

The FREETHINKER

The Secular and Humanist Weekly

Registered at the Post Office as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 BY G. W. FOOTE

Vol. 92, No. 46

Saturday, 11 November 1972

3p

AN ORANGE, GREEN AND BLACK COMEDY

—THE NORTHERN IRELAND (BORDER POLL) BILL

The terms of the British government's plebiscite in Northern Ireland, to be held early next year, have reduced it to the level of a futile and dangerous farce, and one whose results, if it takes place, will be a foregone conclusion. The voters will be given the choice of only two alternatives: Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom; or alternatively, the North to be joined with the Republic of Ireland, outside the U.K. Now H.M. Government knows as well as everybody else that these two rigid alternatives are exactly what in reality every election in Northern Ireland has been fought over for the last half century, and the Government also knows full well that the six north-eastern counties of Ulster were deliberately partitioned off from the rest of Ireland to give the Unionists a permanent two-thirds majority on this very issue. The Government's Border Poll Bill shows on the one hand that it is incapable of standing up to Orange bigotry and demands for "a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant People"; and, on the other hand, it will be an open incitement to every bomb-happy I.R.A. fanatic to sabotage the carrying out of the plebiscite with a deluge of blood. It is an Orange, Green and very black comedy in doubtful taste.

Utterly naïve

The Northern Ireland situation is as complex as it is tragic, and offering the people of the province two simplistic alternatives will do nothing to achieve any permanent and peaceful solution. The fabric of strife and violence is composed of a number of intimately interwoven strands: communal, cultural, geographical, historical-colonial, and last, but not least, religious. An 'all or nothing' approach is utterly naïve.

Forcing Northern Ireland into the arms of the present Dublin government, and cutting it off entirely from Britain is as ridiculous as the past policy of artificially separating it from the rest of Ireland. The interrelationship between Ulster, the rest of Ireland, and the United Kingdom, may to some extent be understood in terms of the parable of the family of porcupines on a cold night. If they huddled too close together for mutual warmth they pricked each other with their spines; if they spread too far apart, they felt cold. Eventually, after a good deal of trial and error, they found an arrangement between themselves that gave them both the optimum of warm and comfort combined. It is in these terms, those of a dynamic equilibrium, that a real and permanent solution of the relationship of Britain and Ireland must be found.

Dublin's obligation to assist settlement

The Northern Ireland Office's recent green paper, *The Future of Northern Ireland*, points out that H.M.G. has no wish "to impede the realisation of Irish unity, if it were to come about by genuine and freely given mutual agreement and on conditions acceptable to the distinctive communities." At the same time it recognises that "the right of self-determination of the people of Northern Ireland does not exclude the legitimate interest of other parties." This discussion paper also says that any future administration of Northern Ireland "must take account of the

Province's relationship with the Republic of Ireland: and to the extent that this is done, there is an obligation upon the Republic to reciprocate."

It is heartening to note that the Republic is at last waking up to the need for it to 'reciprocate' in helping to solve the Northern Ireland problem with something other than platitudes. The Taoiseach, Mr. Lynch, has already introduced a Bill in the Dáil to hold a referendum in the Republic on whether to amend the article in the present Irish Constitution which gives a special position to the Catholic Church. This is a step in the right direction, and Catholic moderates say that they will not oppose it. But, by itself, this change is not nearly enough. One Bill to legalise contraception in the Republic failed just over a year ago, and the rôle of the churches in education is as total and divisive in the South as is the case in the North. The hierarchy will not concede so readily in these cases.

Absolutism or compromise ?

Religion, as well as being a major factor in maintaining the communal hostilities in Ulster from generation to generation, is also the main obstacle to any permanent settlement between London, Belfast and Dublin; for this will inevitably involve a considerable amount of mutual understanding and *compromise*, attitudes that are foreign to a Christian view of the world based on philosophical absolutes and the supremacy of God.

As long as the Christian churches in Ireland have direct control of either education or social legislation all offers of compromise will be seen in terms of a sell-out, and all political issues will tend to polarise into a bar-room brawl between Prods and Papists. If the people of both Britain and Ireland are resolved that the political power and privileges of the churches shall be minimised, then there is every hope that the porcupines, after 800 years of sleepless nights, can settle down in peace.

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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).

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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

Freethought History & Bibliography Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Saturday, 11 November, 2.45 p.m.: D. B. Moore, "James Thomson ('B.V.') and 'The City of Dreadful Night.'"

Leicester Humanist Society, 38 Coverside Road, Great Glen (c/o Mrs. J. Crompton). Monday, 13 November, 8 p.m.: Mervyn Thomas, "The Work of INFO."

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Sunday, 12 November, 6.30 p.m.: "The Case Against the Common Market."

Merseyside Humanist Group, Sandon Music Room, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool 1. Friday, 17 November, 8 p.m.: W. P. Scott, "Why Work?"

Socialist Medical Association, House of Commons, London SW1 (room booked in the name of Mr. Eric Ogden, M.P.). Wednesday, 15 November, 7.15 p.m.: "Pharmacy in the National Health Service."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 12 November. 11 a.m.: Peter Cronin, "The Outcome of Positivism"; 3 p.m.: Forum, "What is the Next Heresy?" Tuesday, 14 November, 7 p.m.: a solicitor, "Crime and Prosecution."

Sutton Humanist Group, Friends' Meeting House, Cedar Road. Thursday, 16 November, 8 p.m.: Dr. Peter Draper, "The Aims and Work of the Social Morality Council."

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group. Saturday, 11 November, 8 p.m., 12 Elmwood (c/o Torben Hesselbo): discussion, "Why Work?" Thursday, 16 November, 8 p.m., Backhouse Room, Handside Lane: Andrew MackKillop, "Resources and Technology in Tomorrow's World."

SUSPENDED... NOW EXPELLED!

—For opposing religion in a New Zealand school

In last week's *Freethinker* we gave an account of a case in New Zealand where two sixth-formers from Christchurch Girls' High School had been suspended for organising a boycott of the school's assembly as a protest against compulsory religious services.

Wendy Rich and Helen Leonard have now been expelled.

This latest decision was taken by the school's board of governors after interviews with the girls, their parents and their legal representatives. Professor A. A. Conway, acting chairman of the board, justified the expulsions on the grounds that the two girls had "organised a protest calculated to incite other pupils to defy the school's authority."

Setting the clock back

"I feel sorry for the people who made the decision," Wendy Rich's father is quoted as saying (*Auckland Star*, 25 October). "They have set the clock back . . . I don't think it will hurt Wendy's career in the long run. She has had the chance to see democracy in action."

Miss Rich and Miss Leonard have been expelled despite the fact that they are due to sit their University Entrance examination later this month. They still intend to do so, and we send our best wishes for their success; not to mention our admiration for their courage. They have struck a blow for the reasonable democratic rights of the young, and in doing so have braved the mailed fist of one of democracy's oldest enemies: religious intolerance. These two young ladies have paid a high price for their independence of mind, but it will almost certainly have been worth it in the long run. As Helen Leonard's father has rightly pointed out, "What the girls have done will not lightly be passed over. It will have an effect on religious services in schools."

And the sooner the better. For Christian privilege and bullying the writing is on the wall: its days are numbered. For as that great atheist, Garibaldi, said: "*Libertà non tradisce i volenti*"—liberty will not forsake those determined on it.

SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE...

Television advertisements for tampons and sanitary towels have been banned following a three-month experimental trial by the Independent Broadcasting Authority. They "offended" people.

However, for reasons that somehow escape our understanding, no restrictions are placed on the advertising of razors and shaving soap. Strange, is it not?

It is currently fashionable to regard the Victorians as prudens and hypocrites, but when it comes to self-deception and humbug our glorious and 'enlightened' age surely takes the biscuit!

NEWS

AND NOTES

CENSORSHIP AT THE COUNTER

That well-known chain of newsagents, W. H. Smith & Sons, has refused, for "commercial" reasons, to handle the 'alternative' magazine of London happenings, *Time Out*. This decision, it is thought, may not be unconnected with a cartoon on the magazine's front cover, depicting—to use the *Evening Standard's* delicate prose—"a naked woman in an encounter with a spaceman."

Mr. John Lloyd, *Time Out's* editor, insists that the cartoon was not sexual at all, but "mythical." That, unfortunately, may be half the trouble, for *Time Out* is in distinguished company, as for many years during the last century Smith's refused to handle Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* on account of its anti-Christian character. "Thou shalt have none other gods before me," and all that. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was also banned from the shelves when it published W. T. Stead's super-sensational exposé of child prostitution, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," in 1885. Eventually, after quite a battle, Charles Bradlaugh fought his way into the same gentlemen's club in Westminster as the firm's founder, the devout W. H. Smith, M.P. After getting to know Bradlaugh, Mr. Smith's heart softened, and the ban on the *Reformer* was eventually lifted. Nowadays Smith's even carries such scurrilous and blasphemous productions as *The Freethinker* and *New Humanist*; so why the ban on *Time Out*? Nostalgia for auld lang syne perhaps?

SOFTLY, SOFTLY

"I've always been regarded as a prig," says Lord Longford in an article in the American magazine, *Life*. "But how can a man with seven children be against sex?" We have often wondered, for the phenomenon is not uncommon; but, as he is long dead, Leo Tolstoy cannot write in to give us the answer.

"Emotionally," says Lord Longford, "I'm not the ideal leader of an anti-pornography campaign. I am not harsh enough. I'm too soft for sustained condemnation. I would prefer to be helping the sinner rather than condemning the sin."

So, to his credit, Lord Longford is shrinking back from the brink a little. Harshness and hardness of outlook are indeed the qualities required for the leader of an anti-'porn' crusade; they are also the attributes of pornography at its worst. More catholic even than his Lordship is that wise old warning lest "we become the thing we hate." Were it heeded a little more, the world would be happier.

VATICAN "DIVORCE"

The Vatican, whose political hacks are still hard at work trying to engineer the repeal of Italy's divorce laws, has itself reformed the machinery for granting Catholic 'annulments' for the *third* time since divorce became legal in Italy.

The new regulations for "Vatican divorce" cut the legal costs to a maximum of £120, which will to some extent end the scandal of annulments being normally only the prerogative of rich Catholics. Lawyers of the Sacred Rota, however, are displeased with the change, and are staging a virtual strike. Grounds for annulment used to be duress, non-consummation and refusal to have children; they have

now been enlarged to cover impotence and—according to George Armstrong of *The Guardian*—insanity, nymphomania, "excessive attachment to one's mother," hysteria, drug addiction, alcoholism, and, believe it or not, "fixed and delirious ideas."

It is difficult for mere infidels to reconcile some of these grounds with the theory behind annulment, namely that the marriage is declared never to have existed validly in the first place; but then the workings of the ecclesiastical lawyer's mind is one of those Mysteries that should perhaps be spelled with a capital 'M'. A more sinister aspect of Vatican annulments, especially when considered in the light of the clerically-inspired anti-divorce agitation, has also been pointed out by Mr. Armstrong: "Annulment offers no guarantee whatsoever that the husband will pay alimony, or be financially responsible for the offspring which may have been born during the non-existent marriage."

FIFTY YEARS AGO

J. W. Gott . . . died in the early morning of November 4 . . . Among his last requests were that he should have a secular funeral, and that he should be buried at Bradford, where his wife lies . . . When he came out of prison in August last—it was the fourth term he had served for "blasphemy"—he came to the *Freethinker* Office to see me, looking the wreck of his former self, but as ready as ever to return to his own form of propaganda . . . When Mr. Gott was leaving prison the bigot who did duty as deputy chaplain said to him, "Well, Gott, you will not live long and so will not be able to carry on your evil work much longer" . . . Mr. Gott replied, "Long or short I shall do my best to end your creed." That was in the right spirit, the spirit that made Freethought in the past, the only spirit that can keep it clean and useful in the present. Right or wrong in his methods, J. W. Gott gave his life to the work that, after thirty years of speaking and writing, I still believe to be the most important that any man or woman can do. And I for one shall set aside a few minutes on November 8 [the day of the funeral] to give thought to one whose courage never quailed in fighting one of the worst superstitions that ever afflicted humanity. Whether J. W. Gott will really be the last prisoner for blasphemy remains to be seen. He will be, if every *Freethinker* in the country makes up his or her mind that he should be. It is time that the "infamous" disappeared from every country with any real claim to be called civilised.

—Chapman Cohen in *The Freethinker*, 12 November 1922.

"England is a post-Christian nation; a land of former believers."
—Cardinal Heenan, March 1971.

"The plain fact is that unless more money is found we shall have to stop building schools . . . with unpredictable effects on Christianity in this country."
—Cardinal Heenan, September 1972.

PUBLIC MEETING:

THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

Speakers:

EDWARD BLISHEN PATRICIA KNIGHT
LORD RAGLAN

Chair: BARBARA SMOKER

Organisers:

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ADMISSION FREE QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

FORM CRITICISM AND THE DATE OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

G. A. WELLS

Critical theologians are agreed that Mark is the earliest extant gospel; that Matthew and Luke used it as one of their sources and are therefore of later date (suggestions range from A.D. 90 to 115). Mark is clearly the earliest document we have that sets Jesus' life in Pilate's Palestine, and it is therefore of some interest to try to ascertain its date.

In Mark 13 : 1-2, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem:

And as he went forth out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, behold what manner of . . . buildings! And Jesus said unto him, seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.

Only those who credit Jesus with divine insight can believe that, about A.D. 30, he was able to foretell this event which occurred in A.D. 70, and it is widely accepted that Mark put these words into his mouth because he was writing either after the destruction of the temple or shortly before, when it was obvious that it was likely to occur. The narrative frame in which this saying of Jesus is placed is patently artificial. Palestinian Jews, even those living in Galilee, would have been familiar with the temple since childhood, since it was the custom to go there for the greater festivals. It is therefore naïve to make one of them speak as though he were seeing it for the first time.¹ Here we can detect the hand of Mark, writing for Gentile Christians who had never seen the temple.

Luke's adaptation of Mark

The next verse changes the scene. Jesus is now sitting "on the Mount of Olives over against the temple," and is no longer accompanied by "his disciples" but only by four intimates, who ask him: "When shall these things be?" Luke was obviously worried both by the implausibility of Palestinian Jews marvelling at the temple, and by this discontinuity between verses 2 and 3; for in his adaptation of Mark's passage he eliminated both these features by combining the two episodes into one, and by making not disciples but unspecified people admire the temple (Luke 21 : 5-7).

In an earlier article² I drew attention to the form-critical school of theology, which argues that Jesus' sayings originally circulated independently of any connected narrative. An important corollary of the form-critics' hypothesis is that the sequence of events of his life familiar to us from the gospels is no part of the primary material but a creation of the evangelists—in particular, a creation of Mark, for his order of events is in the main retained by Matthew and Luke. H. D. Betz writes in this connection of Mark's "historicising" of his material. "The traditions that had circulated thus far as singular units, without chronological and geographical order, were put by Mark into the 'historical' framework of the life of Jesus as he sees it."³ Another corollary is that, if Mark compiled his gospel from short pericopes, originally independent of each other, each incident must to some extent be viewed in itself and not forced into harmony with others.

Now the two features eliminated by Luke in his adaptation of Mark (the implausibility of the situation and the independence from the following verses) do suggest that the saying of Jesus given in Mark 13 : 1-2, "Not one stone

shall be left upon another," was originally a logion that existed as an independent unit before Mark put it into this frame. Thus F. W. Beare concedes that these two verses are "a self-contained narrative, centred in the prediction; the introduction is merely a frame for the saying."⁴ If so, the fact is not without significance for the date of composition of this gospel; for the logion could not have come into being until the destruction of the temple was imminent, and Mark's assimilation of it must have occurred still later.

However, few scholars seem willing to entertain a date later than A.D. 75 for the composition of Mark, since 13 : 4 and 14 are held to imply that the end of the world will follow shortly after the destruction of the temple. In verse 4 Jesus is asked (in reply to what he said about the temple): "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" The "accomplishment of all things" is a technical term in apocalyptic literature for the end of the world, and Jesus does in fact answer the question by telling what signs will presage it. The apocalyptic discourse that follows is thus clumsily introduced by a question about "all these things," when Jesus has in fact spoken only of the temple. Matthew, in his adaptation of this passage, is careful to eliminate this clumsiness by making the disciples ask two questions—one about the temple and the other about "the sign of thy coming and the end of the world" (24 : 2-3). The wording of Mark 13 : 4 betrays, then, that the evangelist links an event of A.D. 70 with the end of the world only because he decided to use the floating logion about the temple as an introduction to an apocalyptic discourse by Jesus. Once again we see the importance of the form-critics' analysis of the gospels, which is widely admitted to have established that, before Mark, "the traditions about Jesus were transmitted as brief self-contained anecdotes or sayings," and that "when they came into his hands, there was no sure indication of the order of events."⁵ Mark, then, was able to take a floating logion about the temple and make it serve as an introduction to an apocalyptic discourse derived from other traditions which measure time on a different scale. The original connexion between the two was merely that both are concerned with some form of destruction. This is what critical theologians call a "catch-word connexion," and the individual items in Jesus' speeches, as given in the gospels, are often linked only in this way.

The "Abomination of Desolation"

Jerusalem is not again mentioned explicitly in Mark 13, but verse 14 of this chapter is often understood as another reference to events in the city of about A.D. 70:

But when ye see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains.

The corresponding passage in Matthew explains that the abomination is something "which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet." The writer of the book of Daniel had used the phrase "the abomination that maketh desolate" to allude to the heathen altar which the Syrian Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes had set up in the temple in 168 B.C. The writer was a contemporary of Antiochus, but pretends to have lived centuries earlier and to prophesy the events of his reign. He refers to them in such a veiled manner

that the Christian evangelists supposed that they had not yet occurred, and that Daniel's 'prophecies' in fact referred to events which would come to pass in their own day and age and would presage the end of the world: for according to Daniel the "abomination" is to inaugurate a period of unprecedented distress, after which the end will come. Mark, then, is telling his readers that some event will shortly occur which will fulfill Daniel's prophecy, and that people in Judaea are then to "flee unto the mountains." Why Mark, who was not writing for Jews, should wish to tell Judaeans what to do at a particular moment is not at all obvious. To explain this, it has often been assumed that this section of his work is an incorporation of an earlier Jewish document (or Christian document addressed to Jews) which interpreted Daniel's prophecy as a reference to the Emperor Caligula's threat in A.D. 40 to have a statue of himself placed in the temple, or to some desecration accompanying the destruction of the building in A.D. 70. However, whether Mark merely assimilated this passage or wrote it himself, he goes on to say in verse 24 that the world will end "in those days after that distress." If, then, he expected the end soon after the distress caused by the abomination, and if this latter refers to an incident of A.D. 70, then he must have written his gospel within a few years of this date.

In my book *The Jesus of the Early Christians* (1971) I did not dispute that Mark interpreted the abomination in this way, although I was at a loss to see how this gospel could have existed at such an early date, as none of the Christian epistles (in or outside of the New Testament) which are dated within the first century show any knowledge of it or of its material. Clement of Rome, for instance, writing in A.D. 96, fails to use information in it which would have suited his purpose very well indeed. Furthermore, Mark 13 : 7-10 suggests that the writer is offering an explanation as to why the end of the world did *not* come during or soon after the Jewish War of A.D. 66-70. He here says that wars and rumours of wars "must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet," and must be preceded by a long and painful period of missionary activity:

They shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues shall ye be beaten; and before governors and kings shall ye stand for my sake, for a testimony unto them. And the gospel must first be preached unto all the nations.

It may be argued that the "wars and rumours of wars" are too vague to be construed as an allusion to the war of A.D. 66-70; but the final sentence I have quoted is directed against expectations of an immediate end, and is hardly consonant with expecting it to come soon after the destruction of the temple.

It is of course possible to suppose (within the terms of the form-critics' hypothesis) that Mark has simply strung together disparate traditions without noticing or caring about their contradictions. But it is surely uncharitable to assume that he went about his editorial work so unintelligently. And as he himself couples his mention of the abomination with an exhortation to the reader to "understand," we must assume that he intended to convey some coherent and intelligible message. In fact the apparent contradictions disappear if the reference to the abomination can be understood as an allusion to an event later than the war of A.D. 66-70. And this, I think, is the case.

Fear of enforced pagan worship?

The first book of the Maccabees (part of the Old Testament Apocrypha) gives an historical account of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, and tells (1 : 54) that "the abomination of desolation was set up on the altar"; that "pagan

altars were built throughout the towns of Judaea", and that death was the penalty for refusal to comply with the king's decree to offer sacrifice at them. Evasion was only possible by "fleeing into the mountains" (2 : 28). Christians of the first century would not have suspected that the events openly reported in this book are the same as those "propheesied" in veiled manner in the book of Daniel. But Mark's reference to the abomination and to the necessity of "fleeing into the mountains" when it arrives does suggest that he had the incidents of I Maccabees in mind. E. Haenchen⁶ has argued that what Mark envisaged was a future attempt by a Roman emperor to force pagan worship on Christians as Antiochus had done on his subjects. The Book of Revelation (13 : 12) reckons with such a possibility. The point is not baldly stated, as open criticism of the imperial power would have been dangerous not only for the author, but also for the community in which his book was used.⁷ Mark had to be equally discreet, and himself hints that he is giving his message in coded form by adding "let him that readeth understand." Haenchen decodes the message to read: as soon as preparations (for example, the setting up of an image or altar) are seen being made for a compulsory sacrifice to a pagan god or to the emperor himself; as soon, then, as the "abomination" is "seen standing where he ought not," then "those in Judaea", i.e. the Christians, are to "flee into the mountains." Judaea is named because Mark is keeping within the framework supplied by Daniel; but in reality he had in mind Christians all over the Roman Empire. And flight is necessary because, if they wait until they are dragged before the image or altar, a choice only between compliance and death will remain to them. If Haenchen is right, Mark is looking, not back to an event of A.D. 70, but forward to a danger that has not yet materialised. And so there is no conflict between his reference to the abomination and his insistence that, before the end, "the gospel must first be preached unto all the nations."

Brandon justly notes⁸ that the assurance of Mark 13 : 30 (that "this generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished") would have been written at a period when many Christians had begun to feel uneasy because the end of the world (represented as imminent in the earliest Christian writings) had failed to occur. This again militates against the view that Mark is earlier than A.D. 70, but does not exclude a date of composition twenty or thirty years later, when a few people who had been alive in A.D. 30 were still alive. The same evangelist elsewhere (9 : 1) makes Jesus expressly say that only "some" of his contemporaries will experience the end. And in any case, as Haenchen observes, Mark did not think in terms of historical precision, but regarded the statements in chapter 13 (which the evangelist has himself put together from various sources to form a continuous speech) as addressed to the Christians of his own day and age. Every reader would feel he belonged to "the present generation" of Mark 13 : 30.

Two different interpretations

Matthew does seem to have understood the abomination as a reference to the desecration of the temple at the end of the Jewish War in A.D. 70; for he says not (as Mark does) that it will "stand where he ought not," but that it will be seen "standing in the holy place" (24 : 15). This, he adds (verse 21), will be a time of great distress, and "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (verse 29) the end will come. It seems strange that Matthew goes out of his way to imply that it will come soon after A.D. 70

(Continued overleaf)

when he himself (as is agreed by critical theologians) may well have been writing as late as the early second century. But we must bear in mind that Matthew did not originate the reference to the abomination, but had to come to terms with it as an existing tradition in Mark. That so Jewishly orientated an evangelist as Matthew should interpret it as a reference to the temple, and that he should regard the destruction of the holy city as an eschatological event, bearing a significant relationship to the end of the world, is not so very surprising.

Luke interpreted Mark in a quite different way. He writes not of "the abomination of desolation" but of "the desolation of Jerusalem" brought about by the armies encompassing it. And after describing the fall of the city as the result of a siege, he makes Jesus declare—not that the end of the world will follow immediately, but that the gentiles will trample down the city "until their times are fulfilled" (21 : 24). Then will come a time of "distress"—not for Israel, but for the gentiles, and amidst convulsions of nature the Son of man will come. The "immediately" of Matthew 24 : 29 has no equivalent in Luke 21 : 25, nor has Matthew's statement that the days preceding the end shall be shortened for the elect's sake. Luke retains (21 : 32) the doctrine that "this generation shall not pass away till all things be accomplished," yet he shows signs of embarrassment in that he is nevertheless concerned to represent Jesus as

declaring that the end will come later than Matthew had envisaged; while the fourth gospel, admitted to be the latest, has dropped all reference to the end of the world, and equates Christ's second coming with the coming of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers.

Jesus and Pilate's Palestine

Many theologians do not dispute that, apart from Mark, the canonical gospels belong to the turn of the century. In this article I have tried to show, using their own form-critical methods, that their reasons for exempting Mark are unconvincing. If I am right, then there is no extant document—pagan, Jewish or Christian—linking Jesus with Pilate's Palestine that can confidently be dated earlier than the second century.

NOTES

- 1 BRANDON, S. G. F. 1967. *Jesus and the Zealots*: p. 236.
- 2 WELLS, G. A. 1972 August 26. "Form Criticism and the Gospels." *Freethinker* 92: p. 276.
- 3 See BETZ, 1968, in TROTTER, F. T. (ed.) *Jesus and the Historians*: p. 124.
- 4 BEARE, F. W. 1962. *The Earliest Records of Jesus*: p. 215.
- 5 BEARE, *op. cit.*: p. 14.
- 6 1968. *Der Weg Jesu* (2nd edn.): p. 447.
- 7 For this reason he sometimes writes "Babylon" when he means "Rome," e.g. Rev. 14 : 8.
- 8 BRANDON, *op. cit.*: 242, n.

REVIEWS BOOKS

ORWELL by Raymond Williams. Collins-Fontana, 30p.

The Modern Masters series, edited by Frank Kermode, already contains many first-class and very useful books: Robert Conquest on *Lenin* for instance, Ayer's *Russell*, MacIntyre's *Marcuse*, Leach's *Levi-Strauss*, and Miller's *McLuhan*. This makes it all the more necessary to notice the lapses, of which the present book is surely one.

Raymond Williams, as we should expect, writes about *Orwell* within a framework of 'New Left' basic Marxism: and so he finds the powerful anti-totalitarian, and particularly anti-communist insights of *Animal Farm* and *1984* unsympathetic and naggingly embarrassing. The fact that Williams is driven by these particular concerns and embarrassments clearly accounts for two notable weaknesses in his treatment of Orwell.

First, and readers of *The Freethinker* must especially regret this, Williams has nothing to say about the anti-religious implications of *1984*. When—more than twenty years ago now—I first suggested that doublethink should be introduced as the central concept of the philosophy of religion, he did not know that Orwell was, at the time of writing, very well aware of, and intended, the similarities between Winston Smith's reconciliation with Big Brother and the way in which after many trials the believer may come to love the ultimate Author of all torments. *1984* ends:

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! . . . But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.

Second, Williams seems to have been too embarrassed by Orwell's presentation of the essentials of Newspeak to study it with the care and attention which it deserves; and which a professional teacher of literature surely owes both to his readers and to his own cloth. Thus Williams writes: "I would expect that the copywriters of Mitech were admirers of Orwell, but if they had read him they had certainly not understood him" (p. 75). Whether or not this charge can be made to stick against those perhaps not very particular P.R. men, it quite certainly does hold against Williams. For the point of Orwell's own coinages—'Minitrue,' 'Minipax,' and 'Miniplenty'—was that these ministries were concerned with the precise opposites: with lies, with war, and with scarcity, respectively. Yet even I (second only to Mr. Bernard Levin in my distaste for the Wedgebenn of Mitech and almost all his ways and causes though I am) would never have accused his Ministry of being devoted to the abolition of technology.

Again, Williams concludes: "As an intransigent enemy of every kind of *thoughtcrime* and *doublethink*, Orwell is still very close and alive" Those who really have read their *1984* closely will remember that 'thoughtcrime' is Newspeak for 'heresy': for what the secret police in the pre-1945 Japanese Empire called 'dangerous thoughts'; and for what the spokesmen of another and now enormously more widespread authoritarian establishment describe as 'counter-revolutionary ideas'. It is, therefore, an insult to Orwell to assert that he was "an intransigent enemy of every kind of thoughtcrime."

ANTONY FLEW

VOICES OF THE POOR by Henry Mayhew, edited by Anne Humphreys. Frank Cass, £4.50.

Without Henry Mayhew's revelations of the wretchedness hiding below the complacent surface of Victorian England much of our knowledge of the nature and quality of Victorian life would remain incomplete. His perceptive,

revealing and persuasive probes into the stinking subterranean world of London's myriad poor are unique, for they pitched rigorously detailed social research at the public at large in a series of letters to the *Morning Chronicle* between 1849 and 1850. Though later edited and published in book form (*London Labour and the London Poor*), many of the original letters were put on one side. Happily we are now able to add the discarded pieces to the books for they are here reprinted as *Voices of the Poor*. Unfortunately in its coinciding with E. P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo's greatly superior introduction to a competing volume (*The Unknown Mayhew*), this edition, collected by Anne Humphreys, is none the less welcome.

Introductions and editing apart, the crucial words are those of Henry Mayhew, reminding us, as he reminded his Victorian readers, of "the inferno of misery, of wretchedness, that is smouldering under our feet." The quality and texture of Mayhew's work remain as vibrant and fleshy as they did a century ago. The reader can sniff the nauseating stench of Jacob's Island, where people were born and bred without ever knowing of good health; he can peep into the grimy promiscuity of the Ragged schools of St. Giles and see the child prostitutes who scarred the face of Victorian and Edwardian England; listen to Mayhew's verbatim reports of the tramping artisans; flavour the despair of skilled men squeezed out by the march of industry. Toy-makers and carpenters jostle with hatters and sailors; their dependents, earning and food faithfully recorded by the diligent Mayhew. Here you find some of the missing fragments of Mayhew's mosaic of Victorian life. For this, a massive attack on the Victorian conscience, Mayhew will always be remembered. But let us not forget the men and women whose grisly, anonymous lives were enshrined in this monument to the capital's poor.

JAMES WALVIN

THE OBSCENITY REPORT. Olympia Press, 50p.

If the publishers of *The Golden Treasury* will forgive the description, this is an anthology. In small compass it combines the reports of the Arts Council Working Party (without its appendices) and the American presidential Commission (without its massive research findings) on obscenity and pornography, together with miscellaneous comment. At one extreme is that of President Nixon when faced with the outcome of a project initiated by his predecessor: "I have evaluated that report and categorically reject its morally bankrupt conclusions and majority recommendations." At the other is the proclamation of the book's indomitable publisher, Maurice Girodias: "The Sexual Revolution is a powerful new fact of our lives, the great motor of the moral, intellectual and political movement which is fast transforming the world." Well, I do not know what it has done for the world, or for your life, but it does not seem to have done too much for mine. In calling for freedom he introduces a note of considerable altruism: "Virtue is a business, vice a commodity. A publisher of dirty books makes his money by selling books whose main appeal to the reader is that they are forbidden . . . Cop and pornographer intertwined in the same smelly grab-bag."

In a thoughtful introduction John Trevelyan strikes a balance between the two views. While finding "obscenity and pornography objectionable and offensive" (he does not say why), he observes and welcomes a "direction of increasing freedom for the adult in a free society." In his

very experienced view as former film censor, the public will not yet accept pornography in the public cinema but thinks it quite suitable for those who want it in the home or in private cinemas.

I am less inclined than once I was to give special weight to the opinions of "right-thinking liberals," but the essence of forbidden actions should be that they can be shown to cause harm, and we now have, at the highest level on both sides of the Atlantic, demonstrations that 'porn' is not causally linked with crime and may even have a mild cathartic effect.

DAVID TRIBE

NEW PUBLICATIONS IN BRIEF

A welcome addition from the American freethought scene is **All the Lives I Have Lived**, the autobiography of William J. Fielding (Philadelphia: Dorrance, \$5.95).

HISTORICUS writes:

In *All the Lives I have Lived* the author sums up not only his own life, but the socio-economic conditions which prevailed from the first time he saw the light of day until his autumnal years. Always a rebel and an independent thinker, he fought bravely for what he considered to be right. When the courageous and redoubtable Margaret Sanger was fighting for the right of women not to be mere breeding machines in the midst of harrowing poverty, Mr. Fielding was at her side, wielding his sharp pen on behalf of the downtrodden. Despite all the obstacles in his path, he never allowed them to vitiate his idealism or his intellectual strivings. Unfortunately, we still have in our midst many bigots who insist on controlling the lives and fortunes of others by their fundamentalistically inspired tenets. Mr. William J. Fielding's pen will long remain as one of the monuments to his wonderful and interesting life.

We have also received '**On Our Knees'; Ireland, 1972** by Rosita Sweetman (Pan, 35p), **4 Days 40 Hours** edited by Riva Poor (Pan, 75p), **Choose Your Pleasure** by David Shaw (Tandem, 30p), **The Puritan Pleasures of the Detective Story** by Eric Routley (Victor Gollancz, £3), and **The Marvellous Adventure of Cabeza de Vaca** by Hamiel Long (Condor, 75p).

Recent pamphlets include **Slaves to Duty** by John Badcock, jr., with an introduction by S. E. Parker (Colorado Springs: R. Myles), **Who is the Principal Enemy? Contradictions and struggles in Northern Ireland** by Anders Boserup (Square One/I.L.P., 20p), **Towards a Radical Agenda: Comments on Labour's programme** (Fabian Society [tract no. 414], 50p), and **Did Jesus Ever Live?** by Historicus ([Oakland, California:] United Secularists of America, n.p.).

1973 HUMANIST DIARY

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LETTERS

Capitalism and Nationalism

Jim Little (letters, 28 October) says "Yes, it is a pity we are over 50; new world outlooks and work-styles are for the young." In other words, he is a pessimist; and he admits he cannot understand new ideas.

He says, "No one can deny the problems that exist in the capitalist world... as Wells saw it." Mr. Little cannot think of anything except capitalism! But in the twentieth century national sovereignty has been and is more of a menace than capitalism and Wells makes this clear in *The Shape of Things to Come* and other writings. Therefore (1) Mr. Little has not understood Wells; (2) Mr. Little's ideas are out of date.

I. S. Low.

The Irish Language as a Cohesive Force

In the 28 October *Freethinker* Mr. R. C. Churchill reviewed *Towards a New Ireland* by Dr. Garret FitzGerald. Dr. FitzGerald rates high on statistics, but low on imagination.

Irish Catholics of both the Six and Twenty-Six Counties, together with Six-County Protestants, have alienation problems. Such problems are not helped by putting the political clock back 300 years or by attempting to produce English assimilados with fancy labels. The Irish language could help to provide them all with the necessary sense of identity as it has done in the past. As a basically secular phenomenon it threatens no one's Protestantism; in fact the language's present parlous situation is mainly due to the actively Anglicising policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Contrary to popular mythology Ulster Protestantism has by no means an exclusively English tradition.

It goes without saying that Irish must not be used as a means of discrimination against those of any or no denomination from the Six Counties. With this proviso, Irish has a tremendous potential as a cohesive force; to realise this potential the language needs to be "sold."

An English-speaking-people hang-up can be considered natural for someone by the name of Churchill. No such *simplicite* excuse can be advanced for Dr. FitzBentham! SEOSAMH FLOID.

Rationality and Freedom

In reply to David Holbrook's letter (4 November) I should like first to thank him for his generous consideration of my questions. Possibly some readers may think that there are other, more urgent questions to discuss in *The Freethinker's* correspondence columns; the brevity of what follows does not mean I consider that Mr. Holbrook's letter does not raise issues of length and breadth.

From the criterion of rationality, we are all surely either sane or insane according to a state of reasoning or unreasoning. From the criterion of mental health, however, we are all surely well or ill according to a state of 'peace of mind' or 'distress of mind'. Now insofar as the former criterion is 'objective' and the latter 'subjective' it seems to be unhelpful to advocate more subjectivity and less objectivity. Surely our aim should be to be sane and happy. The solution is surely to find, subjectively, a way of accepting the realities of rationality—of living happily with one's uncertainties.

To paraphrase the quotation from Roger Poole: to insult the *mind* is to insult the freedom within it. Despite the "realities of the irrational," it may be that freethinkers are less liable to be 'exploited' than thinkers of the other sort. CHARLES BYASS.

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