

## SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON POPULATION WELCOMED BY FAMILY PLANNERS

The report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology, which recommends that the Government sets up a special office to try to stabilise Britain's population, has been welcomed by organisations concerned with population, conservation and the standard of life in this country. Dilys Cossey, general secretary of the Birth Control Campaign, said the report was not the sensational document which some newspaper headlines suggested and, although it does not recommend radical measures, it is a breakthrough. Nor does it attempt to provide the answers, but concludes that "the Government must act to prevent the consequences of population growth becoming intolerable for the everyday conditions of life" and underlines "the need to act 20 years in advance in order to influence a trend in population figures". Mrs Cossey said that one of the questions the proposed new department would study is the role of family limitation and socially responsible parenthood. "This recommendation is central to our aims", she said.

### Increase in Domiciliary Services

The Birth Control Campaign suggested that the Government could contribute much to the freedom of choice in family limitation by ensuring that birth control services are available to every woman at risk.

The Family Planning Association called on the Government for a £40 million programme to offer free family planning advice and contraceptives to everyone who needs them. The Association estimates there are as many as half a million unplanned pregnancies every year. Each pregnancy costs about £250 in hospital care and maternity and child benefits alone.

Helene Graham, the FPA's head of information services, went on to say that the Government should compel local authorities to provide family planning facilities in their areas. They are empowered to do so under the National Health Service (Family Planning) Act, but many do not provide an adequate service. The FPA would like to see a big increase in the domiciliary family planning service together with a major publicity and educational campaign.

A spokesman for the International Planned Parenthood Federation told the *Freethinker* that the organisation welcomed any attempt to examine the effects of population on social and economic development. It is very important that governments of wealthy countries should do so when many less developed nations have adopted population policies.

"Basically, the IPPF exists to encourage the availability of information and contraceptive devices to all people so that they can control their fertility. This is a basic human right."

### The Quality of Life

David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society, declared in a Press statement that the Committee is to be congratulated for drawing attention to the pressing need for stabilising the population in this densely peopled island. There must be massive contraceptive publicity and provisions.

Mr Tribe continued: "It is not simply a question of food, though Britain's food needs are rising at a moment when her agricultural land is diminishing, and both trends are accelerating. From time to time some agronomist (often Roman Catholic) suggests that people should eat quick-growing artichokes and algae, flavoured with pungent fish concentrates, but fails to notice that even starving people may decline so unappetising a diet. Our attention is drawn to the vast unpopulated areas of the world without recognising that most of these areas are deserts and, desert or no, under independent governments that will no longer take Britain's surplus population as the former colonies did in the nineteenth century.

"Inside the country it is not only food that must be found and, some would optimistically say, can be found by improved strains of plants and animals. There is water. The need for new reservoirs is growing swiftly but every time one is made another valley is flooded, more agricultural land lost, more people uprooted, more beauty spots and wild life destroyed. And there is the whole question of bigness with its attendant social and psychological problems: high-rise housing blocks, vast commuting populations with loss of community spirit and traffic chaos, cybernetic difficulties in assessing and transmitting needs, let alone satisfying them. Above all, if a population continues to grow by natural increase there is the impossibility of ever quite catching up with fresh demands for maternity, hospital, nursery and school provision. We see the results today. Sprawling subtopia and proliferating motorways disfigure the countryside without properly providing for the people we have, much less the people we are told to expect. The working population cannot cope. Old people are neglected while young families are unsupported. Feeble pensioners crowd geriatric hospitals and juvenile delinquents the courts.

"Whether or not we need a new office directly under the eye of the Prime Minister is a matter for argument. That the work should be done, and done speedily, is paramount."

# THE LONG SHADOW OF A PROFITABLE FABLE

ELIZABETH COLLINS

*"We owe all this to the fable of Jesus Christ." Attributed to Pope Leo X.*

The Suffolk farmer who was reported in the *Freethinker* to have resisted payment of tithe for 50 years deserves commendation for showing the right spirit. But if there had been concerted action long ago by the farming community throughout the country this iniquitous imposition might have been abolished. Payment of tithe was a device by which a parasitic priesthood maintained itself in power and luxury from the time of the priests of Amon-Ra in ancient Egypt to the present day. By means of the labour of the poor, and the superstition of the rich, they acquired goods and land and so gained enormous power and wealth—the fiction being that all was for the glory of the god!

The practice of giving tribute—a tenth of all produce and profit—was then adopted by whoever drafted the Mosaic Law, and when Christianity came to power it was quick to cash in on the idea in order to maintain a priesthood which was well-housed, well-fed, often richly clothed and never unemployed. In its early days tithes were voluntary offerings of corn, wool and agricultural produce, but a later Canon Law made payment of tithe obligatory in accordance with what it called "Divine Law" (Old Testament Mosaic Law). It was at one time common practice to pay tithe is kind to the parson of each parish, hence the enormous tithe barns scattered over the country, many of which are still in an excellent state of preservation today.

The Church acquired a considerable amount of land and property in England and the great monastic institutions were often harsh in their collection of tithe, rents and goods which they claimed at a death (heriots). At times the people of East Anglia dealt sternly with the avaricious Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, abducting the prior and burning rent and tithe records. The claim of the Church to be tax-free was a considerable burden on the people. A large part of the nation's wealth was in Church hands, often finding its way to foreign Sees and the Papal Court.

## Tinkering with Problem

Tithe could have been legitimately dropped at the Dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII, but it was carefully retained by the Reformed Church on lands it still held. Monastic and other ecclesiastical properties passed either by favour or purchase into the hands of laymen (mostly the nobility), and these were allowed to maintain the right to exact tithe. This was usually the "great" or rectorial tithe; the "small tithe" usually went to the vicar of the parish if he was lucky. The only lands exempt from the tithe were waste forest, barren heath, Crown lands, or those held by a spiritual corporation which had never paid tithe. Also there might be an agreement between parson and landowner whereby the latter would agree to pay a perpetual sum in lieu of tithe.

In 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act and succeeding amending Acts commuted tithes of England and Wales into a tithe rent-charge fixing the amount for each parish. The Act of 1918 made provision for compulsory exemption of rent-charge exceeding twenty shillings, and it also provided that the Minister of Agriculture was to be the final arbiter should owner and tithe-payer fail to agree. Further Acts of 1925 and 1927 only tinkered with the

problem which gave rise to agitation and remained a thorny subject. The Act of 1936 attempted to end what was a continual grievance and which presented almost insuperable difficulties. It abolished rent-charge and made provision for interested persons by the issue of redemption stock charged on the Consolidated Fund. Thus tithe previously payable to Ecclesiastical Commissioners, Queen Anne's Bounty and certain lay owners, was replaced by redemption annuities payable to the Crown, and the Crown issued Government stock to the tithe-owners. These annuities remain payable until 1996 when it is claimed that the tithe will be abolished with a few minor exceptions.

## Opposition

For non-payment of tithe the penalties are distraint after 21 days, possession after 40 days, or the appointment of a receiver to take the profits of the land until arrears are paid. During the depressed state of agriculture in the 1930s tithe became an increasing burden, especially in the Eastern Counties where many farmers refused to comply with the demands for tithe, and where it has been objected to for centuries. In fact it was the occasion for organised opposition at times in many parts of the country.

There remains no present remedy for this relic of the rule and rapacity of the Church. According to reliable agricultural authorities one must either pay up or consult a solicitor with a view to claiming exemption. Of course in natural justice this irritating and unscrupulous measure should be abolished immediately. Why keep it hanging about until 1996? For whose benefit?

## ADDICTS

Some weeks ago the *Freethinker* carried a report on an organisation known as the National Youth Protection Movement, which is dedicated to defending Britain's young people from sex, sin, drugs and porn. Its founder (an unsuccessful Conservative candidate in the local elections a fortnight ago) had also tried to raise a volunteer force to fight on the American side in Vietnam. Fortunately this venture was doomed from the start. Young men are not so keen to don a uniform as their fathers and grandfathers were.

If young people need defending it is from the "patriots" who, while urging prison sentences for pot smokers, have brought about the tragic situation in which Americans in their teens and twenties have been turned into callous butchers of the Vietnamese and, according to a report published on Tuesday by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, dangerous drug addicts. Investigations have shown that over ten per cent of American servicemen in Vietnam are using heroin or some other hard drug. The report was based on evidence taken up to December 1970, and it has been authoritatively stated that the situation has deteriorated since then.

The Americans have grown accustomed to the spectacle of military funerals of soldiers killed in the fighting. But they may find it more difficult to face the prospect of thousands of them coming back as drug addicts who will stop at nothing to obtain supplies.

# ROBERT OWEN: INADVERTENT FATHER OF BRITISH SOCIALISM

CHRISTOPHER MOREY

Recently the House of Lords took a break from debating the Industrial Relations Bill and spent an afternoon commemorating the bicentenary of the birth of Robert Owen. Although the noble lords could not agree in their speculations as to what Owen would have made of that bill, they were agreed that three hours of their time was not wasted recalling his contribution to social advancement and in considering the relevance of his ideas in 1971.

However, the fact is that the only activity in which Robert Owen was successful was not social reformer, but mill owner. He became shop assistant at ten; at 19 he was manager of a mill in Manchester with 500 employees. He was so successful that in three years he was a partner and at 28 he was able, with partners, to buy for £60,000 the New Lanark mills with which his name is always associated. Two things made for his spectacular success: the first was his management ability and his use of production control techniques; the second his concern for what he called "the living machinery". The two were complementary: profitability enabled him to improve the conditions of his employees which in turn increased productivity and profitability. Taking a five per cent return on capital, Owen used the surplus to improve the conditions of the 2,500 inhabitants of New Lanark. All paid one sixtieth of their wages into a sick fund. Owen provided free medical attention, improved housing, and a cut-price store. In 1806 when he was forced by an embargo of American cotton to close the mill for four months he kept the mill workers on full pay, which cost the mill £7,000.

## An Early Educationalist

Most significant of all was his programme of education. Owen would not allow children under the age of ten to work in the mills. Until that age they were obliged to attend school. (Owen wanted it to be 12, but the parents wanted to enjoy their offspring's earnings.) Owen believed that a man's character was almost entirely determined by the circumstances in which he found himself. Thus education was all important: "Train any population rationally and they will be rational". He anticipated modern psychology in maintaining "that much of temper and disposition is correctly or incorrectly formed before (a child) attains his second year". Accordingly, his school accepted children as soon as they could walk, and so he became the pioneer of infant and nursery education in this country. He also employed methods which are only now being adopted in infant schools. The children were not taught by rote as in the prevailing monitorial systems, but were encouraged to enjoy themselves singing and dancing, and discovering things for themselves. Formal learning was deferred as long as possible and then was strictly utilitarian. Indeed Owen's curriculum can be criticised for its neglect of higher learning and its disregard for individual intellectual differences.

It is worth dwelling on the educational achievements of Owen and his teachers for these are often overlooked. When universal education eventually came to this country the advanced teaching methods came from the Continent, not New Lanark. Owen advocated that education should be the responsibility of the State, since he saw this as the only force strong enough to break the stranglehold of the churches on education. This it has consistently failed to do.

New Lanark was spectacularly successful, and from its success Owen imagined he could deduce an abstract principle of universal application for the transformation of society. Owenite communities were first envisaged as communities of paupers to relieve the acute unemployment of the slump that followed the end of the French wars. Since the situation was desperate the scheme found some support from the establishment. A committee under the chairmanship of the Duke of Kent was set up to implement Owen's plans, but had to be wound up because of lack of funds. Owen soon extended the communities to include the whole of society and to involve community of property. He was concerned in three projects to establish such communities, all of which failed. The only project he initiated, at New Harmony in the United States, was abandoned by him when it rejected community of property. Like the others it eventually failed on account of inadequate finance and the poor quality of the inhabitants.

## A Special Case

Owen failed to see that New Lanark (which was not a community) was a special case. Firstly, it was based exclusively on cotton, which at that time was a boom industry. Secondly, it had as its manager a man of considerable business skill, exceptional benevolence and an irresistible manner. He also failed to realise that such communities were inconsistent with the prevailing economic conditions. At a time of industrialisation with its increasing specialisation, a self-sufficient community could not be efficient as it would involve unnecessary production costs.

On returning from America he had to come to terms with a following that had arisen among the working classes. His original appeals had been addressed to the upper and middle classes, but his millennialism had found adherents in the working class, especially among individual craftsmen who were threatened by the advance of large scale capitalism. Owen dabbled with many working class organisations, but was only interested in them as instruments for establishing his communities. Quickly disillusioned, he withdrew when they fell short of his ideal. Many co-operative societies—by 1832 there were 500—had the foundation of Owenite communities as their ultimate objectives, but none were ever founded. Owen tended to dismiss them as mere trading associations.

He did, however, take over the movement that led to the setting up of the National Equitable Labour Exchange in 1832. This one, and the others like it, worked on the principle of goods being exchanged for a "labour note" of a value determined by the amount of time spent in their manufacture. Soon, however, he dismissed the labour exchange as a pawnbrokers, and turned his attention to the trade unions, again as potential founders of communities. First, the Operative Builders Union made an unsuccessful attempt to organise the building industry on Owenite lines. Secondly, he became the president of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, but only when it was rapidly declining. Trade Unionism was succumbing to a successful campaign waged by employers and government.

(Continued on back page)

## FREETHINKER

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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.

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## EVENTS

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).

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group. Adult Education Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, Friday, 11 June, 7.30 p.m. A speaker from the Family Planning Association.

South Place Ethical Society. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 6 June, 11 a.m. Martin Page: "W. J. Fox of South Place".

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# NEWS

## PUBLISHERS UNITE

When Richard Handyside, publisher of *The Little Red Schoolbook*, faces a Magistrates' Court at the end of June he will do so with financial backing by a group of fellow publishers. Although they decided to abandon the idea of defence by multiple imprint the publishers held a meeting in London and decided to set up a fighting fund. Frederick Warburgh (of Secker & Warburgh) said after the meeting: "I have every sympathy with the publisher of *The Little Red Schoolbook*. I have sat in the dock myself, and know what it is like". Mr Warburgh was the successful defendant in the *Philanderer* case 17 years ago.

The *ad hoc* committee of publishers announced that they had met to decide the course of action to be taken in regard to the prosecution of *The Little Red Schoolbook*. They said: "It is obvious that in general publishers are anxious that books prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act should be strongly defended since as publishers they must always be alert to the defence of reputable books against censorship.

"No question of the republication of the book arises since it has already been published, and in the event of an acquittal it will continue to be published by the original publisher. The object of the group is to support a small publisher with less than adequate backing to defend a reputable book with all the necessary energy and expertise".

Mr Handyside's supporters represent a wide range of well-known names in British publishing. They include Peter Owen, André Deutsch, Calder and Boyars, Anthony Blond and Graham C. Greene (nephew of the writer and managing director of Jonathan Cape).

It appears that the Director of Public Prosecutions has agreed that the trial shall be summary. Although it is widely believed that a trial in a superior court before a jury is a prime essential for the defence in a case of this kind, Mr Handyside is a small publisher with limited resources, and therefore a quick battle rather than a prolonged campaign is preferable.

## NO SALES

Last year the Roman Catholic Church was seriously embarrassed by reports that young girls from Kerala had been "sold" to European convents. For over five years there had been rumours of irregularities involving girls from Korea, Hong Kong, Ceylon and the Philippines. A Vatican spokesman said that reports had been exaggerated by the Press, but one Mother Superior admitted paying £3,000 for ten girls, and it was stated that five nuns now in a Hampshire convent had been bought for £260 each. World opinion was shocked, and the Roman Catholic Church ordered an inquiry.

The findings, have been issued and it is claimed "there is no evidence to confirm the accusation that girls had been

# AND NOTES

"sold" to institutes". It goes on to claim that the majority of Indian girls who entered European convents are happy in their vocations. Under ten per cent had returned home. The report admits there have been defects in the system of recruitment and suggests it would be better if Indian girls were trained in their own country.

While admitting that money has changed hands the Vatican denies that the girls were bought. Any money other than expenses is described as "a spontaneous gift from Western religious institutes", or because the suppliers asked for a "contribution" towards their social and charitable work.

It is not only the system of recruitment but the investigation itself which has been unsatisfactory. The Roman Catholic Church, which stood accused in the eyes of the world, also acted as prosecutor, judge and jury, so the verdict was much as expected. The investigation was confined only to girls in religious institutions, but it is known that large numbers were exported for work in hospitals and as domestic servants. The supply routes were closely linked. This has probably been an even greater worry to the Church than the cash transactions, for it is widely believed that many of the Keralese girls became engaged in prostitution. The Vatican has strongly denied this, but it also strongly denied initial reports of young girls being brought to European convents from poverty stricken areas of the world.

It is probable that, as the Church claims, less than ten per cent of the girls return to their homes. But it should be remembered that, even if they had the money to do so, they are in an extremely vulnerable position. They will be pressurised by their religious superiors and, coming from devout Catholic homes, it is unlikely their return would be greeted with enthusiasm.

The whole matter should have been investigated by an international body, including representatives of the countries involved. The Vatican is faced with a world shortage of nuns and priests, and the situation is likely to get worse as more people—particularly the young—reject religion. So the Church may be tempted to adopt even more dubious methods of recruitment than in the past. Governments must devise more stringent methods of controlling the recruitment of foreign girls to religious orders. It should always be remembered that while many nuns, prompted by the most worthy motives, do humane and charitable work, they are, in the last resort, the handmaidens of the most unscrupulous organisation in the world. It is also becoming increasingly desperate, and consequently the more dangerous.

# PUBLICATIONS

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## BOOKS

### TOWARDS AN OPEN SOCIETY: ENDS AND MEANS IN BRITISH POLITICS

Pemberton Books, £1.50.

This volume consists of contributions made at a seminar organised by the British Humanist Association in December 1969.

Roughly speaking, the difference between "open" and "closed" societies, in the context of progressive politics, is analogous to the difference between thoroughgoing social democracy and marxism. The actual term "open society" was first used by Henri Bergson, but was popularised by Karl Popper in his famous work *The Open Society and its Enemies*, among whom were numbered Plato, Hegel and Marx. The "closed society", then, is one whose social structure is fixed by reference to an ideal model. Or, in Marx's case, the "closed" (communist) society is one whose internal structure is the end product of a predetermined historical process, and therefore sacrosanct. Hence, for example, the rigorous suppression in the communist states of dissident intellectuals and others who criticise existing institutions. By way of contrast, the "open" society is characterised by social experiment and a kind of Fabian utilitarianism which seeks the general good, but does it step by step. Unlike the closed, totalitarian society, there is no concept of an overriding goal or final end in terms of which present miseries and injustices can be vindicated.

As good social democrats, the contributors to this book plump unanimously for the "open" society against the "closed". And they are surely right to do so. Yet, with one or two brave exceptions, the seminarists run the entire gamut of liberal cliché without stopping for reflective thought. Thus, "every child should become familiar with the core material (i.e., a foundation course distilling the essence of the traditional school curriculum) at his level of capacity, and every child should have the opportunity of expanding, and extending to the limits of his ability, whatever elements of the core match his particular attitudes and abilities". (James Hemming, p 127, emphasis mine.)

Now I very much doubt whether this means anything at all. If it does mean anything, it has to be explained—which Dr Hemming does not—how this enormous educational programme can be prevented from absorbing perhaps half of our gross national product. It is strange that, alongside his otherwise sensible remarks about the real needs of the mass of non-academic children in our society, Dr Hemming can commit the typically intellectual sin of assuming that everyone needs, or can be made to need, education. They don't always want it. It is right that the State should insist on minimum standards, and of course an educational system which prepared children for life rather than exams would be highly desirable. But let's not forget that a great many people would prefer, quite simply, to live their own lives rather than have their money taken away from them to finance an indefinitely expanding educational system.

Or take Dipak Nandy. For him, the problems created by Commonwealth immigration into Britain are simply part of the general problem of inadequate social provision, which creates the belief that West Indian and Pakistani

# FREETHINKER

immigrants are responsible for the housing shortage and the bad schools and the rest. Mr Nandy does dimly perceive that large-scale immigration tends to cause social insecurity; people are afraid of losing their identity and traditional way of life when coloured families move en masse into their street. Now liberals may well deplore this fact, but nothing is to be gained by calling such understandable fears and suspicions "racialist". On the contrary, as Mr Nandy himself acutely observes, to do so merely produces feelings of revulsion for the "faceless" politicians and bureaucrats who cut themselves off from ordinary people's lives. Ultimately—as in post-1919 Germany and Italy—this distrust of democratic politicians produces fascism, against which liberals warn us without stopping to think that their own actions, or inactions, all too often encourage fascist tendencies. Mr Nandy is at least aware of this problem, but his prescription—and that only by implication—is for another massive dose of public spending to remove existing squalor. And yet it is surely common sense that the over-concentration of immigrants in our cities itself creates social tension, as well as aggravating any existing shortages of housing and schools, and that such concentration has to be controlled as part of a sane policy for a multi-racial society. Liberals too often overlook that in a democracy the views and aspirations of the white majority—however inarticulate and un congenial—cannot be shrugged off in the interests of liberal ideology.

Regrettably, all too often in reading this book I was conscious of the "humanist sin" attacked by Professor H. J. Eysenck in his thoughtful contribution to another Pemberton volume, *The Humanist Outlook*. Whilst it is right for humanists to oppose socially harmful religious dogmas, it is also necessary for them, as Professor Eysenck says, not to identify religion and superstition. Humanist beliefs unrelated to the facts are just as likely to be harmful as religious beliefs, arguably more so.

At least Professor Ayer cannot be accused of superstition. Whilst conceding that society is becoming more "open", in the Popperian sense, Ayre regrets the absence of any trend towards openness in the original, Bergsonian sense. Increasing social fragmentation, as reflected in the "generation gap", outright hostility between the young—as a group—and their parents and those in authority—as a group; the growth of hooliganism among football supporters; unofficial strikes, and racialism on the part of both black and white—all these phenomena, and many more, underline the failure of Bergson's morality of love and charity, his "open" society, to make headway. Now Marxists and others may well denounce this as an insidious example of the kind of conservatism which calls, not for reform, but for a fundamental change in the human heart, and emphasise instead the need for reform (or revolution) based on clear analysis of society rather than pious moralising. Clear analysis we must certainly have, though I doubt whether the marxist variety will fit the bill. What is surely evident is that only the intelligent application of science, in a democratic framework, is going to ameliorate our problems—and this is why one must be a humanist, if indeed a sceptical one.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

# REVIEWS

## CHRISTIAN ETHICS

by Otto A. Piper. Nelson, £5.25.

Approaching a book on ethics by an American Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis who was educated at Jena, Marburg, Paris, Munich and Göttingen is usually a demoralising moment. One expects the terrors of transatlantic Hegelianism. Happily Dr Piper is well known as a lucid and imaginative writer who wears his considerable scholarship lightly. The publishers claim that "for the first time for some years, this work attempts within one volume of moderate length a comprehensive survey of the Christian approach to the problems of everyday life". After a start of surprise one realises the claim is probably true, for the daily flood of Christian apologetics tends these days to be highly specialised or highly tendentious, promoting this or that cause or anti-cause or school or churchmanship.

Not that this book is completely comprehensive, as its title might suggest. *Protestant Ethics* would be far more accurate. But it does give a broad survey of the whole field of Christian moral views, if from the mainstream Protestant angle. The Bible, it asserts, "proclaims a unified message in and through the diverse views expressed therein". Yet "since the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic and the Protestant treatments of ethics have moved on divergent lines". Which of them got away from the "unified message" of the Bible is not spelt out in these ecumenical days. But, by and large, the author seems to achieve as much consensus on the subject as Christians are likely to attain.

It is impossible to do more than make passing comments on so comprehensive a work. To a humanist its historical introduction is likely to prove most valuable; for, while the book is intended for Christians and non-Christians alike, its style, not to mention its message, is more likely to appeal to the first group than the second. Odd words like "self-transcendence" one finds these days, alas, prodigally in humanist literature, but the "power of the risen Christ" is still mainly the hallmark of Christian (Protestant) writing. Whether or not the phrase connotes reality is something one either accepts or rejects and has little to do with ethics and less to do with morality. Dr Piper tries very hard not to be sex-obsessed, but it does seem that his main concern, as it is for most contemporary Christians, is how "the Church can cope with the sex revolution". When he says that "the weakness of the 'New Morality' lies in its resignation and moral defeatism" he is, of course, thinking of what "New Morality" and "moral strength" mean in Christian circles.

Humanists should, I think, heed his words on "unfounded optimism" over human nature and our "evolutionary destiny" and on the constant need for self-discipline. Yet Christians are demonstrably blighted by concentration on "original sin" and needless self-denial. Catholic girls may, while under surveillance, be more "chaste" than Protestants (and presumably freethinkers) in the way described, but they tend to lapse more readily into prostitution. And it is surely an exaggeration to suggest that "those who favour sexual freedom" ostracise the chaste; they simply do not pester them. Some other practical judgments of the author strike me as curious. He is

against artificial insemination without specifying whether he means only AID, yet does "not share the exasperation which some theologians have shown on account of the transplantation of heart or other vital organs from dying individuals to ailing ones". In most cases transplant operations are not just "similar to blood transfusion" but involve stopping respirators, etc., in use on the donor. This is a careful enough moral decision for humanists, let alone for Christians with their theory of the soul. But on the whole this book is more sensible in its practical observations than is the theology which is supposed to endorse them.

DAVID TRIBE

## THE LAKE DISTRICT AT WORK—PAST AND PRESENT

by J. D. Marshall and M. Davies-Shiel.

David and Charles, £2.75.

There are perhaps too many picture books of the Lake District, as of other glamorous parts of Britain. Any local bookshop is likely to have a choice of four or five. One assumes that most of the sales are to tourists who want a memento of their visit and in a superficial way these picture books do their job fairly efficiently. They usually contain a sprinkling of colour plates and the buyer may look forward to leafing through the chapters once every few years, pausing at pictures: "Remember that place, George? We had a picnic on that hill."

This book is quite a different matter. It contains only one colour plate, but the 140 or so black and white photographs are as atmospheric as any I have seen. One finishes the book with a conviction one has the *feel* of the place and its people.

The first of the photographs is of Bloomery Slag, mysterious words that mean the left-over of a Tudor iron-smelting industry, and the photograph shows a close-up of the cloud-like shapes which the slag took. On we go through Arcadian overgrown pot-ash pits, draught tunnels and packhorse bridge, then disused wood-mills of the nineteenth century. And so on down to the work-places of the region in the present day.

The text with these pictures is down to earth and practical, so that there is no danger of tipping over the edge into whimsy that some writers on industrial archaeology are prone to.

Yes, I fell for this book, hook, line and sinker. Fascinating photographs with the majestic scenery hanging in the background. The price may seem steep but you get many times your money's worth.

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# ANTHOLOGY

## AN ULSTER RECKONING

by John Hewitt, 15p.

This is a most readable anthology of poems by an Ulsterman living in exile, although the subject of most of the poems is, directly or indirectly, Ulster.

John Hewitt's poems on Ireland, and especially the strife-torn North, have that touch of "native authenticity" in dealing with his subject that it is almost impossible for someone to capture who has not had an Irish childhood, however Irish he or she might otherwise be.

This is my country. If my people came  
From England here four centuries ago,  
The only trace that's left is in my name.

(An Ulsterman)

Though he concludes the same poem with: "My heritage is not their violence", the violent heritage has not been forgotten:

At Auschwitz, Dallas, I felt no surprise  
When violence, across the world's wide screen,  
Declared the age imperilled: I had seen  
The future in that frightened gunman's eyes.

(An Ulsterman in England Remembers)

I particularly liked the way the author is able to capture the tender shoots of Ulster liberalism:

You even had a friend or two of the other sort,  
Coasting too: your ways ran parallel.  
Their children and yours seldom met, though,  
Being at different schools.

(The Coasters)

Anyone who has listened, often with some embarrassment, to a traditional Ulsterman trying to explain, with faltering circumlocutions, the fact that he has Catholic friends "as well" will appreciate this poem!

I am glad also that John Hewitt has not forgotten the Irish characteristic of being able, after the smoke of horror has cleared, to laugh at themselves until the tears run:

I'm Major This or Captain That,  
M.C. and D.S.O.  
This Orange Lily in my hat  
I sometimes wear for show.

So long as I can walk my dogs  
Around the old estate,  
And keep the Fenians in their bogs,  
The peasants at the gate.

(An Ulster Landowner's Song)

Other poems in this anthology which I enjoyed include *Street Names*, *The Tribunes*, *Demagogue* ("He breaks that hope (some generous light of common sense) across his broadcloth knee"); *Agitator*, and *Exile*. In his foreword the author says: "In an article . . . John Montague described me as 'the first (and probably the last) deliberately Ulster Protestant poet'. That designation carries a heavy obligation these days". John Hewitt has discharged his obligation well.

Copies of *An Ulster Reckoning* are obtainable from the author at 5 Postbridge Road, Coventry, CV3 5AG.

# LETTERS

## Greetings

Congratulations on reprinting the principles laid down for the *Freethinker's* first issue in 1881. Although great strides have been made during the last 90 years, those principles are as pertinent today as they were then, and we certainly cannot afford any complacency. Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic brand, is still very powerful, and although large dents have been made in the myths and superstition, we still have not succeeded in abolishing RI in the schools; the laws relating to people's freedom on a Sunday have still to be repealed; the gains of the Abortion Law must be strengthened so that all women will have complete freedom of choice in such matters.

Let us therefore continue to give full support to the *Freethinker* in the battles ahead.

L. LAZARUS.

I send my heartfelt best wishes to the *Freethinker* on its 90th birthday; when one thinks of the dedicated men who have contributed to its pages, and gone to prison, even, for its cause, one can feel very proud to be associated with the paper, albeit in a humble capacity. From this beautiful but sad island of faith, superstition, and bigotry, a beleaguered freethinker salutes the memory of G. W. Foote. May the *Freethinker* go from strength to strength, and, true to the traditions of Foote, continue to hurl defiance at the powers of darkness and ignorance.

NIGEL SINNOTT, Portrush, Northern Ireland.

(Continued from page 171)

## Owen and the Working Class

The working class were always suspicious of Owen on account of his opposition to class hostility. He could maintain that the labour involved in its manufacture was the true value of a product, but would not say that a labourer was entitled to all he produced. Owen reckoned that capital as a factor in production was entitled to a share of the profit. He could not see that by his first premise existing capital must have been obtained by exploitation. He naively wanted to restructure society economically while retaining the status quo. It was for this reason that the Tory administration of Lord Liverpool showed some interest in his scheme, as did several European despots. So little did he understand the political aspirations of the working class that in the year of the Peterloo massacre he could write that the interests of classes were identical.

Despite this, his millennialist vision and the charm with which it was propounded won him many disciples in the working class. His relations with these R. H. Tawney described as "at once touching and odd. It was a blend of admiration on the one side, sympathy on the other, and cross purposes, which did not diminish, on both". He offered them an alternative to the competitive ethic, and had shown that even within capitalism degradation was not an inevitable part of industrialisation. He justified labour's claim to self-respect.

It is for his ability to inspire, not for any movement he led or founded that Owen can have a claim to the title of "father of British socialism". As a social theorist he was, as Sir Leslie Stephen says (*Dictionary of National Biography*), "a man of one idea; that idea too was only partially right, and enforced less by argument than by incessant and monotonous repetition". If we do want to dismiss him as a rather misguided fanatic, we must also be scandalised that 150 years after his example at New Lanark we still do not have universal nursery education, and we still do not make adequate provision for the sick, the old, and the poor.