few hold tenets more extraordinary than Roman Catholicism, which is powerfully represented.

#### Training for Religious Programmes

We suggest that the most valuable training in this field is impartial scholarship in history, philosophy, sociology and ethics.

## THE FREETHINKER

1881

Founded by G. W. Foote

1971

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# THE DILEMMA OF LIBERAL CHRISTIANS

CHRISTOPHER MOREY

Secularists are often accused of still fighting the battles of the nineteenth century. We do so unashamedly for the simple reason that many of the battles have not yet been won, and our opponents are still firmly entrenched and all too perniciously influential. They, after all, have failed to learn the lessons of not one, but 20 centuries.

Contributors to the first issue of *Christian Renewal* are beginning to learn these lessons, and that may be one of the reasons why the appearance of this new quarterly was ignored by the religious Press. When believers begin to challenge dogmatic Christianity that is a step on the road to perdition. Attempts to mitigate the terrible demands of its God can only lead either to intellectual dishonesty or to the abandonment of religious belief.

Christians have always had to reconcile (confuse) the demands of God with those of an institutionalised Church. Now they are faced with a new set of demands—those of humanity. Five of the seven articles in *Christian Renewal* are concerned with this and the contributors, as others before them have done, promptly proceed to reconcile (confuse) the demands of humanity with those of God, but are not quite sure what to make of the institutionalised Church. (In every case the Church is the Roman Catholic Church which makes the issues involved more clear-cut than would have been the case with the Protestant Churches who dare not insist on any specified allegiance from their members.)

## Milk-and-Water Theology

The gist of "renewed Christian" theology seems to be that we must, first and foremost, recognise the demands on us of the human species as a whole. (We do not avoid the word humanist.) The source of our concern (love) we call God. (Man, of course, cannot be the source of anything so selfless.) We then turn for practical guidance to the life of the supernatural social worker, Jesus Christ. It is as a result of the good work we do in Christ that we wish to join together and praise God. We regret the social indifference and pious magic of the institutionalised Church. But there is always hope; one contributor tries to compare the development of the Catholic Church with that of parliamentary government in this country (pre-1832, of course), but has to concede that "a glance at the political development of traditionally Catholic countries is not reassuring".

## Comfortable Rhetoric

It is very difficult for the secularist to know how to deal with these "renewed Christians". First he admires and shares most of their social objections, and when he finds himself sitting next to them on a committee he is reluctant to be impolite. Secondly, their theology, what there is of it, is arranged so far as possible to be logic-proof. They have thrown off most of the shackles of the supernatural, but cannot get rid of the word God, which is neither logically nor psychologically necessary to their position. It is all comfortable rhetoric.

I cannot end without mentioning one of the other articles which, although the best, has nothing directly to do with Christian renewal. Bishop Ambrose Reeves describes the human degradation caused by the South African Pass

Laws, the determined ineffectiveness of Bantu education and the alarming increase in South Africa's "defence" expenditure (800 per cent in ten years).

The faith of the sponsors of *Christian Renewal* is evident in view of the speed with which other independent Christian magazines have folded up: *Slant* ceased publication completely and *New Christian* was forced into amalgamation. According to the editor 500 subscribers are needed to make the magazine viable. His problem is that liberal Christians are few and far between—understandably so, since liberal Christian is a contradiction in terms.

Christians (being possessed of revealed truths) are naturally hard liners, and do not want to be urged to commit themselves to their fellow men. They are quite content to wallow in the fulminations of the Archbishop of Dublin or meditate on the miracles of Loudres

*Christian Renewal* will not be found on many church bookstalls, and I fail to see how its supporters can continue as members of an institutionalised Church.

## SECRET FILES

It is to be hoped that those who are so keen to save children from the horrors of sex education and deprivation of religious instruction will speak out against the scandal of secret files that are kept by many schools on pupils and their parents. Despite denials, it has been widely suspected that such files were being kept, and the practice was effectively exposed when it was reported in the national Press that two girls found their files in an unlocked cupboard and read them, one of the girls discovered that her mother had had an illegitimate baby. The mother agreed this was so but, not surprisingly, did not understand what business this was of the school authorities. The other girl's file contained a great deal of misinformation which was obviously based on hearsay.

The Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority announced last week that it will discontinue the practice of keeping files on children. This move will encourage parents' and teachers' organisations in other parts of the country to exert pressure on their education authorities to follow London's example.

## SEX EDUCATION — THE ERRONEOUS ZONE

MAURICE HILL and

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

Foreword: BRIGID BROPHY

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

## FREETHINKER

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London, SE1

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

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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 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

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## EVENTS

Guildford Humanist Group, Guildford House, Guildford, Thursday, 13 May, 7.45 p.m. Professor L. R. B. Elton: "Humanism and Education".

Humanist Holidays. Summer Centre in the Lake District is now full. Youth Camp being planned for 24 July until 1 August in Salop. Details: Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone 642 8796).

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8, Sunday, 16 May, 7.30 p.m. Hugh Jenkins, MP: "Communications".

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group, Adult Education Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, Friday, 14 May, 7.30 p.m. Professor Alastair Smart: "Thomas Hardy and the Visual Arts".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 9 May, 11 a.m. H. J. Blackham: "Shakespeare and Christianity".

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# NEWS

## THE BLOODSUCKERS

Most people are under the impression that the Tithes Act of 1936 completely ended a privilege enjoyed by the Church for centuries; therefore much surprise was caused by an item broadcast in the BBC early morning programme *Today*, last week. A Suffolk farmer named Albert Mobbs was interviewed, and it transpired that every year for 50 years, he refused to pay tithes. And every year the bailiff seized some of his property which was sold at a public auction, for which Mr Mobbs was always the highest bidder. But the joke went sour this year when he had to pay £90 in order to recover his property. He forcefully expressed his indignation, which is shared by many other farmers who still have to pay tithes because when tithes were commuted in 1936, the process was to be effected over 60 years.

David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society, in a Press statement said the case "is a brutal reminder of the many injustices entailed by the establishment of the Church of England and failure to improve the lot of British citizens by periodic tinkering with its consequences. Not only is this a continuing burden on those still involved, the immediate handout to the Church of redemption stock has, since conversion to equities, provided the Church was a greater income than it previously enjoyed.

"The whole operation is as though the Capone gang were to have had their protection racket legalised, with a clause making allowance for inflation. The people of Britain no longer believe in hell-fire as a reality to be protected from and should deal with Church Establishment as effectively as America dealt with Capone".

Mr Tribe is quite justified (even in these ecumenical times) in comparing Church Establishment to the operations of a notorious American gang which grew fat on the proceeds of blackmail, protection rackets and extortion. By the fourteenth century the Church in this country had secured its endowment with vast estates and great wealth. The monastic orders had become nothing more than landowners who rigorously oppressed the peasants and threatened them with punishment in this world and the next. Priests and monks used their influence to persuade landowners to "purchase heaven" by frightening them with descriptions of hell-fire on their deathbeds. At one period half the land of England was vested in religious houses, and this eventually led to the first of the Mortmain Statutes. Priests were generally more interested in collecting tithes than instructing their flock, and had a list of sins drawn up to assist them when hearing confessions. The first sin was a refusal to pay tithes, followed by failure to pay promptly and pay in full.

It is incredible that these clerical vampires should still, in what many of them admit to be the post-Christian era, be enjoying unwarranted financial privileges.

## IRISH BISHOPS LOSING THEIR GRIP?

Dr Noel Browne, Eire's former Minister of Health whose Mother and Child Scheme was vehemently opposed by the Catholic hierarchy in 1952, delivered a broadside against the bishops in a speech last week. He bluntly accused them of having "deliberately created the impression that

# S AND NOTES

their narrow-minded beliefs and prejudices . . . are binding on our legislators under pain of mortal sin, hellfire, or most laughable of all, a medieval curse on our laws should we ignore their warning".

He accused Cardinal Conway of deliberately confusing the issue of contraception by claiming that a simple amendment of the law would lead to abortion, euthanasia, divorce and the total breakdown of the moral value in society. Dr Browne went on to say that Cardinal Conway "believed that Irishmen over whom the Catholic Church had had absolute control for centuries are separated from a libertine Hibernian Sodom and Gomorrah by a slot machine of contraceptives.

"The hard truth is that the Catholic Church is one of the most dedicated, resilient, obscurantist, conservative political machines in the history of man, which is only now entering into its decline the world over".

It will be recalled that when Dr Browne put forward his scheme Eire's infant mortality rate was one of the highest in Europe. His proposals were mild enough, but the bishops insisted that they should approve of any Government medical programme before it was submitted to the public. They did not approve of Dr Browne's scheme and, with typical, nauseating spinelessness, his ministerial colleagues disavowed him and his scheme. He resigned, and the *Irish Times* deplored the fact that an honest and energetic man had been forced out of active politics: "This is a sad day for Ireland . . . the Roman Catholic Church would seem to be the effective government of this country".

Nearly 20 years have passed; Dr Browne is back in the political arena, and the winds from the bogs that blow up the bishops' skirts are distinctly chillier than of yore. The decisions of the Vatican Council, a world shortage of priests, definance of papal authority and the Church's teachings, are having alarming repercussions. Worst of all, an increasing number of young couples who return to Ireland for their annual holiday take with them a small, well-fed, well-clothed family, plus a supply of contraceptives adequate to their needs until they return to benighted England, recently described by Cardinal Heenan as "a land of former believers".

Most Irish Catholic homes are still adorned by those hideous plaster statues of a simpering, peaches-and-cream Virgin Mary. But there are suspicions that Holy Mother Church is really a nasty old crone. And there is a growing recognition of the fact that subservience to jewelled bishops is a greater obstacle to national unity than the thunderings of Ian Paisley.

## CONCERT

There was an appreciative audience for a concert arranged by the National Secular Society and South Place Ethical Society at Conway Hall, London, on 30 April. Derek Wilkes, tenor, who is well known to freethought audiences, and Marie-Helene Georgio, a brilliant young soprano, performed a programme of works by Scarletti, Delius, Mozart, Verdi, Wagner and Puccini. The accompanist was Sheer Pleeth, and David Tribe introduced the programme.

## '... ART MADE TONGUE-TIED BY AUTHORITY'

It is a pity that Lord Eccles, Minister for the Arts, said in a House of Lords debate in February that he hoped the Arts Council would consult with him to produce a convention restricting theatrical productions which affronted the religious beliefs or sense of decency of what he described as a large body of taxpayers. He must have known there is a substantial number of people whose religious convictions lead them to believe that theatres, cinemas and even concert halls are dens of iniquity, and whose sense of decency is so easily outraged that nothing short of a complete shut-down of places of entertainment would satisfy them.

The British theatre is applauded the world over, and controversy, experiment and vigour are its life-blood. So the Arts Council is to be congratulated on its firm assurance that it will not accept nor impose censorship. In a statement issued at the request of Lord Eccles, the Council declared it does not seek "to discourage the presentation of controversial plays. On the contrary they support such productions, and believe that they bring life and vigour to the whole theatrical scene. Inevitably some must give offence since they express viewpoints and attitudes at variance with many orthodox opinions".

It hardly seemed necessary for the Council to remind its beneficiaries that "the greatest care should be taken to avoid encouraging the attendance of children at productions which are manifestly unsuitable for them". Theatre directors are well aware of the need for careful thought in preparing productions at performances of which children and young people will constitute a large proportion of the audience. The statement refers to the "talent, energy and judgment of their directors and their boards, for establishing a theatrical reputation in this country which is acknowledged throughout the world and which has made this country one of the world's centres for students of drama". All but neurotically protective parents will have confidence in those who present and organise performances for children.

Lord Eccles dutifully carried out his money-grubbing Government's imposition of admission charges to museums and art galleries. During the recent Lords debate on pornography he made noises pleasing to the genteel ears of Mary Whitehouse's disciples. But he would be well advised to stop breathing down Lord Goodman's neck, and let the Arts Council get on with its job. They have enough problems without interference from Lord Eccles or busybodies whose experience of the theatre is often confined to an annual visit to the pantomime, and the first night performance by the local amateur operatic society.

## THE RIGHTS OF OLD PEOPLE

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## BOOKS

**TRIAL** by Tom Hayden. Cape, 70p.

In 1968, prior to the Democratic Party's convention in Chicago, large numbers of young people, both black and white, assembled to protest peacefully against the American war in Vietnam and oppression of black people at home. They were brutally attacked by police. Daley, the Democratic mayor of Chicago sought justice, and as a result eight people were brought to trial. They were charged with inciting a riot under what became known as the famous Chicago Conspiracy Trial. The author of this book, who was one of the defendants, argues that the case "foreshadowed the resistance of the '70s . . . we did not come to Chicago with the term 'pig' in our vocabulary".

There are various explanations for the police violence in Chicago. Eldridge Cleaver supposes it was a Right-wing conspiracy to elect Nixon through discrediting the Democrats. Dick Gregory believes the CIA was trying to overthrow the country in order to initiate even more repressive measures. But Tom Hayden suggests that it was an effort by the Democrats in attempting to outdo Nixon's pre-election threats for establishing law and order. Whatever the explanation, *Trial* outlines the result: a search for a non-existent conspiracy amongst the eight, who included Jerry Rubin and Bobby Seale.

Hayden compares the court to the Church; the judge is referred to as "Your Honour", much as the Pope is "His Holiness". It pretends to be above politics, but favours rich, white, respectable, conservative people. This trial represented an attack on the system itself, from the defendants' viewpoint. They made it clear, they were "not at war with the people of Vietnam".

This book describes in detail the "contempt of court" with which Judge Hoffman charged the defendants. Hayden writes "our fates were to be decided by a madman"; and it became increasingly obvious that this was true, when Seale was denied bail, and the defendants' own lawyers were also charged as being privy to the conspiracy to overthrow established order in the USA.

The new men who took over the Justice Department when Nixon was elected found their leader in Spiro Agnew. He and they see liberalism and permissiveness as a danger everywhere, leading to the defeat of the USA not on the battlefield, but through the perverting of the minds of the young generation. They believe repression will halt this process, though evidence shows that they are alienating a large section of this new generation, who wish to accelerate a yearning for freedom: "Until recently people dropped out in their minds, or into tiny Bohemian enclaves. Now they drop out collectively, into territory".

Hayden traces the violence of internal repression against civil rights and Vietnam protest; for America, he argues, "it would be impossible to act as International Gendarme while permitting mass movements to threaten the power structure at home". This leads him to conclude: "The political history of the 1960s is one chapter after another of frustrated reform efforts".

## FREETHINKER

He states clearly the position of those large numbers of people in the USA who object to the oppression of blacks at home and Vietnamese abroad: "When authority becomes despotic, citizens have an absolute right to resistance. It was exactly this situation that faced the original American rebels, and it is exactly this situation that faces dissenters today". He reminds readers: "The point at which protest becomes effective, the State becomes repressive. Constitutional rights become primarily rhetorical".

At the time the trial was taking place the Weathermen indulged in a rampage of looting and burning of property. But, from the point of view of effectiveness, Hayden disagrees with their practices. This is right, because their actions only invoke more vicious repression.

I have quoted several passages from this book, in the belief that its diagnosis is correct; we are entering a phase of reaction against movements among the people that grew up in the '60s. In Britain the expulsion of Rudi Dutschke was a sign of this. In America, the man who started the hunt for a conspiracy in 1968, Mayor Daley of Chicago, has just been re-elected for his fifth four-year term of office!

DENIS COBELL

## VICTORIAN ATTITUDES TO RACE

by Christine Bolt. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £3.

"All men are, from some points of view, equal. But to suppose that the races of Africa are, in any sense, the equals of men of European descent, so far as government, as society, as the higher interests of civilisation are concerned is really, I think, an absurdity, which every man who looks seriously at this most difficult problem, must put out of his mind, if he is to solve the problem at all."

Who would guess that those words came from the Prime Minister of Britain in 1904? Balfour was so pleased with them that he repeated them in the House of Commons on 16 August, 1909, when the constitution of the new Union of South Africa was debated. Born in 1848, Balfour was at an impressionable age 20 years later when the subject of race was under continual discussion in British newspapers and journals. It is these sources that Dr Bolt has combed, with praiseworthy effort, in order to give us this book on a neglected subject.

She has taken the period from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century. It is a pity that she did not extend it to 1914, a date which would make a better end to her story. Had she done this, she would no doubt have come across Balfour's opinion. She would also have noticed the anti-Jewish sentiments freely expressed in and out of Parliament at that time in the hope of curbing the flow of immigrants from persecution in eastern Europe.

Dr Bolt was at such pains to gather her rich material that she evidently had no desire or energy left to ask herself, as a social scientist should, what its significance is.

# REVIEWS

If the belief in racial characteristics was as strong and widespread as it evidently was in the middle class, when and why did it change? Surely the object of such a study is to help us understand the vital processes of change.

The first world war clearly was the watershed. By 1921 Winston Churchill was proclaiming to the Imperial Conference that "there is only one ideal that the British Empire can set before itself—that there should be no barrier of race, colour, or creed which should prevent any man of merit from reaching any station if he is fitted for it". Empire-building, re-building, and later demolition provide the clues. The pseudo-scientific racialism that the young Balfour must have heard and read was part of the climate of British imperialism. The scientists and journalists of the 1860s and later decades obligingly produced "evidence" from travellers' tales and the reports of explorers and missionaries which confirmed the sense of racial superiority enjoyed by middle class Englishmen. To exploit Africans and Asians without feeling guilty, it was necessary to believe that they were not fully human in the same way as Europeans.

By 1920, however, the world situation had altered. For one thing, the Russians, after their revolution, had adopted the principle of racial and national equality. Yet when the League of Nations was constructing its Covenant, and Japan asked that it embody the principle of racial equality, the proposal was rejected, mainly because the United States and Australia disliked it. By 1945 the Charter of the United Nations not only included but emphasised the principle.

The great change can be measured in another way. The eminent German-American anthropologist, Franz Boas, was the foremost social scientist to sort out the differences between the physical characteristics called "racial" and language, religion, and culture. His pupils at Columbia University were to carry on the good work, and they make an impressive list. Analysis and results unacceptable before 1914 were welcomed after 1920 when biological inheritance was distinguished from social heritage.

Dr Bolt has compiled her valuable catalogue of race, reason, and rubbish with reference to four main topics—the issue of slavery in the United States, which tested British attitudes sorely; the notorious conduct of Governor Eyre in Jamaica; the opening up of "darkest Africa"; and the evaluation of "our Indian empire". If you want to perceive how deep are the roots of colour prejudice, here is the fertile soil which nourished them.

JULIUS LEWIN

**THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS**  
 By DAVID TRIBE  
 Foreword: MARGARET KNIGHT  
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 NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

## FAITH WITHOUT RELIGION

by Fred Brown. SCM Press, 95p.

Major Fred Brown of the Salvation Army became front page news in September 1970, when he refused to submit his book, *Secular Evangelism*, to Army censorship. As a result he was dismissed from the Army and his job, and was evicted from his home. His new book, *Faith Without Religion*, develops ideas raised in his first. Like other thoughtful Christians, he realises that traditional evangelism has become virtually useless to the Church, and that a new method of approach must be found. Modern man's indifference to religion is part of God's plan, it appears. To quote Bonhoeffer: "God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without him". The human race has come of age, and the working hypothesis of God is being withdrawn by the deity himself.

This is not to say that the Church is no longer necessary, though it will die if it does not adapt itself to the changed religious outlook. It must gradually transform itself into a social organisation, creating or supporting existing secular groups at every point of human need. In addition to traditional social work, there is a great need for companionship which does not require commitment to a creed. The Church should be an open society, accepting everyone. The common binding interest might be a social problem, a personal handicap or a recreation. Evangelism would be out.

All this is radical enough, and one can understand the alacrity with which the author's employers dispensed with his services. His personal beliefs remain orthodox, however, and he would retain evangelism for the dwindling number likely to respond to it. Some development along the lines suggested is probable, though Mr Brown fears the Church will adapt itself "too little and too late".

For "secularists", meaning the religiously indifferent, there is little but praise, with a frank admission of the harm done through the ages in the name of Christianity. Reading this book, one gets the feeling that God ought to have withdrawn his own hypothesis much earlier.

R. J. CONDON

## LETTER

### Inquiry at Thetford

Some weeks ago the *Freethinker* published a brief comment upon the proposals to demolish the house incorporating the birthplace of Thomas Paine at Thetford, Norfolk. As I have seen nothing further on this matter it might be opportune to let readers of the *Freethinker* know something of what has happened since.

When the proposal received the consent of Thetford Borough Council by one vote the resulting press publicity brought about a strong movement of protest that encompassed individuals and organisations in Britain and abroad. Among the individuals are numbered Jeremy Thorpe, MP, Lord Soper, and Michael Foot, MP, while organisations included the Thomas Paine Society, an American Jewish society, the Ancient Monuments Society and the London Secular Group.

The result of the many protests is that the Minister of the Environment has ordered a public inquiry to be held into the demolition proposal, and this will take place at the Thetford Borough Council Offices on Wednesday, 12 May, at 10 a.m. There is still time for interested persons to protest in writing to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Whitehall, London, SW1, quoting the reference HB/1720/270/11; or, if the time before the inquiry is short, direct to the Inspector at the Borough Council Offices, Thetford, Norfolk.

ROBERT W. MORRELL, *Honorary, Secretary,*  
The Thomas Paine Society.

## IMPRESSIVE DEMONSTRATION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

The cohorts of purity and Christian morality, from the Chief Constable of Blackburn to Sir Gerald Nabarro, have been having a field day in recent months, and the Special Branch boys have also been working overtime against publishers and booksellers. So it was about time the defenders of freedom launched a counter attack and they did so in fine style last week. The Defence of Literature and the Arts Society called an emergency public meeting and, despite all the problems of arranging a meeting at short notice, there was standing room only at Conway Hall, London.

Benn Levy, the playwright and former Labour MP who was in the chair, said that some of today's puritans are figures of fun. Most of them were motivated by strong religious feelings, and we should always remember that religious convictions, carried to the point of fanaticism, have caused bloodshed, repression and great unhappiness in the world. Unlike many of the "cleaner-uppers" Lord Longford, who initiated the recent debate on pornography in the House of Lords, was a substantial public figure, with access to the media and influential friends. "And of course Lord Longford is a good man", said Mr Levy, "but I don't see why the rest of us should suffer for it."

Novelist Mervyn Jones said that considerable progress had been made since the 1950s when the most innocuous books were targets for the police and the censors. But there is now some danger of a step backwards with the offensive being taken against such publications as *Oz* and *The Little Red Schoolbook*. They are not being attacked because they are concerned with the subject of sex; they are seriously questioning the structure of schools, and society, and the relationship between ordinary people and those in authority. They are saying you should not always do as you are told; you should not always blindly accept what has been handed down to you. It is this spirit of free thought that is under attack by those who want to put the clock back.

Richard Neville, editor of *Oz*, gave examples of police harassment to which he and his colleagues had been subjected. He said: "The police raid the office with such regularity that we sometimes mistake them for members of the staff". Less amusing was Mr Neville's account of how plain clothes police with dogs entered his flat one morning.

### Nothing Shocking

William Hamling, MP (chairman of the DLAS and secretary of the Humanist Parliamentary Group), told the audience that if art and literature are to be judged by legal standards there would be no freedom of thought or expression. Writers and artists would not be allowed to offend established ideas and conventions, "or lift up the stones and see the social ugliness and corruption underneath. Many people in Britain would like to foster the vice of triviality and conformity. If there are any ugly truths, conceal them; there must be no challenge to accepted standards".

Dr Martin Cole introduced his controversial sex education film *Growing Up*. He said the film was something of an experiment, and agreed it was by no means perfect. Although criticism was expressed during discussion it was evident that the audience thought the film had a great deal of merit and Dr Cole was warmly applauded.

Dilys Cossey, general secretary of the Birth Control Campaign, told the *Freethinker*: "Unlike Mrs Jill Knight, MP, and the Archbishop of Canterbury I have seen Dr Martin Cole's sex education film *Growing Up*. It is therefore perhaps impertinent of me to comment on it. But I think it is worth reminding those who only have the newspaper reports and the wisdom of Mrs Knight and the Archbishop to go on, that this film is not an orgy of masturbation. It is an unemotional, almost clinical, description of the development of the human body, the sex organs and sexual activity. I do not see how anyone could find this shocking. The film contains nothing objectionable, obscene, pornographic or, for children in their teens, even disturbing. If anything it could be said to make sex seem rather dull.

"One of its major faults is that, for an educational film, it gives too much complicated information too quickly. Another drawback is that the film is rather amateurishly made, and its presentation somewhat stilted. It is time we treated the film—as its originator intended—as an honest attempt to provoke a re-thinking of our presentation of sex education. Dr Cole does not claim that it is the final word; he presents it as an experiment. It is also time we stopped judging it from our point of view and gave those for whom it was made—the teenagers—a chance to see and criticise it."

### Opposition in Birmingham

In Birmingham a number of organisations including the National Union of Students, Women's Liberation, Schools' Action Union and the Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy have formed a co-ordinating committee to oppose the suspension of teacher Mrs Jennifer Muscutt who appeared in *Growing Up*. Members believe there is a connection between the campaign against the film and Birmingham's unwillingness to accept modern educational ideas. The ruling Tory Party made "law and order" and "anti-permissiveness" prominent issues in the last city elections.

Birmingham has also been the centre of the campaign against abortion law reform, and the case concerning a doctor who informed the parents of a young patient that she was on the Pill, followed a complaint by the Brook Advisory Centre in the city. And Dr Louise Eickhoff, one of the nation's leading opponents of sex education in schools, is a consultant of the Child Psychiatry Clinic at Selly Oak Hospital.

MEMORIAL EDITION

WHY I AM NOT  
A CHRISTIAN

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Preface DAVID TRIBE

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