

# The FREETHINKER

The Secular  
and Humanist  
Weekly

Registered at the Post Office as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 BY G. W. FOOTE

Vol. 92, No. 42

Saturday, 14 October 1972

3p

## BIG "NO!" TO CENSORSHIP

### —LONGFORD REPORT CONDEMNED AT LONDON MEETING

"I do not believe that the authors, publishers and distributors of the Longford Report ought to be put in prison for three years," said Brigid Brophy, the distinguished writer and critic, to an audience of 300 people, some of them wearing "anti-fing leaves," in the Conway Hall on 3 October. She was addressing a public meeting organised by the National Secular Society to counter the latest threat to literary freedom. "This," Miss Brophy continued, "is the point on which I, and other protesters at this meeting differ from the Longford Committee. I do not believe that the mere fact that a book offends me is a sufficient reason to punish its authors and to deprive my 55 million fellow citizens of the right to decide for themselves whether to read the book or to avoid it." Pornography, Brigid Brophy added, probably caused no social harm, and if it influenced anyone at all it only influenced them to masturbate: "Masturbation is one of the very few human activities that absolutely *cannot* do any harm to anyone." Miss Brophy thought that Lord Longford's report was immeasurably more harmful than pornography: it would not encourage many people to masturbate, but "it is trying to influence its readers to discount the evidence, set aside reason, and to elevate their own personal prejudices into the law of the land."

#### Instrument for suppressing heresy

The legislative changes envisaged by the Longford Report were, said Brigid Brophy, "simply an instrument for prosecuting and suppressing heresy." A good example of a book that "grossly outraged contemporary standards of humanity accepted by the public at large" was Darwin's *Origin of Species*. "The Longford legislation," she added, "is a prescription for replacing the permissive society by the stagnant society." (Both *The Freethinker* and the National Secular Society hope to publish the full text of Brigid Brophy's speech in the near future.)

In the chair at the meeting was Barbara Smoker, President of the National Secular Society, who began by introducing a surprise guest who had offered not only to speak, but to perform, namely Larry Adler, the world-famous harmonica player. Mr. Adler spoke of the American Commission on Pornography, whose findings had been rejected outright by President Nixon; and quoted the words of Spiro Agnew, that "the national need to restrain bad taste and outrageous vulgarity is important." "He should know," said Mr. Adler, who went on to describe the Longford Report as "one of those books that everyone will talk about but seldom read."

#### "Do It Again"—on the mouth organ

Larry Adler added that he had visited Copenhagen, the fabled Mecca of pornography. He pointed out that the Danes were "totally bored" with the pornographic scene; the only language used in the live sex-shows there was English, and the clientele consisted almost entirely of Japanese, British, American or German tourists, or Danes entertaining out-of-town clients—"The Danes usually go to sleep." After his visit he found it difficult, for a while, to mention the mouth organ without embarrassment, but

this did not deter him from playing "a piece of pornography." "Very few people have managed to get really filthy with music until I went to work on it," he concluded before taking out his harmonica and playing Gershwin's "Do It Again."

Another speaker was John Calder, the publisher and secretary of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society. He described Lord Longford's committee as "not so much out to suppress pornography as to cast a massive smear at everything in contemporary society they don't like." Statistics from Denmark, Germany and America showed that pornography did some good and no harm; pornography did not appeal to children and the young but principally to older people—it was basically a substitute for sex. At Frankfurt Book Fairs a few years ago there had been a large proportion of third-rate erotica on display, but nowadays there was no longer a market for it. "Today there is no use in publishing sexy books unless they are also very good books."

#### Return to the Dark Ages

Mr. Calder was not altogether happy with the law on obscenity as it stood, based on the concept of 'tending to deprave and corrupt,' "but the law as it is is far better than a return to the Dark Ages which we will get with Lord Longford's proposals," which would take informed opinion out of the courts.

"We are more numerous than the puritans," Mr. Calder added, "and I think that most people are tolerant; but they will also be tolerant of a bad law." Although most liberals were by now heartily bored with the pornography issue, the advocates of censorship were not: "We are

(Continued on next page)



## THE FREETHINKER

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.

The *Freethinker* can be ordered through any newsagent, or obtained by postal subscription from G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd. at the following rates: 12 months, £2.55; 6 months, £1.30; 3 months, 65p (U.S.A. and Canada: 12 months, \$6.25; 6 months, \$3.13—by cheque or international money order).

## 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 Street, London, SE1 1NL. Telephone: 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL.

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.

## EVENTS

Croydon Humanist Society, The Studio, 1 Edridge Road (near flyover). Sunday, 15 October, 8 p.m.: Dr. S. Hamilton, "What Can One Believe?"

Guildford Humanist Group, Guildford House. Thursday, 19 October, 7.30 p.m.: Canon L. Tanner and others, "The Case for the Established Church" (debate).

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Sunday, 15 October, 6.30 p.m.: Professor G. A. Wells, "The Origin of Christianity."

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday, 15 October, 7.30 p.m.: Anthony Merrick, "Industrial Conflict in the Docks."

Merseyside Humanist Group, Sandon Music Room, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool. Friday, 20 October, 8 p.m.: Bert Mason, "The Open Society."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 15 October, 11 a.m.: Richard Clements, "John Stuart Mill and the Humanist Tradition." Tuesday, 17 October, 7 p.m.: Peter Spink, "Industrial Psychology."

Sutton Humanist Group, Friends' Meeting House, Cedar Road. Thursday, 19 October, 7.30 p.m.: Barbara Smoker, "Are Humanists Living on Christian Capital?"

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group, Backhouse Room, Hand-side Lane. Thursday, 19 October, 8 p.m.: Dr. John Lewis, "The Open Society, as propounded by Karl Popper."

(Continued from front page)

dealing with a small bunch of people who are obsessive and tireless . . . We must get up and fight them."

### Should be laughed out of existence

The next speaker was the jazz musician, critic and journalist George Melly who, the chairman pointed out, had been mentioned five times in the Longford Report. Mr. Melly pointed out, amid laughter, that the Report had "non-fiction" printed on the back cover. It was ridiculous for Lord Longford's committee to be horrified at the "boring great load of rubbish" in Soho 'porn' shops, which stood under the shadow of a far worse obscenity: the empty, unused Centre Point office block. Both pornography and the anti-'porn' campaigners should be laughed out of existence.

After reading a message of support from David Tribe, who was unable to attend, Miss Smoker introduced Gerald Sanctuary, a former national secretary of the Marriage Guidance Council and at one time executive director of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States. On the subject of sex education, Mr. Sanctuary said that the so-called right to remove children from school sex education was a misnomer; the reality was that every one had received an education in human sexuality by the very fact of living in a family, a community and in society. "We have no choice as to whether young people will or will not receive sex education. Our only choice is the *type* of sex education they will receive."

### Sex education left largely to chance

"At the moment," he added, "we leave it largely to chance. We leave it to the parents whose own sex education has so often left them fearful and anxious about their own sexuality, embarrassed, and unable to discuss it with their children. It is to these unlucky people that Longford group would leave the primary responsibility for educating the next generation. Now it is no answer to say that Local Education Authorities should provide courses for parents; my direct experience of such courses here in Britain and the United States is that those who would most benefit from them stay away."

"Has it occurred to nobody," Mr. Sanctuary continued, "that, by educating the children of today we are educating the parents of tomorrow? How else can we break the vicious circle under which sexuality is viewed by successive generations as something indecent? Why do you think there is such an enormous market for 'porn' in Great Britain, Germany and the United States? Because it is we Angles, we Saxons, who have tended to equate sexuality with sinfulness and dirt.

"I carry no brief for pornography; nor does anyone here. It is the symptom of society's sexual sickness. This sickness will not be cured by telling people not to be sick. Prevention—through education—is the only sane answer: we need a shield, not a sword.

### Sex: fun, decent—and private

"The best sex education, of course, is gained within a secure home where love flourishes, but where there is also healthy conflict, argument and reconciliation. I remember a friend who told me that his father used to give him half-a-crown on Sunday afternoons and tell him to disappear until teatime. The message was that his mother



and father wanted to make love—in private. That's the place for it! He got the message: sex was real, and fun, and decent, and private."

Mr. Sanctuary said that it was high time that we made a serious attempt in this country to create an era of sexual sanity by applying such knowledge and skills as we possessed to the problem of sex education. "The obvious authority to do this, I think, is the Health Education Council; it is a body ideally suited for the purpose and already deeply concerned with the subject. To rely on voluntary advisory councils or viewers' and listeners' associations to provide guidelines will be to put prejudice and ignorance where knowledge and science should be." Gerald Sanctuary went on to suggest that the Health Education Council should set up an Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality which could train and select social workers and sex educationists, and to which representations could be made by government departments, the police, and social and voluntary organisations.

**Comical or dangerous?**

The final speaker from the platform was Charles Osborne, the Literature Director of the Arts Council. He was astounded to find people who still said not, "I am offended, therefore I shall not watch," but "I am offended, therefore you shall not watch." "This," he added, "would be comical if it were not so dangerous." It was like the old slogan of "Better dead than Red": the people who uttered it really meant "Better that everyone should be dead than that I should be Red."

Pornography, said Mr. Osborne, was basically a branch of romantic fiction and even if a link could be established between pornography and crimes committed by the unbalanced this would not be sufficient grounds for suppressing pornography: the speaker knew of one lunatic who attacked people whenever he saw a portrait or statue of Queen Victoria. As for the old plea of 'literary merit,' a book of real literary merit would surely corrupt and deprave far more effectively.

**Christianity offensive**

Mr. Osborne cited the Old Testament as an example of a book that was highly stimulating for the purpose of sexual phantasy; but equally, he said, Christian belief contained much that was repressive and offensive and was responsible for a good deal of the misery in the world. In dealing with artificial 'problems' like pornography, which tend to dissolve when they cease to be thought of as problems, the speaker said that what was required was common sense and rationalism, even though these appeared to be in short supply.

After the platform speeches, the meeting was thrown open for comments and questions from the audience, and a lively discussion ensued. Speakers included a Methodist who said that the views of Lord Longford and Mrs. Whitehouse did not represent the majority of Christian thinking in this country; Mrs. Kit Mouat, the humanist bookseller, said that books in a Sussex library were being marked with stars to denote their being "offensive"; and Richard Hall (London Young Humanists) feared that any new censorship legislation would only encourage corruption of the police force. Another speaker had interviewed 64 passers-by at random at a London station: 13 of the 64 agreed with, and would uphold the Report's conclusions; and 51 regarded the conclusions as "rubbish."

**SABBATARIAN SURVIVALS**

Sabbatarianism, despite losing a few teeth in recent months, is not entirely bereft of fangs. *The Scotsman* informs us that the Lewis and Harris branch of the Lord's Day Observance Society has pressurised two Scottish brewery firms into giving an undertaking not to serve drinks "either openly or surreptitiously" on their premises at Stornoway on Sundays. The L.D.O.S. had threatened to lodge a requisition for a veto poll which might have made Stornoway "dry" for the first time in 50 years. Mr. James MacIennan, a local hotelier, is still holding out against the sabbatarians despite threats to boycott his hotel, and a soft drinks company and a building firm which he owns.

In the land of the infidel Sassenach the Lord's Day defenders have also been busy. Sabbatarians recently objected to a furnishings exhibition in Southend which opened on a Sunday. The staff were allowed to keep the show open on the Sabbath so long as they did not answer the public's questions!

Fortunately, there is a more humorous side to the Lord and His Day, which appears on our desk from time to time. We refer to *Joy and Light*, magazine of the Lord's Day Observance Society, Incorp., the latest number of which had this to say on the subject of "Growing Crisis":

... Calvin ... states: 'He who setteth at nought the Sabbath day hath cast underfoot all God's service, as much as is in him; and if the Sabbath day be not observed, all the rest shall be worth nothing.' We are not alone in that opinion. With quite different emphasis, the militant forces of infidelity say as much when, for example, the National Secular Society gloats over the passing of the Sunday Theatre Bill fully aware that another blow has been struck at the whole fabric of godly living. At its Annual General Meeting in June 1972 (held on a Sunday!) the N.S.S. passed eleven resolutions, the first of which welcomed the passing of the Sunday Theatre Bill ... If Christian people are blind to the consequences of Sabbath desecration, unbelievers are not; ... We need fast not festival; penitence not pop religion; grief for sin, not guitars. The nation is not in the flames of revival; it is ripe for the flames of judgment.

By the sound of things the L.D.O.S. offices require no heating in the winter: Hell has come home to roost!

**HUMANIST HOSPITALITY**

The executive committee of the National Secular Society and the editor of *The Freethinker* were the guests of the executive committee of the British Humanist Association at an informal get-together held at the B.H.A. offices on 4 October. The evening was both a successful social occasion and also provided those who attended with a useful opportunity for general discussion and exchanging of ideas.

**FREETHINKER FUND**

Our thanks are extended to those readers who kindly contributed to the Freethinker Fund for September, namely:

- H. A. Alexander, 35p; S. Berry, 45p; A. M. Blenkinsop, 18p; Charles Byass, £2; W. Gerrard, 45p; D. Harper, £3.35; James Hudson, 45p; K. Kalra, 10p; D. J. McConalogue, £2.45; S. McPhee, 14p; Lord Raglan, £5; Miss M. R. Rayment, 50p; P. F. C. Sowter, 28p. Total for September: £15.70.



## OUR NATIONAL DIRGE

According to the *Evening Standard* (15 September) when the Australian swimming team returned home from the Olympics one of their first "wings" was about the national anthem. "'God Save the Queen' drives us nuts and not one of us wants it" was one of the comments.

As Britain suffers from the same national anthem, we know how they feel. "Calling upon a figment of the imagination to save an anachronism" was how this paper rightly described this ceremonial dirge some years ago. Still, as it has a rather limited tune, at least the said anthem cannot easily be updated by some lickspittle trendy to something worse, like "May her Gracious Majesty have a meaningful relationship with the Ground of our Being . . ."

## EXTREMIST RABBI ARRESTED

Israeli police in Jerusalem recently arrested six leading members of the right-wing extremist Jewish Defence League, including its world leader, Rabbi Meir Kahane. Kahane, who allegedly said that he was planning to hire the Mafia to deal with the League's Arab equivalents, refused to co-operate with the authorities, though he has now been freed on £4,000 bail.

## CONSEQUENCES OF CONFESSION

The September number of the Indian Rationalist Association's journal *Freethought* (Madras) carries a Reuter report of a pair of Yemeni lovers who went on a pilgrimage to Mecca last July and there confessed that their relationship was adulterous. A local judge and a Saudi Arabian army squad accordingly stoned them to death.

# POPPER'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

RALPH CHAMPION

Karl Popper's work is not very well known outside the narrow circle of professional philosophers of science, and in this article I want to draw attention to some of his contributions to social and moral philosophy. First, however, I will point out how his ideas overcome the objections which many creative and artistic people raise against science, which they associate with 'cold reason,' 'impersonal objectivity' and 'soulless technology.'

According to Popper our new scientific theories arise as risky guesses, and this puts the poetic or artistic flight of imagination back into science whence it should never have been banished. Science and imagination were separated by some catastrophic ideas about induction which mainly came from Francis Bacon whose theory of scientific method is largely responsible for the 'dissociation of sensibility,' or the separation of thought and feeling which literary people have been complaining about since the seventeenth century. The Baconian method called for a passive observer who collects facts about the world so that the tale told by the book of nature is slowly but surely revealed. Compare this with Popper:

. . . What we call 'science' is differentiated from the older myths not by being something distinct from a myth, but by being accompanied by a second-order tradition—that of critically discussing the myth. Scientific theories are not just the results of observations, they are, in the main, the products of myth making and of tests . . . The advance of science is not due to the fact that more and more perceptual experiences accumulate in the course of time. Nor is it due to the fact that we are making ever better use of our senses . . . Bold ideas, unjustified anticipations and speculative thought, are our only means for interpreting nature; our only instrument for grasping her. And we must

## THESE POOR CHRISTIANS

Christianity was allegedly founded by one who preached a gospel of poverty, and modern apologists are forever sneering at "materialistic values." Now we read that the (Anglican) Church Commissioners have sold off £1.5 million in shares in Rio Tinto-Zinc as a political sop to the left-wing and liberal conscience.

No doubt the Dutch Reform Church also has investments. Its brokers must be laughing all the way to the bank!

## NINETY YEARS AGO

"We observe that Moncure D. Conway, Esq., M.A., is going to read a paper on 'The Liberty of Printing,' in South Place Chapel, on Tuesday next, October 17th. Mr. Conway will doubtless deal with the blasphemy laws."

—From *The Freethinker*, 15 October 1882.

\*Readers may like to know that the 1972 Conway Memorial Lecture will be held on Tuesday, 28 November, at Conway Hall. Dr. Edmund Leach's subject will be "Humanity and Animality."

## FIFTY YEARS AGO

"Three men and a woman were fined 30s. each with the alternative of a month in gaol by the Flint Borough Magistrates for gaming with cards on Sunday. A South Caernarvonshire farmer was fined 10s. and costs at Pwllheli for cruelty to a drake by nailing it to a board through the webbing of its feet."

—"Mancunian" in *The Freethinker*, 15 October 1922.

hazard them to win our prize . . . Much confusion is due to the tendency of attributing to Science (with a capital S) a kind of omniscience, and I suggest that this theological view of science ought to be replaced by a more humanistic view, by the realisation that science is the work of ordinary humans, groping their way in the dark.

Like his theory of science, Popper's approach to social problems is *critical*, not passive: we should adopt a critical attitude towards institutions, traditions and authorities of all kinds although at the same time we should promote tolerance of ideas which differ from our own, because if we try to understand them we might learn something. We should state our differences of opinion as clearly as possible and attempt to resolve them by discussion, or by fact-finding if the differences hinge on matters of fact.

### Standards for political and social action

Where we cannot be guided by fact we must make use of ethical or moral standards although these standards are themselves open to discussion, Popper has proposed two major regulative standards for political and social action: (1) Minimisation of avoidable suffering; (2) avoidance of tyranny.

The principle "minimise suffering" eliminates the need to quarrel about the relative merits of different Utopian schemes which notoriously give way to dogmatism and fanaticism. These may be avoided if we direct our efforts of social reform at concrete evils which may be made apparent to many people. In contrast, visions of Utopia are usually only apparent to an élite so that attempts to achieve the vision tend to require some kind of tyranny.



The principle "avoid tyranny" bypasses the old political problem, "Who shall rule?" which is usually taken to mean "Who will dominate whom?", and replaces it with the proposal to aim for a protective state whose function would be to safeguard the weaker members of the community from the stronger, cleverer, richer or luckier. Popper has pointed out that "Freedom defeats itself if it is unlimited."

Unlimited freedom means that a strong man is free to bully the one who is weak . . . This is why we demand that the state should limit freedom to a certain extent, so that everyone's freedom is protected by law. Nobody should be at the mercy of others, but we should all have the right to be protected by the state.

### Action rather than hot air

From the principles of tolerance and critical analysis it follows that we should encourage public debate on all controversial matters. In discussion we should avoid arguments about the true meaning of terms and instead we should critically examine policies and the design of institutions, thereby generating action instead of hot air.

Instead of trying to establish the true meaning of democracy we should try to decide what function we want our political institutions to serve, and then we should try to design them to do it. We need to resist word-magic and mystification of all kinds, so we should reject the romantic and McLuhanist notion that what matters is not what you say but how you say it. We should pay close attention to what people are saying, particularly to their proposals for action.

From the principle "minimise suffering" it follows that we should locate suffering and either work directly to alleviate it, or else we should attempt to have the relevant bodies deal more effectively with the situation. For the sake of the self-esteem of the people who we are trying to help we should not try to provide long-term props; instead we should aim to help people get into a position where they can help themselves.

## REVIEWS

### BOOKS

**THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION** by Keith Dawson.  
Pan Books, 40p.

This book is a recent addition to the Panorama of History Series published by Pan Books. Its format is attractive; the layout and printing excellent; and into the text has been skilfully integrated full colour illustrations, maps, photographs, and captions; a readable work at a modest price.

The author, Keith Dawson, within the compass of sixty-four pages, has given his readers a factual and vivid account of a significant period in modern British history. His survey of the scientific discoveries, inventions, economic changes, and social upheavals which transformed the fact and character of our society in the eighty years between 1750 and 1830, is an excellent example of lucid and condensed historical writing.

The reader is reminded of the significance of the economic achievements, with the resultant political and social changes, brought about in those years. The outcome

### Checks and balances

To avoid tyranny we need institutions which allow the people to get rid of their government at regular intervals, and we need checks and balances so that the government cannot get away with too much while it is in power. The state should be designed to be protective and the Rule of Law should prevail. The Rule of Law should not be confused with the cynical programme of "law and order"; the Rule of Law requires that the laws be clearly defined, including the rights of the individual before the law. At present this is not the case because too many laws are ill-defined and too few people know their rights. It requires equality before the law which is hardly the case at the moment, with one law for the rich and another for the poor and ignorant. It requires an efficient mechanism for the review, reform and repeal of laws so that society is not encumbered by laws that are harmful or redundant, and the law enforcers are not overloaded with laws that they cannot properly enforce, or that they should not be called upon to enforce.

These are serious problems which require close attention, and it is difficult to see how either revolution or the flight from reason is going to solve them. Passion and gut philosophy are only likely to confuse the issues and so play into the hands of people who like things the way they are.

Underlying Popper's social philosophy is a respect for reason, though this does not mean that Reason is some abstract entity which should be worshipped as the criterion of all right and good. Rather, the respect for reason implies the attitude, "I may be wrong and you may be right, and by an effort, we may get nearer to the truth." Along with this attitude should go a willingness to learn from our mistakes so that we do not become fossilised in dogmatic attitudes. While we try to obtain a society which is more humane and reasonable we should try to learn as much as possible from history, particularly from the attempts at humane reforms which did not succeed. If it is any consolation, there is plenty to learn from.

in practical terms being a new type of society, that is, one based upon industrialism.

In other words, the rich agricultural and trading community with its fringe of handicraft workers and shopkeepers, had by 1760 become a pleasant place for the nobility, gentry, and rich traders. "Their estates, their country houses, great and small, with their surrounding gardens and parklands were oases of opulence and sometimes culture in what was for the majority a desert of poverty."

The gentry, together with their intellectual hirelings, ran the country and ruled the voteless masses by the Parliament at Westminster, with the aid of the Justices of the Peace and the Anglican clergy in the districts. To many minds in those years it seemed to be "the natural order of society which had existed beyond," and which was presumably founded on the will of God.

The task of applying rational and humane principles in the everyday life of society is not easy nor always successful. Mr. Dawson in the opening sentence of his book writes:

Industrial society is so familiar to us that it requires a great imaginative effort to realise that until about 150 years ago it simply had not begun to exist . . . A single life span witnessed the most remarkable change in the history of mankind.

(Continued overleaf)



The swiftness of this change perhaps explains why the phrase, "the Industrial Revolution," came into general use to describe the ideas and work of the pioneer agriculturists, inventors engineers, canal and road builders, bankers, merchants, ship builders and seamen. The outcome of the labour of such men as Arkwright, Watt, Boulton, Stephenson, Brindly, Telford and Hargreaves, to mention only the more famous names, led to Britain becoming "the Workshop of the World" and the first great industrial society. It was a significant leap forward. But for millions of people it entailed lives of exploitation and misery. That is one reason why today both the successes and the failures of the Industrial Revolution have so many lessons for our politicians, financiers, economists and sociologists.

Its central achievement, viewed in the light of the experience of the past 150 years, was that it deepened and widened man's knowledge and control of nature. The power to produce wealth surpassed the dreams of men in earlier times and placed in human hands the means—when used rationally and directed to social ends—to banish hunger and poverty.

In material terms, the Industrial Age brought about a high rate of growth and an enormous expansion in the scale of production. "It enabled the economy," in our author's own words, "to achieve what has been called self-sustained growth." The power to produce wealth was established; large unplanned towns and industrial areas grew up; and workers flocked into them in search of jobs in mines, mills, factories and workshops. Britain, with her colonies in many parts of the world, access to the growing market in America, and sea power, became a wealthy and powerful nation.

But the new order, from the outset, was troubled by grave economic and social problems. For, under the upper-class government in those years, the process of change was not planned, it was piecemeal in character; it was inspired by the profit motive, and at every turn relied upon private initiative. "In social terms," Mr. Dawson declares, "Britain stumbled into the Industrial Age with its eyes shut." This was the failure that marred the face of the new society created by the vision, daring, and inventive genius of the pioneers of industrialism.

Today, the economically advanced countries of the world stand on the threshold of a second Industrial Revolution. What is now needed is a virile public opinion that will prevent our rulers stumbling as blindly as did their predecessors in past years. The brilliant work of the modern scientists and technologists must be matched by a social policy that will distribute wealth more equitably and advance the social security and welfare of the people.

RICHARD CLEMENTS

#### THE MONKS OF WAR by Desmond Seward.

Eyre Methuen, £4.95.

The military monastic orders of the Catholic Church played an important and often dramatic role in the shaping of European civilisation, but they have rarely engaged the attentions of popular historians. *The Monks of War* is claimed to be the first comprehensive work of its kind since the eighteenth century, and the first ever in English.

Established originally in the twelfth century as the Church's shock-troops, the military orders served its interests wherever it felt itself threatened. They were also intended to be a civilising force for Europe's feuding lords and barons, by offering the ideal of Christian chivalry. Mr. Seward, educated by the Benedictines at Ampleforth,

understandably wishes to absolve the Church from responsibility for the many atrocities committed by the orders, though it is doubtful if the Popes were completely innocent; while deploring unnecessary cruelty, they continued to use the perpetrators of it. The Templars, the only order ever suppressed, were condemned not for brutality but on charges of heresy and unnatural vice.

The military brethren, drawn as a rule from the nobility, were just as much part of western monasticism as the Benedictines and the Franciscans. Just as the mendicant friars lived a monastic life preaching the gospel, so the religious knights lived a monastic life defending it. The holy war was an ideal admired by all Christians, the crusade an inspiration which endured for centuries. Says Mr. Seward:

In theory they were a protection against the infidel, in practice merciless aggressors. The Teutonic Order's deliberate liquidation of the Prussian race is sufficient testimony . . . Simple men, the brethren easily became unbalanced, prayer and mortification intensifying rather than eradicating those violent instincts . . .

Unlike their Moslem opponents, crusading knights seldom offered the choice of conversion or death; annihilation was the rule rather than the exception.

The principal military orders were the Templars and the Knights of the Hospital of St. John, serving mainly in the Middle East, and the Teutonic Knights, who fought in the Balkans. Hardly less important were the Knights of Santiago, Calatrava and Alcántara, who formed the spearhead of the Spanish Reconquista. The Knights of St. Lazarus were something of a curiosity, being composed of Templars and later Hospitallers who had contracted leprosy or skin disease. Primarily a medical order, with a network of "lazar houses" in Syria and Europe, the unclean knights still had to fight when required.

Much of the book is taken up with the orders' various campaigns, in Palestine, Spain, the Baltic countries and elsewhere; their "heroic period" as the author calls it. Here we have the Templars' last stand at the storming of Acre; the Hospitallers of St. John at the breach of St. Elmo, too badly wounded to stand, killing Turks in hand-to-hand fighting while seated in chairs; and the beheading of Turkish prisoners by the Hospitallers at the siege of Malta, so that their heads might be fired into the enemy camp. During the Reconquista the Spanish brethren raided the Moslem settlements ceaselessly, butchering women and children and returning with severed heads dangling from their saddles. Such barbarities were commonplace; it was said of the Hospitallers that when they had received the body of the Lord they fought like devils.

In times of comparative peace the brethren turned their hands to many skills. Only they had the integrity and organisation to become bankers, and in the Holy Land even Moslem merchants deposited cash with them. As shipowners the Templars were popular with pilgrims, for they could be trusted not to sell their passengers into slavery at Moslem ports, as did some Italian merchants. Grateful Christian rulers rewarded the brethren with large estates, which they ruled on the whole with benevolent despotism. Occasionally they proved bad lords, and we learn of one Comendador of Calatrava who became too fond of his subjects' wives and daughters, and even their brides, presumably insisting on his "droit de seigneur." Next to pride, we are told, the brethren's besetting sin was fornication.

By the time of the Counter-Reformation the fighting brotherhoods had more or less served their purpose, though they went into battle until the end of the eighteenth century. In his final chapter Mr. Seward tells of their gradual



decline as a military force. Their work today is mainly charitable. In Britain the Hospitallers of St. John, no longer specifically Catholic, are noted for their magnificent ambulance service.

The Monks of War is a well-constructed book, documented and with maps and other illustrations, and it should prove useful to students of both military and ecclesiastical history. Never a waster of words, Mr. Seward is to be congratulated on getting a large amount of information into a single average-sized volume.

R. J. CONDON

**ASKING THEM QUESTIONS** edited by Ronald Selby Wright. Oxford University Press, £1.

This book is a collection of questions and answers on religious themes. The questions have been asked by school pupils and the answers are contributed by, amongst others, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

The editor of the collection expresses the pious hope that it may show that "the Christian belief, when tested by reason and tried out in life, will prove it is valid."

Just how reasonable a wish this is may be judged by a typical essay in answer to the question, 'How can you prove that God exists?' This is tackled by a Professor of Historical Theology at London University. He begins by warning his young readers not to be taken in by false arguments, particularly those which assume at the outset what they claim to prove—in this case the existence of a god.

With that warning still fresh on the page, the author turns to an examination of the Ontological Argument. He admits that this is not valid, but then goes on to claim: "Nevertheless, this line of thought very clearly brings out one important truth, namely that the fundamental attribute of God is his self-existence."

Now the Professor considers the 'Five Ways' of St. Thomas Aquinas, and he tells us that "many scholars are not satisfied with the manner in which he propounded them but hold that, in spite of this, the general approach is sound."

Next to get the benefit of this masterful scrutiny, is the proof from First Cause.

It is sometimes alleged that this argument fails because it does not answer the question "What is the ground and cause of God?" The objection is, however, quite unreasonable, for, while it makes perfectly good sense to ask for an explanation of non-self-explanatory being, it does not make sense to ask for an explanation of self-explanatory being.

—So much for his warning about arguments which assume at the outset what they claim to prove!

Now for the problem of evil: "How can the pain and wickedness in the world be reconciled with the existence of a God who is held to be all-loving and all-powerful . . . Perhaps what we ought to be saying is: if God can bring good out of even such evil as this, how much more powerful he must be than we are able to imagine." Well, just fancy!

The Telcological Argument is examined, found wanting but is, nonetheless, "impressive" and merely in need of "support". The Moral Argument is the last to be considered, and the author asks: "Is it therefore too much to conclude that the ground of the cosmos is in fact a person who has claims on everything in it, including our own selves, because he is the maker and sustainer of it all?"

The final conclusion is that although these arguments have a "limited character" they have "two very important functions . . ."

The first is to assure those who believe in God and who practise their religion that their belief and practice are not just matters of habit or social conformity, but have a sound basis in reason. The second is to convince unbelievers that religion is a live option for a thinking person and has a claim to be taken seriously.

This shabby piece of non-reasoning may be of a high enough standard for Professor of Theology—indeed it may be the best they can aspire to—but I suggest that school children deserve something better. They are unlikely to get it from Christians.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

## THEATRE

**I CLAUDIUS** by Robert Graves and John Mortimer. Queen's Theatre.

To my mind the best things ever written by Robert Graves are *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God*. They bring to life someone whom hitherto I had found a rather shadowy figure and admirably combine the scabrous gossip of Suetonius with a scholarly knowledge of Roman antiquities. Among "modern" works (published in 1934, as it happens) they lie with the few that are truly memorable; and one approaches any adaptation of them with mingled expectations and apprehension.

John Mortimer is one of the few playwrights with the sophistication, verbal felicity and scholarship at his command to attempt to reduce this great *opus*, republished by Penguins in four volumes, to an evening in the theatre. If he has not been completely successful it is because the task is impossible. In the process the work becomes sharper and more dramatic, but the characters seem both tamer and less convincing. For there are so many characters and incidents to be included it is difficult to capture the passage of time and, above all, the *milieu* in which a man can pass as a god. With admirable (perhaps too admirable) restraint in this sex-'n'-violence age, Mortimer and his director Tony Richardson eschew presenting the full saga of this extraordinary imperial family, especially of Tiberius, whose self-indulgence would need a Ken Russell to portray it effectively. Then there is Claudius's first wife, the monstrous Urgulanilla (Urganalia in the play), who is described as being over six foot three at the age of fifteen. Above all there is the pathetic Claudius himself, whose limp and stuttering were a sick joke at court but which good taste and the pace of the play make it impossible to reproduce adequately on stage.

As the hero David Warner suggests as many of the historical characteristics as are consistent with a pretty pacy production, and especially the likeableness and basic shrewdness that ensure his survival value and real achievements. The other players are varyingly faithful to the text, Mortimer's or Graves's. Most convincing are Warren Clarke as the seedy megalomaniac Caligula, Charles Lloyd Pack as the august yet hen-pecked Augustus, and Freda Jackson as his daunting wife Livia.

William Dudley's first-act set suggests the gods of a tenth-rate modern circus rather than a Roman amphitheatre, but the make-up and costumes by Sue Plummer are impressive throughout. Whatever reservations one may have about details in this production, where else in the West End can one find verbal magic and historical imagination like this?

DAVID TRIBE



# LETTERS

## Voluntary Euthanasia

It was sad to see so few supporters of Voluntary Euthanasia present at the public meeting on the subject, which you mentioned in a recent *Freethinker*. The Human Rights Society, largely Catholic, was there in force, complete with a cheer-leader. It is worth noting several points about the Voluntary Euthanasia Society: (1) The aim of the Society is also one of the "Immediate Practical Objects" of the National Secular Society and of those objects has perhaps the greatest chance of being attained during the next decade, *if sufficiently publicised*. (2) The issue of course does not simply affect old people, since any one of us might be severely injured in a car accident tomorrow. (3) Life Membership of the Society costs only £5.25.

I would suggest that every member of the N.S.S. should seriously consider joining it.

NICHOLAS REED.

The address of the Human Rights Society is 27 Walpole Street, London SW3; that of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society is 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG. (Ed.)

## A Tale of Two Morals

In your News and Notes of 30 September you express a fear that the Worthing magistrate's decision in favour of the Sikh landlady who disliked her tenants cooking beef might become a precedent for Jewish landlords to stop their tenants eating pork or for Muslim landlords to object to their tenants keeping whisky in their sideboards. You feel that the law ought to be clarified.

As I understand it, the relationship between a landlord and a tenant cannot be regarded as one stock type of relationship. Circumstances can and do vary in many ways, for example: (1) the landlord may not be living on the premises; (2) the landlord and tenant may be under the same roof, sharing nothing except perhaps the main entrance; (3) they may be sharing the bathroom; (4) they may be sharing the bathroom and the kitchen. If there is incompatibility and friction between the two parties and the facilities are shared, the landlord is at a disadvantage because he cannot leave his own house whereas the tenant has the possibility of finding alternative accommodation. A time may come when the equitable and commonsensical thing to do is to separate the two parties by giving possession to the landlord and a fair length of time to the tenant to move.

If a Hindu, Jewish or Muslim landlord fell under category (1), (2) or (3) it is highly unlikely that he would or could claim that he was upset by what the tenant cooked in his own kitchen. In the Worthing case, I understand, that the English tenant shared the Sikh landlady's kitchen. It may be that when entering into the relationship neither party had thought of the friction that beef could cause; or it may be that the Sikh landlady hoped that she would be able to adjust herself to beef being cooked in her kitchen. Probably the former rather than the latter. In any event, she found it too much for her and the magistrate decided, rightly I think, that the landlady should be happy in the use of her own kitchen and that the tenant should move, with reasonable notice.

The story has two morals: that dietary habits and prejudices formed under the influence of religion or custom or both cannot be changed except very slowly; and that sharing kitchens is always a dodgy arrangement!

GOVIND DEODHEKAR.

## The B.B.C. and the Virgin Birth Myth

So Lord Hill, on behalf of the B.B.C., has meekly accepted yet another rebuke from that self-appointed censor of the nation's entertainment and education, Mrs. Mary Whitehouse. She presumably pays no more for her TV licence fee than the rest of us who, when we dislike what is on the box grin and bear it or switch to another channel. Her insistent complaints reverberate ever louder through the corridors of power. The chairman of the B.B.C. is now seen acting like a naughty little boy in front of a heavy-handed schoolmarm.

Mrs. Whitehouse's complaint on this occasion (as has been well publicised) was against an amusing line in a recent episode of *Till Death Us Do Part*. As though the Longford Committee's aim to make good taste the criterion for a new Obscenity Act were already law, she bases her complaint on the dividing line, drawn by herself, between good and bad taste. Her letter, instead of

receiving the usual equivocal reply from a middle-grade secretary, was treated to a personal apology on behalf of the B.B.C. from the chairman himself.

The fact that the subject of the allegedly offensive line was the Christian myth of the virgin birth is significant, combining as it does Mrs. Whitehouse's two apparently major preoccupations—Christianity and sex. Had it referred to any other religion but Christianity one imagines that Lord Hill would have reacted less nervously. Indeed Mrs. Whitehouse would probably not have complained in the first place.

No one denies a middle-aged woman her prudery and religious fantasies, but why does Lord Hill have to humour her? And why should a show, which enjoys top ratings, have to be tailored to suit the tastes of a conservative evangelical majority?

BARBARA SMOKER,

President, National Secular Society.

## LONDON

Blind windows still sucked the sun's flames  
In the sky on Centre Point;  
Life settled down beneath  
Its weight on the curbside to rest  
Its dusty feet; the fluttering,  
Soft light of the evening below  
Caressed the graceful cars  
In the homeward traffic congestion;  
A dropout saxophone player  
Bewailed the day as the dusk  
Rose, pouring out of exhaust pipes,  
Engulfing the city; and slowly  
Life filled its withering lungs  
With that lovely, polluted air.

THOMAS LAND. ©

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
and

THE PROGRESSIVE LEAGUE

**Weekend Conference:**

**RELIGION IN THE SEVENTIES**

*Speakers:*

LORD RAGLAN (National Secular Society)

JOHN CAPON (Editor, *Crusade*; former editor, *Church of England Newspaper*)

Lt. Col. GUNTER-JONES (Vice President, Buddhist Society)

HIGH LEIGH, HODDESDON, HERTFORDSHIRE

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, 3 - 5 NOVEMBER

Members of the N.S.S. or Progressive League: £6;  
non-members: £7

Main booking list closes on 27 October; after that date bookings will be accepted only at the organisers' discretion and there will be a surcharge of 50p.

Full details and booking forms available from

N.S.S., 103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1 1NL

Telephone: 01-407 2717