

THE OZ TRIAL: WIDE CRITICISM OF JUDGE AND POLICE

The "Freethinker" joins with those who have condemned the unjustified sentences which have been passed on the editors of OZ. Many of those who have condemned the treatment to which Richard Neville, James Anderson and Felix Dennis have been subjected are by no means friends of the underground Press or permissiveness. But they recognise that whilst the pruders loudly protest about alleged encroachment by the "permissive society", personal liberty and free expression are being threatened by the "cleaner-uppers", the police and bewigged, po-faced puppets who sit, or sleep, at the Old Bailey and elsewhere. Predictably, approval of the sentences has been expressed by some of our more sycophantic followers of Jesus. These latter-day Grundys, like the object of their adoration, are intolerant, vindictive phonies who continually mouth inanities about love and justice but always ready to put the boot in if anyone challenges their ideas and standards. They are of the same ilk as those who initiated the prosecution of G. W. Foote, first editor of the "Freethinker" nearly 90 years ago. He was sent to prison for 12 months on a blasphemy charge. The enemies of freedom were jubilant; they were certain the imprisonment of Foote would kill the "Freethinker" and frighten others. They were totally wrong, and so are those who think that the persecution of OZ will kill the underground Press.

Law Without Justice

William Hamling, MP (secretary of the Humanist Parliamentary Group), told the *Freethinker* that the severity of the sentences passed on the OZ editors is paralleled only by their blundering insensitivity. "Mr Justice Argyle has martyred three young men and earned undying notoriety", Mr Hamling declared.

He continued: "The judgment produced one observation worthy of *This England*. The convicted men were sent to prison because they were too poor to be fined. A new judicial principle has been laid down. Rich people shall be fined because they can afford to pay—and presumably keep their freedom. Poor people go to prison.

"Young people are brought up to think that the English system of law is based on justice. They do not see that an English court of law may provide law but not necessarily justice. Mr Justice Argyle, in carrying out the law, has violated the sense of justice which young people look for. First offenders are treated with a severity which is seldom even applied to thugs on their first offence. These young men are not criminals in any accepted sense. A crime has a victim. The victims in the OZ case are the people who have been charged. One of the curious features of the case is that the prosecution produced no evidence of its own. The star prosecution witness was a contributor to school kids OZ, a friend of the defendants and a most unwilling witness."

Mr Hamling said it would be interesting to know more about the medical and psychiatric examinations the defendants underwent in prison: "Did they last ten minutes or ten hours? Who examined them and what did their reports reveal? If these questions are not satisfactorily answered, the authorities must not be surprised if many people conclude that the defendants were remanded in custody in order to humiliate them".

Police Action

Mr Hamling said he believed that the present drive against papers like IT and OZ "arises from a self-

appointed task which the police have assumed to deal with what they regard as a subversive political movement". Referring to an article in the *Daily Telegraph* on 29 July ("by our Old Bailey correspondent") he said this makes it clear that police concern and police action against the underground Press stems from political motives.

"This is not police business at all", Mr Hamling declared. "If there is to be a move against subversive elements it is a matter for Parliament. For my part, the most serious aspect of the OZ case is the searchlight it throws on the extra curricular activities of some senior police officers".

More Repression

Vivian Berger, 16, who contributed to the prosecuted issue of OZ, told the *Freethinker* that the prosecution and sentences imposed were really aimed at every freethinking person. He continued: "I think it is really frightening to compare this kind of censorship with what is going on in the United States and Russia. I feel there is going to be more repression and street violence which, of course, is a bad thing. The law and the sexual mores of our society are the chief weapons for attacking the culture of my generation.

"Richard, Jim and Felix were prosecuted for an act they did not commit. It was pointed out in court many times that school kids OZ was edited by the kids themselves. But the authorities have been gunning for the others for a long time and they grasped this opportunity to get them".

Vivian Berger said he had no regrets about being an OZ contributor, and is now planning to edit and publish a book on children's rights.

"A Monstrous Violation"

The influential *New Law Journal* published a strongly worded piece on the decision that the defendants would be remanded in custody. It says that although the practice

(Continued overleaf)

THE STATE OF RELIGION TODAY

JAMES O. HANLON

We frequently hear it deplored that church attendance has fallen off, that people are becoming in larger numbers "four-wheeler Christians"—going to be christened in a pram, to be married in a car and to their funeral in a hearse, with little attention to the call of religion in the intervals between these events.

Various reasons are given for this falling away of church attendance. The length of the sermons has sometimes been called into question and these have been shortened in an endeavour to meet the wishes of the congregation. Reference has been made to the appeal of the parson and in some cases, no doubt that individual has made a gallant attempt to make himself more acceptable to his parishioners. Gimmicks such as pop singing and similar activities have been resorted to, but without any marked success.

The apathy of the people has been blamed for the falling off in church adherence. There is no doubt that apathy is a factor to be reckoned with. Its dire effects are to be observed, not only in the churches, but in various organisations including the trade unions, cultural bodies and—let us face it—the freethought movement through the world. Nevertheless, we declare that, as far as religion is concerned, the main reason for its declining numbers is its intellectual bankruptcy. This bankruptcy is the inevitable consequence of the nature of religion. Whether it be in the form of the primitive variety found among the simple folk of the African jungle, or of the highly-developed systems which claim millions of adherents throughout the world, religion stakes its claim to credence on pretention of having received its teachings from a divine infallible source.

Such teachings or revelations, having once been given out as of divine origin cannot, without a weakening of their authority, be altered. Therein lies the dilemma of religion. Rooted in the past it must retain its pristine view in a world where knowledge is rapidly expanding. Christianity could maintain its sway in such conditions as the Dark Ages—that period of about 500 years coinciding with the collapse of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity—to a position of power under the aegis of Constantine. However, the revival of learning, otherwise known as the Renaissance, spelt the ultimate doom of Christianity. As knowledge spread the churches have had to struggle to maintain their ground. Galileo, with his telescope, and various scientists with their probings into the nature of things, have shown that what the church have taught cannot be accepted. The struggle for the supremacy of truth as revealed by science has been a long and bitter one, but science today is winning with increasing momentum.

No Time for Apathy

The churches may take comfort in the fact that the present is not the first time they have been faced with a wave of disbelief, but, while experiences may be repeated, the conditions surrounding them are not identical. "In the early days of the church", Philip Vivian points out in his invaluable work, *The Churches and Modern Thought*, "the heretic was not in the possession of knowledge that we have since acquired. He could not support his views, as he can now, with the facts of science. At every step he could be met with arguments which he had no adequate means of refuting, and if he dared to deny the 'supernatural' there was an enormous preponderance of public opinion against him".

Today that is changed. The man who breaks away from the churches finds himself one of a great company. Popular scientific works support his views and he can hold his own in an argument with the parson on the subject of religion and its claims if, indeed, the parson will come forth to do battle.

The churches are dying, but the end is not yet. This is not a time for apathy in regard to promoting rationalism. It behoves all rationalists, atheists, freethinkers, humanists, agnostics—call themselves what they will—to join the movement so that they can more effectively combat religion and bring about a state of affairs where reason, not superstition, is the ruling force in thought and conduct.

PUBLIC DEBATE :

THAT MAN NEEDS GOD

Proposed by

Sir DAVID RENTON, QC, MP

Opposed by

DAVID TRIBE

Former president of the National Secular Society; author of *100 Years of Freethought*, President Charles Bradlaugh, MP, etc.

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(Continued from front page)

of sentencing in the light of social and medical reports is desirable, this case "is scarcely likely to be cited in years to come as one of the more intelligent or enlightened instances of its use . . . Judge Argyle, prolonging the agony for all concerned in a trial of already unprecedented length, refused to set any date for the imposition of sentences".

New Law Journal says that the courts are indirectly responsible for the defendants' treatment after their arrival at Wandsworth Prison. It quotes the White Paper, *People in Prison*, statement that the "quality" of prison life is one pointer to the credibility of society's claim that it "believes in the worth of individual human beings". *NLJ* asks if we are to conclude that society's belief in the worth of individuals is to be measured by the fact that when the defendants were remanded, their hair was cut short. "Such a monstrous violation of an individual's integrity is, of course, an assault, and assault is justified only by necessity. For the sake of what the prison authorities had no right to assume would be more than a few days' detention, r. 26 of Prison Rules was invoked, but all that even that rule requires is that a prisoner's hair 'shall be . . . cut as may be necessary for neatness'. Are the prison authorities so out of touch with today that they still imagine that neatness is synonymous with short back and sides? We certainly would not like to found the defence of 'necessity on such a flimsy basis'.

THE ROYAL ART: REFLECTIONS ON THE REVIVAL OF ASTROLOGY

F. A. RIDLEY

In his book *The Royal Art*, biblical scholar Robert Eisler traced the evolution of astrology from its beginnings amongst the priest kings of Mesopotamia down to modern times. Since Eisler wrote his book a generation ago the "Royal Art"—or at least a journalistic counterfeit—has undergone a spectacular revival. Fleet Street editors have taken over the esoteric role formerly discharged by the Pharaohs and Chaldeans. The *News of the World* includes "news" from other worlds besides ours, and "What the Stars Foretell" arrives with the morning paper. In fairness, one ought to add that astrology itself should not be stretched to include the ominous predictions that clutter the daily Press. An astrologer I used to meet in the British Museum reading room categorically denied that such commercial outpourings had any real connection with bona fide astrology.

To describe astrology as a religion might be a distortion of what has become a very ambiguous term. But if it were permissible to employ such an expression in connection with our modern stellar cult, it would probably be to assert that more people read the astrological predictions which appear in the Press than ever open a Holy Bible. Certainly more people consult their horoscopes than ever cross the threshold of a place of worship at the present time. And on the European continent the situation appears to be similar. In France the famous astrologer "Madame Soliel" is a national institution—perhaps the most famous "witch" since Joan of Arc. (Even the President recently referred a question to Madame Soliel!) In Hamburg I was told it was virtually impossible to get a job in business without submitting to an astrological test.

Astronomy and Astrology

What is the reason for this seemingly incredible revival in the so-called civilised world of a prehistoric cult? In the course of his erudite survey Eisler traced astrology to its origins in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. In their origins astronomy and astrology were probably inseparable—about equally ancient and scientific. Indeed, to ask which came first, as a writer on the subject aptly commented, is very much like repeating that hoary chestnut about the chicken and the egg.

The priestly astronomers discovered the planets and the astrologers deduced their influence upon mankind. But would the initial astronomical research have been undertaken but for the belief that the planets were capable of influencing mankind? Be that as it may, by about the year 750 BC the library of the Assyrian King Assur-Bani-Pal, recently excavated at Nineveh, records observations in the allied fields of astronomy and astrology that were by then probably as remote in time from Assyria as Assyria is from us.

However, whilst stellar science probably developed by the banks of the Nile and the Euphrates, like most other sciences it owes its present form and methodology to the classical Greeks. (Astrology is merely a Greek word meaning "the science of the stars".) It was among the Greeks, particularly in Alexandria, the scientific metropolis of the ancient world, that both astronomy and astrology, still classified as equally exact sciences, assumed the form in which they subsisted until the Copernican revolution in the seventeenth century. Subsequently the discovery of three

planets unknown to the Greeks, Uranus (1781), Neptune (1846) and Pluto (1930), have still further undermined the traditional basis of classical astrology.

The principal agent in this classification was the Graeco-Egyptian scholar Claudius Ptolemy, probably the most encyclopaedic compiler since Aristotle (second century, AD). It was in the Ptolemaic astronomy and astrology that both these ancient sciences came down to us virtually unchanged between Ptolemy and Copernicus. Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* is still widely regarded as a classic in astrological circles as the classic textbook. Scientific knowledge is always relative; in the context of his age, like Aristotle before him, Ptolemy was undoubtedly a supreme intellect.

Ptolemy was a contemporary of Marcus Aurelius, and lived before the final victory of Christianity at the end of the fourth century. Once in power the new religion took an unequivocal attitude of hostility towards astronomy and astrology, and indeed towards Greek science in general. St Ambrose of Milan declared: "The motions of the sun, the moon and the planets are irrelevant to our salvation" But it was the authority of Ambrose's great convert, St Augustine of Hippo (356-430), which really settled the question.

"The Work of Demons"

A recent historian of astrology declared: "In the words of St Augustine, whose influence on Christianity was so powerful that he is today regarded as one of the true founders of the Faith, 'Those who hold that stars manage our actions or our passions, good or ill, without God's appointment, are to be silenced and not heard'". In his *Confessions* Augustine made a powerful attack on the validity of horoscopes, "for of such an art there is none" He went on to declare that any valid horoscope could only be the work of demons.

The powerful influence of Augustine settled the fate of astrology for the whole of the Middle Ages. But it should be noted that what the Christian Church actually condemned in astrology were the genuinely scientific elements that Ptolemy had inherited from Greek science and philosophy—its inherent determinism and mechanistic materialism. How badly these fitted in with Christian theology based on divine interventions in human affairs was grimly evident in the fate of a medieval Italian astrologer who was burnt alive for casting the horoscope of Jesus Christ, born 25 December, AD 1. Hence the crucifixion was an act of the stars, not of God, a major heresy that expressly denied the redeeming power of Jesus Christ.

A German Marxist historian once noted that astrology always flourishes best in times of crisis. Thus both the decline of the ancient world and of medieval society at the Reformation, both epochs of great social misery, were golden ages of astrology. No doubt the present startling upsurge of astrology, at first sight so peculiar in an age of unparalleled scientific and technical progress, is largely due to the profound social malaise of our own generation, and of an uneasy peace, of fear so precariously poised under the shadow of the Bomb. Assuming this is a correct psychological and social diagnosis it would appear that "Madame Soliel" and her opposite numbers in this country will flourish for quite a time to come—not forgetting, we hope, continually to thank their lucky stars!

NEWS

FREETHINKER

editor: WILLIAM McILROY

103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1

Telephone: 01-407 1251

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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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 Mout, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Minority Rights Group's latest report—on the Southern Sudan and Eritrea—just out, price 30p from MRG, 36 Craven Street, London, WC2.

EVENTS

Ashurstwood Abbey Secular Humanism Centre (founded by Jean Straker), between East Grinstead and Forest Row, Sussex. Telephone Forest Row 2589. Meeting every Sunday, 3 p.m.

Humanist Holidays. Details of future activities from Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey, Telephone: 642 8796.

London Young Humanists. A team of volunteers will be tidying the graves of Charles Bradlaugh and W. S. Ross ("Saladin") at Brookwood Cemetery on Sunday, 15 August. Details from the organiser: Nigel Sinnott, 5 Kew Gardens Road, Kew, Richmond, Surrey. Telephone 940 3794.

DAVID TRIBE'S PRESIDENT CHARLES BRADLAUGH, MP

£4.00 + 20p postage

This book takes one into byways of political and social life never before (or certainly insufficiently) explored. It would be a pity to miss it.—Sheffield Morning Telegraph

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A WELCOME VISITOR

Madlyn Murray O'Hair, who must surely rank as one of the most courageous Americans of this century, paid her first visit to London last week. Mrs O'Hair, who was accompanied by her daughter-in-law and grand-daughter, greatly enjoyed the experience, and was very impressed by the tolerance which is more prevalent than in the United States, and by the appearance and behaviour of people in this country.

For over ten years Madlyn Murray O'Hair has fought an unrelenting battle against religious privilege and domination in her country. Together with her family she has suffered incredible victimisation, vilification and assault. This took many forms, and Mrs Murray O'Hair feels confident that if she had been doing similar work in Britain she would not have been the target for such vicious attacks.

She told the *Freethinker*: "The ways in which dissidents are punished in the United States are mainly economic. Buying and spending are national past-times, and anyone who steps out of line will soon be deprived of the means of livelihood". No one better knows the truth of this statement than Madlyn herself. Although she was at college for 11 years and holds four degrees, there was a time when she literally could not have got a job as a dishwasher. So she created a post of "professional atheist", and in this capacity has fought against the politicians and public servants who are prepared to hand over millions of dollars every year to the churches.

Madlyn Murray O'Hair said that the churches are becoming more aggressive and demanding in the United States. Evangelical tub-thumpers like Billy Graham have the ear of the president himself. Hundreds of broadcasts and television programmes broadcast the sermons of even the most moronic preachers. Even the crew of the moon-ship had a programmed instruction that they were to indulge in "spontaneous act of religious awe!"

There are now 50 million Roman Catholics in the United States and no politician could expect to be elected if he did not promise them more money for schools. The American government now gives the churches substantially more money every year than it spends on the Vietnam war.

No one would expect a professional atheist in America to be bubbling over with optimism. But Madlyn Murray O'Hair is not one of those fainthearts who scurries away at the first sign of resistance by the enemy. And she is not embittered. For a person who has suffered so much, and who has seen her family suffer, at the hands of Christian bigots, Madlyn Murray O'Hair is a very firm, resolute and philosophical woman. She talks fluently, listens patiently, and is refreshingly free from the petty whines and complaints in which some of those who have endured a great deal less are apt to indulge in.

Madlyn Murray O'Hair returned to America on Tuesday. We hope she will long remember her visit to London. Certainly those who had the experience of meeting her will remember this splendid woman.

ANNIVERSARY AND NOTES PUBLICATIONS

ANNIVERSARY

Amnesty International this year celebrates its tenth anniversary. Since 1961 it has grown from a small committee in London into an international organisation with a voice in world debate. The organisation exists to help prisoners of conscience: people who have attempted to exercise ordinary human rights—freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of association—without using or advocating violence. It “adopts” these prisoners, appeals for their release, provides financial assistance for their families in many cases, and gives aid, comfort and support. Each year it organises a special week of intensive publicity and pressure—Prisoner of Conscience Week—for selected categories of prisoners. Last year’s Prisoner of Conscience Week was related to trade unionists. This year’s, from 14 to 21 November, is centred on prisoners whose detention is connected with race.

This work has led to an increasing concern with international law, to missions and ever-expanding research. Amnesty International is now actively involved in working for the application of the UN Standard Minimum Prison Rules. It is appealing for co-operation from governments in applying humanitarian Conventions.

“During the first ten years of its existence Amnesty has grown to the stage of having nearly 1,000 groups, and national sections in 28 countries. Its influence on the international scene has also grown considerably; most governments are now prepared to deal directly with Amnesty International”, writes the chairman, Sean MacBride, in the annual report. The secretary general, Martin Ennals, writes: “Amnesty International is based on the belief that ordinary people care about the human rights of other ordinary people and that human rights and responsibilities are not limited to national boundaries. There is also an assumption that governments are interested in public opinion outside the areas of their control. The first decade of Amnesty International’s existence has proved that these principles are correct”.

The annual report gives information on the present structure of Amnesty International, its methods of working and its budget. The section of research, introduced by Dr Z. A. B. Zeman, describes the present situation and Amnesty’s involvement in approximately 60 countries in Africa, the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

The address of Amnesty International is Turnagain Lane, Farringdon Street, London, EC4.

FREETHINKER FUND

We thank the following readers who sent donations during July: C. W. R. Byass, £1.45; R. E. Bush, 45p; G. Davis, £1.45; Mrs H. Eckersley, £2.45; O. Ford, £1; W. Gerrard, £3; A. W. Harris, 25p; D. C. Johnson, 20p; S. C. Merrifield, 35p; J. McPhail, £1.29; C. Marcus, £2.20; R. McGarry, 13p; W. Parry, 66p; Mr Rodwars, 10p. Already acknowledged: £88.77; total to date, £103.75.

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BOOKS

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: TOWARDS THE LIBERATION OF THE CHILD Elek £2.50

"Children have as much need for a revolution as the proletariat." These words of William Morris are quoted at the end of Nan Berger's contribution to this important, uneven discussion of children's rights. In some senses Mrs Berger's essay is the most telling of them all. It is a quiet, sensible, ungesticulating statement of a great inequity: which lies in the fact that children, on the whole, remain the property of adults and—existing under a special, shrunken code of civil liberty—are granted few opportunities for self-determination. By telling her story from its modern beginning (when nightmare claims of possession and disposal were made upon children by industry and parents) to our present juncture (the Children and Young Persons Act of 1969, which if the habitual rhythm of legislation prevails will set the pattern for the next 40 years, in no way even reflects the rethinking and change of the past few decades), Mrs Berger hardly needs to spell out the case against this obvious tissue of injustices. History makes her point. Reading her essay, I was reminded again and again of Blake. It wasn't only that early in the story one remembers his chimneysweepers: it wasn't merely that he himself had no doubt that, as Mrs Berger puts it, "childhood is a state of life . . . not just an apprenticeship." I thought (as when I was in the schools, I often guiltily did) of that phrase of his about the teacher's "cruel eye outworn": of his protest against the fundamental abuse of the human spirit that lies in obligatory education. Among the rights Mrs Berger claims for children is not only the right to consult the children's Departments of their own volition, but also the right to voluntary education, taken as and when and how a free human being might decide.

Perhaps what I find impressive in Mrs Berger's essay—its coolness and good sense—rests on its being, at bottom, a statement about legalities? And of course there is much here to be warm, angry, expostulatory, vehement about. Dr Paul Adams, for example, an American psychiatrist, is concerned in his essay on *The Infant, the Family and Society* with the right of small children to grow up untwisted by needless guilts and shames, and by dogmas; and it is not easy and may not even be proper to be cool when looking at our present capacity for trapping human nature in a monstrous servility of fears, resentments, unhappy secrecies. But at this stage in history, and when persuasion is a main aim of such writing, it is simple waste of opportunity and sacrifice of forcefulness, surely, to say such a thing as: "There must be an end to racism." Of course: but the word "must", in this shade of its usage, has none of the power of a wizard's hands—it will cause nothing to vanish. In public speech-making, fist thudding upon palm, one might use such constructions: but on the printed page they must (another shade of "must") make many readers recoil from what would seem an old, over-familiar, liberal shrillness and flap—a resort to rhetorical unreality. I remember a magistrate in a police court where I once worked as a reporter, who, when he was faced with a "sexual offender" would bark: "This sort of thing *must* stop!" One felt that exhibitionism (as it usually was) would hardly come to halt, even within North London, in response to such hollow rhetoric.

It may seem ungenerous, or even a sort of treason, to give so much space to a discussion of Dr Adams' over-

FREETHINKER

vehemence (as it seems to me) to his rhodomontade and pure wishfulness. But—because it's a matter of keeping our own heads clear as well as of persuading others—the tone does matter: as does the language. "Conscription of sexually active prospective parents is demoralising by interfering with more positive life-planning" is, no matter what good sense it contains, a sentence designed to send reasonable people scuttling for shelter. Dr Adams says important things, and it's surely a pity that he doesn't say them more calmly and carefully. Dr Robert Ollendorff writes rather more sharply than this about the rights of adolescents, and provides historical and sociological settings for his statement that, in patriarchal society like ours, the adolescent has "to cope with an environment which is jealous of his sexuality." And indeed if we directed towards growing plants the same terror and distaste for what's fresh, bright and vigorous that we direct at our adolescents, then our gardens would be empty. The importance of recognising the rights of children, Dr Ollendorff suggests, lies in its being our great hope of breaking "the chain of continuity" which binds one authoritarian generation to the next. If one might be cautiously euphoric, it does seem that the chain is weaker now than it has ever been. Or perhaps it would be truer to say that in the past it has shown little weakness at all, but that now it seems to have one or two marvellously untrustworthy links.

Leila Berg provides, in the opening essay, a lively account of educational pioneers—beginning with Homer Lane—who have sought to create opportunities for children to shape their own learning and determine their own development. She ends dismayingly, with a stop press story of the suppression of a paper written by a member of the UNESCO secretariat—a paper which (she quotes from it) draws thoughtful conclusions from such a fact as that in New York City "the brightest students are convinced that they can get a brighter education out of school than inside" . . . Which might almost describe the experience of several decades of children who've been to A. S. Neill's Summerhill: except that Neill has made his school one in which you can be out while in, and vice versa. His own essay, called *Freedom Works*, is a delight, of course. He has so marvellously the art of saying things often quite complicated, and fresh and surprising, in a few words that are clear, memorable, and much more likely to persuade than thick and agitated adjurations. "The pundits have cleverly combined the loving Jesus with that old fool Solomon." And of B. F. Skinner and his adherents, who would like benignly to mould children: "I am 87 but would not dare to mould a dog." Reading Neill again, one's deeply grateful that such a persuasive genius has been working for love and not for hate.

But the best of these essays, when it comes to driving old arguments a mile or so further along the road, is Michael Duane's on "the near-barbarity of what passes for education in schools for the lower working class." One sees—reading this clear and closely-argued paper, cool and warm at once—how all our institutions, of which the educational ones are sensitive models, exist in order (in Mr Duane's language) to saturate all we do with competition, "so that we cannot measure work except in terms of money; education except in terms of the types of work that it will lead to: leisure except in terms of escape from work: and our relationships except in terms of having to

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impress others with our wealth, our occupation, our status, our power over others, our 'virility' or, in male fantasy, our power to subdue more females than other men."

It is good to find such shrewdly persuasive essays as this one in such a book: because not only Mrs Berg's shocking UNESCO story but also the astonishing verdict in the case of *The Little Red Schoolbook* suggest that the question of the extension of children's rights is very clearly seen, by the authoritarians, as the threat to their dominance that it, *uniquely*, is. And in such a situation, those who are in favour of as much human happiness as possible will need to be no less persuasive than passionate.

EDWARD BLISHEN

A RAP ON RACE

by Margaret Mead and James Baldwin.

Michael Joseph, £2.20.

The names of these two American authors are both so well known that a dialogue between them about race relations is sure to attract many readers. It is therefore a pity that one's expectations are disappointed. Their talk, which lasted seven hours, is reported verbatim; and, as with most such records, it rambles along without the development of a rigorous argument on either side.

As far as I follow their thoughts they come to this. James Baldwin is a black novelist who feels deeply about the humiliations, past and present, inflicted on black people everywhere. He shows no sign, however, that he has grasped the deeper underlying causes of racism and accordingly he is at a loss to suggest what can be done to eliminate them.

Margaret Mead is an eminent social anthropologist who made her name originally by her field work in Samoa and New Guinea, which are rather a long way from Harlem where Baldwin grew up. Incidentally, she is not as well informed as she should be about other places she refers to. In particular, she talks rubbish when she says that white people reached the "empty country" of southern Africa before the Bantu-speaking tribesmen. In fact, the tribesmen were there first, but were dispossessed by the whites in the nineteenth century. She is trying to get Baldwin to escape from his black skin and look at the world beyond today and even tomorrow to see if it can be spared race wars. But Baldwin is too angry and emotional to do this.

Neither speaker gets to grips at any point with the question that would raise the level of their discussion. This is the question how far the psychology of Africans or Asians or even American Negroes has been influenced by their special experiences. Let me say with emphasis that this question involves realism not racism. Margaret Mead must know that polygamy and other non-western family patterns leave their imprint on cultural personality. For instance, an English public school, together with Christianity, produces in boys an attitude to women or sex or marriage different from the attitudes adopted by Moslems or Hindus or pagans in the African hinterlands.

In his recent book, *Africa in Eclipse*, Leonard Barnes made a brave effort to open up some discussion of this neglected subject. "When an African has to deal with frustration", he writes, "he does not typically resort to either of the stock European responses. On the one hand, he does not try, by displaying self-confidence and technical skill, to prove that he is adequate to the situation and to his own ego-ideal. Nor, on the other hand, does he make the reaction of one who feels himself driven to the wall in a competitive society—a neurotic luxuriating in his own inferiority. He seeks to adjust by establishing a dependence relationship analogous to that of a child to parents . . ."

In other words, the typical African or Asian personality, as moulded by its culture, is different from the personality typical of, say, a Frenchman or an American. We all accept this in daily practice, but psychologists and other social scientists are slow to undertake research which would shed more light on national differences and how they influence our persistent attitudes, especially to politics and morality.

The question has been further obscured by colonial nationalism and by the WASPS (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) with their tranquil sense of racial superiority, whether or not they are always conscious of it. Nationalism, as Bernard Shaw said in 1907 of the Irish, consumes the energies of those in its grip:

Nationalism stands between Ireland and the light of the world. Nobody in Ireland of any intelligence likes nationalism, any more than a man with a broken arm likes having it set. A healthy nation is as unconscious of its nationality as a healthy man of his bones. But if you break a nation's nationality, it will think of nothing else but getting it set again. It will listen to no reformer, to no philosopher, to no preacher, until the demand of the nationalist is granted. It will attend to no business, however vital, except the business of unification and liberation.

Most black leaders in the world today can think of little else save the compulsive necessity to liberate themselves and their people from the sense of racial inferiority which colonialism in one form or another imposed on them. Perhaps this is why, when confronted with the large moral and political choices presented by socialism and capitalism, they seem to be paralysed—and thus in effect support the status quo. Being orthodox Americans at heart, both Baldwin and Margaret Mead share something of this disability and so their whole argument lapses into futility.

JULIUS LEWIN

SUNDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER

A DAY IN SUSSEX

Visit thirteenth-century Michelham Priory,
Long Man of Wilmington and Brighton

(houses of Herbert Spencer and G. J. Holyoake)

Coach leaves corner of Northumberland Avenue
and Trafalgar Square, London, at 9.30 a.m.

Price: £1.90

(which includes return fare, lunch at Michelham Priory
and admission charges)

Please state if vegetarian

Organised by the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
(in association with Brighton and Hove Humanist Group)

Bookings with payment to the NSS,
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Tel. 407 2717

THEATRE

TYGER. New Theatre, London.

Best remembered by the general public today as the author of "The Tiger" and "Jerusalem", William Blake, the subject of this "celebration", remains a subject of intense academic speculation. Were his "dark Satanic Mills" Anglican churches or capitalist factories? Did he really belong to the Christians, Swedenborgians, freethinkers, radicals or communists—all of whom have claimed him? Few would now say, as his contemporaries did, that he was mad; but it is equally doubtful if he were as intellectual and "progressive" as is generally believed. At their best his verses—like those of Adrian Mitchell, the writer of *Tyger*—ring with a strange, powerful rhetoric; but a great number of them are, for me, full of gnomic flatulence in the Linton-Mazzini, or the Christian Socialist, tradition. More interesting are his paintings and coloured engravings. With Constable and Turner, he can claim to be the father of modern art—a title already given, and no doubt to be consolidated when Britain enters the Common Market, to the French Impressionists.

Little new—or for that matter old—light on Blake is shed by this production, which dashes backwards and forwards between his day (1757-1827) and our own and makes its sharpest comments on the latter. Probably Mitchell has little historical sense; though he may defend himself by arguing that the best way to show Blake's "relevance" is to see him in contemporary terms. On that argument, however, complete updating of allusions and costumes might have been expected. As in so much work of the "underground" and semi-basements of the literary world, there is too little self-criticism and editing of material. While it is a pleasure to escape from the hothouse half-dozen cast dictated by modern theatrical economics (as only a subsidised National Theatre can escape), this musical has far too many characters. One can readily understand how the programme, as originally printed, came to omit two of them. With such a company the audience is confused and most of the characters are too lightly sketched to be effective. "Allen Ginsberg", for example, is far less colourful than the real person. Mad King George (based on George III) is a good joke; Mad King Henry, based on one in particular that I could identify, is supererogatory. And the three intellectuals in the bar-room scene are neither accurately nor wittily observed. On the page (many of them appeared in a recent *Ink*) the satirical lyrics do not hold up very well, while Mike Westbrook's tunes are notably unmemorable. No doubt this is why, I am told, the piece was badly reviewed on the opening night.

No one should be deterred by this indictment. What does not work intellectually works, as on many other occasions, theatrically. Heard and not read the lyrics seem sharp. If the music is lacking in melodic invention it is brilliantly orchestrated and the production numbers that conclude the two acts, especially the second, resonate throughout the theatre and the mind. The meeting of the National Cultural Committee, with its Lady Twat—whose mind is such a sterile vacuum that filthy words fly in unbidden, and who is brilliantly portrayed by Hazel Hughes—and the poet's party may be almost totally irrelevant to Blake, but they are brilliant pantomime inventions. I particularly liked Milton as a hippy athlete in a black tracksuit lettered "PARADISE NOW", and the final comment of the Blakes, "We should have invited the Brontes. At least we would have had someone to do the cleaning up"

Gerald James as William Blake and Jane Wenham as his wife Kate skilfully combine peasant stubbornness with the iconoclasm of the visionary, while John Moffat is both camp and conservative as a delightful Sir Joshua Rat (Reynolds). Above all the whole company communicate their obvious enjoyment across the footlights and whatever the critics may have said the audience loved the show on the night I was there. A pity, though, that as Jerusalem was being built on the stage in the finale we did not have the famous tune, if only in parody.

DAVID TRIBE

LETTER

Sacred Books

Figures produced by Gerald Samuel on good authority (*Freethinker*, 17 July), relating to the argument he put forward as to the beneficial effect of Old as against New Testament moral teaching as a deterrent of violent crime, provide welcome information. As I suspected, however, Church of England and Jewish figures are so close—seven for the former and six for the latter per 10,000—as to make nonsense of that argument. Sacred books have never prevented violence or man's inhumanity towards his fellows and can make no valid claim to a superior moral code which is practicable.

More probably the increase of violence is due to the wars of the 60 years in which young men have been taught to kill by all the ghastly means science has placed at their disposal, and for its vivid reporting by the mass media. I still maintain that Old Testament Law and its stringent code was designed to secure despotic power over a somewhat primitive people and to produce a society amenable to priestly rule.

In its present form this work is post-Exilic literature, since it has been largely "re-dacted" with influences that reflect an intermingling of cultures and the customs, traditions and certain religious ideas of Babylonian, Canaanite and Phoenician origin. The religious texts discovered at Ugarit (1929-33) show a strong similarity to Hebrew verse, the same characteristic form recurring repeatedly; especially the stylistic device of the tricolon in certain psalms, in Daniel and the Song of Deborah. The psalm I quoted is one of which we happen to know the source—the Bulaq hymn of Akhenaten—as for the other sacred writings their origin is problematical and various.

Over the years a considerable part of my time has been spent in the study of Egyptian, Hebrew and Palestinian history from reputable historical and archeological sources (not Christian), and I have not lightly arrived at the opinions I hold. Bishops are not usually quoted by me, but the sentence alluded to seemed aptly to describe the book in question, and as a freethinker I hope I am not narrowminded. As to "the erroneous nature of God" those were Dr Barnes' words, not mine, and as I have no belief in a god I do not feel called upon to answer that question.

Regarding Alexandra and education, this Queen was advised by her husband, Alexander Jannaeus before he died, to be guided solely by the Pharisees when she succeeded to the throne, which resulted in that sect becoming the effective government and in control of education; this was almost wholly religious and designed to condition the people, thus rendering them compliant citizens of a theocratic state. It was also to prevent them from becoming contaminated by the ideas of those naughty Greeks and other Gentiles which might tempt them to opt for more freedom, which eventually they did, escaping from an inward-looking narrow world to become the skilled physicians, scholars and able administrators of areas such as Moorish-Arabic Spain in its golden age.

As for the attempt to halt "unlimited retribution" and concern for women, the behaviour of this same Alexander Jannaeus is one example of just how ineffective the Old Testament morality code was. One of the worst of the Hasmonean priest-kings, the retribution he meted out to his opponents (Sadducees) was to have 800 of them crucified in Jerusalem and not content with that he had their wives and children slaughtered before their eyes. Here was a strange lack of concern for the moral code and helpless women.

Freethinkers and secular humanists under the Christian or any other religious yoke mentioned by Mr Samuel, are not known to me. But I am familiar with those National Secular Society members campaigning against religious instruction in schools, the divisive influence of which has caused so much conflict and bloodshed and for which both the Old and New Testament teaching must bear a heavy responsibility.

ELIZABETH COLLINS.