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RELIGION AND THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

LIBERAL CATHOLICS DEFY BISHOPS OVER BIRTH CONTROL

That doughty old American reformer and feminist, Elizabeth C. Stanton, once wrote a controversial article for the *North American Review* entitled, "What Has Christianity Done for Women?" Her conclusion was fairly emphatic: nothing. "The Bible and the Church," she wrote, "have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of women's emancipation." Most freethinkers would still agree with this remark, but equally true seems to be its converse: that the slow, but cumulative progress in the emancipation of women is the biggest obstacle to the orthodox churches in their desperate efforts to keep their philosophical and social heads above the floodwaters of modernity. The Church of England has recently produced a report on *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*, but it appears that this particular calling will continue, at least until 1978, to be reserved entirely for men. If one can stomach the mathematics of the Christian trinity, the idea that only men can interpret the will of the Lord to his flock, or sheep, seems no more far-fetched. Other religions, of course, have preached that women, unlike men, have no souls.

Catholic Renewal and contraception

Of far greater significance than attempts to update the Anglican Church, however, are recent efforts to modernise Catholicism, which has invariably set its face against progress and new ideas, particularly as these have tended to conflict with what the Catholic Church regarded as 'Eternal Truths.' Of especial interest are the latest efforts by the liberal Catholic Renewal Movement to get the Church to revise its teachings on what it terms 'artificial' methods of contraception.

The Catholic Renewal Movement has recently issued a leaflet, in defiance of the hierarchy, called *Catholics and Family Planning*. The revised edition of the leaflet says that it is quite acceptable both to be a good Catholic and also to practise birth control. "There is no need to consult a priest," it says, "or mention the matter in confession. Continue going to Mass and Holy Communion. There is nothing to fear."

As an outsider, one can easily understand the dilemma in which the Catholic hierarchy finds itself. On the one hand the Catholic Church has always offered the 'comfort' of absolute and unchanging moral standards to its believers, and if it does an about-face on contraception it will be seen to have betrayed its own motto of *semper idem*—"always the same." On the other hand, if it continues to oppose birth control, its membership will continue to shrink, for modern woman is determined that she shall have control of her own body, and rightly so. In the end, of course, the hierarchy will have to give way, but they will do it gradually, sanctioning, probably, oral contraceptives but finding sound theological reasons for banning other methods. The eternal truths, they will then tell us, have not been changed, merely reinterpreted.

Major triumph for freethought

The continuing victories of the birth control movement over religious dogmas must surely be one of the greatest

contributory factors to the liberation of women in the last hundred years. It is also a major triumph for the freethought movement. The modern Family Planning Association is descended from the Malthusian League which was established at a meeting on 26 July 1877 in the secularists' Hall of Science. The first meeting of the League's council, a week later, elected a president and a secretary both of whom were freethinkers: respectively, Dr. Charles Drysdale and Mrs. Annie Besant.

This month marks the 125th anniversary of the birth of Mrs. Besant (1 October 1847) who endured much—particularly from the Church of England—in the cause of atheism and birth control in the 1870s. It is apt and appropriate that the event should be marked by the crumbling of the oldest and most formidable obstacle to the spread of contraception and human happiness: Catholic teaching.

N.U.T. ATTACKS LONGFORD REPORT

Another strong attack on Lord Longford's pornography report, for being "misinformed, misleading" and for its "unscientific approach" has come from the National Union of Teachers.

The N.U.T. is surprised that sex education in schools should come under scrutiny in a publication allegedly dealing with pornography. It opposes the statement that "the wrong sort of sex education can hardly fail to increase the appetite for pornography in childhood and later." Further, says the Union, "The suggestion [by the Longford Report] that certain books and films such as *The Little Red School Book* and the film *Growing Up*, are in fact part of the normal school curriculum, destroys any credibility that the Report might otherwise have had."

As for the Report's idea that sexual matters are being deliberately exploited by some teachers, the N.U.T. has

(Continued on next page)

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Freethinker is obtainable at the following addresses. London: Collets, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N1; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), E1; Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, N1; Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1; Freethinker Bookshop, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. Glasgow: Clyde Books, 292 High Street. Manchester: Grass Roots Bookshop, 271 Upper Brook Street, 13. Brighton: Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road, (near Brighton Station).

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High 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.

National Secular Society/Progressive League joint Weekend Conference, High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts. 3-5 November: "Religion in the Seventies." Speakers: Lord Raglan, John Capon, Lt.-Col. Gunter-Jones. Details from N.S.S., 103 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL (telephone: 01-407 2717).

EVENTS

Havering Humanist Society, Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane. Tuesday, 24 October, 7.45 p.m.: George Leslie, "The Development of New Drugs."

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Sunday, 22 October: discussion.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 22 October. 11 a.m.: Nigel Sinnott, "Charles Bradlaugh as Pioneer"; 3 p.m.: forum on "Humanism and Ireland." Tuesday, 24 October, 7 p.m.: Peter Tomlinson, "Social Psychology and the Concept of the Person."

NEWS

(Continued from front page)

found that teachers with political views on the extreme right or left have generally taken elaborate care not to influence their pupils towards their own views. "In a group of professional people it is equally to be expected that the same standards of restraint and responsibility should apply in this field."

Dealing with the Report's recommendation that parents should have a statutory right to withdraw their children from a school sex education programme, the N.U.T. points out that any lesson specifically designated as sex education "is only a tiny proportion of all that goes on in the schools that in some respect or other is related to this field, from the zoological study of reproduction in animals, including mammals, to a consideration of *Anthony and Cleopatra* or 'The Song of Solomon'."

DEMONSTRATION AGAINST ABORTION TRIAL

Several hundred members of the Mouvement pour la Libération des Femmes protested around the Paris Opéra on 9 October against the trial of a 17-year-old-girl who had an illegal abortion to terminate a pregnancy resulting from rape. According to Patrick Brogan of *The Times*, "The demonstration was broken up by the police with their customary violence."

The girl's trial began on 11 October, and her mother is also to be prosecuted for complicity. No charges have as yet been laid against famous personalities such as Simone de Beauvoir, Jeanne Moreau and Catherine Deneuve, who have also publicly admitted to having had abortions. M.L.F. and other women's rights supporters intend to mount further demonstrations, despite the riot police and the French Minister of the Interior.

SCOUTING WITHOUT GOD ?

According to the *Daily Express* (11 October) a conference of some 200 Scout chiefs from Hertfordshire will shortly be discussing a resolution to remove the words "duty to God" from the Scout promise and to substitute a wording such as "duty to my fellow man." The Scout Association expects that there will be "heated objections" to the new move but if carried this may do much to dispel the bad odour which the Scout movement has had for most humanists who have tended, with good reason until recently, to regard it as the orthodox church para-militant in khaki shorts.

HOME FOUND FOR GIMBEL COLLECTION

When Colonel Richard Gimbel of New Haven, U.S.A., died last year there were fears lest his vast and comprehensive collection of Thomas Paine material should be dispersed. We are therefore pleased to read in the Thomas Paine Society's Autumn Newsletter that Col. Gimbel's executors have given the Paine collection to the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia, on condition that a full catalogue is prepared. Paine was himself a member of the American Philosophical Society, to which he was elected in 1785.

AND NOTES

LOCH AMIN ?

Not being over-enamoured of colonialism, we are hardly sentimental about lakes in the heart of Africa being named Albert and Edward; neither, however, are we impressed by their being renamed Lake Mobutu and Lake Idi Amin.

President Mobutu of Zaire should be ashamed of himself for taking part in this shabby publicity stunt for boosting the vicious ego of Uganda's n-th rate Führer. As for "Lake Idi Amin," nothing, thank goodness, is permanent. Thirty years ago there were almost as many roads reading "Adolf Hitler Strasse" as there were pebbles on the sea shore. Where are they now?

When Sergeant Amin finally gets his come-uppance in Uganda, we would suggest, if Uganda and Zaire must have a non-colonialist lake on their borders, that one of them be called Lake Robeson. Until then we will stick to Albert and Edward.

LITTLE RED DIARY

In an age of red books of all shapes and sizes the latest little one to arrive on our desk is not so much the sayings of Chairman Smoker as the 1973 Humanist Diary, edited and published by the same. The *British Humanist Diary* for 1973 has a bright scarlet waterproof cover and consists of the usual diary format and sixteen pages of calendar and general information, together with an additional sixteen pages of specifically humanist interest. The latter include famous sayings, a list of humanist anniversaries and books on the subject in print, some forward dates for 1973 as well as lists of addresses and advertisements of the various freethought organisations.*

The diaries are reasonably priced, and sale-or-return arrangements are available for humanist groups until the end of November next. Fifty per cent of any overall profit on the diaries will go to the humanist-sponsored Tutume community project in Botswana.

*Including postage, 1973 Humanist Diaries cost 53p for one, £1 for two, £2.25 for five, £4.15 for ten, and £6 for fifteen copies. All orders should be addressed with remittance, to Miss Barbara Smoker, 6 Stanstead Grove, London SE6 4UD.

JUSTICE FOR THE WELSH

"Defendants in Wales should be left in no doubt that they have a right to a trial in Welsh 'with the like effect as English'," says a Memorandum on the workings of the 1967 Welsh Language Act recently issued by the National Council of Civil Liberties in conjunction with Cynor Hawliau Dinesig Cymreig (the Welsh Council for Civil Liberties). The memorandum also recommends that courts throughout Wales should be bilingual and that the use of Welsh should be permitted 'with like effect as English' in prisons and detention centres in Wales. Full courses should be provided to train interpreters.

Copies of the Memorandum on the working of the Welsh Language Act can be obtained, price 5p plus 3p postage, from N.C.C.L., 152 Camden High Street, London NW1 ONN.

MORECAMBE UNWISE

Last August the Campaign for Homosexual Equality booked Morecambe Central Pier for a conference to be held in April 1973, only to read later in the press that the town Corporation's Publicity Committee had on 6 September decided that "the organisers of this conference be

informed that the full requirements of the conference cannot be met, and accordingly the conference must be declined." A telephone call to the Corporation revealed that the real reason for the cancellation was the state of safety of the pier, but then CHE subsequently found out that the same pier was being let for a conference of the Fire Brigades Union only a month after the Campaign's own booking. After hearing representations from CHE chairman, Allan Horsfall, on 9 October, the Publicity Committee decided to allow CHE to resume private negotiations with the owners of the Central Pier, but it refused to recommend the rescinding of the 6 September minute.

NO PIN-UPS OF DELILAH ?

That well-known newspaper, *The Sun* (as denounced by the Longford Report), is running what it shingly calls "Another great *Sun* contest" for under-16-year-olds. "A chance to win a copy of the most beautiful book of our age."

The prizes are, apparently, 99 copies of *The Book of the Bible*—"a 256-page interest-packed guide to the supreme best-seller." The days when the Bible itself was foisted as 'the most beautiful book of our age' are, readers will notice, evidently over.

To win this latest religious masterpiece the young contestant has to tell the editor of *The Sun* why he or she would like to own a copy of *The Book of the Bible*, or else "Write a religious pop lyric . . . to the tune of your favourite nursery rhyme song;" or, failing that, "Draw a picture of Noah's Ark as it would look if Noah was building it today . . ."

—The mind boggles—and counterboggles!

IRISH CONFERENCE

The Irish Humanist Association, in conjunction with the Irish members of the Teilhard Centre for the Future of Man, are to hold a conference on "Christianity and the Secular" at Malahide, Co. Dublin, on 11 and 12 November. Speakers will include Andrew Conway, Cecil Hull, Dr. Eric Doyle, O.F.M., Sister Benvenuta, O.P., James Klugman (editor of *Marxism Today*), and Derry Kelleher (vice-president of Sinn Féin/Gardiner Place).

Booking forms for the conference may be obtained from Miss Mary Walsh, Clonard, Torquay Road, Foxrock, Co. Dublin.

NINETY YEARS AGO

We have received with unspeakable satisfaction a copy of the 'Constitution of the Irish Secular Society,' of which Mr. E. O'Neill is Secretary. It is a very characteristic document and bears traces of the fine fervid spirit of old Ireland. Some of our more sluggish English societies might take a lesson from it. The Irish Secular Society's rooms are at 51 York Street, Dublin. We wish it all success. Freethought is just what Ireland wants.

—From *The Freethinker*, 22 October 1882.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Freethinkers all over the country will learn with deep regret of the death of Alexander Duncan McLaren. During the recent heat wave he collapsed in the street . . . and . . . died on October 1st, in his 80th year. Independent, scholarly, warm-hearted and modest, he was an attractive personality . . . His scholarly lectures from the National Secular Society's platform were always appreciated, as were his frequent contributions to *The Freethinker* . . . Besides his writings in the cause of Freethought, he was also the writer of other books. He had an intense love of humanity and toiled ceaselessly, for the sheer love of it, to lift mankind and civilisation to a higher level of culture and self respect.

—R. H. Rosetti in *The Freethinker*, 19 October 1947.

BANNED . . .

The well-known rock-musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* has been banned in South Africa, despite the fact that clergymen in Capetown had no objection to it. *The Guardian* (7 October) quotes one of those reverend gentlemen as saying that, "if used sensibly," *Superstar*, "can create a better understanding of Christ." That, of course, could be one very good reason why the show has been banned, as has also a play called *Scarborough*, based on the Book of Genesis, because of its brief nude scenes.

Meanwhile, down in Australia, so *The Observer* (8 October) relates, the Catholic Archbishop of Perth has banned the cast of *Hair!* from performing at an orphanage fête because of "the notoriously permissive nature of the publicity attached to the show." The Archbishop is obviously in line for promotion to Pretoria.

MARIAN DECLINE

Dreadful warning to Open Society devotees (and detractors)? Well, we have received the latest copy of *Faith* (Valetta, Malta), which bears the banner headline: "Mary: Model of Openness!"

No, Catholics are not claiming that Mary has pre-empted Sir Karl Popper (yet!). Humanists have, from time to time, remarked on the fact that in recent years the various churches have been neglecting such loyal old stalwarts as Hell and the Holy Ghost. This is not all: it appears that in Catholic circles devotion to the Virgin Mary has also

"sadly declined." Fr. Carl Pfeifer hopes to correct this relapse. Mary, he writes, is described by the Second Vatican Council as "someone who knows how to receive."

Mary is portrayed as a person who is sensitive to the call of God and receptive of his gifts. She is open to hear His Word and receive it as a fruitful seed of life. This attitude is most simply called 'faith', or 'trust'.

The Council also praises Mary's "deep inner attitude of openness" and the fact that "she was the new Eve, who put her absolute trust not in the ancient serpent but God's messenger."

Hardly relevant to Sir Karl's ideas, after all; but what about the father of psycho-analysis? At any rate, Mrs. Whitehouse and Fr. Pfeifer can thank the good Lord that at least *Faith* is not read regularly by Alf Garnett.

VERY CROSS EVANGELIST

Another publicity scheme hatched by Arthur Blessit, trendy doyen of the Jesus-scene, has come sadly unstuck. We are informed by the *Daily Telegraph* that Mr. Blessit recently entered Spain equipped with a Land-Rover, his wife and four children, and a 90 lb. wooden cross (discreetly fitted with a wheel at the bottom) which he intended to "carry" around the countryside and hand out "Turn on to Jesus" stickers at the same time.

Alas, the best-laid schemes of mice and men . . . even in the service of the Almighty! The disobliging Spanish police impounded the cross. (It doubtless needed a permit or a number plate.)

HERBERT SPENCER'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIOLOGY

ERIC GLASGOW

Sociology has now become a subject which is so popular and embracing that it is useful to remember that, a century ago, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was in the midst of its creation through the application of the new scientific methods to the study of society. It was then a very necessary extension of the advances in thought and understanding to the problems which had been created by the urban conditions of the Industrial Revolution.

By 1872 Herbert Spencer was already well advanced in his theories of social organisation and evolution. His first writings on the subject had been contributed to the *Non-conformist* in 1842, and they were based upon the argument that the State should never interfere with what he regarded as the natural evolution of society. His *Social Statics* came out in 1851, as another trumpet-call for *laissez-faire*, and between 1862 and 1873 Spencer produced the most definitive of his works, which really established sociology as a subject in its own right.

His was a materialistic philosophy, of course—he rejected the supernatural; he set firmly before the public the urban needs of his times, and demanded intelligible and self-generating solutions. He believed in progress, and he believed in science: doubtless, his optimism was inflated and facile, and his hopes for the future failed to give full account to the imperfections of lesser men.

Humanity stands or falls by its own efforts

Nevertheless, it is impossible, especially today, to set aside his stipulation that, in the last resort, humanity had

to stand or to fall by its own efforts. There was no easy crutch to lean upon; nor any assurance that the manifest imperfections of this world did not matter because of the imminence of some vast and visionary dream. Herbert Spencer brought home the message of self-reliance, so that it was up to his readers to make or to mar their world in accordance with their own informed choices.

He is remembered essentially for the sociological application of science in the heyday of the Victorian optimism. He did for sociology what Darwin did for biology; and it was no small achievement. He offered a new synthesis of all the social sciences, to replace the theological systems of the Middle Ages. He applied the ideas of evolution to society, as Darwin had done to the "Origin of Species." So, in his politics he became a convinced Liberal, fighting off the inroads of the State; and in his metaphysics, he took over the seventeenth-century deism of Spinoza and Leibnitz. In all his fields, Herbert Spencer took up positions of great audacity and challenge. As T. H. Huxley said, his was the recurrent tragedy of "deductions killed by facts."

Nevertheless, Spencer still needs to be remembered today, a century after the core of his thinking began to germinate and set forth; at least as much for his mistakes and his deficiencies, as for his triumphs and the fascinating completeness of his synthesis of social being and development. Herbert Spencer can, least of all, be accused of timidity or lack of the courage of his own, vigorous and demonstrative convictions.

THE FUTURE OF MAN AND SOCIETY

ALAN RICKARD*

*Alan Rickard is General Secretary of the Atheist Society of Australia and editor of the Society's magazine, the *Atheist Journal* (Haymarket, New South Wales), in which this article first appeared in a modified form in July 1972 (vol. 1, no. 9).

It is generally accepted that man has probably reached the end of his physical and physiological evolution (though this is not to say that the human species is physically perfect), and that man's future evolution must lie in the field of mental development. Certainly the rapid advancement of technology indicates that this will have to be so.

For too long the energies of mankind have been based on the instinct of self-preservation of individuals and channelled towards survival of the fittest, whilst abilities, energies and resources have been futilely wasted in wrong directions.

Progress or extinction

With the social and ecological balance of the world in its present state we are certainly at the crossroads of human destiny. There are but two alternatives for the future. Either future development will be along the lines of a rampant technology that will gradually destroy all human and ethical values of life, leading to the final extinction of all life on earth—as certainly appears to be the trend at present—or sufficient people will awake to the perils of contemporary development to force an advance in the direction of ethical standards and social concern.

We have to accept that people must be the prime concern of society, not profits at all costs irrespective of the damage done to the human race and the environment in which we must live. Nothing ever stays still; the alternatives are progress or deterioration. The world has too long followed what it has seen as progress, but in this it has been dangerously deluded.

Life must be simplified and based on human concern. We must cease to think that man can dominate nature and must integrate ourselves with natural living if we are not to destroy everything around us. The great defect of the

industrial way of life, with its expansionist aims, is that it cannot long be sustained. The end result of its ethos is extinction; and its reign can only be extended by inflicting great suffering on huge numbers of people, by poverty, repression and bloody war.

A matter of urgency

The trend has to be reversed as a matter of urgency. Individually and collectively we must play our part, in every way we can envisage, to re-orientate society along co-operative rather than competitive lines. We cannot succeed in this unless we formulate and accept a completely different philosophy of life, based on simple, thoughtful living that is far removed from destructive and acquisitive instincts and whose goals can be reached without destruction of man or environment. Each one of us can play a thoughtful part and we actually have no viable alternative but to do so.

It will involve the freeing of the mind from superstitions and the indoctrination perpetrated by both educational systems and the media; the critical examination of mindless traditions; the relentless search for truth in all matters; radical opposition to repression and exploitation of every kind; strong opposition to the aggressive war-mongering mentality, to rampant technology and science without philosophy, to nationalism and racism, to cruelty and thoughtlessness of all kinds. Thought for, and care of, others will have to replace the idea of self-advancement, which is usually at the expense of others. The Protestant 'ethic'—the fiercely competitive self-seeking which is the very basis of our present society, must be strongly and resolutely opposed.

It has been said that European man is mostly to blame. Mahatma Gandhi was once asked what he thought of western civilisation and he replied simply, "I think it would be a good idea." Today this is too deadly serious to be funny.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

WILHELM REICH REVALUED

The Mass Psychology of Fascism by Wilhelm Reich. Condor Books: Souvenir Press, £3.50.

The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality by Wilhelm Reich. Condor Books: Souvenir Press, £2.75.

Listen, Little Man by Wilhelm Reich. Condor Books: Souvenir Press, £1.75.

In August 1956 many of Reich's writings were burned in New York by order of an American court. Reich himself was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. He died in Lewisburg penitentiary on 3 November 1957. What dreadful crime had he committed to merit such punishment in a country to which he had fled because he believed it to be the home of liberty?

He had been driven out of Austria, where for years he had worked with Freud; out of Germany, Denmark, Sweden and finally Norway in turn. It was said at the time that he suffered from persecution mania. I think he did, and no wonder; he was very genuinely persecuted.

The tragedy of Wilhelm Reich is that his life can be divided into two parts. In Vienna in the 1920s he not only trained psychoanalysts but devised a professional technique that was formerly lacking. He gradually deviated from Freudian orthodoxy and made what many still regard as a more important contribution to psychiatry than that of any of Freud's disciples. His interests were not bounded by the consulting room, however; he wanted to change society as well as individuals. He joined the Communist Party and when he was forced to leave Vienna he went to Berlin where he was in the same Communist cell as Koestler and Fromm.

After 1933, when he published *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* and was expelled from the German Communist Party, he became disillusioned with Soviet Communism. The following year, though he had just published a most original contribution to psychotherapy, he was expelled

(Continued overleaf)

from the International Psychoanalytical Association, and his interest in psychiatry waned.

It is usual to explain Reich's later developments by saying that he slowly went mad. I think this is true. He believed he had discovered a new kind of energy called "orgone." This could be used, among other things, to make rain. He was invited by some farmers to demonstrate it during a drought. In all fairness we must acknowledge that the rains came.

Orgone could also be used for space travel and to repel an attack by invaders from outer space. This might have been dismissed as a harmless eccentricity if orgone had not also been applied to the treatment of disease, notably cancer. The vigilant Food and Drug Administration ordered him to stop using cabinets as orgone accumulators for the cure of ailments, mainly because no one except Reich and his entourage could detect this mysterious, and almost certainly mythical, energy. Reich claimed it was blue in colour and "functionally identical" with love, whatever that may mean.

In the first and most fruitful part of his career he attempted two tasks which, if he had succeeded, would have had far-reaching significance. He tried to work out a synthesis of Marx and Freud which he called sex-politics. He believed that economic change was only half the battle; sexual freedom was essential if human beings were to find happiness.

Reich was a pioneer of the Permissive Society. He tirelessly agitated for it in four countries, only to be expelled from each for opinions which were outrageous then, though they are widely accepted now. The case is presented in *The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality* which has not previously appeared in English translation. It shows the great influence of his friend Malinowski's anthropological theories.

The key idea is that authoritarianism in the State and family depends on sexual repression. The undischarged sexual energy finds another outlet—in the exercise of power, in acts of cruelty, in mystical fantasies. If people were sexually satisfied most of the evils of the modern world would vanish; Reich's message is the contemporary slogan of "Make love not war."

Sexual taboos imposed on children condition them for life to authority, whether of parents, or the State, or both. That this is how authority maintains itself seemed to Reich to be demonstrated by the reversal of liberal laws on marriage, divorce, abortion and homosexuality in Russia in 1927. One result was a more docile generation which did not resist Stalinist indoctrination.

Where Reich differs from Freud is in his denial that higher culture depends on sublimating a great deal of sexual energy—the victory of the *ego* over the *id*. Reich regarded the sublimation instead of the full use of sexual energy as a defect. Also, Freud would not agree that all neurosis is traceable to sexual frustration.

Reich's philosophy was totally materialistic; thus he was one of the first to adopt a thoroughgoing psychosomatic approach, treating muscular cramps and bodily postures not merely as symptoms of mental conflict but as identical with it.

The three books under review are welcome additions to the works of Reich which are becoming available in this country. The least important is *Listen, Little Man*. The earlier Reich has undoubtedly great relevance to many problems today. No-one can fail to notice, for example, the streak of puritanism in Russia and China. To correlate

this with an authoritarian education was one of Reich's most valuable insights. His plea for a "natural morality," instead of a "compulsive morality," and his advocacy of full emancipation of women strike a contemporary note.

HECTOR HAWTON

FIRE WORDS: An Anthology of School Age Poetry compiled by Chris Searle. Jonathan Cape, 50p (£1.50 hardback).

*Mamoushka lies
flat out
on the beach . . .
tanning like a ripe nut
to a dark brown
in the afternoon sun . . .
she floats in water
and in dreams.*

—a young girl of seventeen, Sinnet Kabraji, of Tunbridge Wells, describing with fond awe the mother who is the focal point of the family and yet who somehow remains separate.

This is one of over 190 poems by young people which Chris Searle has compiled. The age range of the contributors is 8 to 18, and consequently, there are vast differences to be found in the quality, as well as the subject matter of the various poems. Sharon Johnson, 8, of Tottenham, hoping for a white Christmas, asks:

*Oh Snowman, Snowman,
so woolly white,
why doesn't it snow for Christmas night?*

While Paul Fox, 18, of Chesterfield, debates the point and purpose of sitting school examinations:

*I see the pettiness
Of gods who ask so plain
Of callow youthfulness
To tell in just three hours
How blinding history failed.*

By no means all the entries in this collection are worth publishing, in my opinion; though that is certainly not to deny their worth. From a literary standpoint, only a few poems stand out as good poetry, when judged in adult terms. But as a record of the way children think on matters like parents, teachers, dreams, the future, war, heroes, poverty and caring, this is a frank and unassuming product from honest kids up and down the land.

LINDSEY HARRIS

THEATRE

JOURNEY'S END by R. C. Sherriff. Cambridge Theatre.

I have long known adaptations in other media, but I suddenly realised when the latest comeback of this famous First World War play was announced that I had never seen it on the stage. For anyone else like me, and for those who regard it as an evergreen to be visited regularly, Eric Thompson's production is a must.

Sherriff is very much a one-work writer, like many contemporary novelists who have made their reputations with thinly disguised wartime autobiographies. The sheer momentum of the stage or the publishing world ensures that they continue "creating," but they are not so much professional writers as sensitive amateurs who respond to one overwhelming experiences in their lives, an experience

that is—fortunately—seldom repeated. After every war a guts-and-glory period is followed by a time of revulsion when the heroes of yesteryear become monsters of hatred or cruelty or drunkenness. Especially has this been so with war dramas and films in the last few years. Yet, as someone who has never been involved in a war, I am inclined to think that as well as the opportunities it undoubtedly offers for sadism and cynicism, it is waged by a number of people who really do try to keep a stiff upper lip while doing what they see as an unpleasant but necessary duty. In the process nerves may go and limbs or life be lost, but people still manage to crack jokes and keep up the veneer of society for much of the time. In *Journey's End* we may escape the typhus, the gas-rotted lungs and some of the other hazards we know to have existed in the trenches, but there is enough nastiness to justify the play's anti-war reputation.

The 69 Theatre Company is uniformly excellent in its portrayal of courage and neurosis. In a completely naturalistic production the climactic electronic sound that explodes in the back of the theatre is a chilling, and justified, concession to modernity.

DAVID TRIBE

THE RELIEF OF MARTHA KING by David Parker.
The Bush Theatre.

BAKKE'S NIGHT OF FAME by John McGrath.
Shaw Theatre.

"Do you know who you are?" a priest asks a condemned man in *Bakke's Night of Fame*, and the question seems pertinent to both of these plays. Bakke, constantly playing games with guards, the warden and a priest, is a man condemned to the electric chair, who seems intent on disguising and losing his identity. Martha, in *The Relief of Martha King* knows exactly what she is—a transsexual—and seems determined to make those around her question what they are. Both plays treat serious problems but I found John McGrath's play infinitely more amusing, stimulating and gripping.

Bakke's Night of Fame presents the last hours of a man in an American cell, condemned to death. "This is one great night for requests," he draws and slowly and subtly he manipulates those around him to the point where they no longer know what they are doing. He is able not simply to point out the absurdity of a situation where "Right up to the moment you kill me you're gonna be sure I don't kill myself," but is able to make them really feel it. It is fascinating to watch his strategy and to see how he destroys the priest's belief in truth and faith, and the warden's illusion that the condemned man is a courageous guy who will take it quiet and sensible. Finally, in the long-awaited brief confrontation with his "buddy" the executioner, he is even able to destroy that man's veneer of a rôle, turning him from a man doing a respectable job to someone who is about to kill with hate and anger. And this chameleon prisoner is superbly acted by Hywel Bennett, speaking volumes with the defiant puff of a cigarette, the soft flicker of smiles and the lithe clambering over cell bars, so that we almost think we are witnessing an event rather than watching a performance. But perhaps that, too, is what the play is about: with its mention of Punch and Judy, realism, improvisation and pastiche Hamlet is the play also exploring what it means to act and how we act to be, both in the theatre and life?

There is no doubt what David Parker's *Relief of Martha King* is about. Martha, once a man, is now, but for the

final operation, all a woman. The plight of transsexuals, however minute a minority, is a legitimate subject and their case has been presented, as quoted in the play, by Leo Abse in the House of Commons. I suppose if the play makes people aware of this it has done something, but for me it did not do much more. To pay for her final operation Martha has rented a room next to a bank; this conveniently means she can set up as a whore providing for any weird deviation her clients (including an M.P.) may desire and organise a bank robbery with the aid of her criminal brother. But this sub-Orton sub-plot never really took flight and the continual puns and *double entendres* (think about the title) began to pall by the end. The blimpish character of the landlord gave plenty of opportunity for Enoch-knocking and Heath-blasting, but I wonder how sympathetic the average supporter of the other party would be to Martha's plight. Somehow David Parker seemed a little too determined to make his point and his jokes, whereas the humour, ideas and skill of John McGrath's play made me feel I had passed a thoroughly rewarding and stimulating evening.

JIM HERRICK

LETTERS

Positive Humanism and Human Catholicism

I have just read F. H. Snow's article, "The Radio Freedom League" in *The Freethinker* of 13 May. (It takes a while for journals to reach the Antipodes!)

As a former officer of the Jehovah's Witnesses I wish to congratulate Mr. Snow on his article, with the qualification, however, that I do not think that the "basic *raison d'être*" of the humanist movement is to oppose Christianity and most religions. I consider that humanism is a positive school of philosophy; even so, it is obviously often dissimilar to Christianity in some respects.

Whilst there is little that can be accomplished in flogging dead horses (such as the main-stream churches which are almost pseudo-humanist), much still remains to be done in competing with the fundamentalist types of Christianity, for example the Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and their ilk. I think, therefore, that the humanist movement should particularly expose the latter.

A failure to distinguish between anti-humanist religions and religions which are becoming humanist, or are dying, can only hurt the humanist movement. Humanism should be as conciliatory as possible both in the East and West. This may become an important rôle; the world has enough divisive movements already. By stressing the positive side and by being truly catholic and human, Human Catholicism will effectively counteract, balance and eliminate unhumanistic elements.

In the meantime I am all for countering the Bible bashers but the humanist movement does not seem to be interested in this goal. Why cannot the humanist movement be more "evangelistic" to combat evangelists and beat them?

VICTOR K. MYHILL.

Victoria, Australia.

Secularist Xenophobia

Bill McIlroy has not answered my letter (*Freethinker*, 16 September); instead he has delivered an anti-personnel bomb of a letter (30 September) which has little if anything to do with the points I was trying to make.

Perhaps in defending the right of Muslims in this country to have equal rights with Christians I have offended some deeply held secularist belief. Having as a result already been attacked as being anti-Irish (which is false) I am now being attacked for being pro-Judaic (which is happily true); none of which is in the least relevant.

It shows a great lack of understanding for the suffering of the Irish people to suggest that theirs is not a unique problem and that it might recur at any place and at any time especially if a few peace loving Muslims are given the right to R.E. in schools.

Bill McIlroy must know that making oneself ridiculous is not necessarily an effective deterrent. Sometimes, as he himself can bear witness, one can win through. Why should he expect it to deter others?

His suggestion that a few industrious Muslim citizens can re-create a Northern Irish situation in this country is helpful to no one. In suggesting that these few people will succeed in repeating that evil where millions of Irish, tens of thousands of Poles and Hungarians have shown no wish to do this, he goes very far; in fact he goes much further than both Mr. Enoch Powell and the National Front in his xenophobia. The fact that none of your other readers has seen fit to register their views suggests a certain degree of support for this extreme racist view. William McIlroy called my reference to the long tradition of secularist racialism a sneer; his letter and the acceptance of it would seem to confirm the inherent nature of this characteristic. GERALD SAMUEL.

Lies, Damned Lies . . .

Mr. Gerald Samuel (letters, 30 September) says: "Had the truth or falsity of your lie any relevance . . ." etc.

May I very respectfully ask: what is a truthful lie?

I. S. LOW.

Malaise or Improvement?

Mr. R. Reader (letters, 7 October) wants to know where his article "The World Malaise in Space" (25 March) went wrong. In it he claims that each person in the world theoretically has a square with sides of 200 yards in which to live. He then says, "If we assume that four persons are living in a small house, we shall first need one-quarter of the surface on which that house stands for the housing needs of our hypothetical person." To start with, he seems to have overlooked the fact that since the house is catering for four people, it will be in a square 800 yards long and wide—which gives a lot more room.

He then goes on to suppose that all the necessities for each individual will have to be supplied on each person's plot of land. If we were still uncivilised this might be so; now that mechanisation has come in, and one factory can supply millions of people with all they need of a particular commodity (or several), the argument is irrelevant. Mr. Reader states dogmatically that "One person's proportional share of, say, a biscuit factory, or electricity station, covers very little land area, but so many factories are necessary that the total land area available is inadequate." Why? It is not obvious; on the contrary, it seems highly implausible.

It is pleasing to see that Mr. Reader does not claim that his second article, "The World Malaise in History" (9 September), contains "some practical, workmanlike figures and reasoning to check" (letter of 7 October). Both are sadly lacking. It is true that H. G. Wells foresaw a growth in pornography: it is, of course, only one manifestation of the growth in sexual freedom (and freedom from sexual fears) in which all liberal-minded people will rejoice, and say, "Thank God—or rather, Bradlaugh!"

Perhaps the brunt of Mr. Reader's argument in his second article is the pessimistic point of view that we have experienced two world wars, the second more extensive and, thanks to Hitler, more horrific than the first, therefore we shall soon experience a third war which will blow us all to smithereens. Quite apart from the fact that at least a small colony of people would be able to survive underground, to emerge later, there is now little reason to suppose that an atomic war will take place: we all have too much to lose. The risk is still there, true; but when one can have America actively co-operating with Russia in space, the situation looks better than it has for twenty years.

Lastly, what Wells and Mr. Reader regard as growth in 'cynicism' is in fact merely a replacement of woolly-headed idealism by a down-to-earth practicality, a realisation that society and the world can, and will, be improved—not by a grand 'revolution,' but by what Popper has called "piecemeal social engineering." A group like the National Secular Society can do much to help speed up such improvements. NICHOLAS REED.

Irish Unity and Catholic Power

In his review of C. Desmond Greaves's book, *The Irish Crisis* (23 September), Terry Philpot displays an ignorance of the situation which, if it were not so serious, would be laughable. He claims that "Ireland is one, historically, geographically, culturally and by sentiment."

Historically, prior to the seventeenth-century conquest of Ireland, the society was a conglomeration of tribes, each fighting against each other; no unity existed, only the unity within the tribe. After the conquest, the mass of the Catholic peasants was leaderless and the only coherent political force arose in the north-east where the Protestant settlers organised in defence of their rights and began to develop capitalist industry. From then on the two communities developed independently until by the end of the nineteenth century two separate nations had evolved, each with its own traditions, history and world outlook.

For the same reasons as before there was no geographical unity except in the sense that an island is surrounded by water. Even in pre-conquest times the north-east was considered separate and distinct from the other parts of the island. Culturally, one has only to watch the religious parades of the Catholics in the south and the Orange parades in the north to see that no unity exists here.

The point about sentiment is hardly worth considering when for over a century the Protestants have declared in favour of the United Kingdom, while the Catholics have favoured a republic.

Mr. Philpot further claims: "A united Ireland has possibilities for industrial, agricultural and economic development and self-sufficiency and political and social advancement." If your idea of progress is that of the Catholic Church controlling society with all its stifling authoritarianism, then a united Ireland will be a great place.

The Catholic Church's hold on Southern Ireland is immense: education, culture and medicine are spheres in which their influence is widely felt; elsewhere, the word of the local clergy is generally law. This is the society into which your reviewer would lead the Protestants! He may disclaim that force would be necessary to do so, but this is the logical method for those who support a united Ireland.

The only way to peace in Ireland is through the recognition of the national rights of the two nations in the island. Also, civil rights should be implemented in the South as well as in the North, though this would entail the secularisation of society in the South.

Readers should realise that support for a united Ireland will mean an Ireland controlled by the Catholic Church—possibly the most reactionary church in history. BRIAN GIRVIN.

Meaning and Uncertainty

David Holbrook (letters, 7 October) may appreciate the fact that at least one person, having read Antony Flew's advice not to read *The Masks of Hate*, had the perverse urge to read the book without delay! Yet, to be fair, Professor Flew did not tell us not to do something—he only advised us.

Personally, I wish Mr. Holbrook's concern over our "quest for meaning" was expressed in a more critically telling way. For if what we all need is a certainty of the self, are there not states of self-certainty which can be described as states of insanity? And who is more certain of him/herself than a "fanatic"?

In any "quest for meaning" is there not the potential self-destructiveness of denying the doubt and uncertainty in which we live? CHARLES BYASS.

Unfair to Joad

Mr. F. A. Ridley's description of the late Dr. C. E. M. Joad as "that modern successor of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways" (*Freethinker*, 7 October) is very unfair. The most obvious characteristic of Dr. Joad as a philosopher was his complete integrity, and his determination to pursue the truth wherever it might lead. Certainly, he began as an agnostic and ended up as a Christian, but he was never—like some contemporary theologians I could mention—both at the same time!

Incidentally, I have read the transcript of the lively 1928 debate between Chapman Cohen and Joad on materialism, and would say that Joad won on points. JOHN L. BROOM.

The Late Shri Narsingh Narain

Since publication of *The Freethinker's obituary of the late Mr. Narsingh Narain* (7 October), Mr. Abe Solomon has written to say that the deceased was born in 1897. He was therefore 75, and not 74, as earlier stated. (Ed.)