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# The FREETHINKER

The Secular and Humanist Weekly

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3p

## NOT SUCH A FREE COUNTRY, AFTER ALL?

### —N.C.C.L. PUBLISHES ANNUAL REPORT

Britain's much vaunted reputation as a "bastion of liberty" has received a long and somewhat withering look in the 1972 Annual Report of the National Council for Civil Liberties, published last week. Among N.C.C.L.'s targets for criticism are the operation of the legal aid and advice scheme, the bail system, the abuse of Judge's Rules, police powers, immigrant legislation, censorship, and, of course, the Northern Ireland crisis. The overall impression given by the report is of a country in which "the rights of the citizen are being steadily eroded by a combination of illiberal legislation, official intransigence, public prejudice, and the arbitrary use of power by officials."

#### Traditional Safeguards inadequate

Assessing the administration of justice, for example, the Report notes that "one of the real dangers to civil liberty has arisen out of the failure . . . to provide satisfactory checks and balances against the arbitrary use of power by officials. The traditional safeguards have been shown to be ineffective or inadequate. Rights in this country are at a premium; there is no right to legal services, no right to welfare, no right to housing. We are faced with a range of 'privileges' which can be granted or withdrawn at the discretion of an official."

The section of the N.C.C.L. Report dealing with the police suggests that "1971 will go down as the year when the benign image of the police was replaced by one that showed a more fallible human being. As a result perhaps members of the force were now better able to understand the need for an open working relationship with the public. This is surely preferable to the sudden exposure which focuses attention on the warts rather than the total structure." Indeed, says the Report, it seems that criminal prosecutions against policemen in this country have reached "unprecedented proportions". The Home Secretary is also criticised here for ignoring public opinion and N.C.C.L.'s recommendations for independent investigation of public complaints against the police force.

The Council says that Britain's reputation abroad has been further affected by the passing of the 1971 Immigration Act. Apart from this Act being discriminatory *per se*, the Report states that "the Home Office and Immigration officials are taking a tougher line . . . All too often it is forgotten by politicians and the Civil Service that they are dealing with human beings and not immigration statistics".

#### Censorship ultimately political

1971 was also the year in which censorship became a major civil liberty issue, especially during the much-publicised trials of *Oz* and the *Little Red School Book*. "The judgements in both cases", states the report, "were

a victory for those who sought to impose their bigoted attitudes on the rest of the community." Following the "resurgence of primitive attitudes towards a liberal and humane society", the N.C.C.L. General Secretary, Tony Smythe, found it necessary to remind people, in article in *Ink*, that "ultimately all censorship is political . . . Censorship is for the powerful and is a means of protecting their power. What they are really saying is 'Do as we do, think as we think', with the obvious rider, 'You must do this in order to protect our interests.'"

Northern Ireland was, of course, the civil liberties issue that dominated 1971. The 1972 Report traces the work of N.C.C.L. for the preservation of civil liberties there and also stresses the tragedy of a situation "built on a long succession of failures of political imagination. From the N.C.C.L.'s point of view, it is small comfort to know that since 1936 we have given the right warnings at the right time. Even we could not have predicted that the consequence of official blindness and deafness would be such widespread death and destruction". In deciding to increase N.C.C.L. involvement in Northern Ireland, Mr. Smythe writes (in the Introduction): "we were influenced by the likely impact of injustice there—censorship, violence and the unrestrained abuse of lawful authority—on standards and attitudes *here*."

#### Growing Injustice and Authoritarianism

In a statement accompanying the Report, the Council says: "If the denial of civil liberties in Northern Ireland today is not to happen here in the future, the British public will need to be much more vigilant and concerned than it is now. If the cases and analyses contained in the N.C.C.L. Annual Report have a single message, it is that the increasing power of government opens the way to injustice and to an authoritarianism that is the growing danger to civil liberties all over the world."

Copies of the 1972 Annual Report may be obtained, price 20p plus 3½p postage, from N.C.C.L., 152 Camden High Street, London NW1.

# FACT AND FICTION IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY\*

ROBERT MORRELL

Replying to my comments on his attitude towards the myth theory of Christian origins, Philip Hinchliff asserts, of a passage in Tacitus which mentions Jesus, that "there comes a point when the commonsense interpretation of a disputed text hardly needs defending . . ." This assumes that he has established his own view as "the commonsense interpretation," which is certainly not so, while at the same time he displays an apparent ignorance of the fact that a "commonsense interpretation" need not of necessity be the correct interpretation.

The only evidence produced by Mr. Hinchliff to corroborate the Tacitus passage are references to Clement, which as even he shows is too vague to base anything on, and Suetonius. Contrary to what Mr. Hinchliff maintains Suetonius does not support the tale of a Neronian persecution of Christians, all it says is that Nero punished the Christians, and moreover the passage in no way relates to events following the fire at Rome as Suetonius refers to this earlier without mentioning the Christians. Thus Mr. Hinchliff changes a quotation that cannot be interpreted as a reference to a persecution into support for Tacitus' story.

## "Commonsense" Interpretations

To return to the "commonsense interpretation" comment. There are many examples one could produce to show that what appears to be a matter of commonsense in the interpretation of texts or events is frequently wrong. The most appropriate in this case is the Genesis flood. Until recently the idea of a universal flood was generally accepted, and attention was drawn to the evidence all about us in the form of gravel deposits and boulder clays. The presence of shells in the most unexpected of places was also held as "commonsense" proof. In fact there are still several individuals who argue along such lines, particularly in the United States, and a recent work advocating a universal flood written by a civil engineer and a theologian is entitled, simply, *The Genesis Flood*. An early Christian writer, Tertullian, observed, "Yes, and the whole earth was changed once, being covered by all the waters. To this day, sea conches and tritons' shells are found as strangers on the mountains, desiring to prove to Plato that the heights have once flowed with water." Hundreds of years later we find Young and Bird in their book *A Geological Survey of the Yorkshire Coast* (1822) arguing ". . . we are persuaded that . . . to the Deluge the principal changes which the crust of our globe has undergone, in so far come nearer the truth than those who would throw back those changes into long ages that preceded the creation of man . . ." In passing it can be added that much of the palaeontological evidence supporting evolution can be by the use of "commonsense" interpreted in a non-evolutionary manner, only within the collective body of evidence from many sources does it become clear in an evolutionary sense. This digression into geology illustrates the extreme caution we should use when speaking glibly of "commonsense interpretation."

Concerning the trial of Paul Mr. Hinchliff admits now that there is no supporting evidence and is thus compelled to fall back on "Christian tradition". He does not provide us with the documentary evidence for this tradition, and pointedly ignores the existence of traditions which contra-

dict this. However, this is of little important as once we resort to tradition we cannot really question any tale associated with Jesus or his early followers but logically must accept all. Mr. Hinchliff is being quite arbitrary in his selection of tradition. A degree of confusion is seen in Mr. Hinchliff's comments about Paul and the events said to lead to his trial. After the arrest Paul appeared before Felix not Festus, and it was Felix who imprisoned him for two years. As to Paul in Rome, all Acts states is that Paul lived two years there in his "own hired house", and he was free to teach and preach. Nothing is said of the conclusion of his trial in Rome nor about any other part of it. Acts might end abruptly as Mr. Hinchliff states but has absolutely nothing to say on any part of the trial whatsoever.

## Tacitus, Trajan and Pliny the Younger

I have a preference for something more than Mr. Hinchliff's subjective speculations, which he passes off as evidence. I agree that a trial is a plausible event but concur with the historian Grote that a narrative of credible incidents raises of itself no more presumption (in default of positive testimony) that the incidents occurred than does a composition of some author, it is plausible fiction and nothing more. There is in fact some strong evidence from at least one Roman source to indicate that the passage in Tacitus should be treated as an interpolation. Writing to the emperor Trajan, Pliny the Younger appeals for advice about how to deal with the Christians, of which he is ignorant. Trajan in reply shows his own ignorance but approves of Pliny's methods of extracting information. Now surely this is strange when we remember that a few years before there was supposed to have been a major persecution of Christians in Rome—on a scale that even the Romans became of; just prior to this there was, so Mr. Hinchliff maintains, the trial in Rome of a leading Christian. How, then, do we explain the ignorance of two men who had access to official records? Even stranger is the fact that Tacitus was a friend of Trajan and once governed Pliny's province, so it is likely he would be asked for expert advice. It is not unreasonable to assume that both Trajan and Pliny knew of the Annals, and so one can submit that in the light of the ignorance displayed in high circles it is reasonable to suggest that the famous passage did not appear in the Annals at that time.

There is a final point upon which I should like to comment. Mr. Hinchliff claims that I fail to recognise the "two distinct strands in Christian doctrine and practice in the first century." On the contrary I am perfectly aware of this theory, but in so far as the period in question is concerned I do not accept it as valid. Until the final destruction of Jerusalem, and with it the destruction of Palestine as the focal point for Jewish religious aspirations, Christianity remained a heresy within the context of Judaism, and it is well to note that Paul for all his work among the gentiles was always stressing his claim to be part and parcel of Judaism. To Paul Christianity represented the true Israel, and in this his outlook coincided with that of all the other Christian leaders. Mr. Hinchliff claims that we have a complex problem here; however, I can but wonder whether most of the complexity is of his own making.

\* An answer to Philip Hinchliff's "Hamlet without the Prince" (*Freethinker*, 11 March). Professor Wells's reply to the same article will appear next week.

# VICTOR HUGO AND "THE TERRIBLE YEAR"

ERIC GLASGOW

For France the year 1871 involved a sequence of shattering events, including the institution of the Third Republic under Thiers (17 February), the Treaty of Frankfurt (10 May) and the ruthless suppression of the Paris Commune after 21 May. These bewildering events, in a France with traditions of freedom, equality and civilisation, had their inevitable repercussions upon the nature and the message of French literature.

They affected especially the outlook of the poet, Victor Hugo (1802-85). Until 1820 he had been a Royalist, but had joined the republicans in opposition to Napoleon III, and had gone into exile after 1851, first in Brussels and later in the Channel Islands. He emerged as a democratic republican, chiefly because of his deep feeling for humanity, its needs, its hopes, and its sorrows that became evident from his novel, *Les Misérables* (1862), and—after so long a period of exile—he had seen, in the turmoil of the Franco-Prussian War, a chance to realise his stifled ideals of republican brotherhood in France. So, on 5 September 1870, he left his refuge in Guernsey for Paris: it was a hasty embroilment, and he was expelled again after the defeat of the Commune.

## An Authentic Description

Once more the poet had proved to be inadequate and ineffective as a politician. Nevertheless, the leopard could not, and did not, change his spots. Despite his second exile, and his short-lived return to Guernsey, Victor Hugo retained all his earlier enthusiasms for liberty and justice, and the mere humanity of man. Nor could he quickly or easily discard the memories of the terrible events which had afflicted France in 1871. As a romantic poet, he was bound to be greatly affected by that year's record of French defeat, humiliation, and internal strife.

The anguish and the strife of 1871 Victor Hugo distilled, movingly, into the collection of poems which was soon published under the significant title of *L'Année Terrible* (1872). It was an authentic description of a disastrous year; and authentic, too, in its patriotism, romanticism, sensitivity and its sincerity. *L'Année Terrible* made Victor Hugo a national hero; for it was published in one of France's darkest hours, before the Third Republic had time to establish itself and when the necessary process of national recovery had not yet even reached the stage of the Constitution of 1875, engineered by Marshal MacMahon. Amidst the wider crisis of confidence, and bewilderment at the national fate or destiny, Victor Hugo's volume of poems afforded some necessary and acceptable reassurances, which inevitably won for its author great honour and prestige; for, even within the aligned stanzas of *L'Année Terrible*, Victor Hugo revealed his best and most characteristic features as a poet: "All tones are his, but especially a tone of inexorable majesty and solemnity".<sup>1</sup> His fluent descriptions of the ravages and despair of France rise into great poetry, and the corrosions of politics and public disputes yield the sublime eloquence of lasting literature.

*L'Année Terrible* is a volume of stern, if supremely poetic, memories: as a grandfather looks back to the tragic

events in the French capital in 1871, those events already begin to recede into the past, already they seem—like President Lincoln—to belong to history. Nevertheless, at their mere recital, "vous serez pensifs sous les arbres profonds". The die has been cast; the wound has visibly gone—but still France should remember that year of anguish and tumult in the interest of her own soul and her own future. So, despite their controversial political basis, and their roots in the aftermath of defeat and collapse, the contents of *L'Année Terrible* have become literature as well as history.

## One of Hugo's most Impressive Books

Once the year 1871 had gone Victor Hugo, exiled again, soon passed on to other and perhaps less narrowly-based works, such as the two last series of *La Légende des Siècles* (1877, 1883) and the poetry-selection, called *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit* (1881). Nevertheless, the overshadowing presence of his other works, both before and after 1871, should not permit us to forget about *L'Année Terrible*: alike as poetry and as an embalmed fragment of history, it must still represent one of Victor Hugo's most impressive and memorable books, especially perhaps for those British readers whose concerns with France are more historical than literary. Even at the very least, *L'Année Terrible* is a book which goes far to explain why Victor Hugo became "the national poet who gave his name to a street in every town in France"<sup>2</sup>. Its contents suggest, moreover, Victor Hugo's life-long preoccupation with the duality of good and evil: the outcome of which was his suggestion that the answer must lie in the discovery of Religion, beyond the forms of religions (1880). And that is a surprisingly modern idea, to come from Victor Hugo almost a century ago.

## NOTES.

<sup>1</sup> Eccles, F. Y. 1909. *A Century of French Poetry*: p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> 1970 edition, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 2: p. 818.

## SPRINGTIME

Springtime—it comes again!  
New life becomes the scene!  
All nature quickens in tune  
To the season the bird-song sings;

Spring weather in rhythm again:  
Wind-blown by breeze and gale,  
Rain-freshened by shower and storm,  
Earth warms to the brightening sun!

Spring, coloured and scented again,  
Comes bursting the bud and the seed!  
All nature grows young again—  
The lamb, the flower and the weed!

CHARLES BYASS.

## THE FREETHINKER

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

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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, 9 April, 6.30 p.m.: Half Annual General Meeting, "The Future of Leicester Secular Society".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 9 April, 11 a.m.: Professor G. A. Wells, "Christian Orgins". 3 p.m. Peter Cadogan, Judith Colne, Michael Lines, Peter Lumsden and Harry Knight, "Humanism as Rational Religious Sentiment". Tuesday, 11 April, 7 p.m.: John Rowan, "Scope of Humanistic Psychology".

# NEWS

## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL N.S.S. DINNER

Barbara Smoker, who presided at the Sixty-Sixth Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society, held in London on 25 March last, began the formal part of the proceedings by welcoming the many guests (some 148 members and friends in all) who had come from all over the London area and from as far afield as Aldridge, Andover, Birmingham, Brighton, Eastbourne and Luton. They included representatives of such organisations as the British Humanist Association, the Brook Advisory Centre, the Family Planning Association, London Young Humanists, the Progressive League and South Place Ethical Society.

Miss Smoker, who had been billed in *The Freethinker* as being "of Humanist Diary fame", pointed out that although the Diary had received a few criticisms for listing religious feast-days it was nevertheless apt that the dinner was being held on the Feast of the Annunciation as it honoured the founder of the Brook Advisory Centres which had specialised in providing contraceptive advice to young unmarried people. Perhaps if the Brook Advisory Centres had started 2,000 years earlier we should have been spared the tall story about the Blessed Virgin Mary and consequently saved from the misery of Christianity altogether!

The first speaker was Baroness Gaitskell who proposed a toast to the guest of honour, Helen Brook. Lady Gaitskell began by saying that she was very glad to be able to stand in for Jill Tweedie (who had been called away on business) and said, "As a guest of the National Secular Society I find myself in congenial but unhallowed company; for I have always been an agnostic". She had also affirmed when taking her seat in the House of Lords. During her spell as a U.K. delegate at the United Nations for four years she had noticed that while women delegates from Asia were keen advocates of birth control, the same could not be said of men, particularly from Africa and South America—"Birth control reflected on their potency!" Furthermore, although we had come a long way in the last fifty years population control was still an urgent matter. The greatest obstacle to birth control in the poorer parts of the world was religion.

Lady Gaitskell went on to describe Helen Brook as an old and close friend who in the nine years since she founded the Centres named after her had worked wonders with fund raising and administration, despite the jealousy and hypocrisy of some of the older generation who desired to see the young kept ignorant. The success of the Brook Advisory Centres had been remarkable, "but perhaps one should never be surprised about one's friends—or enemies!" Progress had indeed been good, but there was still a need to be vigilant: the permissive society was faced by waves of reaction such as the anti-pornography movement which was riding on a high tide of hypocrisy. Helen Brook and her Advisory Centres had done a wonderful job for young people and their parents. She and "the valiant pioneer women" in the birth control movement deserved all honour for their vision and energy. Lady Gaitskell concluded her speech by mentioning the 1877 edition of Charles Knowlton's pamphlet, *Fruits of Philosophy*, which had been republished by Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant. It was no exaggeration to say that the progress made by the Family Planning Association and the Brook Advisory Centres was the fruits of secularism.

Replying to the toast Helen Brook said that she had joined the "army of hard-working, anonymous women" in

# S AND NOTES

the family planning movement because she wanted to see the concept of birth control generally accepted, and every child a wanted child; she wanted to free women from the fear of unwanted pregnancies and to press the Government into making birth control an integral part of the provisions of the National Health Service. Mrs. Brooke also paid tribute to her many friends and colleagues, particularly the late Margaret Pyke and Lord Brain, without whose help the conflict would have been even harder. "Ten years ago I was hot news; now my work is discussed at stuffy country dinner parties." In the early days "most of us kept our hats on when interviewing". Since then means tests had been abolished and interviewers were a thing of the past.

Speaking of the "early days" of the family planning movement Helen Brooke said she had been surprised how prejudiced and narrow-minded some of the workers themselves were: one woman had been refused help because she had openly admitted she did not like children—"but then we were family planners". On another occasion she had arranged (in the days before the "pill") for a young woman who was getting married to be fitted with a cap. A few months later she returned, pregnant and furious, and "it was all my fault". She had been told to put the cap in every evening before going to bed *but nobody thought of the afternoon!*

Public opinion on birth control, said Helen Brook, had largely been influenced by a friendly press. She thanked Lady Gaitskell for her speech and for championing family planning in the House of Lords; and the N.S.S. for assisting the change in public opinion. There was, however, she concluded, "still much to do, and many more to be converted to a civilised way of life". The ultimate aim should be the production of a free and perfect form of birth control that could be obtained without any prescription.

The toast to the National Secular Society was proposed by George Melly, film critic, musician, writer, and member of the N.S.S. Distinguished Members' Panel, who began by saying that he was not going to sing—despite requests from several middle-aged guests! He pointed out that the traditional work of the Society was still relevant: Christianity, for instance, was not yet dead on its feet and was still very much in evidence. We were menaced on three sides as strongly as ever. First there was the recent backlash of the Festival of Light, some of whose supporters might be amiable but mistaken—like Lord Longford; but others of whom were sinister and "dedicated to obscurantism and oppression". Mr. Melly quoted some choice phrases he had heard himself from such people:

"Fornication is as bad as murder . . . It leads to it."

"Hanging is the hinge pin of British justice."

They seriously believed, he said, that sex unless sanctified by Christian marriage was a sin, "And even then they keep their pyjamas on and adopt the missionary position". The Festival of Light had on their side many figures who would like to see society frightened, suppressed and inhibited.

The second menace, Mr. Melly went on, was authoritarian politics. He had some sympathy for adolescents who turned to Trotskyism: "(a) They are young, and (b) they are faced with this Government!" But Trotsky was an authoritarian, and authoritarianism, whether of the left or right demanded the acceptance of received truths: "Do this; think that". Freethinkers must oppose such attitudes.

Thirdly, we were menaced by the hippies—not by all—but by those who were "cuckoo for God", and, like the

White Queen, "believed in six impossible things before breakfast". Glastonbury was fast becoming the Heathrow of the flying saucer band. Mr. Melly warned against the influence of "those for whom enigma is all-seducing". We must fight, he said, for reason and the idea of free choice, which is what the N.S.S. had been doing for ages and ages. He doubted if mankind really had freedom of choice, "but we must act all the time as though we have it."

On behalf of the N.S.S. Michael Lloyd-Jones replied to the toast by saying that it was hard to follow George Melly: "People have been arrested for doing less". In the field of social law reform (such as birth control, abortion, feminism and divorce) the N.S.S. had been there right at the beginning and had rarely had any thanks when reforms were won. It had not, like some of the churches, jumped on to the bandwagon as this lurched over the finishing line.

Mr. Lloyd-Jones went on to say that the N.S.S. and its members should not be afraid to continue with their traditional opposition to organised religion, despite those who said they were "out of touch with educational developments" and that "Old fuddy-duddy R.I. has been replaced by new, swinging R.E.". There had been no real change of aim. The object was still to provide a suitable climate for the implanting of Christian beliefs. In primary schools, in particular, the crudest superstitions were still inculcated. If the N.S.S. was to remain active, he concluded, it must continue to have an active membership, and members must do all they could to further the Society's aims and principles. "We must go out and make ourselves heard."

## NINETY YEARS AGO

"Worshipping by telephone is becoming quite common in some parts of America. By and bye this sort of thing will all be done by contract, and telephone companies will supply sermons at so much a yard."

From *The Freethinker*, 9 April 1882.

## FAITH DISGUST

One of the most unpleasant excrescences of evangelical Christian imperialism received at this office is *Faith Digest*, a brightly-coloured monthly published by the Osborn Foundation Limited, whose prime movers are two international evangelists, T. L. and Daisy Osborn. The Osborns spread their soulwinning attempts throughout the Third World, backed up by all the expensive adjuncts of modern technology.

To state that Osborn's claims border on the miraculous is no exaggeration. During T. L. Osborn's "crusade" in Trinidad, *Faith Digest* writes of the following befalling "a young Moslem lad", Harold Khan:

One of Harold's legs was a full 5½ inches shorter than the other. Believing on Christ, the young man was saved from his sins and made completely whole in his body—his crippled leg lengthening to normal size in one miraculous moment.

The Osborn syndicate has also learned the successful art of serving both God and Mammon, as is evinced by the following testimonials:

God has been good to me ever since I began sending my "Firstfruits" for soulwinning. I was made a beneficiary to an insurance policy which amounted to \$5,000, and after I had settled some accounts there still remained \$3,000.50.

God is good. I sent \$100 to you for worldwide soulwinning and he has returned to me \$1,100. Truly his pact cannot fail.

It is ironic, when one reads this sort of missionary propaganda, that Christians should have the temerity to assail Humanists for their "materialism". Even more tragic is the fact that pre-industrial cultures are being lured and destroyed by systematic evangelism of this type.

## PAMPHLET

**MAN AND THE SHADOW** (53rd Conway Memorial Lecture) by Laurens van der Post.

South Place Ethical Society, 10p.

This pamphlet gives the text of the 1971 Conway Memorial Lecture. In it Laurens van der Post takes as his main theme the origin of colour prejudice, particularly as shown in his own country of South Africa. He seeks to account for this prejudice in terms of Jung's concept of the Shadow, the archetypal survival in the collective unconscious of the untamed, savage relics of man's distant past. He argues his case with great skill and eloquence. If he had been content to point out that all of us have tendencies to violence and hatred that sometimes threaten to overwhelm our consciousness and sometimes succeed—his thesis would have been undeniable. But this concept of a collective unconscious with its archetypal traces of human and prehuman experience offered as an explanation of colour prejudice, seems to me obscurantist and uninformative. Beyond some interesting parallels in the symbolism used in folklore, myth and primitive art, it seems to have very little scientific foundation.

This kind of thinking tends to defend itself by derogating reason and science, suggesting that there are other intuitive roads to knowledges of which the poet and the artist are the supreme guides. The poet and the artist certainly help us to become aware of the richness and variety of experience but any claims to truths, from whatever source, must be subject to critical examination, to demands for evidence and logical support. Mr. van der Post must be aware how easily one can be deceived by "insights" and "intuitions" if they are unsupported by critical examination. Reasoning, not "instinct", is our only protection against self-deception and wishful-thinking. Applied to the problem of colour prejudice it cannot be satisfied with vague references to archetypal tendencies. There is plenty of scope in economic, social and psychological fields for research. Already, for example, researches have shown that people who are particularly hostile to other groups tend to have had authoritarian upbringings, insecure and unhappy home-backgrounds. Hard research rather than dramatic explanations, with guesses and intuitions critically examined, are required before we can claim to have discovered the origin of colour, or any other kind of prejudice.

Mr. van der Post talks as if we place too much weight on reason and science today, suggesting that we should listen more attentively to the instinctive, the intuitive, the natural within us. The tragedy is, in fact, that reason is still a small voice; that we respond rather to the irrational promptings from within and disregard the evidence and arguments that rational, scientific thinking makes available.

REUBEN OSBORN

## BOOKS

**LOVE AND HATE: On the Natural History of Basic Behaviour Patterns** by Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, translated from the German by Geoffrey Strachan.

Methuen, £2.50.

Ethology, the study of animal behaviour, is a relatively new science, and one which especially in the field of human behaviour, has largely dwelt in the realms of philosophical hypothesis rather than experiment and observation. Writers on human behaviour patterns have tended, over the years, to alternate between the optimism of the

## FREETHINKER

Rousseau school—the noble savage who would be perfect but for the shortcomings of an imperfect environment; and the pessimists, who regard man as basically incurably depraved and vicious, with only a brittle, superficial and inadequate veneer of civility.

Professor Eibl-Eibesfeldt, himself a student of the pioneer behaviourist Konrad Lorenz, has produced an enthralling account of his own experience and theories of human behaviour patterns and their counterparts in other animals. On the old argument over heredity versus environment he is, primarily at least, an heredity man: "Man certainly does not possess fewer innate drives than other higher mammals, if anything he possesses more". His book is, in many respects, a timely restatement of naturalism in ethics, for as the author contends: "there are in fact innate norms for our ethical behaviour". Eibl-Eibesfeldt proceeds to demolish the traditional argument that normal evolutionary selection pressures would tend to eliminate altruistic behaviour, citing as examples injured frigate birds and pelicans which could only have survived in a breeding colony by being fed by their fellows. He maintains that hitherto the aggressive drives in man, and other creatures, have not been properly set against the bonding mechanisms that are also present, and which act as the natural counterpoise of aggression. Eibl-Eibesfeldt regards these patterns as being derived from a parental-cherishing instinct, rather than Freudian sublimated sexuality: "The roots of love are not in sexuality, although love makes use of it in the secondary strengthening of the bond". In other words, the Father of Psychoanalysis got his first premise topsy-turvy!

Freethinkers, particularly, will enjoy this book, even if they do not necessarily agree with all the author's conclusions. He has produced, for instance, devastating arguments against the old "natural law" objection to contraception, citing pseudo-copulation behaviour in various primates which serves no reproductive function, but which has become modified to serve purely as a "gesture of greeting and appeasement". He also produces evidence in support of "monotropy"—the innate tendency to form especial relationships with a single individual, which, if this proves correct means that alternative societies for child-rearing such as communes are foredoomed to failure. Eibl-Eibesfeldt also points out that "the moralistic misunderstanding of sexuality—in particular on the part of Christian ethics—carries with it the danger of trivialising relationships between the sexes, which, in having their sexual content repressed, are being robbed of their most specifically human values. Furthermore every repression in this field . . . leads to increased aggression. Many a sadistic perversion has its roots in this . . . Repression also leads to feelings of guilt . . . [and] feelings of guilt make men easily led. It is not least for this reason that the untenable doctrine of original sin was cultivated for centuries". In this context it is a pity that the author does not follow up further his comment that violence and sadism portrayed in the mass media give "cause for considerable concern", or what should be done about this.

Professor Eibesfeldt's concluding chapters are given to considering the modern human predicament in large, overpopulated, anonymous communities, and our prospects for the future. Basically, he agrees with Desmond Morris that industrialised *Homo sapiens* is living under "zoo" conditions, though his prognosis is somewhat more optimistic than that of Morris. Eibl-Eibesfeldt also disagrees with Desmond Morris over the behavioural significance of the

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human breast, which he shows is not, as Morris supposes "a copy of the buttock, projected on to the front of the body".

This book is worth reading if only to dip into for the snippets of anecdote and observation. Who would have thought that one can make friends with a normally most aggressive heron by offering it a piece of reed as an appeasement signal, or that in the world of macaques "a male can increase its social rank by busying itself with a child . . . A male managed to join the central group by cuddling an infant", just like a human politician currying favour by kissing babies! The book also contains a number of charming illustrations, and, as a sop to scientific accuracy, miniatures of the photographs from which many of these were drawn are added at the back.

Your reviewer is left, after reading this book, with a certain Wildean sense of unease in that it has flattered so many of his "common sense" prejudices about human nature, but I think we may rest assured that the author will not be allowed to have the last word in other quarters. The argument on the nature of Man is by no means over, but *Love and Hate* is well worth reading for ammunition before joining in the fray!

L. G. BEELZEBUB

**SEX, GENDER AND SOCIETY** by Ann Oakley.

Published by Maurice Temple Smith in association with New Society, 95 p [Hardcover £1.80].

How much do we know about the difference between men and women in this day of the women's liberation movement? If you are interested in finding out, here is a good book. Sociologist Ann Oakley investigates what differences exist between men and women and what significance they have for the way men and women behave and are treated in society. She makes it clear in the Introduction that her aim is "to replace dogmatism by insight" and "to separate value-judgements from statements of fact." Her approach is dispassionate. She draws evidence from many sources covering biology, anthropology, and sociology.

The definition of the terms, "sex" and "gender" should be first kept in mind. Miss Oakley explains:

"Sex" is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible differences in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. "Gender" however is matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into "masculine" and "feminine".

As she remarks, there is a great deal of confusion about biological and cultural differences between men and women in our society.

Aggressiveness is one of the major traits used in defining masculine and feminine behaviour. Some scientists produce evidence for the genetic and hormonal control of the difference between the sexes in this trait. But Miss Oakley's evidence is that greater female aggressiveness is found in some primitive societies and that parents' treatment of aggressiveness in their offspring varies according to their sex: encouraging that quality in male children and discouraging it in girls. She makes an interesting comparison of male and female patterns in the statistics of suicide, homicide and criminal behaviour. In reference to the offence of rape, she points out that "there is no legal provision for a situation in which the woman is the aggressor and the man, the victim." On sex and personality in general, she concludes that while "it is obvious that culture

plays an important part in the shaping of male and female personality . . . , it seems possible that biology may indicate the *direction* of the difference, although not its extent."

Once the smaller size of the female brain was used as proof of a woman's inferior intellect. Now girls' low scorings at tests for spatial and analytical I.Q.s are used to discredit their overall intelligence. They show superiority in verbal ability. The author thinks more investigation is needed, especially into the patterns of intelligence in other cultures, and of the relationship between intelligence and personality in other societies, before we can pronounce conclusively on the relationship between sex and intellect.

A belief persists in our society that the female's sexuality lies in her receptiveness and that she is slower to reach orgasm. The chapter on sexuality presents some research findings which contradict it. Differences in male and female sexuality are not universal: a report tells that "women with a low capacity for orgasm were less confident and less sure of themselves, more emotionally unstable and sensitive, and more conformist in their attitudes towards authority and convention." Cultural influences seem to be important here, too.

Modern society emphasises the importance of the social relationship between mother and child in the first years of its life as the foundation of its future security and mental health. Miss Oakley asks why it should always be the mother that cuddles and looks after the baby, and not the father. Among the Arapesh and the Trobriand Islanders, fathers share all the routine cares of the children with mothers. She thinks the assumption in Western society that fathers need not share much of the child care with mothers principally originates in its economic system which makes it almost impossible for fathers to stay much at home.

Many mothers are not aware of a part they are playing in perpetuating the accepted social roles of male and female. In guiding the child's choice of toys, for example, some mothers are not conscious of what they are doing—that they are encouraging the child to adopt the appropriate sex rôle. There is often a discrepancy between mothers' beliefs and what they actually do. A psychologist asked mothers whether they discriminated in their treatment of boys and girls. The majority of those mothers gave egalitarian answers, but their answers on specific practices revealed a marked tendency to act out traditional norms.

The discrepancy between the egalitarian ideology and discriminatory practices abound in industry and in politics. Miss Oakley says this is basically because people continue to attach importance to what they believe "masculine" and "feminine". Those beliefs are strangely incongruous with the changes that have taken place in women's lives in our society. Now the average woman has two or three children, most women do not breast-feed their babies, and the life span of women is about 75 years, of which perhaps only two or three years are spent in pregnancy and in lactation. Miss Oakley thinks "it may be the family which insists on traditional gender-rôle differentiation in a more deterministic fashion than any other social or economic force."

After reading Miss Oakley's book, we come to realise, or are reminded of, depending on what we knew previously on the subject, the fact that there is still much unknown about origins of the apparent differences between men and women, whether they are biological, intellectual, psychological, or social differences. I believe that better knowledge will lead to wiser treatment of the differences and wiser solution of problems involved in them. It will serve to enhance the happiness of both men and women which is after all the goal of the women's liberation movement.

T.S.

# LETTERS

## Political Commitment

Though not exactly bewildered, this reader is rather puzzled by some implications in both J. W. Fretton's letter and the editorial comments which accompany it in *The Freethinker* of 18 March.

As far as political subjects in *The Freethinker* go, Mr. Fretton seems to imply that the more "controversial" they are the less space they should be given. One wonders whether Mr. Fretton would apply the same "relative standard" to religious subjects. After all, the "existence" of Jesus Christ does appear to be a controversial subject even amongst the non-religious.

As far as "party politics" go, the editorial comment seems to imply that the paper is committed—outside the "narrowest sense" of "party politics". One supposes such a "commitment" to be no more than to the wide fields of 'social justice'. After all, there are even in the best political parties—political "Gods and Religions" which *The Freethinker* is surely committed to oppose—and the more controversial the subject, the more space, surely!

C. BYASS.

## Literary Standards of "The Freethinker"

I am saddened to see that the new editor of *The Freethinker* has seen fit regularly to include some rather heavy-handed humour. This is doubtless a sincere attempt to introduce a lighter note to these historic columns.

Admittedly, one man's humour can be another's boredom. "Ignorance" as Lady Bracknell said, "is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone", and similarly when humour is clumsily used to labour philosophical or political points, the bloom wilts sadly and rapidly.

In the first six issues in 1972, we have had four articles by Charles Byass, two by William Welsh and one by Mollie M. Watson. Regretfully, I must protest. Painfully unfunny, these are far below the literary and philosophical standards we have come to expect in *The Freethinker*.

We have also suffered a marked recent diminution in the *Freethinker* Reviews—surely one of our most popular and important features. Please, Mr. Sinnott, more reviews and less of puerilities more suited to *The Schoolboy's Own* or *Playland*.

Wahroonga, N.S.W., Australia.

BENJAMIN R. BENSLEY.

## The Editor comments:

Mr. Bensley's letter demonstrates that one simply cannot please "all of the people all of the time"! Only a few days before this one, I received another letter grumbling about the reviews ousting space that should be devoted to articles.

Although Mr. Bensley is entitled to his opinion, I must beg to differ with his criticism of articles by Byass, Watson and Welsh. As regards the overall content of the paper I can only say that, if one assumes that written comment reflects the feelings of the general readership, then I am of the opinion that Mr. Bensley's feelings are by no means widely shared.

## Man and Nature

I agree with Barbara Smoker and B. Hinde (*Freethinker* letters 18 and 25 March) that population control is vital if we wish to preserve the integrity of the environment. But it is only part of the solution.

The reason I object to the idea that "Human beings come first" is because some people will mistakenly interpret this to mean that we should continue to dominate and exploit Nature in the vain attempt to give everyone the "good life" even if this entails further destruction of the countryside and wild-life.

What is desperately needed today is not slogan-mongering but a complete and drastic re-examination of our religions and philosophies and a change in our attitude to Nature from the present one of competition and exploitation to one of understanding and co-operation.

We should remember what Francis Bacon said long ago: "Man may command Nature, but only by obeying her".

Here may lie the other part of the solution to the "environmental crisis".

D. C. TAYLOR.

## Responsibility after Arrest

In his review of *To Encourage The Others* by David Yallop, Michael Lloyd-Jones implies that a person under arrest cannot justly be held jointly responsible for anything that another person may do after that arrest. But surely, one can be held under arrest and yet encourage another person to commit a crime by shouting some such encouragement—and should the other person act on that encouragement, one can, surely justly be held jointly responsible for the other person's act.

I raise this point as a matter outside the Craig-Bentley murder case, and would also suggest, in general, that it would be insensitive to consider that illiterates and/or epileptics are necessarily "less responsible" for whatever they may do than literates and non-epileptics.

I should perhaps add that, in my belief, Bentley should not have been hanged.

CHARLES BYASS.

## Public Ignorance about Epilepsy

I am disturbed by the review in *The Freethinker* of 25 March of *To Encourage The Others*. I have not read David Yallop's book but must remark that the words "Bentley was not only illiterate, he was also an epileptic" shows a remarkable ignorance of the problem of epilepsy.

There is no such thing as an "epileptic".

As the Report *People with Epilepsy* (1969) made clear—epilepsy is not a disease but a symptom.

If Bentley did suffer from epilepsy one must not suggest this makes him a murderer. I do accept that David Yallop tries to prove the reverse. But the present public ignorance of epilepsy must find no place on the pages of *The Freethinker*.

One person in two hundred in this country suffers from epilepsy. The majority live normal lives. Indeed, the sufferer could be your closest friend. Under present public thinking he/she is not likely to tell you.

Many sufferers accept the wrong jobs—the only ones offered. This in turn can make the condition something that need never be. So next time you hear the word "epilepsy" don't thug your head in pity.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

## SECRETARY

### LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

The Leicester Secular Society is seeking a new Secretary to replace Mr. C. H. Hammersley, who retires in June. Duties are not onerous, and include arranging Sunday evening lectures, attending committee meetings and dealing with correspondence, etc. Applicants should live in the Leicester area and be willing to join the Society. Out-of-pocket expenses will be paid.

Applications to the  
Secretary, Leicester Secular Society, 75 Humberstone  
Gate, Leicester.

## UNIVERSAL LOVE

Could all love all, we'd happy be,  
Each other's faults we should not see.  
But give applause to each one's deeds,  
And thus we'd sow ambition's seeds.

We'd help our fellow creatures all.  
The mighty and the very small.  
Thus we should have a Heaven on earth,  
Not waiting for a great re-birth.

LILLIE HOUGHTON.