

# The FREETHINKER

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3p

## NATIONAL BIRTH CONTROL SERVICE PROPOSED

There is an immense need for wider birth control provision in Britain today, and the only realistic way of meeting it is to provide an integrated and comprehensive birth control service both to administer and to provide contraception, voluntary sterilisation, and abortion within the framework of a re-organised National Health Service. This is the main message of a report entitled *A Birth Control Plan for Britain*, published on 16 March by the Birth Control Campaign, an all-party pressure group set up in April of last year.

### Main Reasons for Increase

The Campaign, in its latest plan, gives four main reasons for proposing a considerable increase in the provision of contraception facilities: to tackle the problem of an estimated 300,000 unwanted pregnancies a year in Britain, many of them ending in abortions; to slow down the rate of population increase, which is already a problem in the southern parts of the country; to reduce the burden of welfare and other community support for the children resulting from unwanted pregnancies; and finally to give more couples the emotional and financial stability associated with a planned family.

At present only about half of the 8 million women "at risk" are using a dependable form of contraception, and arrangements for voluntary sterilisation and abortion remain inadequate. Women who have just had abortions are not receiving appropriate contraceptive advice and are becoming pregnant again. Birth control provision also varies considerably in different areas, some providing excellent services (often in association with the Family Planning Association); but others having abysmally inadequate facilities.

The Birth Control Campaign's plan sets out, in detail, the organisation of a proposed national birth control service, and suggests, for example, that local health authority clinics should become family planning centres under the N.H.S. "Their present normally institutional character" should become "a more friendly, informal and neighbourhood atmosphere"; and the contraceptive pill should be freely available on N.H.S. prescriptions. The B.C.C. calls for the appointment of a family planning officer for each of the new Area Health Authorities, who would administer the birth control centres and domiciliary family planning services, and provide co-ordination and information for this aspect of the work of family doctors, hospitals, health visitors, midwives and social workers.

The plan stresses the need for large-scale spending on advertising and education (more than a million pounds a year on birth control publicity). Without this the provision of services by themselves cannot be effective in reducing unwanted pregnancies and over-population. One proposal "that is likely to be controversial" is that there should be a Birth Control Advisory Unit with powers to visit Area

Health Authorities and submit reports to the Secretary of State about family planning services.

### "Ramshackle"

Introducing the plan, the Chairman of the Birth Control Campaign, Mr. Alastair Service, said: "The present birth control services in this country are like a ramshackle and unco-ordinated machine, with some parts working efficiently, others scarcely moving at all. The organisation outlined in this report could provide new machinery for present-day conditions: an integrated birth control service for everyone, supported by the necessary widespread publicity. The Birth Control Campaign believes that such a service can prevent the majority of unwanted pregnancies and bring us within reach of a stable population within a decade. In addition, although we cannot be precise at this stage, perhaps the most telling argument in favour of comprehensive birth control provision is the economic one . . . Something like £2,000 million could be saved in welfare and general social services expenditure in under twenty years if we can put an end to unwanted pregnancy."

Copies of *A Birth Control Campaign for Britain* are obtainable from the B.C.C. office, 233 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1P 9AE.

## FREETHINKERS ON THE AIR

On 14 March, the day the churches held an "Ecumenical Service of Intercession for Northern Ireland" David Tribe (a past President of the National Secular Society) took part in a radio confrontation with Norman St. John Stevas, M.P., in the programme, "P.M."

William McIlroy, the General Secretary of the N.S.S., took part in a debate the same day with the (Anglican) Bishop of Wakefield and Monsignor Michael Buckley on Yorkshire Television's "Calendar". Mr. McIlroy also appeared later that evening in an Ulster Television programme on the strength and influence of the churches in Northern Ireland.

We note that the safety of those taking part in the ecumenical service was ensured by the presence of a number of Special Branch men, rather than the intercession of the Almighty.

# THE WORLD MALAISE IN SPACE

R. READER

Few people to day would contend that this planet is not over-populated. Unfortunately, the acceptance of a general truth is not always the same thing as its detailed understanding. And in the case of over-population, the idea is still widespread that we have only to hit on the correct (but elusive) economic combination of political "system", production, distribution, prices and tariffs, for things automatically to fall into place. A few simple calculations, however, suffice to show the real position.

World population is a known and inescapable figure: at present it stands at about 3,000 million. Also inescapable is the fact that this population depends, for its continued survival, on the food (and other resources for supporting human life) produced by the surface of the earth. What is that surface? It is about 40 million square miles of *inhabitable* land. Certain regions, such as the Sahara Desert, could, theoretically, be irrigated to produce fertile land, but such a task would place a present burden on humanity larger by far than the benefits that would ultimately accrue.

Therefore, if we divide population by land area, assuming uniform distribution of population, 75 persons would be living on each square mile. That is, each person would have a square with sides of about 200 yards, or 40,000 square yards.

At first sight, this appears to be a lot of space. But now let us make the further assumption that world living resources are also uniformly distributed over the world's inhabitable land surface and crust. It now follows that all questions of distribution have been eliminated by our assumption, and the situation reduced to its simplest terms, namely that each 200 x 200 yards square must contain all the means of supporting the life of the person occupying it.

## The Familiar Case

Now let us consider what is, in fact, necessary for supporting human life, in terms of land area. Of course, the requirements vary with race, class, climate, and many other factors: therefore let us take the case that is familiar to us—that of the working class Englishman.

First, if we assume that four persons are living in a small house, we shall first need one-quarter of the surface on which that house stands for the housing needs of our hypothetical person on the 40,000 square yards. We shall need a small timber plantation for the wood necessary for building the quarter-house, and a quarter share of the furniture. A small orchard for supplying one person's yearly requirements of fruit—apples, oranges, pears, and so on. A farm for the animals to supply one person's meat requirements—a sheep, pig, hens, etc. We must have a small stream for water and fish. Space for growing small quantities of each of a dozen kinds of vegetables and cereals. Space for growing textile plants for clothing. One person's proportional share of a mine in coal, lead, tin, copper, etc.

Our 40,000 square yards are filling up alarmingly. But we have hardly got into our stride yet. Raw materials are only the fringe of requirements. Materials for building, clothes, and food all require a multitude of factories to process them. One person's proportional share of, say a biscuit factory, or electricity station, covers very little land

area, but so many factories are necessary that the total land area available is inadequate. But still requirements pour in.

All factories need machines, and all machines need other factories to make them. Space must be found for those factories also. And the aggregate of these demands deals a mortal blow to the space remaining.

Still further needs press upon us. Our hypothetical person still needs his proportional share of the world's highways, railways, shops, stores and places of recreation—all of which need further land surface.

Lastly—but not of least importance—sufficient space must be left for vegetation to supply the air to breathe and to retain the moisture in the soil.

Long before we have finished, it becomes starkly evident that an area of 40,000 square yards is hopelessly inadequate for our needs. Not even 100,000 square yards would suffice. And it is useless to envisage "improved distribution" as a solution because distribution has been completely eliminated at the outset by our assumptions.

## Possible Alternatives

The general conclusion can now be stated. *Total world population can never even remotely attain English standards of living.* Of course, total world population does not have the same needs as those of an English population, but the discrepancy everywhere between needs and space is now so enormous that all humanity is now having to forego certain of its needs. And, depending on which of the requirements is not met by our 40,000 square yards, we have one or other of the various aspects of the world malaise now confronting us.

Thus:

1. We can try to steal somebody else's square. This is war, which is always waged over territories, locally and internationally.

2. We can sacrifice vegetation to the other needs. This is pollution—much in the news just now.

3. We can build ever higher on a limited building area. This is overcrowding, alleviated temporarily by skyscraper flats and offices into which human beings are herded like cattle into stalls.

4. We can develop new techniques to increase food production from a given land area. This is the sacrifice of *quality to quantity*—and the fact still remains that three-quarters of the world population is unacquainted with regular square meals.

5. We can cramp our roads and transport, cramping ever more people into trains and buses, eliminating the least spry with road accidents, and destroying the countryside in order to build motorways which do not solve the problem, but only displace it.

How is mankind reacting to this situation? First, every country in the world is steadily increasing family allowances, tax rebates for children, advantages enjoyed by large families, etc. *Procreation everywhere is being State-subsidised.*

Next, in order to face the tremendous pressure of this new life being brought into the world, every politician of every country is preaching "economic expansion" to make even further demands upon inadequate space.

For this state of affairs—which is leading us straight to extinction—there is only one remedy; *renouncement of parenthood by the young* (insofar as they are the dominant section of the community)—even by those perfectly capable of having healthy children—until such time as total world population falls to a small fraction of its present size,

for any appreciable modification of the birthrate can only come as a result of their initiative. And this, ineluctably, entails searching investigations into a host of related problems—above all, the economic and financial consequences of effective birth control. At present, economic and financial considerations are being used as a yardstick with which to measure everything else. They must be relegated to their proper place now that we are faced with the inexorable imperatives of biology and the space/time framework of our earthly existence.

## THE DEATH OF CHRISTIANITY

ERIC GLASGOW

Most British readers will tend to associate David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74), the German Biblical critic, with the heroic dedication of the novelist George Eliot, whose translation of his *Life of Jesus* was published in 1846. That was ten years after its first appearance in German; but the English version remained faithful to the radical nature of the original, in that it rejected the historicity of all the supernatural elements in the Gospels, and claimed to interpret the story of Primitive Christianity in strictly rationalistic terms. Its author was a German scholar of immense stature and potential: a product of the University of Tubingen, and an Hegelian disciple at Berlin (1831). His *Leben Jesu* was his first major work, and it effectively set the pattern for all that he subsequently wrote relating to theology and Biblical studies. It represented the ultimate and devastating impact upon the old Biblical certainties of an important and crucial theme of German philosophy during the nineteenth century; and, as such, its repercussions were loud and significant, in England as well as in Germany. It was a work of great intellectual daring and courage, as well as of a consuming learning: it cost its author his Chair of Theology at Zurich, and the resulting furore (doubly disturbing for a scholar of depth and integrity) caused him to abandon theology for 20 years.

D. F. Strauss was an important and distinctive pioneer of the movements, a century later, for the liberation of the quest for knowledge and truth from the shackles of authority and tradition. Certainly, he sought earnestly and persistently for truth and enlightenment, regardless of the opposition of the inherited testimony, and he never deviated from the path to which he had been set, as a young student at Tubingen. That was creditable, no doubt, but it involved him also in some rather barren and frustrating pursuit of what could only become a sheer and soulless cul-de-sac. Sometimes, even in his later years, Strauss did permit himself the luxury of studies outside the range of the Bible: one such example was his *Voltaire* (1870), written whilst he lived at Darmstadt. But he was back again on his old theme of the rationalistic interpretation of the Bible with his last work, the important *Der alte und der neue Glaube*, in 1872.

So that book—which was published in England in 1873, under the title of *The Old Faith and the New*—attains its centenary in 1972. It is worth looking back at it, from the long interval in time, since it must still represent the apotheosis of the whole of the Biblical criticism of D. F. Strauss. "Essentially it rejects Christianity in favour of scientific materialism, and like all his critical works it suffered from his lack of critical study of the texts" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, edition of 1970, vol. 21: p. 305). Perhaps, as a pioneer effort, it was bound to exhibit just such characteristics and deficiencies. At any rate, it did effectively demonstrate the emotional overlay which, through the centuries, has been permitted to obscure the historical events related in the Bible, and so it exposed, for the studies of later generations, much new and often unexpected ground. Its publication dismayed many, even of those who were well-disposed towards Strauss himself: but that, in itself, may well be regarded as some eloquent tribute to both the originality and the audacity of his last, culminating book.

### Not permanently deterred

So it was that he retired to write about German literature, especially in its biographical aspects. Perhaps that was a sad fate for one whose mind and outlook were so essentially theological and philosophical: yet it is difficult to discover much future for any Biblical scholar who tries too resolutely and harshly to separate historical truth from myth, as John Allegro has lately proved, even in our own times. Nevertheless, D. F. Strauss could never be permanently deterred from the pursuits of his first love: he was back amongst theology, in 1864, with his *Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk*, which elaborated still further his demolitions of 1835-36. Christianity had to be subjected to the most thorough and unmitigated of criticisms until nothing remained of its supernatural character or pretensions. Jesus then emerged, as a figure of history, and as a moral teacher; but scarcely to be set apart from such other people as Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, or Mohammed. Theology, therefore, became scientific, and neither sentiment nor tradition could be permitted to stand in the path of the most rigorous pursuit of historical truth.

That is surely a position which is easily recognisable as preliminary to the more pervasive and acceptable scientific materialism of our own times. In that respect, therefore,

### The Issues of Truth and Knowledge

It is interesting to notice how the older books of reference receive *Der Alte und der Neue Glaube*. My 1906 edition of the *Nuttal Encyclopaedia* (edited by a clergyman) suggests that in it Strauss "openly repudiates the Christian religion, and assigns the sovereign authority in spiritual matters to science and its handmaid art". At the same time it dismisses all of his thesis as "a tissue of irrelevancies", so suggesting that Christianity emerges unscathed from its close and critical ordeal. Now, in 1972, that is a verdict

(Continued on back page)

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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, WC1; Freethinker Bookshop, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. Glasgow: Clyde Books, 292 High Street. Manchester: Grass Roots Bookshop, 271 Upper Brook Street, 13. 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.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

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

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

## 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.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Sunday, 26 March, 6.30 p.m.: Miss Gillian Hawtin, "Is History Important?"

London Young Humanists. Sunday, 26 March, 2.30 p.m.: visit to Department of Ethnography, Burlington House, 6 Burlington Gardens, London W1 (meet inside entrance).

National Secular Society, The Clarence, Whitehall, London SW1. Friday, 31 March, 8 p.m.: David Tribe, "The Decline of the Intellectual".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 26 March, 11 a.m.: Grahame Greene, "T. F. Evans"; 3 p.m.: Brian Youngs, "Fringe Medicine". Tuesday, 28 March, 7 p.m.: Dr. Martin Bax, "Doctors and the Prevention of War".

Worthing Humanist Group, Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday, 26 March, 5.30 p.m.: a humanist symposium.

# NEWS

"When the Queen came to London, a few weeks ago, one of her mounted attendants was thrown and badly hurt; and the next day one of the loyal Tory papers reported that her Majesty had completely recovered from the accident to her outrider!"

—G. W. Foote in *The Freethinker*, 26 March 1882.

## MAZZINI SCHOLARSHIP

To commemorate the centenary of the death of Mazzini (March 1872) the Italian Parliament has given a study grant of a million lire (£666) to the University of London.

Mazzini, the prophet of Italian unity, was the leader of the short-lived secular Roman Republic of 1849. London University was chosen for the award because of Mazzini's long association with London during his years of exile.

## "BLURRED IN ONE GENERATION"

"I believe that if the schools in Northern Ireland were united now the division of nearly 300 years would be irrevocably blurred in one generation. In an all-denominational school system, the Catholics on the staff could guard against any possible excesses—and our own pet 'excesses' would soon vanish . . . No child should be segregated by race, colour—or creed. We don't need a ghetto any more."

—Joan Richards in the *Catholic Herald* (3 March).

## NEW ABORTION LAW IN EAST GERMANY

The East German Volkskammer has passed a new law permitting abortion on demand during the first three months of pregnancy, despite what *The Guardian* has described as "a rare demonstration of opposition to a Government bill" from the Christian Democratic Union. 14 deputies (probably Catholics) voted against the bill, and 8 (Evangelical Protestants) abstained—an unprecedented number of dissenting votes by normal Volkskammer standards. The Bill had earlier been denounced in January by the East German Catholic hierarchy in a statement read out in pulpits which described abortion as "an execrable crime".

## ANGLICAN CURATE AFFIRMS

The Rev. Peter Philip, curate of St. Peter's Church, Battersea, who appeared recently as a witness in a case involving possession of drugs, refused to take the oath and asked to be allowed to affirm. He was allowed to do so.

Interviewed afterwards by the *South London Press* Mr. Philip explained his objections by saying that there was a subtle implication in an oath "that what I say outside the oath might not always be the truth". Also he felt that the oath contradicted St. Matthew 5:35, that one should not swear in God's name. Mr. Philip's objections were, he emphasised, a purely personal opinion, thought the Quakers have objected to the taking of oaths for very similar reasons for several centuries. Should this attitude come to be shared by many more "mainstream" Christians it will provide a powerful argument for those who want to make universal affirmation the normal court procedure.

# SAND AND NOTES

## A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

At a meeting of the Albert Memorial Loyal Orange Lodge, No. 56, held in Manchester on the 11th inst., the following truly Christian resolution was unanimously passed:

"Seeing that the Catholic Emancipation Bill was passed on the good faith of promises made by the Roman Catholics before its passing, that they would not injure directly or indirectly the Protestant established religion, which promises have been and are being repeatedly broken, we demand its full repeal, with the view of the entire exclusion of Romanists from Parliament, which we believe to be the only safe and wise course to adopt."

[From *The National Reformer*, 24 March 1872.]

## ABORTION PREVENTED IN CANADA

An Ottawa woman's attempt to obtain an abortion has been halted by a court injunction issued on behalf of her husband and the "infant plaintiff"; the latter being "represented" by David Dehler, a lawyer and member of the anti-abortion organisation, Alliance for Life. The Canadian journal *Labor Challenge* describes the decision as "all the more outrageous since the abortion had already been approved by a hospital Therapeutic Abortion Committee. The woman's doctor had warned her that continuation of the pregnancy could endanger her own life, and possibly result in the birth of a deformed child. She is already the mother of four children".

## CHURCHES OFFER OXFORD HOLIDAY

This paper has mentioned recently some of the more idiotic approaches of the churches to the Northern Ireland violence. On this occasion, however, we are pleased to record that the various churches in Oxford are combining to raise money to give a hundred Belfast children (50 Catholics and 50 Protestants) a week's holiday in the City of Dreaming Spires, which will doubtless be a welcome respite from the Ulster nightmare. The Oxford churches hope to raise £1,200 in collections to cover the children's air fares.

## THE ADVANCE OF THE FUNGI

As a former mycologist (and still a keen amateur) I cannot resist relating the following story which warmed the cockles of my black old heart.

Some twelve years ago the mycologist Peter Orton described as new to science a humble relation of the familiar cultivated mushroom from Surlingham Wood, in Norfolk. He named it *Agaricus vinosobrunneus*, and it has not, so far, been found anywhere else. This unique habitat has enabled Ted Ellis, the naturalist, and owner of Surlingham Wood, to foil plans by Forchoe and Henstead Rural Council to build a sewerage works on the site of this property as, says Mr. Ellis, this would mean the fungus's extinction. A £382,000 "development" has been scuppered by a mushroom less than 12 cm. high!

The precedent has endless possibilities: one conjures up visions of Sir John Betjeman working round the clock to submit a paper on three hundred new species of fungus allegedly found on the beams of Georgian terraced houses scheduled for "redevelopment", or in the crannies of Victorian railway viaducts under sentence of demolition.

Certainly this writer gains a distinct sense of satisfaction at the prospect of estate agents, property speculators, town planners, and the men from the Ministry all going into a cold sweat every time a number of the sober, grey-covered *Transactions of the British Mycological Society* rolls off the printing presses.

May *Agaricus vinosobrunneus* long continue to burgeon beneath the sanctuary of the beeches and elm trees of Surlingham Wood, disturbed only by hungry squirrels, curious botanists and Dr. John Allegro!

## FALSE POPES ALL ECUMENICAL

Monsignor Luigi Tautu, a Rumanian, has recently published a work entitled *Actu Pseudo-Pontifical* ("Acts of the False Popes") which is based on documents issued between 1378 and 1415 during the reigns of the "False Popes" Clement VII, Benedict XIII, Alexander V and John XXIII, whom the Catholic Church now regards as usurpers. Mgr. Tautu was able to study the documents from the Vatican's famous secret archives.

According to the *Catholic Herald*, Mgr. Tautu has come to the conclusion "that an interesting angle on the four anti-popes was that they generally took an ecumenical attitude to all Church matters".

## FIFTY YEARS AGO

The Bill for the abolition of the blasphemy laws was introduced into the House of Commons on 16 March by Mr. J. F. Green . . . and . . . is backed by Colonel Wedgewood, Will Thorne, A. R. Atkey, and Captain Wedgewood Benn . . . The other day . . . we paid a visit to Wormwood Scrubs prison to see the latest prisoner for blasphemy. We found Mr. Gott was still in hospital, where . . . he is likely to remain . . . He informed us that the only labour he had performed was dusting the pulpit. There is evidently a humourist in that prison. After being imprisoned for "dusting" parsons, he is set to work dusting pulpits.

[From *The Freethinker*, 26 March 1922.]

## PONTIFICAL PROBLEMS

Life has not exactly been running smoothly in recent weeks for the mini-state of Vatican City. Recently Signor Loris Fortuna (co-author of the infamous divorce law that has all but broken Pope Paul's heart) called upon the Italian Government to negotiate an agreement with the Vatican which would "protect the dignity and interests of Italian workers in a foreign country". Sr. Fortuna, a leading advocate for the separation of church and state, claims that Vatican City's 3,000 Italian employees do not receive pay, pensions, and termination agreements on a par with those of other workers in Italy. "Of course", commented *The Times* desperately, "many of the people employed by the Pope have the advantage of duty-free purchasing at the Vatican shop."

A few days later the Holy Father had to contend with a torchlight protest prayer meeting under his window organised by left-wing Catholics who objected to Vatican attempts to oust Father Giovanni Franzoni, the liberal Abbot of St. Paul's Without the Walls. The Vatican Congregation of the Religious had been displeased by Fr. Franzoni's opposition to the church-state Concordat; his objecting to the referendum to abolish divorce; his organising "pop" masses, and getting involved in social and political issues. The demonstration served its purpose, the authorities backed down, and the good Abbot is still safely ensconced in his basilica.

# BOOKS

**TO ENCOURAGE THE OTHERS** by David Yallop.

W. H. Allen, £2.50.

If this book were a novel, one might be tempted to dismiss its "plot" as too unbelievable. But this study of the Craig-Bentley murder case is no work of fiction; the unbelievable actually happened. David Yallop has written a well-documented account of the circumstances which led up to the execution of 19-year-old Derek Bentley, and he has ably argued the case for a public inquiry.

On the evening of 2 November 1952, Derek Bentley and 16-year-old Christopher Craig made their way to a Croydon warehouse with the intention of breaking in. They were seen climbing over the gates and by the time they had scaled a drainpipe on to the roof the police had arrived below. Craig and Bentley took cover behind a lift-head and were hiding there when a policeman, Detective Constable Fairfax, arrived on the roof having also climbed the drainpipe. This policeman took hold of Bentley, whereupon Craig, who had a revolver with him, took a shot at Fairfax who then retreated behind the roof-top entrance to the building, holding Bentley in front of him as a shield.

After a while other police officers got into the building from below and made their way up to the roof entrance. First through the door was P.C. Miles, but as soon as he stepped out on to the roof he fell, shot dead, the prosecution alleged, by Craig. After some time Bentley was hustled down the stairs by his arresting officer, and Craig too was eventually taken into custody but only after he had broken his back in a thirty-foot dive from the roof down to the ground.

Craig and Bentley were jointly charged with murder and after a three-day trial at the Old Bailey they were found guilty. Craig was too young to be executed but, after an unsuccessful appeal, Derek Bentley was hanged on 28 January 1953.

David Yallop has researched the case with obvious care and thoroughness, and he presents a great deal of evidence to support his argument. He points out that Bentley could not justly be held responsible with Craig for the shooting. *Bentley had been under arrest for at least 15 minutes when P.C. Miles was shot.* It is highly unlikely that Bentley had any intention of being a party to the use of a gun when the two lads set out to break into the warehouse. But, in any case, it would seem self-evident that once Bentley was under arrest he could not justly be held jointly responsible for anything Craig did after that arrest.

Yallop also claims that Bentley's medical history was not taken properly into account. Bentley was not only illiterate, he was also an epileptic. He was examined shortly before the trial and a report on his medical condition was drawn up for the Court by the Principal Medical Officer at Brixton Prison. Yallop alleges that there are a number of "disturbing aspects" to this report, not the least of which is its implication that Bentley's epileptic attacks had ceased about 11 years earlier. Yallop demonstrates that "all the available evidence confirms that he continued to suffer from epileptic attacks for the rest of his life—the last recorded attack was less than a month before his arrest". Yallop believes that Bentley may even have had an attack shortly before his arrest, an attack induced or precipitated by the climb up the 30-foot drainpipe. It is by no

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means certain, however, that even if these facts had been made clear at the time it would have made any difference. In 1950, another epileptic, Daniel Raven, had been executed for murder even though Home Office specialists were aware of his condition.

But David Yallop's thesis is not just that Bentley should not have been executed, or that he was not a party to Craig's shooting of P.C. Miles. He believes that Bentley was "hanged for a crime that no one committed. Furthermore, Christopher Craig was imprisoned for ten and a half years for a crime that he did not commit, either". Yallop contends that P.C. Miles was in fact shot accidentally by one of several police officers who, issued with guns, had taken up positions overlooking the roof-top.

Yallop was a contemporary of Bentley and Craig and he grew up not far from their homes. He has used this background knowledge in setting the case in its context. His book is full of implications, not just for this particular case, but for justice, law-enforcement and punishment. It is very readable, well-written and clearly establishes the case for a public inquiry.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

The television programme "To Encourage the Others" will be shown on B.B.C.2 at 9.20 p.m. on Tuesday, 28 March next. (Ed.)

**THE TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS** by Joyce Marlow.

André Deutsch, £3.50.

Though the Tolpuddle Martyrs are legendary figures, known at least as names to anyone concerned with working-class politics and trade-union history, they have had little written about them that truly brings them to life. There have been useful studies of the legal aspects of their case, and the autobiographical *Life and Struggles of W. Lovett* (1876) was reprinted in 1967. But the memorial volume issued by the T.U.C. in 1934 was a hotch-potch; and there has long been a need for a thorough biographical study. This has at last been given in *The Tolpuddle Martyrs* by Joyce Marlow, already known for her *Peterloo Massacre* (1969).

The author has worked hard to follow up every phase in the career of the six martyrs; and there can be few relevant details that she has not ferreted out. Nothing surprising emerges; but the picture one had of the men is satisfyingly filled in and rounded out, and just enough of the historical situation is given to bring out the full significance of the events. It was indeed an odd set of factors that came together to make these six obscure and remote Dorsetshire labourers, and not workers organising in the industrialised areas, into the outstanding witnesses of the early struggles for trade-unionism, which even today is weak in the countryside. Making inquiries among local workers who are keen trade-unionists, I found that they all thought the Tolpuddle men had been fighting for the right to organise in a period before trade-unions were legal. But although the bill to legalise unions, which the astute Francis Place had got through Parliament in 1824, had been amended and weakened in 1825, a limited protection under common law was established for trade-

# REVIEWS

unionists; and in 1833 Robert Owen had founded the National Consolidated Trades Union as the first London-based attempt at a general organisation. It was the N.C.T.U. that worried the government and brought about the very oblique attack on the new developments through the Tolpuddle prosecutions.

No doubt the fact that most country J.P.s represented the older type of Tories and were accustomed to being the unchallenged petty tyrants in their localities had much to do with the crucial effort to check trade-unionism emerging in the country backwaters of Dorset. Magistrates in the more industrialised North were better aware of what they were up against and more cautious about the steps they took. Further, the gentry of the southern and eastern counties had been badly shaken by the Swing Riots only three years before, and at that time had encountered no check or rebuke in the ruthless suppressions they carried out (Captain Swing has been well treated in the recent book by Eric Hobsbawm and George Rude). Country J.P.s were in a disturbed and suspicious state, afraid of being murdered in their beds at any moment; and the J.P. who was the main actor in bringing Loveless and his friends to court was James Frampton, a very active suppressor of the peasantry during the riots. His stepbrother wrote of his mansion at that time in terms that have a topical echo today: "I found Moreton barricaded like an Irish mansion".

Miss Marlow shows clearly all the steps leading up to the arrests and the part played by Lord Melbourne in discreetly encouraging the whole thing. The charge was of taking an illegal oath, and it rather shakily went back to legislation at the time of the Mutiny of the Nore, 1797 and 1799. The reader must turn to the book for the engrossing story of how the radical took up the labourers' cause and finally forced the hand of the government; for the experiences of the convicted men in the hulks and in Australia, their triumphant return after many difficulties and delays, their settlement in Essex with the aid of the fund raised on their behalf, and their final departure for Canada, where they wanted to start a new life. Miss Marlow brings out the struggle that must have gone on inside William Loveless, a convinced Methodist who had learned the need for social and political struggle the hard way, but who was at heart a man of peace. He and his friends must have found it hard to carry on in Essex with the knowledge that any local disorders were sure to be laid at their door by the vicious clergy and J.P.s around them.

One interesting point, strangely topical at the moment, is the play made by the radicals on the fact that the Duke of Cumberland, the sinister brother of King William, was head of the revived Orange Lodges with some 200,000 members, many of whom were in the army. The defenders of Lovett pointed out that the Duke and the rest of his Orangemen were all liable to the same penalties as the Tolpuddle labourers, since they too had taken illegal oaths. The agitation on this point certainly had considerable effect in bringing about the pardons, especially in affecting the stubborn old king.

A few slight criticisms. It is hardly correct to say that "Methodism was the first creed to lay emphasis upon and cultivate the individual worth of the individual laymen". What of the rebellious popular creeds of Cromwellian days,

including Fox's Quakers, to look no further? But in fact the conflict between this aspect of Christianity and the authoritative forms of organisation rapidly developed from the outset has been characteristic of all periods of the church, with varying degrees and forms of tension. Also, in the brief summary of Australian history given in chapter 11 there is no mention of the phase before Macquarie, generally called the Rum Rebellion, when the officers of the army corps, led by the scoundrel MacArthur, took advantage of the break in communications during the Napoleonic Wars to depose Governor Bligh (of the Bounty) and in effect to share out the land in ways that had a lasting effect on Australian society. But the author may well have felt that this striking episode would introduce side-issues not relevant to her own story.

Miss Marlow is to be congratulated for knowing how to produce highly readable books with a solid but unobtrusive basis of scholarship.

JACK LINDSAY

## LETTERS

### A Little Whisper on the House of Lords

Lord Raglan (*Freethinker* letters, 11 March) gave some interesting comment on his Upper House speech. As one who wrote to Lord Raglan expressing my thanks may I too give a little whisper?

I can appreciate his point on there being some value of the House of Lords. That is to say, the House of Commons are afraid to speak their minds fully as the ballot box has to be considered. But one must recognise that the other House has admission centuries away from democracy too. Accident of birth or perhaps having one's collar back to front is no criterion for free speech.

It is true that George Brown, sorry, Lord George Brown has earned his retirement by entry to the building of British gentlemen. The Red Flag is no better for it. Perhaps, half-mast.

This torrid letter in no way revokes my thanks to Lord Raglan. I know by experience he is not wanting in good human deeds. May the blessing of Thomas Paine be on us all.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

### Sufficient Evidence for Historical Jesus

I feel that I must express agreement with Mr. Hinchliff that there is sufficient evidence to justify the belief that one of the many origins of historical Christianity was or is the real-life experience of one man who was physically crucified for offering some kind of defiance to orthodox Judaism and to Roman Imperialism. Jesus may really have been a kind of "unknown warrior" of social and economic democracy, long before such terms were humanly intelligible.

The rapid deification of Jesus after his death must be accepted historically as unique. The posthumous glories attached to the memory of the dead man (the Resurrection, the Ascension and the intermediate appearances) must have been the product of rumour, story-telling and perhaps of hallucinations induced by some form of drug addiction or even of religious enthusiasm which may in turn be due to some peculiarity of brain structure in those who have it.

PETER CROMMELIN.

### Humanist Diary

The innovation of a humanist pocket diary for this year was not an outstanding success, but nor was it an abysmal failure. Perhaps my print order of 2,000 was over-optimistic. I sold 1,168, which brought in £403 gross. This would have meant a financial loss of over £120, were it not for the fact that Messrs. Charles Letts generously knocked that much off their final account, in compensation for the late delivery of the diaries caused by a printers' strike and other production difficulties. In addition, the R.P.A. took 500 off my hands in January, at a special agreed remainder price, thus giving me a profit of £50, of which I have donated £5 to each of the six humanist organisations mentioned in the promotion leaflet.

Since many people felt that the diary provided a useful service for the movement, I have decided to go ahead with a 1973 edition—with a smaller quantity and at a slightly higher retail price.

I have received many complimentary comments on the diary, and a few criticisms. One of the latter was that the diaries "did not burn with the humanist spirit". (Perhaps paraffin would have worked better!) However, this criticism may be met to some extent by the inclusion next time of a humanist book-list and a few suitable quotations. My favourite comment on the diary, however, came from the United States: "There is such good information in it—and particularly I loved the diagram of the Underground".

Anyone still wanting copies may now have them at half-price—i.e. at 20p, including postage—from me, at 6 Stanstead Grove, London, SE6 4UD.

BARBARA SMOKER.

### Mazzini, Humanism and Hypocrisy

What prompted Nigel Sinnott to write a short piece on Mazzini (11 March) I do not know, but one thing is certain and that is that Mazzini was no atheist or humanist. Bradlaugh must therefore have been hypocritical when he wrote in praise of Mazzini.

Mazzini's secret society, Young Italy, required all initiates to swear an oath, some of which was: "In the name of God and Italy; in the name of all the martyrs of the holy Italian cause who have fallen under the blows of foreign tyranny; by the duties which bind me to my country, to the God who created me, and to the brothers God has given me . . . I also swear, calling on my head the anger of God, the horror of men, and the infamy of perjury, if ever I venture to betray all or part of my oath".

This apostle of Italian liberty, Mazzini, might have had his thoughts summed up in two words: *Dio e popolo*—Who said humanists were not hypocrites?

By the way I see you suppressed my last letter; are fools to be protected by an editor just because they call themselves humanists?

IAIN MCGREGOR.

*The Editor may well have a responsibility to protect fools from the worst excesses of their folly. Mr. Sinnott will doubtless be replying to the rest of this letter (Ed.).*

### Christianity, Paganism and Religion

Avril Fox ("Has Christianity Destroyed Religion?") really cannot be allowed to get away with some of her more fantastic remarks unchallenged. She describes herself as finding "a sense of the holy" like "a middle-aged duck discovering water for the first time". Perhaps if she had come across it more in the manner of a duckling who soon learns to take water for granted, she would have made a more naturalistic and healthy assessment of ecstasy instead of regarding it as a wash-day miracle!

So Christianity, Avril Fox laments, by calling itself a religion, has brought "true religion" into contempt. So doubtless, has Islam, but for some reason she would still like to salvage "true religion"—the "mechanism by which we contact that which is beyond our material existence". Almost, one would have thought, a contradiction in terms. Avril Fox's "true religion" seems to bear little resemblance to common-or-garden "religion" as understood by everybody else. Further, Christianity was once "genuinely revolutionary"—is every "genuine revolution" right or just?

After patting the ghost of Bradlaugh on the back, Mrs. Fox goes on to speak of the necessity to "recognise the social value of woman" and to replace "the priestess and the prostitute to their respective and healing places". Bradlaugh and Mary Wollstonecraft must be turning in their graves! In any case, I always thought of prostitution as a product of male-dominated societies.

Avril Fox would have us revert to "pagan sanities"; alas, this reminds me too much of the idyll of the healthy, rosy-cheeked little pagan so beloved by the revolutionary Nazi ideologists, whose ideas of the "social value" of [Aryan] women were largely confined to *Kinder, Kirche, Küche*. They too, knew how to manipulate the tendency to "merge with the rest" during mass rallies.

I do not denigrate *Eros*, the sense of awe of the "oceanic"; or ecstasy, but these could more usefully be related to terms such as "love" and "art" and "poetry", which know no ideological boundaries, rather than to a highly individualised redefinition of "religion".

L. G. BEELZEBUB.

### Putting People First

In reply to D. C. Taylor (Letters, 11 March) I wonder at his conclusion that putting human beings first is responsible for the present environmental crisis. For example, putting cyanide on a public dump is a cheap and convenient way of disposing of it; only if you put people first do you remember the children who are attracted to such places and the danger of seepage into water supplies.

A healthy environment is one of the basic necessities of life, so if you believe in people first, one does one's bit against pollution from taking your litter home with you, to restricting the number of children one has in the fond hope that population might decrease. For if there is one major cause of the environmental crisis its too many folk.

Of course no one slogan can cover all eventualities and many of our theories have to change as the world around us changes. We have to think out each problem as it is presented and occasionally try to avoid creating the problem in the first place. If the first question we ask ourselves is how will this affect humanity now and to come, to my mind we are on the right track.

B. HINDE.

### Religious Education or Instruction

In his letter in *The Freethinker* of 11 March, the Rev. John D. Allerton refers to "that kind of religious education which is concerned for the religious (or non-religious) awareness of the child, the explanation of what different kinds of religion are about, the critical examination of stories, myths and religious history".

Now, aside from any semantic splitting of words, the above quotation does, surely, offer more than one interpretation as to what kind of religious education the author is referring to. To begin with, what does a concern for the "religious awareness" of a child mean when it can also mean a concern for the "non-religious awareness" of that child? And then one could perhaps fairly say that *religions* are "about" someone or something called "God". How, then, are mere children to "explore" that uncertain someone or thing?

Personally, I would suggest that what is needed is a critical examination of what "open-minded religious education" means—especially when one considers that some of its advocates seem not to have made up their minds regarding any difference between "Education" and "Instruction" in the matter.

CHARLES BYASS.

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### THE DEATH OF CHRISTIANITY

(Continued from page 99)

which seems to be incredibly superficial and naïve: it skates over all the issues of truth and knowledge which Strauss raised, often quite creatively, during his own lifetime. Strauss died on 8 February 1874, and it is difficult not to accept his book of 1872 as the definitive expression of all his Biblical studies. Certainly, if it is so accepted, it becomes no unworthy or flimsy contribution to the European thought of its age: nor discreditable, either, to D. F. Strauss, as outstanding amongst the German theologians of the nineteenth century.

It is unfair that he should be so little regarded today. He well deserves to be considered, in his own right, and apart from his detached and subsidiary connection with the venturesome efforts of George Eliot. The best source for that consideration, is of course E. Zeller's *David Friedrich Strauss in seinem Leben und seinem Schrifften* (1874, English translation, 1874). But, especially for those who cannot read German, it is important not to overlook the appreciation of his work, which occurs on pp. 68-120 of the English translation of Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1910).