

## YAHYA KHAN SAYS GOD IS ON PAKISTAN'S SIDE

"God is with us in our mission . . . As 120 million *mujahids* (warriors of Islam) you will receive God's help and your hearts pulsate with the love of Islam's prophet . . . God is with us". These phrases, variations of which have been used throughout history to announce similar holocausts, come from President Yahya Khan's announcement to the people of Pakistan that their country is involved in a full-scale war with India. There may yet be time to avert a catastrophe on the sub-continent, but the anti-democratic policies of the rulers of West Pakistan and the murderous behaviour of the army combined with religious fanaticism does not encourage feelings of optimism. Their atrocities against the people of East Bengal, which resulted in ten million of them seeking refuge in India, caused concern throughout the world. But, in the words of Mrs Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, "governments seem morally and politically paralysed".

### A Religious State

If foreign governments were not able—and in some cases not prepared—to exert their influence on the West Pakistan Government when it suppressed and deprived the people of East Bengal of their freedom and slaughtered hundreds of thousands, it is unlikely they will be able to prevent it from plunging the entire sub-continent into a state of total and indefinite war.

The State of Pakistan was born out of religious fanaticism. It was argued that Muslims would be at the mercy of the Hindu majority in a united India. In fact East Pakistan has been treated as an inferior by the government, and when the people voted solidly for those candidates who favoured autonomy the election results were annulled their leaders murdered or imprisoned, and the Muslim people savagely attacked by their co-religionists.

The influx of millions of refugees imposed an intolerable strain on India who had not recovered from floods and other natural disasters which had ruined crops, land and thousands of villages. But, despite her own problems, India gave all possible help to the refugees. Although this was supplemented by foreign aid it was India who had to provide most of the food and shelter, always risking major epidemics and possible conflict between her own citizens and the refugees.

The Pakistan Government's pleas to the refugees to return home fell, for the most part, on deaf ears. Support for the Bengla Desh cause was growing, and a guerilla army had emerged. Yahya Kahn's government, pressurised by the militarists and militant Muslims, recklessly escalated the conflict in an attempt to maintain dominance of the eastern section of the country and control of India's western frontier.

### The Rights of East Bengal

Other countries will become involved in this war if it continues for even a short time. So it is imperative that firm and realistic action is taken. It is pointless to talk about sending in a United Nations observer force between the two armies. This would simply provide West Pakistan

with a shield under which she would continue her aggression against East Bengal. Those countries which are seriously concerned about the establishment of peace and justice must, even at this thirteenth hour, spell out to Yahya Khan that he must recognise the validity of the election held in December, 1970, and abide by the result; Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman must be released; the elected leaders of East Bengal should be allowed to meet as a constituent assembly. Failure to accept these terms will lead to recognition of Bangla Desh.

Action of this kind would isolate West Pakistan's military rulers, and give them one more chance to come to terms with the situation.

## BREEDING GROUND FOR HATRED

Stuart Maclure, editor of *The Times Educational Supplement*, was one of a party of London educational journalists who recently visited Northern Ireland. His report indicates that the school community in the province is no longer a haven of peace and stability—if it ever was. Although it would have been pleasant to report that the schools were making some significant contribution to social peace and harmony, Mr Maclure stated bluntly that this was not the case. One of the reasons for this is that the Roman Catholics see no reason to alter their educational policies, "which are rooted in Catholic teaching and encapsulated in papal encyclicals".

Mr Maclure says that this, humanly speaking, is quite understandable. "A Roman Catholic school is a powerful agent for the propagation and defence of the faith. The impression which an outsider carries away from a visit to one of the Catholic schools is likely to be of the almost overpowering presence of Holy Church within the school, the ubiquitous portraits of his Holiness, the slogans on the walls urging moral and pietistic heroism, the notice boards covered with announcements about religious or social activities.

(Continued at foot of next page)

## SEXUAL MYTHOLOGY

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

This article is based on a lecture given in London on 3 December under the auspices of the National Secular Society and the "Freethinker".

The relationship between sex and superstition is as old as supernaturalism itself. To the primitive mind, every aspect of life was shot through with supernaturalism. Given the strength of the sexual urge and the need to reproduce, it is not at all surprising that sex should have come to play a large part in religious rites and ceremonies. What more obvious than that the gods and demons would need to be propitiated and flattered by charms and ceremonies? And once a god of fertility, or spirit of fecundity, is recognised, perhaps associated with a mother-earth goddess, then what could be considered more pleasing as an offering than sex itself? This explains not only the discovery of sexual rites and symbolism in the religious practices of early civilisations, but also their continuance under Christianity and their survival into this century.

Christianity dealt with many of the pagan practices by assimilating them and providing outlets under Christian auspices. For example, phallic worship was absorbed by the fostering of phallic saints. But Christianity's main contribution to sexual mythology was not the fostering of the old sexual rites, but its attempt to suppress sexual activity. Early Christianity adopted the Persian doctrine that the end of the world was at hand, and this belief encouraged the early Christians to lead ascetic lives. Indeed in many cases this personal asceticism was extended from self-denial to self-mutilation and so to self-mutilation. Many castrated themselves, others applied hot irons to their bodies, or bound their flesh with chains or ropes so as to produce maggot-infested putrefactions. In such cases it is not difficult to see evidence of masochistic impulses.

Christianity was in large part a campaign against sex-pleasure. Its thesis was that sex was an evil, only made into a necessary evil by the need to propagate the human race, and the feeling which accompanies the act was to be avoided. This attitude enabled the church to make a series of regulations concerning sexual behaviour, and strict penalties were devised for every possible sexual misdeed. In their detection and suppression of sexuality, the church was assisted by the confessional. Confession required penitents to inform their confessors, in detail, of any deviation from the extremely straight and narrow path of virtue, and to avoid the possibility of concealment or forgetfulness on the part of the penitent, the confessors were instructed to ask about sexual sins even if none were mentioned.

### Saintliness or Sorcery

Of course the faithful were understandably reluctant to adopt a virtuous way of life whilst their priest openly enjoyed the forbidden pleasures, and so for this and other reasons the Church sought to impose a celibate life on their clergy. The priests and nuns, however, resisted and evaded the regulations to such a degree that their sexual licence became a common-place. Even in those cases where monks and nuns adopted a celibate existence, the result was sexual fantasies and neuroses of a most bizarre kind—the Church authorities welcomed these cases and viewed

such manifestations of sexual pathology as evidences of piety. In the common people, however, the Church considered sexual fantasies not signs of saintliness but manifestations of sorcery. The unconscious aim if not the deliberate intention of the witchcraft persecutions seems to have been the control of sexual fantasies. A similar intention may be seen in our obscenity laws.

The sexual "sin" which has been condemned more than any other is "masturbation". But at about the beginning of the last century, self-stimulation ceased to be thought of as merely a sexual sin and came to be considered a specific cause of mental and physical decay. From then on the Church did not need to rely on the pulpit and the confessional to spread the idea that self-stimulation was an evil. Alex Comfort in his book *The Anxiety Makers* has collected numerous examples of doctors teaching that self-stimulation causes blindness, impotence, senility, and so on. Today we know that masturbation is normal and harmless. But still writers of advice for the young are preaching the Christian myth about the evils of masturbation—as Maurice Hill and I showed in *Sex Education: The Erroneous Zone*.

Another area in which Christian sexual mythology has had consequences right down to the present day is contraception. From the view that the only legitimate purpose of sex is procreation, it was logically deduced that any means of inhibiting or preventing conception was a sin. It is therefore not surprising that all the pioneering work in this area was done by freethinkers, in the face of fierce opposition from the Catholic and Protestant churches.

Homosexuality is another aspect of sexuality which has been bitterly condemned by the Christian Church. Today society's attitude towards homosexuals is more tolerant than it was, but there is considerable need for improvement—both in the law and in social attitudes. Of course social attitudes are only likely to be changed by education, but it seems that what sex education does take place in schools is designed to inculcate the old Christian myths. Facts are the antidote to superstitions, but until we have honest sex education in our schools, people will continue to base their sexual morality not on facts but on mythology.

(Continued from front page)

"How can the Roman Catholics be expected to surrender this vast machine for the preservation of communal identity among the impressionable young? Anyway the link between Catholicism and nationalism is too close to make this imaginable—unless Christian conviction could transcend nationalism and ecclesiastical self-interest. Unfortunately it does not or cannot. So it all has to go on, with the public religion of Christians of all denominations contributing to the scandal of disunity and hate, instead of working against it."

Non-Catholic schools in Northern Ireland are, in many cases, a breeding ground for evangelical Protestantism. The folk heroes of these establishments are Jesus Christ, William of Orange and Ian Paisley. Thus both Catholic and Protestant children are indoctrinated and segregated from the cradle. And the harvest is now being reaped.

Religion is such a comfort.

## WAR ON WAR

DAVID TRIBE

Did those readers who can remember 1910 and 1927 notice anything unusual about them? They were the only years of universal peace this century. This interesting if melancholy fact was brought out by M. le President Jules Moch, a former Premier of France, in one of the closing speeches at a recent conference in Conway Hall, London, on *Nuclear Weapons—Political and Military Dangers of the Arms Race*. It was convened by an International Continuing Committee under the chairmanship of Philip Noel-Baker, a former Nobel Peace Prizewinner, and including the indefatigable secularist, Kathleen Tacchi-Morris. Representatives came from all over the world; encouragingly, from the two Germanies.

Conferences of this sort, like actual disarmament negotiations, are, as Jules Moch observed, "almost as ancient as war and hence as man, but have never led to very positive results". They have also tended to be bedevilled by religious and political factionalism. Though I was unable to attend all the sessions there did not, on this occasion, appear to be any delegates urging us all to the feet of Him Who is the Prince of Peace. Among the "friendly institutions" with which contacts were proposed were however "church leaders and local churchmen", whom an objective analysis might show to be on the whole as divided between hawks and doves as any other section of the community and in certain cases notably hawklike. Nor am I aware of any evidence for the glib assumption which recurred throughout the conference that women and young people are more devoted to the cause of peace than men and older people. Really "old people (pensioners)" are also named among the goodies. It appears that people mysteriously become bad only during the years of their prime. Another feature that added an air of unreality to the proceedings was a fair proportion of gratuitous Marxist propaganda. Three years after the invasion of Czechoslovakia and with China and the Soviet Union on the brink of war, the socialist world is hardly in a position to adopt a holier-than-thou position. If one condones these actions on the grounds of good intentions, however misplaced ("to defend socialism and its acquisitions", as a GDR delegate put it), then it seems a little hard to dismiss American policy as simply "arming to conquer and dominate the world".

### The Role of the Media

A major complaint was at the failure of the media to publicise this and similar events, and it is true that "news" is increasingly being seen as the special prerogative of television and that this medium increasingly goes for the visual (as its name implies), the trendy and the trivial. Not only disarmament conferences but other conferences that discuss serious subjects seriously and do not end in a punch-up (there was a time when a slanging match sufficed to attract attention, but something more spectacular is now needed) find themselves ignored. At the same time I think the peace movement should give more attention than it usually does—admittedly *some* attempt was made on this occasion to look at *some* of these points—to a series of propositions that I believe a number of "ordinary people" people feel about war and peace: (1) with the possible exception of activities involving slave states and the feudal system most wars throughout history have been popular;

(2) brainwashing by the ruling classes is only one factor, sometimes a small one and even a restraining influence; (3) wars are not usually "irrational" in any meaningful sense of that word; people feel there is no other way to safeguard their basic interests; (4) wars give a boost to scientific research and technological innovation; (5) under cover of war major political changes often occur (e.g. the collapse of empires and monarchies; probably the success of the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, and certainly those in Eastern Europe, are attributable to this cause); (6) any one who remembers or who has read about the interwar years in Europe fears that unilateral disarmament merely encourages aggressors; (7) there is no world unanimity over which are the real aggressor nations in contemporary encounters, much less in long-term strategy; (8) at a time of economic recession people fear, whether or not they are justified, that disarmament will mean, at least in the short term, fewer jobs; (9) the slump in world metal prices and depression in mining, metallurgy and engineering industries may be plausibly related to America's phased disengagement from South-East Asia; (10) under all systems of government it is politically easier to get big budgets for military rather than social service expenditure; (11) the Great Deterrent has in fact deterred. In other words, wars are not waged because a handful of warlords or munitions manufacturers manipulate entire populations, and disarmament propaganda has to be, on the whole, a good deal more sophisticated than it has hitherto been.

### Constructive Suggestions

That said, doubtless to the indignant protests of most *Freethinker* readers, I can record that this conference was able to point to encouraging signs like the admission of China to the United Nations and to make constructive suggestions. Apart from heart-warming but hardly central proposals like the establishment of a Philip Noel-Baker Peace Centre and a Chair in Peace Research in memory of Bertrand Russell, J. D. Bernal and Dame Kathleen Lonsdale (which Bradford University has in mind), a reintegrated system of disarmament committees and commissions, in which China and France would be encouraged to play their full role, was outlined, while the United Nations Secretariat was urged to concentrate on this and not simply on fringe issues. With "overkill" already achieved, the "deterrent" effect of continued armaments is lost. Not only are they using resources which should go to the developing world, many of the arms are themselves going there and thus encouraging "brushwood fires" while the nuclear holocaust is in cold storage. For UN influence to be effective, however, confidence must be restored in the organisation itself.

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By DAVID TRIBE

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The *Freethinker* is obtainable at the following addresses. **London:** Collets, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N1; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), E1; Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, N1; Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC2; Freethinker officer, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. **Glasgow:** Clyde Books, 292 High Street. **Brighton:** Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road, (near Brighton Station).

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

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## EVENTS

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.

Eastbourne Humanist, Group, The New Hotel, Eastbourne, Saturday, 18 December, 7 p.m. for 7.15 p.m. Annual Dinner. Tickets £1.40.

Humanist Holidays. Details of future activities from Marjorie Mopham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone: 01-642 8796.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, 12 December, 6.30 p.m. Father F. X. Harriott (Society of Jesus): "The Church and Development".

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 12 December, 11 a.m. John Wren-Lewis: "What Shall we Tell the Children?" Tuesday, 14 December, 7 p.m. Judith Colne: "Future Shock".

# NEWS

## ANOTHER PRESSURE GROUP

The name of Lady Lothian may soon be as familiar as those of the other crusading damsels, Mary Whitehouse and Lady Birdwood, whose efforts to protect other people's morals have turned them into national figures. Lady Lothian, a Roman Catholic, is chairman of an organisation known as the Order of Christian Unity which has just sent 2,000 letters to members of both houses of Parliament asking how they stand on such questions as school religion, divorce and religious broadcasting.

The Order was formed 15 years ago, but until the present time has been content to work behind the scenes. Now it intends to add its misty beam to the festival of twilight, and a membership drive will be launched after Christmas. It claims that all the major Christian denominations are included in its membership.

Lady Lothian told a Press conference in London that pressure against "Christian education" in schools will increase, as will the campaign to legalise euthanasia. The Order would be concentrating its attention on Parliament: "There are very powerful pressure groups in Parliament, and more changes are being planned by such groups".

The humanist movement and civil liberty organisations which are campaigning for social reform and wish to defend the gains made during the last decade, should note the proliferation of organisations like the OCU. They have their share of naïve fundamentalists, but there are also shrewd and wealthy supporters who are determined to frighten the politicians against supporting new reforms.

In this situation the humanist movement must speak out clearly on social questions even at the risk of upsetting the ecumenical elements who prefer to chat with bishops. Our resources and personnel are limited, whereas the religionists are well-heeled and still entrenched in education, broadcasting and government.

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The Clarence, Whitehall, London, SW1

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## PUBLIC LECTURES

Friday, 17 December, 8 p.m.

R. J. CONDON

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# S AND NOTES

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

In the nineteenth century and for part of the twentieth, journals tended to be imperishably associated with their editors. Imperishably in an historical sense, for they often perished physically when their editors did. If today this close relationship does not survive, it should not be regarded as a sign of journalistic disintegration but of a new form of vitality. Personnel may change but the imprints linger on.

There will nevertheless be universal regret among readers that after all too short a period in the editorial chair Bill McLroy is leaving it at the end of this year. To this position he has brought a lively news sense, humour or denunciation as the occasion demanded, and unswerving devotion to the great traditions of the *Freethinker* and of world freethought. Happily he is not leaving the movement but is returning to his old job as general secretary of the National Secular Society, of which he is also a vice-president. What is the paper's loss is the Society's gain, just as some eighteen months ago the position was reversed. And as the paper was then enriched by the many contacts he had made and fraternal links he had forged while general secretary, so the Society—and his successor—will benefit from the friends he made and the publicity he gained while he was editor. I doubt if there has been any other period in the *Freethinker's* history which can boast of so many distinguished contributors and so many references to and quotations from the paper in the other media. Though now out of the editorial limelight he will continue, as secretary of the publishing companies, to play an active role in directing the paper's affairs.

Happily Bill McLroy's successor is another old friend of the paper and of the whole humanist movement. Nigel Sinnott has been chairman of the London Young Humanists and has worked for South Place Ethical Society. For some years he has been on the executive of the National Secular Society and he recently founded and became honorary organiser of the Freethought History and Bibliography Society. *Freethinker* readers know him as a scholarly and pungent writer on Irish history, John Allegro, Charles Bradlaugh and many other subjects. Originally educated in biology (he was a botanist at Kew Gardens) and now turning to history, he is admirably placed to bridge the gap between the "two cultures" that is one of the great problems of our increasingly specialised world. I am sure that all readers will join with me in wishing him every success in his new appointment and doing whatever we can to assist him in his stimulating but exacting duties.

One of the most important of these duties at a time of economic uncertainty and rising prices is to increase the circulation of the paper. Such intellectual and polemical riches deserve to be immeasurably better known. We must not hoard them but should be generous in sharing them with others. If every subscriber would undertake to introduce just one new reader every year our circulation would double annually. Small publications cannot afford lavish

advertising campaigns and rely largely on word-of-mouth contacts to expand, or simply to maintain, their distribution. Remember, the *Freethinker* is the only freethought-humanist weekly in the world. That alone gives it a unique claim on our support. Let us all rise to the challenge.

DAVID TRIBE,

Chairman of Secular Society Ltd. and  
G. W. Foote & Co.

## LIFE AND LITERATURE

PAUL ROM

People of various religious denominations may find that their professional minister does, or does not, correspond to the ideal they have of such a person; most of us will have met, or will know, a teacher, a psychologist, or a physician whom we find to be a representative of his profession and for whom we can have equal admiration and love.

Reading Albert Camus' *The Plague* (1947), may raise our enthusiasm for the indefatigable physician Dr Bernard Rieux. Though an unbeliever, he succeeds in getting a priest (who first preached that the plague was a punishment sent by God) to help reducing its misery more efficiently on the lines of modern hygiene and medical science.

One meets another fine physician in chapter one of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* (1968).

Innokenty remembered Doctor Dobroumov from his childhood! This was before Dobroumov was famous, before he was sent on delegations abroad, before he was even talked about as a scientist—he was simply the family doctor whom Innokenty's mother always called in. She was often ill, and she trusted no one else. The moment Droboumov arrived and took off his beaver hat in the hall, the whole flat seemed to fill with an atmosphere of kindness, reassurance, confidence. He would never spend less than half an hour by her bedside. He went painstakingly into every symptom, he examined the patient as though he had all the time in the world and explained every detail of the treatment. Nor, on his way out, would he ever pass the small boy without stopping, asking him something or other, and gravely waiting for the answer as though he genuinely expected it to be intelligent and important . . . Like all gifted men he was generous. A gifted man is conscious of his wealth and yet ready to share it.

In reading this passage, those who know the life and work of Alfred Adler may also think of him. He often recommended reading Dostoevsky in order to increase one's understanding of human behaviour; were he still alive he might also recommend reading this novel both to enjoy a masterpiece of literature and to increase one's psychological insight. Solzhenitsyn is a sublime humanistic poet. His work extends the reader's knowledge and understanding of unique and concrete human beings; who in this case are political prisoners, employed in a Stalinist "special prison", a technological research establishment.

The title of the novel refers to *Dante's Inferno*: in his "first circle of hell", there are ancient sages and poets who, having not been good Christians, they had to take their not being common sinners, were free from torture; but placed in Hell.

## BOOKS

### A WEDDING MAN IS NICER THAN CATS, MISS

by Rachel Scott. David and Charles, £1.95

There's a tacitly agreed limit, in our family, to the amount of reading aloud we do to each other. "You *must* listen to this!" Frowns and sighs—even tightenings of lips, as people look up from their own books, newspapers, knitting, guitars, washtubs and so on. Over the years we've built up a sense of the grave danger of overdoing it. But I threw all caution to the winds when reading Rachel Scott's book: and knew it was perfectly safe to do so. It's the funniest book on a serious subject that I've read for a long time. And the fun is entirely legitimate, and immensely valuable.

Rachel Scott ran a Special English Department for immigrant children in the West Riding. Mostly they were Indians and Pakistanis. As the author says, an outsider might suppose that language is the great problem in such work. In fact, it's the least of all the difficulties: far outweighed by such problems as arose from the constant flow of new arrivals. "In May, June and July, a time of year when an ordinary school admits only the occasional newcomer, we took in over ninety children, and in 1967 the wall graph on which entries were recorded vanished clean through the ceiling . . . In every week of the following school year five more, perhaps even ten or fifteen, had somehow to be squeezed in". Some were suffering from the acutest form of cultural shock: from a village in India or Pakistan to the streets of a Yorkshire mill town is a distance between planets rather than continents.

Then there was the problem of time. We hardly know in the West how bullied we are by the clock, and how untypical this is of most human outlooks. "Play time, milk time, dinner time, home time . . ." The children didn't know which was which, and were terrified of doing the wrong thing. They wore clothes of a flimsy colourfulness that was out of tune with the Yorkshire climate and with English taste. "Looking back on our numerous bans and prohibitions I realise now what a dismal, dowdy lot we must have seemed in our sober tweeds and cardigans . . ." Then there was the problem of names. "There were always squads of children with exactly the same name. Like Homer and the Welsh before us, we resorted to epithets, and just as they had their swift-footed Achilles, their Jones the Fish and Morgan the Meat, we had our Worried Banso and Laughing Banso, our Fat Banso and Thin Banso, our Tidy and Scruffy Amriks . . .".

Rachel Scott and her colleagues were, in this department as in others, far more intelligent and imaginative than bureaucracy: which was "shattered. SURNAME their forms demanded uncompromisingly, and surnames there had to be". And to this vast and beautiful confusion of names ("Sishila, Shamuna, Shahida, Shafreen . . . My register was like a page from the *Arabian Nights*") was added something like anarchy in the matter of dates of birth. Akhtar, officially eleven, had "a 40in chest and was 5ft 8in tall, with a deep baritone voice and the beginning of a moustache". There were tiny tots who were "legally recorded as eight or even eleven, but whose whole physique, mode of play and general behaviour were those of a child of four, or even three". But officially they were of school age

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and had to be admitted. Some "could hardly climb on to a chair . . . and preferred to pursue their education from underneath it, attracting teacher's attention by tweaking her ankle as she passed". These major problems branched out into others, most resting on cultural dissimilarities that were beyond rational reconciliation. What was needed was patience, guile, love, and a durable sense of humour.

Rachel Scott's Special English Department had all these: in the matter, for example, of English food—found quite nauseous. Or in the matter of medical examinations. "Nurse was a hearty West Indian, with no time to spare for Muslim inhibitions. 'Vest up!' she would say briskly, whipping it smartly into position. The terrified girl immediately pulled it down again, and so the battle went on, with the vest flicking up and down like a roller blind, and the doctor . . . waiting, stethoscope at the ready, for the appropriate site to be revealed".

Much of the book is devoted to an account of such problems: of the great headaches and hilarities of a mutual incomprehension that was outside the previous experience of the teachers. It's inevitably funny, and inevitably sad: there were many tears and terrors—many cases of children being simply and awfully lost in the bewildering streets: their mothers not having come to look for them because they, too, were often simply bemused by their new environment. It adds up to an important statement, in terms of memorable anecdote, about the complexities of bringing about anything like multi-racial ease. Here and there Miss Scott makes room for a telling general point. "It is a common accusation that immigrants sponge on and abuse the welfare services, yet between 1964 and 1967 the Welfare Officer did not receive a single application for free meals, footwear or clothing for Indian or Pakistani children." The author, who was drawn deeply into the Indian and Pakistani communities (there's a memorable account of a Muslim wedding in an old worn milltown terrace house), looks with cautious hope to a future when the most abrasive differences might have been smoothed away. But it's not in any role as prophet that her importance lies—and that of her work. It's in her clear observation, her delight in human conduct—and certainly, in her account of the way, in these near-impossible conditions, she and her colleagues set about schooling their charges so that the children were ready to move on to other schools.

The teachers had to make headway against the puzzlement and even scorn of some of their Asian colleagues and of many of the children themselves: all "shocked by the lively activity methods of an English primary school". There were lessons in anatomy, and Asian teachers (and a parent or two) were horrified to observe children actually searching for veins (or "weins", as they called them) under each other's skin. "Weins" in Asia were in textbooks, not in human beings, and the modern approach to learning . . . was mistaken for slackness and lack of discipline". The teaching consisted almost wholly of projects "based upon the children's immediate needs": so they conducted everyday dialogues, played at shopping, eating in cafés, travelling, being lost in the street. They went to imaginary doctors, and to a real railway station and a real police station ("where they were impressed, not so much by the

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majesty of the law, as by its sanitary arrangements. The provision of a lavatory, 'A little laverterry!' they exclaimed delightedly, in every cell, seemed to them such . . . a gesture of goodwill towards the inmates, that it drove every other aspect of the visit clean out of their heads").

A hundred tiny unstressed points in Rachel Scott's account of this teaching make clear how good it was. As Sybil Marshall says in her introduction, much of it is closely relevant to the better teaching of English children. Some teachers will take a silent sardonic pleasure in the fact that the ordinary English primers and first readers were, once again, found horribly inadequate. They will delight, too, in Rachel Scott's way with the problem of swearing. "I was forced to recognise the need for an expletive of some kind, and consulted the experts in Junior 4. 'Blooming heck!' they the advised unanimously." That was better, says Rachel Scott, than the four-letter word "so constantly on the lips of even the most innocent, and which became such a feature of our lives that we were often tempted to correct its mispronunciation . . ."

And, of course, there was one final, grossly bedevilling problem: that of religion. It's an irony that again many teachers will appreciate, that Rachel Scott's children found it fearfully difficult to distinguish, in school, between a ticking-off and a prayer. "Seeing the dinner mistress grave and stern, interpreting her solemn warning as a call to devotion, the infants would bow their heads, screw up their eyes and put their hands together in the belief that grace was being said." A forgivable confusion! "They prayed earnestly through many a wiggling and must have formed a strange idea both of us and of God." Their own religious angers and distresses, as between Hindu and Moslem (shading into rages of Indian versus Pakistani—so that one child refused the term "Red Indian hat": it was a "Red Pakistani hat", he insisted)—these imported means by which human beings reject other human beings were, in some ways, the most untranslatable form of foreignness the children brought with them. In a Chinese puzzle of prejudices, these were the darker ones. Coming away from that wedding, Rachel Scott had caught a glimpse of the hooded figure of the wife of a visiting Muslim dignitary: "I shuddered in the July sunshine". At times, she looked down "a vista of theological argument too exhausting to contemplate".

But this is such a hopeful book—because it's an account of such a substantial piece of good, sensible teaching in this difficult context: and because it simply radiates a kind of delight even in the worst dilemmas and difficulties. And truly, the comedy within the sadness is so sweet and true. In the matter, as one more example, of the distress of the infants because their "Miss" was single.

"Puzzled and unhapy, they discussed the matter endlessly amongst themselves. She was not in any way deformed, she had the requisite number of arms and legs, her breath was sweet, especially when they had plied her with pumpkin seeds, and she was not noticeably ill-favoured—but she had no husband . . . An inadequate dowry, they decided could be the only reason for her plight . . . In all their young lives they had never met or

heard of an unmarried woman who lived alone . . . and were not comforted when she told them that she had two lovely cats to keep her company. Little Sharifa came next day with an old brass curtain ring, and pushed it on her finger. 'A wedding man', she said firmly, 'is nicer than cats, Miss'."

EDWARD BLISHEN

## THE GLADSTONES: A FAMILY BIOGRAPHY, 1764-1851 by S. G. Checkland

Cambridge University Press, £5.00

The remoteness of the Victorian age from the problems of our own times, may well be more apparent than real. At any rate, it would be foolish to suggest that the record and the outlook of Gladstone, as the great creator of the Liberal Party can be dismissed or discarded, despite his intense and constant religious pre-occupations. However one may react to Gladstone's ultimate belief in the guidance and will of God, as the dominant factor in politics, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that his was a stature which one misses amongst our contemporary politicians.

There is no lack of adequate biographies of Gladstone: one can think at once of Sir Philip Magnus's book (1954), J. L. Hammond's *Gladstone and the Irish Nation* (1938), John Morley's *Life* (1903), Herbert Paul's potted biography in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (First Supplement, Vol. 2, 1901, pp. 280-329), and the article on Gladstone in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (edition of 1970, Vol. 10, pp. 442-6). But Gladstone, as the national leader, was only the product and the result of a solid phalanx of background factors, which it is no waste of time to study nowadays. Gladstone's relations with his wife Catherine (1812-1900), daughter of Sir Stephen Glynne of Hawarden, whom he married in 1839—were always ideal and revelatory, a model of the "Victorian family". We learn much about them from A. Tilney Bassett's selection of their correspondence (1936); but it is not a topic which can be, or should be, closed. Even less explored, so far, has been the story of Gladstone's debt, to his father, the rather formidable Sir John Gladstone (1764-1851).

Yet both of those are very important and significant themes whose scrupulous pursuit is perhaps more necessary now than any further investigation of the better known aspects of Gladstone's public career. Perhaps especially in these times of shaken faith in the Victorian notions of family life, it is valuable to recollect the influence of Mrs Gladstone, "a woman of frail and luminous beauty, and intense piety", according to Professor Checkland's monumental new book, *The Gladstones*. Here he offers us with a wealth of authentic detail, a picture of Gladstone's domestic and personal background; together with his wife and six children, Gladstone presents a "bourgeois" image, but in the end one is left with the question whether his contribution to the nation's history became any the worse for that. Sir John Gladstone, too, emerges from this book as a strong and resolute figure, prominent for good in the politics and philanthropy of Liverpool. It is necessary and quite timely to resurrect him, despite the greater fame of his son.

(Continued on back page)

## LETTERS

### Not Proven

In his review of Koestler's book about Paul Kammerer (*Freethinker*, 27 November), Robert W. Morrell seeks to validate the Stalinist doctrine of genetics.

The distinguished Nobel Prize geneticist, Professor H. J. Muller, for example, has described how, in 1940, another renowned geneticist, Vavilov, was sent to a labour camp and supplanted by Lysenko who resurrected in Russia, Lamarck's theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics. Muller shows how the Communists have created conditions inimical to freethought, and regard as a threat any concept that does not fit into their schemes. He explains how Lysenko offered a return to pre-Darwinian days that had been all but forgotten by modern biologists and that Lysenkoism must be termed as much a superstition as the belief that the earth is flat.

Leading biologists agree that no known experiments performed to demonstrate the inheritance of acquired characters have been validated (see, for instance, Dobzhansky, *Mankind Evolving*; and Moody, *Introduction to Evolution*). It is hardly to be expected, therefore, that Julian Huxley should apologise for his statements. As Professor C. H. Waddington said at the Alpbach Symposium organised by Koestler in 1968, there is nothing wrong with Lamarck's idea about evolution, except that it does not actually happen. Our new knowledge of the molecular basis of genetics makes it even less likely that Lamarckian mechanisms could operate.

J. JUDEX.

### Sex and Drugs

Charles Byass lives up to his name (*Freethinker*, 27 November). He moralises. He says that there are "distortions" of sex; he speaks of a "healthy state of . . . mind" in connection with sexual matters; he suggests that the offer of sex as an impersonal "thing" is "unhealthy"; he proposes the tautology that "impersonal . . . things" . . . "oppose" . . . "personality"; he implies outright condemnation of those things which "oppose" . . . "personality" and has no time for those who have sex without caring about it or those who have sex with themselves. His moralism is as objectionable as a vulgar theology and as specious. He should mind his own business.

Further, some drugs produce states of being not to be acquired in other ways. The acquisition of these states of being (by drugs) certainly does *not* imply that they are derived from an "unhealthy" initial condition.

PHILLIP HODSON.

### Marxist Failure

I'm sorry that my review of David Tribe's pamphlet caused Trevor Morgan (*Freethinker*, 27 November) to break out in a froth. When he can say of my last paragraph that it was a "vertiginous inducing exit", which I suppose means that it made him giddy, the malady is severe indeed. But then Marxists never have believed in good clean English.

Mr Morgan, who has not read *The Open Society and its Friends*, knows it for a fact that my review was just a peg on which to hang my anti-Marxist prejudices. He condemns the "defects" of my reference to the Marxist pretensions of scientific method, without specifying what the defects are. He attributes to me positions I do not hold: that metaphysics and materialism are the same; that papal infallibility is to be "equated"—whatever that means—with "scientific hypotheses"; that—if I read him right—I'm just an incurable Tory (like, I suspect, most *Freethinker* readers, I vote Labour, too).

Mr Morgan seems not to know that Marxists really do proclaim that their approach is the only valid (because scientific) method of social, economic and historical analysis, and that the dialectic really does yield up the laws of progress, and that the whole tortuous process really will culminate in the communist utopia. The sheer lack of evidence for all this exceeds even the sheer lack of evidence for God. In fact, Marxism is the child of the optimism of the nineteenth century, which pitted against the discredited dogmas of the churches the faith that human reason and scientific method would combine to bring about a better society. (This is not to disparage scientific humanism as a way of life, but merely to point out, in passing, that Marxism is a faith, like any other faith.) So it was that Marx felt his theory had to be scientific. And

surely Mr Morgan is not so totally ignorant of the dialectic that he doesn't see that Marxism, if it worked, would fulfil liberalism by extending liberty and equality from the political to the economic sphere?

David Tribe pointed out some of the inadequacies of that favourite humanist concept, the "open society". My review tried to show the danger of substituting for religion a single-minded faith in a secular utopia, under the protective umbrella of an appealing myth like the open society. Mr Morgan's letter just illustrates the old adage "if you haven't got a case, then abuse the attorney".

PHILIP HINCHLIFF.

## FREETHINKER FUND

We extend our thanks to those readers who sent donations during November. Anonymous, £2; John L. Broom, 48p; J. G. Burden, 25p; A. Bradley, 70 p; Vera D. Brierley, £3.00; S. Clowes, 56p; W. V. Crees, 35p; W. R. Grant, 13p; P. Hinchliff, 50p; A. L. L. Howels, 35p; T. Miles Hill, 30p; D. Harper, £2.35; L. Hanger, 27p; Miss M. E. Jadison, 15p; N. Leverett, £1.00; P. C. Lumsden, £1.00; D. J. McConalogue, £1.45; Mrs M. O. Morley, 45p; P. J. McCormick, 25p; R. McGarry, 13p; J. McCorrisken, 50p; E. Pettit, 50p; W. C. Parry, 34p; G. D. Rodger, £1.45; R. M. Roberts, £1.00; F. G. Shaw, 45p; Miss W. L. C. Sargent, £5.00; Mrs L. Van Duren, 25p; E. Wakefield, 12p; L. B. Walker, £5.00. Already acknowledged: £180.49. Total to date £210.77.

(Continued from Previous page)

Professor Checkland has shown that the huge resources of the Gladstone family papers, whether at Hawarden or in the British Museum, still contain the materials for important books. He has produced one of great significance and scholarship, a model of its kind, which makes a large contribution to our knowledge and understanding of Gladstone. It was a task which he has carried out with admirable thoroughness and dedication.

Moreover, regardless of one's own religious beliefs, or lack of them, it is impossible to read or to write anything about Gladstone without becoming affected by the grandeur of his moral earnestness. *The Gladstones* exudes that austere elevation of character and aim, and it would be a hasty assumption that such attitudes have no relevance for the conditions and the problems of our own times. At least one can still accept the validity of Gladstone's alliance, between morality and politics; and it is useful, too, in these days, to be here reminded that wealth and privilege could find their place in the creation of a fairer society, in the context of the experience of Victorian England.

ERIC GLASGOW

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