

THE FREETHINKER

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HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE LAW

Readers of this paper may have a better idea than the Editor of the measures necessary to engineer a "conspiracy" to outrage and corrupt public morals; but if ever there was a vacuous form of words, this seems to be one. None the less, the law lords have recently seen fit to reject an appeal by the publishers of *IT* (formerly the *International Times*) against conviction on just such a charge, based upon the publishing of "gay" advertisements. By a 4 to 1 majority the Lords decided that the publishers had, on the one hand, conspired to corrupt public morals; but, on the other, had *not* conspired to outrage public decency. A nice distinction, but one which will still cost *IT* a hefty fine.

Irrational attitudes to homosexuals

Despite the legalisation of male homosexuality a few years ago, society's attitude to this problem seems as irrational and prejudiced as ever. The man-in-the-street still seems to think of the homosexual as an irresponsible neurotic, a corrupter of youth, or a loiterer around public lavatories; this despite the fact that for every maladjusted homosexual who seeks psychiatric help, or who comes before the courts for making a public nuisance of himself, there are plenty of others (not so newsworthy, of course) who live reasonable, well-adjusted lives, and make a perfectly valid and useful contribution to society, both professionally and otherwise. This mythology has quite probably contributed (for example) to the continuation of "queer bashing" by hooligans long after the "Blackmailers Charter" was repealed.

Quite apart from the fact that *IT* was clearly written for a minority clientele (and much of its contents only intelligible to those with a detailed knowledge of up-to-date underground slang) it is difficult to understand how homosexual personal advertisements "corrupt public morals" any more than the "lonely hearts" columns of other papers which cater for heterosexuals. Presumably the pitfalls and caveats to be observed by those answering personal columns are comparable, whether homo- or heterosexual in nature. There is, after all, no guarantee that the "handsome bachelor, 45, penthouse, Jaguar" seeking "buxom, blonde lady with taste for adventure" will not turn out to be a rapist, white-slaver, or psychopathic killer. In other words, people answering such advertisements are expected to use their judgement and common sense, and nobody has seriously advocated banning "lonely hearts" columns so long as these are not a "front" for prostitution.

Inconsistent and cruel

If we accept that homosexuality between consenting adults should be lawful, then it is inconsistent and cruel to outlaw "lonely hearts" columns for homosexuals; many of them feel quite isolated enough already, and would welcome a discrete and socially desirable means of finding a suitable partner. There seems little doubt that if homosexuals were given greater opportunities to meet one

another through the press or through properly run "gay" clubs, this would add greatly to their own happiness and also help to eradicate blackmail, soliciting in public, and other anti-social facets of this way of life.

As for the the more way-out ambosexual and homosexual advertisements in *IT*, it is very unlikely that they misled—let alone "corrupted"—anyone, and some of them were hilariously entertaining examples of prose and human vanity: they were at least gay!

IRELAND AND HISTORY

History has a curious way of repeating itself. Fifty years ago Ireland witnessed the siege of the Four Courts in Dublin and the beginning of a bitter civil war between the Free-Staters, who accepted the 1921 treaty with Britain, and the republican "irregulars" who repudiated the Treaty as a sell-out, and who insisted on a 32-county republic and no constitutional ties with Britain. It is surely no exaggeration to say that one of the decisive factors in swinging the tide of that war in the Treatyites' favour was the action of the Catholic Church in supporting the Free State, and, eventually threatening the anti-Treaty republicans with excommunication.

In recent weeks the Catholic hierarchy has found itself at loggerheads with the I.R.A., and particularly with its Provisional wing, for their insistence on prolonging the campaign of violence in Northern Ireland. The situation was the more ironic as the Provisionals' conception of Irish society falls much closer to the Catholic, corporatist version than the socialist/Marxist republic of the Officials. There was little doubt as to the "favourite" had the confrontation come to a showdown.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lynch (as ever wishing to appear "relevant" in the melodrama) has been making noises about negotiations for a "new Ireland" and pointing out that a new unified state, whilst containing a Catholic majority, would also be "heir to the non-sectarian principles of Irish republicanism." This sounds like another kipper-on-a-string, but we live in hope!

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Editor: NIGEL SINNOTT

103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1 1NL

Telephone: 01-407 1251

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.

Rationalist Press Association. Conference on "Rationalism and Humanism in the New Europe," Churchill College, Cambridge, 11-13 August. British and Continental speakers. Coach from and back to London. Details from R.P.A., 88 Islington High Street, London N1 8EW (Telephone: 01-226 7251). Bookings close 28 July.

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.

Havering Humanist Society, Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane. Tuesday, 4 July, 7.45 p.m.: John Black, "Halfway Round the World and Back."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 2 July, 11 a.m.: M. F. H. Roe, "Sanctions."

NEWS

FEUERBACH MONUMENT RESTORED

The *American Rationalist* reports that the monument to Professor Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804-1872), the famous philosopher and atheist, has been rebuilt at Nuernberg despite the howls from local religious leaders over the inscription: "Man created God according to his image." The first monument was destroyed by the Nazis in 1933.

MATERIALISM AND SPIRITUALISM

One of the more idiotic and downright nasty offerings of the religious press recently appeared in the *Salvationists' War Cry* for 17 June. "Whenever someone falls in love," wrote Major Will Clark in that number, "... a purely materialistic view of life is contradicted . . ."

... It is a fact that you cannot believe in the possibility of falling in love and at the same time think of people as simply chance combinations of atoms—unless, that is, you are prepared to try to explain that heady experience in chemical terms.

If you do try, one thing is certain: you have never been in love!

—Really? But not content with this pompous proclamation, the gallant Major goes even further:

This is true also of admitting to finding delight in music or in literature. To those who give only a materialistic interpretation of life, music must be merely the action on the ears of sound waves, nothing more . . . But we all know that this is not a sufficient explanation of the inspiration of a Beethoven sonata or a poem by Browning.

Nor can we explain in purely chemical terms all those heroic, self-sacrificing deeds of which the story of mankind is full. That there is in life a quality that transcends the material just cannot be denied.

But, of course, it can—and is. Major Clark's argument is a standard Christian con-trick whose devices will be apparent to anyone who has ever heard the old story of "The Emperor's New Clothes."

Major Clark commits the usual spiritualist's fallacy of supposing that there is an essential dichotomy between matter and its properties by which it is, of necessity, perceived. As for falling in love, this is quite explicable in materialist terms as a sophisticated form of what (in some other animals) we call pair-bonding, which has obvious social survival value as do other forms of "self-sacrifice." Verily there is more on a materialistic earth than the Major ever dreams of under a spiritual heaven! And if he has never met a materialist poet, lover, or musician, he deserves our sympathy.

Frankly, a material Cheshire cat is by no means less plausible than a disembodied, "transcendent" grin!

ON SECULARISM

"The rise in secularism is pushing the State forward and the Church backward, particularly in the fields of welfare, health and education."

These were the words of Cardinal John Wright, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, speaking at a Liverpool press conference on 11 June last. Not content, however, to concede the field to the infidel, the Cardinal allowed himself a brief indulgence in *non sequitur* and wishful thinking:

"I think because it depends to a great extent on an enormous technological knowledge, it carries within it the seeds of its own destruction. When the spirit reaches the point where it is suffocated . . . secularism destroys itself." (He hopes!)

AND NOTES

DUBIOUS DOCTORATE

Another contribution to the current saga of doubtful academic awards: received at the *Freethinker* office recently was an envelope containing an elaborate address to the effect that the Editor of this paper had been awarded the degree of "Doctor of Divinity" by the Church of Aphrodite Pandemos, Balham, for "dedication to Peace, Love [and] Freedom . . ."

The Editor has no objections to love and freedom, but we wonder if the citation would have included "peace" had the Church of Aphrodite known that he had, in fact, been a party to the founding of the National Union of Warmongers* back in 1970. Other co-founders were Dr. Ilych Haczetmann ("positive" humanist and moral education crusader), Feargus O Flaithbheartaigh (the Fenian Firebrand of Finsbury Park), the Rev. Dr. William Mountjoy McGrundy (Loyalist and Sabbatarian), Cardinal Kraftij (the former Ustashi chaplain), the late Major-General Ali ("Massacre-Pasha") Ghore, and last, but not least, the Hon. Peregrine Burke (editor of the people's revolutionary atheist daily, *The Episcopophagist*). We have been precluded by lack of space from carrying reports of meetings of the N.U.W., but we hope to rectify this matter in the near future.

* Affiliated to the International Federation of Militarists.

AS OTHERS SEE US

"What can London do to end the mayhem in Northern Ireland? It . . . can guarantee equal rights for all Ulstermen. But the best thing London could do is something it is not likely to do: end religious segregation in education. That course might enable Ulstermen to learn to live together, but it would run counter to the unwise British policy of providing nearly full public funding for sectarian private schools, begun in Scotland in 1918, in England and Wales in 1944, and in Northern Ireland after 1921."

—From the May issue of *Church & State* (Silver Spring, U.S.A.).

FIFTY YEARS AGO

We have often been told that the U.S.A. is not a land for old-world despots, but of democrats and humanitarians. From this quarter for many years we were urged to settle our disputes, not by armed force but by arbitration. Mr. W. J. Bryan, who recently conducted a campaign against Darwin and evolution, was one of the most eloquent of the internationalists. Now Harvard University appears to be falling into line with America's other academic institutions. The university authorities, said to be largely under the domination of clerical influence, have been recently criticised for discrimination against Jewish students, while coloured students have been excluded altogether from the Freshmen's quarters. Most Americans assure us that theirs is "God's own country." We are inclined to think there is something in this assurance.

—From *The Freethinker*, 2 July 1922.

GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND CHARITY

Verily the inconsistent and anachronistic nature of the present charity laws passeth all understanding. According to the *Catholic Herald* (16 June) a charitable bequest,

established in 1618 by the will of Sir Samuel Lennard, provided for an annual sermon to be preached at West Wickham Parish Church each 5 November in "thanksgiving for God's deliverance of this country from the powder-treason . . . plotted or contrived by the Satanical Lymbes of that anti-Christian and hereticke of Rome."

Now, alas, in this trendy, ecumenical age, the Charity Commissioners have decided in their wisdom to divert the money from the bequest towards the upkeep of St. John the Baptist Anglican Church, West Wickham. An odd decision, when one considers that there must be at least one church in, say, Northern Ireland, able, and very willing, to administer and effect this charity in the style and manner of its founder's intentions.

DIGGER DEPRAVITY

Mrs. Grundy is alive and well, and has emigrated to Australia! The following appeared in the correspondence columns of the *West Australian* (Perth):

While swimming at a popular metropolitan beach last Saturday I was horrified to see two little girls and a little boy completely naked running around unabashed in full view of other children and adults, too.

This unashamed encouragement of exposing the flesh has a corrupting influence on all those who witness such a depraving spectacle as the one I saw. Beach nudity must stop . . .

We never fail to be amazed at the list of phenomena likely to corrupt and deprave some people. It is perhaps a mercy that legislation insisting that babies be born into this world wearing Bermuda shorts could not be enforced (but do not count on it!).

WAR OF THE ROSARIES

Nothing, it would appear, is sacred in this wicked, materialistic day and age. According to the *Sunday Telegraph* (18 June) Italian rosary manufacturers are up in arms because Japanese producers are undercutting their prices by some fifty per cent. In consequence, Italian rosary production has slumped from 2 million to 500,000 rosaries a year, and there is little prospect, nowadays, of being able to dispatch a Papal gunboat to Tokyo bay!

EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

According to the *Times Educational Supplement* (16 June) the constitutional status of Bangladesh as a secular state is being translated into action. Education is being purged of the "religious dogmatism" fostered during the Pakistani régime, and a number of textbooks are being rewritten.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

An address by William Lovett—a name to be venerated by all Democrats—has been widely circulated, condemnatory of cruel and degrading punishments. . . . Lads, whose original offence was no worse than trespass in pursuit of game, catch for some breach of prison rules a horrible laceration with the "cat." This fearful instrument is also used to the number of twenty lashes on offenders of eleven years old! Such crimes as "having tobacco," "singing in cell," and "misbehaviour in chapel," are punished with five-and-thirty lashes. And those who object to "violent attacks on children," will learn that in London—the centre of civilisation—little ones of *four years old* are punished with ten strokes of a birch rod by the brawny hand of a prison warder!

—From *The National Reformer*, 30 June 1872.

CHRISTIAN INDOCTRINATION IN SCHOOLS

PATRICIA KNIGHT

In these enlightened times, progressive church leaders are constantly telling us that old-fashioned R.I. in schools is a thing of the past; indoctrination has vanished, to be replaced by comparative religion and moral education which would not hurt a secularist fly. But is instructive here to look at the actual Agreed Syllabuses on which R.I. teaching is supposed to be based, for unless the teaching diverges so much from the syllabuses as to be completely opposed to them, we must conclude that moral education is as far off as ever.

I studied the Sunderland *Syllabus of Religious Instruction* (in use in Croydon schools) written in 1944 in the Second World War wave of sentimental piety and not revised since, and the Surrey *Syllabus of Religious Education* written as recently as 1963. Believers in the liberalisation of the churches might expect that the Surrey Syllabus would be a great improvement on the Croydon one. But this was far from the case; the Surrey Syllabus differs only in its more modern layout, language, greater emphasis on teaching methods and aids, and a recognition that the R.I. teacher might come across some "antagonism" from sixth form pupils.

God and Christianity assumed to be true

Both syllabuses start from the assumption that the existence of God and the truth of Christian beliefs are indisputable facts. Croydon: "Theology is the scientific study of the facts . . . These facts include the Being of God," and Surrey quotes approvingly a National Society publication, also of 1963: "In this pamphlet it is assumed that the Christian religion is true and that all children if they are to fulfill the purposes for which they were created should grow up as fully practising Christians." The aim is to produce committed Christians. Croydon: "The goal will be a life of worship and service within the Christian community," and Surrey: pupils should ". . . become full and practising members of a Christian Church." Surrey adds blithely that "The children [in this case aged 7-11] who do not attend Sunday Schools can be encouraged to ask their parents for permission to join."

The syllabuses are both based on the Old and New Testaments, and by an amazing process of sleight-of-hand "logic" the Bible is stated to be true because divinely inspired, and God said to exist because it says so in the Bible. There is to be no awkward Biblical criticism either: ". . . Biblical scholarship today is satisfied with the substantial accuracy of the picture presented to us in the Gospels. They are documents which may be handled with confidence and the contrary view reflects an out-of-date scholarship." (Surrey). As any secularist, or indeed anyone with a cursory knowledge of the subject knows, biblical scholarship is far from being in this happy state of consensus.

Nursery Schools and prayer

Indoctrination starts in the Nursery Schools (3-5 age group), where in both syllabuses young children are to be taught that food, shelter, flowers, etc., are "God's gifts to us his children." Religious training is to be ". . . the very core and centre of the day's activities and experiences"

and is to be integrated into other lessons and extended to drama, drawing, Christmas celebrations and harvest festivals (Croydon), thus making nonsense of the opting out procedure which is supposed to safeguard children's rights. Surrey Syllabus has a very objectionable section on teaching prayer to 7-11 year olds; prayer ". . . is an act of choice . . . Christ knocking and waiting to be invited into the human heart"—so there is no excuse for not being good at it! There is some slight regret that "mastery at prayer" cannot be tested like reading or writing. Presumably children who will not pray properly are morally subnormal!

All through the syllabuses ethics are viewed as the result of Christianity, with references to "helping God by helping other people" (Croydon) and "the evil things that God does not want" (Surrey). It is not of course made clear whether certain forms of behaviour are wrong only because God does not approve of them or whether there is some other standard. But Croydon is certain that "Christian conduct and character are the fruit of the Christian faith, and when once conduct is divorced from belief, conduct will deteriorate inevitably," and Surrey is sure that the world's problems are caused either by sin or by unavoidable natural events like earthquakes.

Religion, colonialism and monarchy

Both syllabuses have very similar lists of "Heroes of the Kingdom" and "great Christians" including such odd examples as General Gordon (an unbalanced prototype of the Christian soldier) and Albert Schweitzer (who has been heavily criticised for his paternalistic attitudes to coloured people). There are numerous references to missionaries as examples of the good work done by the churches, with no mention of course of the rôle they played, and still play, in colonialism. And why include Charles Dickens (Croydon), whose succession of mistresses and separation from his wife certainly would not appeal to the authors of the Syllabus? The sections on church history give the impression that all reformers were Christians and vice versa, and Christianity is even extended to cover the rise of the trade unions, which would have surprised the many secular trade unionists and socialists of the nineteenth century. Like working class history till recently, secularist history is treated as though it were non-existent, and expunged from the history books.

On the question of social problems Croydon contents itself with a few rhetorical questions for older pupils. "Is it necessary to be a Christian in order to be good?" Surrey is more explicit, and launches into a sanctimonious diatribe. On work, "Unpunctuality, going slow and prolonged tea-breaks are as dishonest as short weight and short change;" on power, ". . . We all owe allegiance to our sovereign and to the Government" (who said religion was not part of the ideology of the ruling class?); and, inevitably, "Marriage is the only relationship within which sexual intimacy can lead to all the ends God has designed." One of the ends is (you've guessed it!) "the birth of children." In view of all this it is not surprising that some difficulty is envisaged in Surrey in getting support of pupils for R.I., though "The parents' association . . . may be helpful in enabling the school to enlist the goodwill of parents towards the subject."

Comparative religion no panacea

The most interesting section of both syllabuses was on Comparative Religion (for 15-16 year olds). But this is geared towards trying to prove that Christianity is superior to all other religions which are merely imperfect versions of it. Croydon says "Man is incurably religious"; religions other than Christianity fall into two categories, "immoral polytheism" or "ethical monotheism," both equally bad, and Christianity is "... the climax of the religions of the world." In Surrey the conclusion is that "No development in religion or theology in the last 2,000 years has superseded Him." Comparative religion, sometimes regarded by humanists as the panacea for all R.I. ills, can quite easily result in extolling Christianity. In the same way, were humanism or secularism or other ideologies to be part of a Christian orientated syllabus (this was what the recommendations of the Social Morality Council's *Moral and Religious Education in County Schools* boiled down to),

they would also be treated in a derogatory way and compared unfavourably with Christianity.

Croydon Humanist Society is sending reports on the syllabuses to councillors in Croydon and Surrey and to all Croydon schools. We hope then to get information as to how far the actual teaching conforms to the Syllabus. Both syllabuses assume that teachers are all committed Christians. We think this work is vital to shatter the widespread complacent assumption that all is well. There will be a new education act in the next few years. A Labour Party Study Group working on proposals for an Education Bill have suggested only that opting in to R.I. should replace opting out for pupils aged 16-18. Unless considerable secularist pressure is applied, we will be stuck with the Agreed Syllabuses for the next 30 years, or with new "updated" ones which turn out to be exactly the same as the old.

THE OPPOSITION TO EFFECTIVE BIRTH CONTROL

R. READER

Effective birth control (the reduction of world numbers to conform to the material space/time framework of human existence) entails profound social and economic changes. It is therefore understandable that those who are at present enjoying advantages from the present position (i.e. the leading lights and nightlights of religious neurosis and unlimited quantitative expansion) should oppose all attempts to bring about effective birth control and, at the same time, keep alive the expansionist ideal in all its ramifications. Various ingenious devices are being used to achieve these ends, and it is interesting to trace some of them, for they throw a good deal of light on otherwise inexplicable aspects of our daily lives.

The campaign against effective birth control opened some two decades ago by a boosting of the ego of the young (the keystones of procreation). Little by little, the period of adolescence, formerly known as a period of callow immaturity, through which all of use are obliged to pass, was represented by press, radio, television and literature as being, on the contrary, the most significant age in the life of a human being—perhaps the most important. Very soon, a select minority of the young were earning gigantic sums which no life of genuine service and ability could possibly command—and were held up as an example (albeit unattainable) to the rest.

Next, in many countries the law courts began to pass progressively lighter sentences on "youths" and "young offenders." The word "hooligan" disappeared from the dictionary.

Making do with less and less

Following this conditioning of attitudes towards the young came conditioning of the young themselves. Economic expansion had early realised that, on a planet on which there can never be enough for all, further expansion is possible only if each individual is made, progressively, to do with less and less. Therefore, after the "teen-age" cult, we saw the "mini" cult. The victims of this conditioning were soon eating mini-steaks in mini-flats, cooked on mini-cookers; wearing mini-clothes in mini-offices, enjoying mini-haircuts and consuming the pres-

cribed brands of mini-cigarettes, medicines and drugs. For diversions, they had mini-art, mini-science, mini-music, or just noise. The whole thing was, in fact, the deliberate manufacture of beings who, although still incontestably *Homo sapiens*, had a fixed, predetermined pattern of reactions, thoughts, emotions, ambitions, hates, and loves (and consequently a fixed, predetermined pattern of behaviour) directed solely to serving the ends of unlimited quantitative expansion. In short, *caricatures* of human beings were produced, modelled along expansionist lines.

The next menace to unlimited expansion—and a very real one—was the contraceptive pill. This threatened a world in which every individual would be in complete control of the *results* of his or her sexual life, and consequently a world in which every individual would be less amenable to subsequent economic exploitation. A campaign was therefore launched to associate the Pill with the incidence of certain diseases. It is not necessary to go into detailed medical evidence, either for or against the Pill, to see that the net result of the controversy has been to discourage many women from taking it—and therefore to offset its beneficial results on the birthrate.

But the blame for this absurd exploitation of a normal biological function cannot be placed entirely on religious neurosis and economic expansion. The over-adulation of procreation and young life goes back to ages in which abundant reproduction was humanity's only means of survival against the ravages of predatory beasts and natural cataclysms. That age of the caverns and the mammoths has long passed, but we still have individuals who think that they are circumventing death, and perhaps creating an audience by begetting numerous offspring; and their attitude is stimulated and kept alive by the machinations of those who procure advantages, either material or illusory, from the situation.

Confronted by extinction

The suppression of these machinations is an indispensable first step to the liberation of humanity. We must hold fast to the hope that, even now, when time is fast running out, there will occur the sorely-needed mental

(Continued on page 215)

BOOKS

CHANCE AND NECESSITY; an Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology by Jacques Monod. Translated by Austryn Wainhouse. Collins, £1.75.

This work has already established an international reputation prior to its present English translation. It combines the rather incongruous rôles of a cosmopolitan best seller and a major scientific treatise; one that aims, and without any beating about the bush, at effecting a complete scientific revolution. Also a philosophical revolution that has for its declared aim nothing else, or less than, the abolition, final and total elimination of traditional philosophy altogether. In the universe as viewed by Monod, causation, purpose, teleology of any kind, is entirely absent. We are the necessary products of chance! It is this austere gospel that our French author expounds with a Gallic lucidity that has already provoked comparisons with his great French predecessor Diderot. Monod appears to represent a kind of "Athanasius contra mundum" against the current ideologies of both Left and Right.

The author, a Nobel prize winner in chemistry and a Fellow of our own Royal Society, evidently regards himself as a modern Democritus, to whom, not only terrestrial (including human) life, but also the entire cosmos represents the product of "Chance and Necessity". This terse aphorism of the original Democritus (fourth century B.C.) adorns his title page, and both gives the book its title and represents its essential underlying thesis. All that exists, ever has existed, or ever will exist, represents the offspring of this unique combination. Monod writes:

Immanence is alien to modern science. Destiny is written, and while, not before, it happens. Our own was not written before the emergence of the human species, the only one in all the bio-sphere to use a logical system of symbolic communication . . . another event which by its very uniqueness should warn us against any anthropocentrism. If it was unique, as appearance of life itself may have been, it was because before it did appear its chances of doing so were almost non-existent . . . The universe was not pregnant with life nor the bio-sphere with man. Our number came up in the Monte Carlo game. Is it surprising that, like the person who has just made a million at the Casino, we should feel strange and a little unreal?

This iconoclastic negation of all notions such as cause, purpose and teleology is due to recent scientific developments, particularly in biology, and in Monod's own discipline, chemistry. The magic formula has been found, the "Aladdin's Cave" has opened, though only recently, to the magic formula: not nowadays, "Open Sesame" but to the chemical formula D.N.A.

The fundamental biological invariant is D.N.A. That is why Mendel's definition of the gene as the unvarying bearer of heredity traits, its chemical identification by Avery (confirmed by Hershey) and the elucidation by Watson and Crick of its replicative invariants, are without any doubt the most important discoveries ever made in biology. To this must be added the theory of Natural Selection, whose certainty and full significance were established only by these later discoveries.

According to these recent chemical discoveries, it is only the invariable character of this transmutation of genes that makes all life (including human life) "necessary" and inevitable. "Chance" has produced this complex genetic development; then "necessity" does all the rest! All causal explanations of the universe and of life, including all religions and all philosophies, come down in final analysis, to the simple "chance and necessity" complexes of genetic development. The "Meaning of life" is, simply, that it has no meaning. For we are what we are, and universal history is what it is, ultimately due to this particular genetic evolution, "this number that came up in the Monte Carlo

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game," to repeat our author's own description. This conception surely appears to be final justification of Auguste Comte's "Law of the Three stages" in intellectual evolution: theological, metaphysical, and finally scientific. Stability, subject to the subsequent play of "Natural Selection": that is the answer to the riddle of existence.

The arch-enemy of the Monod gospel is represented by animism, vitalism; in brief, by teleology of any and every kind. The most controversial, as well as the most readable chapters in this book are devoted to a decisive and ruthless polemic against these sworn foes of "Chance" and irreconcilable enemies of "Necessity." Our author's list of "animists" is comprehensive: the philosophical "vitalist" Henri Bergson, briefly dismissed as the author of "an engaging style bare of logic, but not of poetry"; and the Jesuit apologist, Teilhard de Chardin, described as "a member of that Order which, three centuries earlier, Pascal assailed for theological laxness." But Monod throws his net wide so as to include in the ranks of animism some much more substantial, as well as surprising names.

Amongst animists is Herbert Spencer, whose "Unknowable" is not apparently "Un-animistic." For "Spencer's differentiating force, like Teilhard's ascending energy, is a clear case of animist projection." But the full measure of Monod's wrath is poured out on Marxism, in particular, on to dialectical materialism, which he denounces as the most powerful animistic creed in the world today. "Marx and Engels too resort, more clearly and deliberately than Spencer, to animistic projection." Monod writes:

To make dialectical contradiction the single "fundamental law" of all movement, all evolution, is still an attempt to systematise the subjective interpretation of nature, showing it to have an ascending, constructive, creative intent, a purpose, in short, to make nature decipherable and morally meaningful. This is animist projection again, always recognisable whatever its disguises. This interpretation is not only foreign to science but incompatible with it, and it has appeared as such, every time the dialectical materialists, emerging from purely "theoretical" verbiage, have tried to illuminate the path of experimental science by the light of their ideas.

As a Parthian shot Monod accuses Engels of "recurring to the myth of the Eternal Return," which Monod brands as "One of mankind's most ancient myths." Animism of whatsoever kind, theistic or dialectical, has no place in M. Monod's universe compounded solely of chance and necessity.

This is an important book, perhaps the first major work based upon recent discoveries in genetics, though its ethical implications appear to be rather inadequately summarised in the closing chapters. Its implications are certainly far-reaching, and could usefully be developed further. Meanwhile, freethinkers in particular should make a point of reading *Chance and Necessity*, not only because of its undoubted importance, but also because its highly controversial material may also provide a searching test for the extent and direction of their own freedom of thought.

F. A. RIDLEY

A QUESTIONING GENERATION. A Report on Sixth Form Religion in Northern Ireland, prepared for the Northern Ireland Committee of the Church of Ireland Board of Education.* By John Greer.

The subject of religion in schools is of perennial interest to *Freethinker* readers, and those who like to season controversy with a little statistical salt will welcome this

REVIEWS

report of a survey (carried out in 1968) of second year sixth form pupils in non-Catholic schools in Northern Ireland. Although hardly a detached observer—he was formerly Church of Ireland Education Organiser and is at present C. of I. Chaplain to the New University of Ulster—Dr. Greer is too good a scholar to allow his views to affect his academic work and he provides us with some useful insights into the religious and moral attitudes of the best educated young adults in Protestant Ulster.

The survey is of particular value in that it was based on the research methods used in England by Edwin Cox for his *Sixth Form Religion* (1967) and thus enables some direct comparisons to be made. Inevitably, many conclusions are those that one would expect but it is still useful to have them quantified and to note, for example, that 33.2% of the boys and 47.2% of the girls in Ulster were "completely confident" that God exists as compared to 19.2% and 39.1% respectively in the English sample. There are, however, surprises, such as the revelation that a significantly higher percentage of the Ulster pupils thought that the Church had a bad moral influence and that it was not active in dealing with social problems.

On most moral issues such as capital punishment and pre-marital sexual intercourse the views of the Ulster pupils are close to those of their English counterparts but they are noticeably more likely to condemn gambling, lying and suicide and are less inclined to the view that a resort to war is "always wrong." There is much more opposition to the provision of religious instruction in schools in Ulster, a view that may reflect distaste for the Roman Catholic Church's policy of segregated education.

Dr. Greer also investigated the attitudes of the pupils' parents and here he found striking evidence of the existence of a generation gap. No fewer than 76.8% of the parents, for example, were "completely confident" of the existence of God. The fact that sixth formers may not be typical of their generation makes it dangerous to draw general conclusions from the mass of data that the author has packed into his 80-odd pages, but the survey does suggest that the young Protestant men and women of Ulster are less concerned with religious conflict as such than with the right to think and act as they see fit, free from clerical domination.

T. K. DANIEL

* Obtainable from the Education Organiser, 7 Rosepark, Belfast BT5 7RG (50p plus 5p postage).

PAMPHLET

THE POLITICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT by Jeremy Bray. Fabian Society, 25p.

Where in hell do some leading Labour politicians want us to go? Following Anthony Crosland's Fabian pamphlet which put down the conservation movement to middle-class reaction, we now have Jeremy Bray's patchily written tract saying that technology will take care of everything—so let us go on breeding and increasing economic growth as fast as we care to. Nor can we look to the present Conservative cabinet for much relief. Sir Keith Joseph slaps down any M.P. who suggests that better birth control facilities will help to decrease population growth, and Peter Walker recently stated that our environmental difficulties are not caused by population problems but only by pollution. Such views from political leaders (or ex-leaders

in Mr. Bray's case, since he lost his parliamentary seat in 1970) reveal a yawning gap between most politicians at this level and the generally held views of doctors, scientists, agriculturalists, the House of Commons as a whole and public opinion in Britain. In 1968 the overall majority of M.P.s signed a motion asking the Government to act on the population problem, and in 1971 a Select Committee of the House repeated this call. This year a National Opinion Poll showed that two-thirds of the electorate believe that the Government should take action to curb population growth, while scientists and doctors are joining the relevant pressure groups in large numbers.

They have got it all wrong, declares the modest Mr. Bray, referring the reader to several of his own works to demonstrate his points. Of course, he says, we must deal with pollution (he even makes a few suggestions, one of them original). Of course, he says, "birth control facilities should be available free on the National Health Service." But "there should not be any suggestion of setting population targets." Then, perhaps realising the weakness of his position ("Other policies should enable us to provide well for whatever population we have"—*whatever!*), he backtracks and writes, "But it is right to recognise the problem of population generally." You have not thought it through, Mr. Bray, have you?

The document abounds with other similar inconsistencies, mostly on this matter of population growth. Mr. Bray obviously finds this a touchy problem. Understandably so, for if we are to deal with it, our political leaders will have to learn to plan in terms of at least twenty years ahead—rather than the easier five year periods between elections to which they are accustomed. And they will have to make the economists produce some of the biggest revisions in theory since Keynes to adapt national economies to the stable populations which *must* start to become realities soon after start of the next century. That will be no easy job, for any government finds increasing *numbers* of consumers useful to increase apparent prosperity.

One cannot help suspecting that this is the factor that is at the root of such politicians' objections to the notion of a stable population, though there is doubtless a genuine and necessary desire to stop extremist hysteria on the subject. But Mr. Bray is horrifyingly complacent. That might be less objectionable if the weaknesses in his arguments were not so apparent. The biggest of all these weaknesses is that he almost completely ignores the question of future food supplies in his selection of resources. Doubtless he could find soothing things to murmur about the Green Revolution, but I would rather take the word of Dr. Borlaug, father of that revolution, that "it can buy only just a very little time in which to adjust population growth to a reasonable level."

ALASTAIR SERVICE

THE OPPOSITION TO EFFECTIVE BIRTH CONTROL

(Continued from page 213)

enlightenment to avert our extinction. For that, quite bluntly, is the issue now confronting all mankind today. The biological considerations and imperatives override all the political, financial, and economic aspects of the situation.

Our museums contain the whole story, could we but spare the time to read it. Previous species, struggling to achieve survival conditions, gambled, like us, on swarming to save themselves. All lost. They passed into oblivion. It is more than time that mankind used its much-vaunted reasoning powers to avert a similar fate.

LETTERS

The Ultimate Disaster: World Government

I. S. Low (letters, 10 June) offers us one of those monumental *non-sequiturs* that so easily pass for thinking in the context of shallow empiricism. He writes: "The main cause of war is national sovereignty. The remedy is world government."

Might I ask people to consider what is the nature of national sovereignty and then to consider in what way "world government" will remedy it?

To take this country as our most useful example, it is clear that national sovereignty, i.e. the nation-state, was established by the Tudors as a means of overcoming the baronial anarchy of bastard feudalism that was manifest in the Wars of the Roses. Its critical feature was the outlawing of private armies by the Statute of Livery and Maintenance and their replacement by the single military authority of the king. The second Tudor underwrote this arrangement by making himself Head of the Church and the second Cromwell capped it by setting up the first standing Army and Navy.

The nature of national sovereignty, that is, turned upon and still turns on the ultimate power of the armed forces. The Army is the State. The situation in Northern Ireland and the political power of the armies of the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R. and China should make this plain to any discerning observer. The trouble is that we are conditioned by our miseducation not even to look at this kind of question. The political power of the military is a subject much more taboo than religion and sex ever were.

It follows from this analysis that to urge world government is essentially to urge a world army and to repeat all the sins of national sovereignty on the vastest possible scale.

The answer to national sovereignty is to phase it out. This is now possible in Europe where modern military technology has rendered war an anachronism. In the place of nation-states we need city-regional republics and self-financing national and international utilities most of which we have already.

National governments are no longer necessary and world government would be the ultimate disaster.

May I commend, for further reading, the brilliant document written by Derek Senior as a minority report to the Maud Commission on local government. He does not draw these conclusions but he does present much of the evidence and argument.

PETER CADOGAN.

Peace Moves ?

President Nixon ordered bombing raids near and around Hanoi to be suspended during Soviet President Podgorny's official visit to the North Vietnamese capital. *En route* to Hanoi Podgorny said: "The Vietnam problem should be solved. America should cease bombing."

The solution to bombing is now eminently simple: Podgorny takes up *permanent residence* in Hanoi and openly encourages other prominent peace-loving Soviet and Chinese officials to do likewise in other Vietnamese cities and towns.

Better still, Pope Paul and the Archbishop of Canterbury move their permanent headquarters to Hanoi and Haiphong respectively.

SIDNEY SIMON.

To the Editor of the "European (Occidental) Freethinker"

Few of us have any doubt that whatever we do as individuals the Christian Church will long survive us; we can do but little to modify its effects. As rational human beings we may rise to respond to unpleasant stimuli but after a while we decide that the futility of changing things which are unchangeable suggests a wiser course; we remove ourselves from the stimuli. So it is with *The Freethinker* and your correspondent.

It might well have been more appropriate to question whether there was any medical evidence for recommending circumcision before including your facetious remarks (*Freethinker*, 10 June) in order to tease a reader. The almost complete absence of carcinoma of the cervix in Jewish women might interest women's lib. and should interest you.

In *The Freethinker* of 17 June you let pass unedited a line by the learned R. J. Condon, "the notorious oriental indifference to chronology." Its notoriety has escaped me! Has Mr. Condon any evidence? Can he tell what attitude to chronology is possessed by occidentals of that period?

GERALD SAMUEL.

The Editor comments:

Our correspondent would probably have apoplexy were he to read some of the comments on "orientals" by the founder of this

paper (G. W. Foote)! However, these did not, apparently, deter Chapman Cohen from eventually taking over the editorship! We greatly honour the work and traditions of both.

Death and Human Dignity

Despite Nicholas Reed's earnest pleading (*Freethinker* letters, 17 June), I am still not convinced that my arguments against euthanasia have any bearing upon abortion. An abortion is an operation to increase the positive happiness of a woman. The pressures for "freely available contraception" probably are diminished; yet not because those who need such reform are forgotten, but rather because they are being helped in another way.

Now euthanasia is different. It is not an act to give joy but an acceptance that for the person who is to die joy is no longer possible. The belief that for everyone life can and must be made worth living is the force behind all today's social reform. Euthanasia runs clean contrary to such a concept.

Since it is a reform of such a totally different nature from any other instigated so far, parallels with the thin ends of other wedges are not applicable. I have no belief in a Victorian phenomenon called progress and I do not believe with Mr. Byass that we are "reformable"—whatever that may mean. (Are we some fallen creature?) Yet I do believe in human dignity and happiness and cannot understand how death can further either.

J. STEWART ROSS.

Hitler's Russian Campaign

I was surprised to read J. H. Morten's letter (17 June) praising Hitler's military leadership and genius. Perhaps Mr. Morten has not read of how Grand Admiral Raeder begged the Führer to invade Britain *before* Russia and thereby secure his rear against a second front, but the "master" military mind would not listen!

As I have visited Russia I do not wonder that Hitler's tanks and guns got stuck in the mud and then frozen solid. Where Hitler advanced 100 miles in the west, he would require to advance 1,000 miles in the east to accomplish the same object, and then what about his lines of communication?

Some military strategist! He even sent the German army into Russia without proper winter clothing—but of course the *Blitzkrieg* should have finished the Red Army by September (according to the Führer!).

S. BIRKIN.

Pornographic or Erotic ?

I am relieved to learn from David Holbrook (*Freethinker* letters, 17 June) that he still writes about subjects other than sex. For the past year or so every article or letter I have seen by Mr. Holbrook in a wide variety of periodicals has, without exception, been on pornography.

David Holbrook is careful to offer no definition of pornography and I strongly suspect that most of the time he is confusing the pornographic with the erotic. For instance, he claims that 46 out of 60 recent London films depicted "sexual scenes, homosexuality and masturbation," implying that these films were therefore pornographic; but of course this is a blatant *non sequitur*. To take but three examples, the films *Ryan's Daughter*, *The Staircase* and *Dearest Love* contained episodes dealing with aspects of sex, but none of them was in the slightest degree pornographic.

In my opinion, for a work of art to be pornographic it must have been created with the explicit purpose of degrading, and it must include scenes of *gratuitous* sexual sadism. On these criteria *The Devils* was not a pornographic film, since Ken Russell's intention was clearly the highly moral one of exposing the cruelty endemic in the Catholic Church of that period, and the torture scenes (though perhaps rather too prolonged at times) were an integral part of that purpose. Incidentally, I did not say I enjoyed the film (who could?), but that I found it compassionate and moving.

Since sex is at the very basis of life it would be a strange and effete culture that was not vitally concerned with it. But I contend that our culture is no more (or less) obsessed with sex than any other. The only difference is that today it is much more explicit and less shrouded than heretofore.

It is difficult to argue with Mr. Holbrook as he uses words so loosely. Is it too much to ask him to define his terms, distinguishing particularly between pornography, eroticism and straightforward sex?

Finally, Mr. Holbrook complains that his writings have been "maltreated" in the media and "greeted with intolerant prejudice." May this not be because he himself is guilty of that very vice and has closed his mind to the possibility that on this subject he may be mistaken?

JOHN L. BROOM.