

## THE POPE CALLS ON RELIGIOUS TO TRUST AND OBEY

In his recent Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of the Religious Life the Pope once again defends the concept of religious obedience. While recognising the dilemma of some religious people who experience a conflict between their conscience and the order of a superior, he declares that conscience is not self-sufficient and warns against concluding that a directive which was objectively less good was necessarily contrary to conscience. The Pope declares that the life of "consecrated chastity" is needed more than ever at a time when human love is threatened by "ravaging eroticism". Encumbrances or rigid forms accumulated over the centuries need to be curtailed, and new forms can be instituted with the approval of the Church. Certain situations could justify the abandonment of a religious type of dress, but the dress of religious men and women should be a sign of their consecration and should be different from styles which are clearly secular.

### The Pope's Problem Children

*Philip Hinchliff writes:* St Thomas Aquinas didn't like sex because it interfered with the contemplative life of reason. We are more enlightened these days, but traces of this attitude still remain in the occasional Vatican pronouncements on celibacy. This is always a good issue on which to evoke the latent schizophrenia of the Catholic Church, and this Apostolic Letter is no exception. The chastity of the religious in no way constitutes an "undervaluing" of the normal life of love and marriage, yet at the same time "consecrated chastity" symbolises the union of Christ and his Church more dramatically than marriage, and carries within it that "surpassing excellence" towards which all human love and should strive. But if it did so, of course, it wouldn't be human love; St Thomas, for all his faults, did at least see that. As one of Tchaikovsky's homosexual friends drily comments in Ken Russell's film, *The Music Lovers*, women aren't always content with a spiritual relationship. Nor, of course, was St Augustine: "Give me chastity, Lord, but not yet!"

Less frivolously, the main question that springs to mind from this Letter is what possible value the life of the religious can have in modern society. How does this withdrawal from the world help the Church, let alone the rest of us? Why do people in the Christian churches feel the need to forsake the world? And granted that they do, is there any lesson for us?

Isolation of the religious originated in the desire to heed Jesus' call to abandon the world for his sake, promising to those who heeded the call a purely materialistic gain in the world to come that far exceeded the cost in this world of giving up family and friends. Nowadays this stark self-interest is underplayed by the Church, and the appeal is to the altruistic love of God. This sets an example to the rest of the faithful, for whom Sunday mass and supporting the local parish church are strictly peripheral activities. However, more than just an example is required; so the Word of God must be proclaimed anew by the missionary societies and the religious orders, the Franciscans, Benedictines and Jesuits. The Jesuits, in particular, have kept alive the spirit of intellectual inquiry in the Church and have made

many contributions to academic life. Ironically, this diversion of energy into secular intellectual life was also condemned by Aquinas. In this, the most reason-oriented of the Christian churches, those who use their reason are somewhat prone to cast off the shackles, lapsing if not into unbelief then at least into heresy; and Pope Paul is clearly uneasy about his problem children.

From a humanist point of view, the most desirable type of religious life, granted that such seems destined to exist for some time yet, is one rooted firmly in the world. And surely freethinkers can unstintingly admire the love of humanity which prompts the work of Mother Theresa in Calcutta, and ask themselves what it is about Christianity that can inspire such dedication—paralleled, as it is, all over the world. Not that I share the view, common today among many Christian apologists, that you don't need to believe that God exists, rather you just believe *in* God and Christ will then work through you in the world. You can't believe *in* God without believing *that* there is a God to believe in.

### Weak Justification for Religious Life

But in reading this Apostolic Letter, I caught myself more than once half-agreeing with some of the Pope's points. Withdrawal from the world does have a certain attraction when you consider what a mess the world is in, as young people who drop out would also maintain. And perhaps we need the occasional reminder that there is more to life than worrying about the weeds on the lawn, as they apparently do in rich American suburbs where no other problems exist. One can disagree strenuously with the object of the religious life, but still affirm the value of taking stock—of thinking, not just consuming. And a great many religious these days do not withdraw at all—they are to be found where the going is hardest, getting their hands dirty with humanists and others. Again, whatever one may think of the Catholic Church's record in practice, the Pope's exhortation to the religious to throw

(Continued on back page)



# DARWIN AND THE SILENT MAJORITY

DANIEL BAUARCHAUD

**This article was recently published in the French scientific journal, "Le Chercheur". It has been translated by F. A. Ridley.**

When scientific evolution has conflicted with the teachings of defunct ideologies it has usually prevailed in the long run, and today opposition by authority to experimental discoveries is less intense. In this century even "Jewish physics" (Relativity) and "bourgeois genetics" (Lysenko in the USSR) do not meet nearly so much opposition as their predecessors in the past. But it would be naïve to imagine that all opposition has vanished, for though the discoverer need no longer fear for his life he is still far from being uninhibited in his researches. The fact that he is able to express unorthodox views merely indicates that his social milieu has decided to tolerate even what it regards as "subversive" ideas.

One might surely have hoped that the futile attacks which followed upon the announcement of the theory of evolution in the middle of the last century were a thing of the past. Darwinianism was described by the Bishop of Orleans as "this reprehensible theory which reduces man to a glorified ape in place of the sublime Creation recorded in Holy Scripture". But paradoxically, it is now the United States, where scientific and technological researches are currently most advanced, that the old controversy is being revived. In fact, it has never been completely stifled. For example, in 1920 the Fundamentalists (as the anti-modern wing of Baptists and Methodists in the United States are known) obtained a court order banning the teaching of evolution in the State of Tennessee. John T. Scopes, a teacher who used a textbook that dated from 1909, and which dealt with the theory of evolution, was fined 100 dollars at what became known as "the Monkeyville Trial". Soon after, similar decisions were made in Arkansas and Mississippi.

It was only in 1937 that Tennessee revoked this decision, and an equivalent result was secured Arkansas and Mississippi in 1968 by a judgment of the Supreme Court which declared that the laws were unconstitutional as they violated the first and fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution.

## Anti-Intellectualism in America

At the present time this controversy appears to be on the point of being resumed, not in the Southern states, but in California. The Board of Education has announced its decision that in future all biological textbooks must print, with equal prominence, the biblical narrative from Genesis together with the interpretation given by modern evolutionary science, since "all the conclusions regarding the origin of life at the very best imply a dualism. This dualism is not unique among scientific explanations. For example, one finds it illustrated also by current physical theories of light".

Without pausing here to discuss this rather surprising comparison with modern technical theories in the domain of physics, we may enquire what are the reasons for continued opposition to the theory of evolution in the United States in 1971. In his book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, R. Hofstadter (of Columbia University) demonstrates how anti-intellectualism, anti-evolutionism, anti-

cosmopolitanism and anti-modernism are closely associated with an entire layer of American society. Yesterday it was enrolled in the Ku Klux Klan; today it supports the John Birch Society. When Vice-President Spiro Agnew recently spoke on television, and described American professors as "a bunch of snobs who impudently describe themselves as intellectuals", he reflected an old and powerful tradition in American life.

The fact that a large majority of American universities and schools are privately owned makes them susceptible to the intellectual and political beliefs of the people who control them financially. During the Scopes trial the statement was actually made that "believers in evolution are forbidden to teach what is not acceptable to parents and financial backers, since in the last resort the school is controlled by the people who pay its bills".

According to the English journal, *Nature*, this latest decision was made by the State of California as a direct result of pressure from the Creation Research Society, an organisation founded in 1963. This Society informs American citizens (particularly those belonging to scientific bodies) that it has "complete faith in the biblical account of Creation". It expresses its views in a periodical known as *The Creation Research Society Quarterly*, of which 2,000 copies are published. The Creation Research Society has published a textbook to conform with the new State legislation. Some critics are already asking if this ideological conflict is not reinforced by a flourishing business — particularly since California represents more than ten per cent of the market for scholastic books. It would appear the authors of this one will not be paid in theological currency.

## Back to Monkeyville?

And so, 112 years after the initial publication of Darwin's *Origins of Species*, evolution is still not universally accepted, as an established scientific fact. George Beadle, a Nobel prize-winner in medicine and a professor at the University of Chicago, records in a recent book the views of one of his students on the subject: "Certainly an intriguing speculation, but I'm afraid I can't go along with it". Selecta-Mate, a matrimonial bureau which helps lonely Americans to find suitable partners, includes a questionnaire to clarify the psychological image of its clients. One of the questions asked is: "Do you believe in God, sorcery, Yoga, extra-sensory perception, evolution?"

Most human societies are intensely conservative as Galileo, Darwin and Freud found had reason to know. It can only be hoped that California, the State which includes some of America's most celebrated universities, is not going to launch a new Monkeyville era.

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# ANCESTRAL EUROPEAN HUMANISTS

MARTIN PAGE

At a time when Britain seems about to plunge into a predominantly Catholic Common Market, it is appropriate to recall the contribution to European liberalism of those brilliantly gifted eighteenth century freethinkers and sceptics who stood on the threshold of the modern world and, indeed, did not a little to usher us into it. For all their quarrels and divergencies, personal and ideological, men like Voltaire, Diderot, Lessing, Hume, Adam Smith, Gibbon, Kant, Paine and Rousseau were in the vanguard of that remarkable if loosely defined European movement known as the Enlightenment, which—for all its naïveté, utopianism and liberal mythology—showed men new frontiers and new horizons and gave them the vision, if not the hope, of a brave new world that would be secular, reasonable, humane and free; in short, civilised.

Some of the "philosophes" (as the men and women of the Enlightenment were called) were undoubted geniuses in an intellectually dazzling age, and nearly all of them possessed considerable talents and abilities. Just as life would be impoverished without Beethoven (who may be regarded as the supreme musical embodiment of Enlightenment ideals), all that is best and most enduring in our mental and cultural life, in our hard-won political traditions of free speech and toleration, would not have been achieved without the catalyst provided by the exertions and example of these dead reformers. Scholars like J. M. Robertson and, more recently, Professor Peter Gay in his superb and masterly study of the Enlightenment in *The Science of Freedom* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson) have resurrected these dead figures, substantial and insubstantial, to show us the debt owed them by the living.

## Militant Anti-Clericalism

The "philosophes" were truly pioneers in their insights and excursions into sociology, psychology, history and political economy; in their condemnation of slavery and outline of universal human rights; in penal and legal reform; in their realisation of the immense potentialities of science and technology; in their consciousness of the power of the emotions and of sense-experience; in their ecstasy before the wonders and mysteries of nature; in their reflections on art and aesthetics. The world was their oyster, nothing human was a matter of indifference to them—though thinkers and investigators like Diderot (notably in his remarkable *Rêve de d'Alembert*), Monboddo, Buffon and Lamarck could visualise evolution and dynamic materialism on a cosmic scale. If asked, as the great astronomer Laplace supposedly was by Napoleon, where God fitted in, they would doubtless have replied like Laplace: "Je n'ai pas besoin de cette hypothèse" ("I see no need for that hypothesis"). Indeed, the work of the "philosophes" and their heirs was decisively and profoundly anti-Christian at virtually every point: Voltaire's rallying cry "Ecrasez l'infâme" ("Crush the Infamous") sent shivers down many a pious spine; and to this day his name is a symbol of that militant anti-clericalism which should surely remain an integral part of modern secular humanism. Like W. J. Fox of London's South Place (a son of the Enlightenment), Charles Bradlaugh of the NSS and Bertrand Russell (another child of the Enlightenment) in our own time, Voltaire battled against injustice, fanaticism and vested clerical and other sectarian interests long before the National

Council for Civil Liberties was a power in England or any similar organisation flourished in France.

Employing Fabian tactics long before the Fabians, the "philosophes" infiltrated the circles of the ruling élite (with which they were intimately associated, either through family connections or through economic dependence resulting from patronage) to stimulate and even create free discussion and to promote social and political reform. In this work they were largely successful according to their lights. Diderot's master-minding of that collective work of genius, *l'Encyclopédie*, was instrumental in securing the favourable reception and effective diffusion of the humanitarian and libertarian ideals of the Enlightenment. Indeed, *l'Encyclopédie* was, in many ways, the most solid and perhaps even the most enduring literary expression of the ideology of the Enlightenment. Its tomes may have been confined to the libraries of the well-to-do, but its ideas threatened, and to a great extent still threaten, to liberate mankind. It was with considerable justification that Friedrich Engels declared: "If ever anybody dedicated his whole life to the *enthusiasm for truth and justice*—using this phrase in the good sense—it was Diderot". In his *Encyclopédie* Diderot the passionate sceptic spoke of man as "the single place from which we must begin and to which we must refer everything" and exclaimed:

If we banish man, the thinking or contemplating being, from the face of the earth, this moving and sublime spectacle of nature will be nothing more than a sad and mute scene. The universe will cease to speak; silence and night will seize it. Everything will be changed into a vast solitude where unobserved phenomena take place obscurely, unobserved. It is the presence of man which makes the existence of beings meaningful.

This passage may be compared with Bertrand Russell's apocalyptic warning (in 1956) of the nuclear threat to human survival:

For countless ages the sun rose and set, the moon waxed and waned, the stars shone in the night, but it was only with the coming of man that these things were understood. In the great world of astronomy and in the little world of the atom, man has unveiled secrets which might have been thought undiscoverable. In art and literature and religions, some men have shown a sublimity of feeling which makes the species worth preserving. . . . Is our race so destitute of wisdom, so incapable of impartial love, so blind even to the simplest dictates of self-preservation, that the last proof of its silly cleverness is to be the extermination of all life on our planet?

## The Spirit of the Enlightenment

More profound than Voltaire, more balanced than Rousseau, Diderot—or for me at least—incarnated the genius and the spirit of the Enlightenment. Virtually his last words were "The beginning of philosophy is incredulity"; and like his contemporary Condorcet, Diderot was a man whose high intellectual gifts and ideals were matched by moral courage and a natural goodness of heart. Diderot knew that "the heart of man is by turns a sanctuary and a sewer"; and in *Le Neveu de Rameau*, for instance, he gave a striking pre-Freudian adumbration of the Oedipus complex: "If your little savage were left to himself, keeping all his childish foolishness and joining the bit of rationality of the infant in the cradle to the violent passions of the man of thirty, he would strangle his father and sleep with his mother".



## NEWS

## FREETHINKER

editor: WILLIAM McILROY

103 Borough High Street,  
London, SE1

Telephone: 01-407 1251

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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.

## 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).

The Progressive League, Halden House, Dunchideock, Exeter, 7-14 August, Summer Conference. Details from Ernest Seeley, c/o Progressive League, Albion Cottage, Fortis Green, London, N2.

Rationalist Press Association. Annual Conference at St Peter's College, Oxford, Friday, 3 September—Sunday, 5 September. Subject: "Rationalism—an Answer to the Problems of the 1970s"; speakers: D. J. Stewart, Colin Campbell, Christopher Evans, Leslie Sklair. Fees: Resident, £8, Student members of the RPA, £5; Non-resident, lectures and meals, £4.50; lectures and coffee, £1. Return coach fare London-Oxford, £1.50. Applications and payment to the General Secretary, Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, London, N1 8EW. Telephone 226 7251.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 18 July, 11 a.m. John Lewis: Mao and Chinese Culture".

## TREASURE ON EARTH

Fervent pleas for tax relief accompanied by political pressure for public aid for Church schools have made the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church a public issue in the United States. The hierarchy have organised and carried forward the campaign without ever once making a public disclosure of the Church's assets and income. But it is not only the taxpayer who have been kept in outer darkness on this question, Roman Catholics themselves do not receive financial reports. The Vatican has vast wealth and investments throughout the world, including the USA. Two examples are the \$75 million watergate Towne in Washington and the projected Italian Centre in San Francisco.

The Vatican hides its assets and operations behind a veil of secrecy, and in this it provides an example which is followed by its American branch. A spokesman for the New York archdiocese has even asserted that no record exists of the total assets and revenues of the 149 dioceses and archdioceses in the USA. It is abundantly clear, however, that the Church has financial resources which belie its pleas of poverty. And of course its income is exempt from tax. All business profits are completely exempt from tax even though they may be totally unrelated to the work of the Church.

The financial manipulations of the Roman Catholic Church are as impressive for their cleverness as for their dimensions. The archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut, wanted to hold a valuable 1212-acre for appreciation. It bought the site for \$23,500 and declared it to be a "cemetery" for tax purposes by placing a single body there.

After evading taxes for years, the archdiocese removed the body, subdivided and sold off the site for \$5,000 an acre. This, after evading some \$200,000 in taxes. Part of the profits were invested in yet another "cemetery site" as the Church sought to repeat its bonanza.

The New York archdiocese recently made \$25 million on a deal, and it requires 24 pages of small print in the *Catholic Directory* to list its religiously used properties, without even mentioning its vast commercial assets. Yet the clergy have repeatedly sought to amend an Article of the New York State Constitution so that the Church can obtain State funds to subsidise schools.

Two of Chicago's largest garbage dumps are owned by the Church; this is a lucrative business and exempt from tax because it is owned by the Church. Some other businesses operated tax-free include apartment houses, hotels, department stores, restaurants, theatres, ranches and farms.

There are 521 religious orders of the Roman Catholic Church, and many of them have huge sums invested. The Jesuits alone have an estimated income of \$250 million a year.

One of the advantages the religious orders enjoy is that their members are under a vow of poverty. This means they may be assigned to employment on behalf of their

## THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

By DAVID TRIBE

Foreword: MARGARET KNIGHT

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# AND NOTES

# PUBLICATIONS

order which collects their salary without paying social security or income tax. This amounts to a substantial annual income.

There are 18 Catholic Action groups, some with many units, and at least 207 Catholic associations and societies covering every conceivable interest and specialty. One of these groups is the Knights of Columbus. Its membership is, typically, limited to Catholics and it spends much of its vast tax-free profits on Catholic Churches and on programmes designed to convert Protestants to the Catholic faith. This organization has over \$1½ billion in life insurance policies. The Knights have huge financial stakes in hotels, warehouses, steel, department stores and investment real estate. The Knights own the land under Yankee Stadium which they lease back to the baseball club.

Not only does the Roman Catholic Church (in common with other churches) enjoy tax exemption on its entire income, even from unrelated commercial business, it also receives important government subsidies. These are mostly federal, but they also include some grants from states and municipalities. Subsidies reach the Church under such federal legislation as the Higher Education Act, the Hill-Burton Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, housing and urban redevelopment, and the Economic Opportunity Act.

Father Richard Ginder, a well known columnist, wrote a summary of the Church's wealth for *Our Sunday Visitor*. He said that the Catholic Church must be the biggest corporation in the United States with assets and real estate holdings exceeding those of Standard Oil and US steel combined. The dues-paying membership "must be second only to the rolls of the United States Government".

This is the organisation that expects the taxpayers to foot its bills.

## BEYOND COMPREHENSION

Strong feelings have been aroused in Coatbridge, near Glasgow, over the establishment of a new school at which Catholic and Protestant pupils will be religiously segregated. The school—as yet unnamed—will be strictly divided into two religious halves. The food will be cooked in the same kitchen but the children will eat separately; they will play in the same playground but there will be a fence down the middle; they will go to classes at the same times but in different parts of the building. There will be two headmasters and two sets of staff.

Clergymen of all denominations support the policy of segregation. One local councillor, however, is reported to have said that he hoped the children will be adult enough to ignore what the adults have done, and live in harmony. We hope he is right, but bearing in mind what is happening a few miles across the sea in Northern Ireland, where children are religiously segregated from the cradle, there is little reason for optimism.

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## BOOKS

### MORAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOL

by Philip R. May. Methuen, £1.75 (hard cover) and £1 (paperback).

As the title suggests, Mr May's researches have now extended to the subject of moral education, and teachers' attitudes to it. Stung no doubt by criticism of the limitations of his former surveys, he has enlarged the scope of this one to cover all parts of the country and all types of school. Out of 420 schools selected at random, 311 took part. Questionnaires were sent to 3,650 teachers, 2,615 of whom completed and returned theirs. These came from primary, secondary modern, grammar, comprehensive and technical schools, and from different types of area, e.g. rural, industrial and old and new housing estates. The respondents were in all kinds of teaching posts, ranging from heads to newly appointed teachers, and taught a wide variety of subjects. They are even classified as male or female, married or single.

Mr May shows how much we are in need, these days, of moral education. He points to the lack of vision in education, the upsurge of violence, the decline in the influence of religion. People in 1944 looked to the religious clauses of the Act to ensure that the nation's children would be made morally upright, but it was obviously unfair to saddle the religious knowledge teaching with such an aim. The motives for Religious Instruction, he says, are perfectly sound educational ones, but certainly not of the moral order. Having thus admitted that compulsory religious teaching has not produced good results in terms of the nation's morals, he then presents his case for Moral Education, outlines the development of the child in this connection, and considers the possible role of the teacher. He traces recent developments, from the original Humanist-Christian document of 1965, through the Farmington Trust project, the Schools Council project, and those of various county authorities, such as Gloucester and Wiltshire.

The report of the survey into teachers' attitudes forms an important part of the book. They were asked if they favoured separate periods on the timetable for ME; they were asked who they thought should be responsible for teaching it, and what they thought should be the content of the lessons. Sixty per cent agreed with the proposal for separate periods, 55 per cent wanted the lessons to be taken by team teaching methods which would involve several members of staff. Seventeen per cent favoured leaving this subject in the hands of the RI specialist, and only 12 per cent wanted the head teacher to control it. According to Mr May the head teachers were more willing to perform than their colleagues were to allow them, and they were less than enthusiastic about teaching. Perhaps it sounded to democratic. As to what should be taught, a large number named ethical principles (48 per cent) and 26 per cent Christian ethics as subjects which headed the suggested list. Other themes, such as the study of society, family relationships, the law and psychology, all had supporters.

Many of the respondents, while still favouring moral education, thought that this could best be indirectly approached through other subjects, and general organisation of the school, or by allocation of responsibilities. One teacher said that special ME lessons would give "too much scope for narrow-minded bigots, or alternatively the sheer waffle of the gas and gaiters brigade". It is important to notice that many argued that ME should be part of religious teaching and has no meaning outside of it.

The survey next tried to find out Teachers' attitudes to RI. Ninety-five per cent agreed that children be taught

# FREETHINKER

to know about and understand christianity; 66 per cent wanted State schools to continue to be required by law to provide religious instruction, with 24 per cent disagreeing; 60 per cent were satisfied with the law concerning worship (30 per cent objecting), and 78 per cent wanted school worship to continue even if not required by law. Mr May concludes that the religious clauses of the Act still enjoy widespread support throughout the profession, although there is now a substantial minority against.

If any confidence can be attached to these figures, 30 per cent is quite a considerable proportion. It represents, in a labour force of 400,000 teachers, something like 120,000 against compulsory worship. How far this is significant must be balanced against the general tendency of Mr May's review.

Many people, including this reviewer, are sceptical of all these surveys on the grounds that the questions suggest the answers, and Mr May must be gratified to find that a majority always seem to share his own views, more or less. He leaves us in no doubt at all about his views, and argues that morality needs certain fixed and absolute standards for its basis. These he finds in Christianity: "It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that at the present time the Christian moral code should be the basis of direct teaching about moral principles". Throughout the book there is reference to the need of the child for moral rules. Towards the end we learn what these rules are to be—none other than the Ten Commandments, "deepened by the New Testament". Whether teaching that commences from a fixed premise that one particular religion is necessarily true and absolute can ever be called moral training in any real sense of the word, is a question that brings us up against one of the many contradictions in the book. But we are obviously intended to assume that, since a majority support religious teaching as well as moral education, that they agree with Mr May. They believe that ME should be Christian orientated. This leads to my final point.

The Christian Establishment has looked at the idea of moral education and found it good. RI teachers have not enough time in their RI lessons to do all that they want to do. Their teaching, too rigidly hidebound by Agreed Syllabuses, has failed to produce a believing public. So, they say, let the message underly the ME lessons more adroitly, diffuse it through the curriculum, bring in all your science and language experts, discuss current affairs and interesting social problems, and you have a much more subtle way of permeating lives with Christian dogma. In other words the Christian Establishment is quite willing to take over Moral Education, lock, stock and barrel and use it for its own purposes.

This means that we secularists and humanists must get our priorities right. It is obviously hopeless to press for moral education unless we have first got rid of compulsory religion and worship. Those who thought that by presenting Moral Education on a plate to the religionists they would thereby get some concessions are shown, in this book at any rate, to have been mistaken. They are simply putting another weapon into the hands of our religious opponents. It is absolutely clear that if Mr May and his friends have their way, moral education will become, not an alternative, but an adjunct to Christian teaching. This, it seems to me, is inevitable, unless we first secure a truly secular education system.

MERLE TOLFREE



# REVIEWS

**RICH AGAINST POOR** by C. R. Hensman.

Allen Lane The Penguin Press, £2.95.

The import of perfumes costs some African states almost as much as the import of fertiliser; and the import of liquor accounts for as much as agricultural machinery, farm tools and tractors combined.

Mr Hensman is rightly disturbed by the contrast between rich and poor, perfume and poverty, found in the third world; and he wonders if we must always have the poor among us. From many good sources, some of them little used by other writers, he has drawn together a volume of material which shows once again that the rich don't care about the plight of the poor. This is true not only of the two classes in Asia and Africa but also of the two sets of nation-states, the dozen rich, mainly in western Europe and North America, and the hundred poor. Gradually this has become a story familiar to those concerned about the disparity in the wealth of nations. *Of course*, we who live comfortably in the rich nations ought to help those who exist desperately in the poor countries where the majority of mankind live.

What strikes me as odd, however, is the persistence of writers like C. R. Hensman who keep telling us to be kinder and more generous. They hardly appear to realise how little notice is taken of their eloquent pleas. Nor do they stop to consider the vital question *why* the rich refrain from helping the poor on a scale and in a way that would fundamentally alter the world situation.

In his closing pages Mr Hensman says that "the war of the poor against the rich may go on for many decades before it can be won". Yes, indeed. He then asks: "What can those who want to aid the poor do, living as they do in societies whose technology and politics create poverty?" Alas, his own answer to the question is both obscure and (so far as I grasp it) wholly inadequate. He says there is, among others, "the revolutionary way of turning swords into ploughshares". I should have thought that the truly revolutionary way is to turn ploughshares into swords (or other weapons) in order to enable the poor to fight against the rich, both inside and outside their own countries. Not that blind force can accomplish much, as Mr Hensman could infer from the recent upheaval in his own country, Ceylon.

The lesson of modern history is surely this: the poor will not free themselves from poverty and the oppression which helps to maintain it, until and unless they organise a political party to do the job. In some parts of the third world they are trying to do this. They may win or lose; but in the course of their struggle they will learn who and where their real enemies are. These are not only the importers and consumers of perfume amid abject poverty but all those who strive to uphold and defend the existing economic and social system. Under this system the gulf between rich and poor nations is getting wider every year. The system has this effect by the very nature of its operations.

Mr Hensman would have enhanced the value of his book if he had probed the question how far the wealth enjoyed in western Europe and North America depends on the poverty suffered everywhere else in the world of non-socialist nations. If he did this, I believe he would

find that the key lies in the very relationships between the two areas. Precisely because to a large if uncertain extent, the rich continue to exploit the poor countries, they will not agree to change the essential elements in the relationships. Hence the difference between what Mr Hensman properly describes as the rhetoric and the reality.

JOHN GILD

## THE FRAIL OCEAN

by Wesley Marx. Ballantine, 40p.

The pollution bandwagon is in full spate. There is an insatiable demand for books crying woe. We seem to take a masochistic delight in reading about our imminent demise. Wesley Marx's little book, first published in 1967 and now reprinted, is part of this flood. It is a slight book which discusses a few cases of man upsetting the balance of nature, both physical and biological. Some of the most telling are nothing to do with the oceans, such as the development of Chicago's Lake Shore waterfront and the Colombia river salmon. The few cases cited are interspersed with lengthy descriptive sections of the most irritating purple passages which the English reader may find difficult to stumble through. Perhaps it is a little hard to condemn an American for writing in American.

Unlike most doom merchants Wesley Marx does recognise that there is another side to the pollution coin. For example the depositing of old cars and similar junk off the coasts appears to be something for which fish have been waiting for millions of years. It provides shelter from piscine predators and they flourish to the delight of anglers.

The horrors of raw sewage being dumped in rivers and into the seas similarly has its benevolent aspect. The Chinese did not waste their excrement, they manured the fields with it. We manure our coastal waters and the North Sea, and consequently are able to crop larger yields of fish.

What is all too frequently forgotten is that much pollution merely involves pumping excess nutrients into the environment. If properly controlled this can be exploited to our advantage. The old adage "where there's muck there's brass" applies to coastal waters. The attraction of seagulls and presumably fish to sewage outfalls is not a measure of the perversity of other life forms. It is a measure of the nutrients we flush away.

Unfortunately it is not as simple as all that. Fertilisers from fields get washed into the sea after heavy rains and the result is a bloom of microscopic organisms—the red tide—these are highly toxic and thousands of fish are poisoned. These micro-organisms get ingested by shell-fish and the toxins lodge in their tissues to poison humans who eat them. Chemicals such as DDT become concentrated as they move up the food chain so that they kill sea birds and seals even as far away as the Antarctic. Effluents also can have strange effects by encouraging sea urchins to flourish, which destroy the Laminaria fronds—the basis of the kelp industry for the production of emulsifiers. Oil spills, deliberate and accidental, and the indiscriminate slaughter of whale are now familiar to everyone.

The lesson to be gleaned from Wesley Marx's book is that the oceans can be a source of great wealth if properly cultivated. But it is necessary first to stop thinking of the sea as a bottomless lavatory.

L. BEVERLY HALSTEAD



## LETTERS

### Hunting Exhibition

Thanks to the *Freethinker* for entering the lists against the scandal of the taxpayers' money being used for the promotion of cruelty at the Hunting Exhibition in Budapest in August. Many people will have written to the Government to complain: its excuse is that Anglo-Hungarian relations will be cemented by Britain's participation in this hunters' get-together.

Any *entente cordiale* that needs to be cemented with the blood of suffering pigs is under question itself. Do our "bloodies" intend to avail themselves of the open invitation to visitors to the exhibition to have a go at sticking pigs—as a change from hunting deer, hunting otters and coursing the timid hare?

GWENDOLEN BARTER.

### Old Testament Morality

I wish to take up Elizabeth Collin's challenge (*Freethinker*, 19 June) in which she asks for authentic statistics to bear out what she prejudices by calling a sweeping assertion. This refers to my statement that those exposed to the Old Testament to the exclusion of the New are less likely to commit crimes of violence and to be found in our borstals and prisons.

Unlike Elizabeth Collins I do not call a bishop to aid my beliefs. My assertion is based on statistics supplied to me by Mrs Margaret Knight and obtained from Home Office figures, and from figures relating to Holland and Australia. The Home Office figures showed that for every 10,000 of each denomination in the population there were in prison or borstal 21 Roman Catholics, 10 Methodists, 7 members of the Church of England and 6 Jews. Since Jewish children are heavily exposed to the Old Testament, and the New is not taught or even included in their Bible, Mrs Collins has her answer. Further, the absence of alcoholism and drunkenness amongst those exposed to the Old Testament is well documented, and may partly account for the almost complete absence of crimes of violence.

Elizabeth Collins' quotation from Bishop Barnes suggests also the source from which she gathers her selective approval of parts of the OT. Someone who dismisses all the psalms except one as not worthy of note is hardly qualified to pronounce on what is barbaric. It is of great interest to all believers and non-believers to find the columns of the *Freethinker* used as a vehicle to denounce the OT because of its "primitive and erroneous ideas of the nature of God". Does Elizabeth Collins know where to find less erroneous ideas of the nature of God?

The *lex talionis* (an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth) was a very great moral advance. It was an attempt to halt unlimited retribution. Look at the context in the Exodus version and you will see that it was an instruction to respect the unborn child and its mother in an age when perhaps we can assume there was no great demand for induced abortion. It is followed by the injunction that anyone attacking a slave and causing the loss of eye or tooth must give that slave his freedom. Of course, since Jesus is supposed to have improved on the teaching our Christian friends have made it a central point in their propaganda—propaganda which seems these days to have left its mark most on those who are called secularists or freethinkers.

Since throughout the Christian era and in the so-called post-Christian era, the doctrine of unlimited retribution goes scarcely challenged (the nuclear deterrent is unlimited retribution) it is difficult to know why this very moral advance is considered barbaric. The only explanation that fits the facts that is that some of your readers are attempting to be freethinkers without the basic too—an understanding of the meaning of words.

As to the sexual morality of the Old Testament it does not anywhere describe sex as wicked or not to be enjoyed. It does not deny sexuality to woman; indeed it is incumbent on those that believe in the Torah (The Five Books of Moses) for a husband to make love to his wife at least once a week, for her sake not for his. This contrasts favourably with the teaching in the New Testament and the practice of the Greeks to whom love of boys was more important than love of their wives.

The morality of the OT concerning one's obligation to teach one's children led to Judea (under Hasmonian queen Alexandra) introducing free education—the first country in the world to do so. In the dispersion that followed literacy was continued. Although this was to enable religious books to be studied, it con-

trasts favourably with those who followed the NT and confined education to the priests.

If secular humanists were not so interested in their navels and below they would have freed themselves from the Christian yoke which prevents them studying Judaic literature on Old Testament themes. Perhaps they might find a Rabbi Barnes whose views they might be prepared at least to consider in order to balance their judgment on such matters.

GERALD SAMUEL.

## FREETHINKER FUND

Our thanks to those readers who contributed to the Fund during June. N. C. Adshead, £5; H. A. Alexander, 35p; D. G. Baker, £1.45; J. Buchanan, 45p; S. Clowes, £1; W. Craigie, 72p; H. W. Day, 95p; N. H. Dival, £1; A. Elsmore, 50p; J. L. Ford, 45p; H. Gaspardis, 65p; J. G. Hillhouse (in memory of W. Ingram), £2; H. Holgate, 20p; F. W. Jones, £1.45; Miss G. M. Jones, 45p; J. Kent, 35p; E. W. Madhill, 45p; H. Madoc-Jones, 50p; R. C. Mason, £2; W. C. Parry, 50p; B. B. Pinder, 27p; P. Rom, 40p; A. R. Richards, 20p; H. R. Scobell, 15p; M. D. Silas, £1; J. Vallance, 95p; Mrs L. Vanduren, 25p; Miss E. G. Vaughan, 50p; E. Wakefield, 55p; W. L. M., £1; Mrs M. Watson, £1. Already acknowledged: £88.77; total to date £115.46.

(Continued from front page)

in their lot with the poor can only be endorsed by progressives.

It is difficult for an unbeliever to empathise with the felt need to respond to the "charity of Christ" that inspires the active religious. Either you have these experiences, or you don't have them. What is more fruitful, it seems to me, than speculating—as some unbelievers have done—on the allegedly psychological origins of the impulse to the religious life, is to affirm once more the weakness of the Christian argument that attempts to derive a justification of the religious life from the gospels. Of the three vows of evangelical perfection, chastity, poverty and obedience, only the second can plausibly be held to originate from Jesus himself. Obedience to the Church certainly did not, since Jesus did not found a Church. As for obedience to God, this for the Jews meant obedience to the Jewish Law.

The case against Christianity will continue to rely, in part, on a number of cogent historical considerations, which effectively dispose of the Pope's effort to base a moral vindication of the religious life on the ethical teachings of the gospels. That this is so ought not to prevent humanists from generously acknowledging the sincerity of individual religious, and the social value of many of their efforts, for without Mother Theresa the world would be an even unhappier place.

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