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CHURCH AND STATE

—HIGH TIME FOR DISESTABLISHMENT

A recent meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England has decided to ask Parliament to grant the Anglican Church much wider powers of ordering its own doctrine and forms of worship, at present controlled by Parliament by virtue of the Church's being established. The new proposals would restrict Parliamentary control largely to jurisdiction over the use (or otherwise) of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. A move by the Bishop of Chester to remove Parliamentary controls completely was heavily defeated, mainly because this would result in a constitutional crisis over the future of establishment itself. Nobody, of course, has suggested that in exchange for freedom to order its own affairs the Church should surrender the privileges, both legal and financial, that have, until now, accompanied establishment.

Anomalous

To the average citizen it must certainly seem anomalous that the doctrine and worship of any church should be regulated by a secular assembly, many of whose members are non-believers. The Church of England is certainly entitled to its freedom in this respect, but only if it concedes in turn that it has no moral or financial claim, either directly or indirectly, upon those members of the community who do not subscribe to its beliefs.

The time is positively over-ripe for radical legislation not merely to give the Anglican Church its liturgical freedom, but to carry out its disestablishment and disendowment as well. Alas, there seems little prospect of this with the present Government or any likely successor. But one must keep chipping.

WITH WHOM WERE THE SPIRITS DISPLEASED?

A Conference Report by Barbara Smoker

"Religion in the Seventies" was the theme of a weekend conference, held at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, from 3 to 5 November, under the joint sponsorship of the Progressive League and the National Secular Society. It attracted more than a hundred residential participants.

After dinner on the Friday there was a showing of a film made by Laurens van der Post in the Kalahari Desert. Its most memorable feature was the mystic interpretation put upon the unremarkable fact that, in the tropical heat, the expedition's tape-recorder broke down and their camera developed a fault. Not surprisingly, their native guide ascribed these mishaps to the displeasure of the local spirits. More surprisingly (though perhaps not, in view of his intense Jungian philosophy), Mr. van der Post manifestly accepted this primitive 'explanation' of these happenings, though he professed to keep an open mind on the subject; for he actually left a carefully worded two-page letter of apology (in English!) to the displeased spirits at the sacred place supposedly inhabited by them!

Buddhism and humanism

On Saturday morning (after country dancing, which is in the nature of a religious ritual with the Progressive League) the Vice-President of the Buddhist Society, Lt.-Col. Gunter-Jones, gave an excellent (that is, comparatively comprehensible) exposition of Buddhism, which, in its sophisticated form, is more a philosophy than a religion: a sort of inward-looking humanism. Such a lively discussion ensued that it could obviously have gone on much longer if only the audience had been converted *en masse* to a Buddhistic detachment towards luncheon.

The afternoon was free, an optional organised ramble giving an opportunity of enjoying the surrounding countryside with its glorious autumnal tints. The grounds of the conference centre itself were delightfully rural, with a variety of trees, a stream and waterfall, a lake, ducks and squirrels.

Lack of freethought films

Between Saturday tea and dinner came a well-prepared programme of sacred music from the cultures of many parts of the world. Later in the evening there was another film show—generally felt to be the least successful event of the weekend. One of the three films posed the question of life after death in a rather jejune way, leaving the question open, while the other two films were definitely Christian propaganda. The chief blame for this bias in the choice of films must lie with the sheer lack of freethought films for hire. The rest of the evening was given over to such secular activities as dancing and folk singing.

On Sunday morning there was to have been a talk from the orthodox Christian viewpoint by Mr. John Capon, author of *And There Was Light* and former editor of the *Church of England Newspaper*, but—whether due to spiritual intervention or not—his car broke down on the way to Hoddesdon, and he failed to arrive. Fanny Cockerell gave a résumé of the history and activities of the Progressive League, and the present writer gave similar

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National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL. Telephone: 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

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

Ashurstwood Abbey Secular Humanism Centre (founded by Jean Straker), between East Grinstead and Forest Row, Sussex. Telephone: Forest Row 2589. Meeting every Sunday, 3 p.m.

EVENTS

1972 CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Tuesday, 28 November, 7.30 p.m.: Professor Edmund Leach, "Humanity and Animality." (Admission 10p.)

Croydon Humanist Society, Ruskin House, Coombe Road. Wednesday, 22 November, 8 p.m.: Dr. Peter Draper, "Do People Come First in the National Health Service?"

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Sunday, 19 November, 6.30 p.m.: Peter Wyncoll, "The Trade Union Movement and the Industrial Relations Law."

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday, 19 November, 7.30 p.m.: Dr. W. G. Harding, "A Shot in the Arm for the National Health."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 19 November, 11 a.m.: Eva Figes, "Sex Roles and Self-Determinism." Tuesday, 21 November, 7 p.m.: John Freeman, "Criminology."

NEWS

(Continued from front page)

details of the National Secular Society. The remainder of the session was devoted to an impromptu discussion on religion in general: its nature, its effects, and the psychological impulse behind it. The standard of discussion was high, and the consensus was that the absence of the Christian speaker was a blessing scarcely disguised.

The final session (Sunday afternoon) was the secularist one—the talk being given by Lord Raglan (whose car was apparently spirit-proof). He made the point that a sense of wonder and a wholehearted acceptance of life are by no means dependent upon religious belief, and that it is confusing and dishonest to label them "the religious sense." A first-rate talk, again followed by a worthwhile discussion, it provided the weekend with a happy ending.

B.S.

SCHOOL RELIGION IN NEW ZEALAND

Expelled girls return pending litigation

In last week's *Freethinker* we mentioned the case of the two 16-year-old pupils at Christchurch Girls' High School who had organised a boycott of assembly in protest against compulsory religious services; and whom the school's governors had decided to suspend and expell at the end of the current academic year. We are now pleased to announce that, pending further legal proceedings, Wendy Rich and Helen Leonard are back at school.

In the Christchurch Supreme Court on 1 November the respective counsel for the two girls and for the school agreed that Miss Rich and Miss Leonard could return until a substantive hearing takes place. The girls would not be compelled to attend morning assembly, and they, in turn, agreed to suspend their agitation.

THE DARK CONTINENT

Another little flicker of the light of dissent in Africa is about to be snuffed out: the Zambian government has published a bill banning all opposition political parties, and, furthermore, making it illegal "to belong to or assemble, associate, express opinion or do anything in sympathy with" any such parties or groups. Only 'thought-crime' appears to have been overlooked, it would seem.

The expression, "the Dark Continent," coined by Victorian romantics, seems to be taking on a new and unsavoury meaning in this twentieth century.

SANCTIONS AGAINST RHODESIA

"The right wing argument that sanctions [against Rhodesia] should be lifted because they are ineffective was disproved by the fact that sanctions and sanctions alone drove Mr. Ian Smith to the British negotiating table," writes Judith Todd in her foreword to a new pamphlet, *Token Sanctions or Total Economic Warfare?* by Alan Baldwin. Mr. Baldwin contends that sanctions against Rhodesia have both served to maintain international concern over the Rhodesian issue, and also to keep the Smith régime in diplomatic isolation, and thus deny it outright victory.

The author concludes by recommending that sanctions should be strengthened by retaliatory measures against

SANCTIONS AND NOTES

sanctions breakers (principally France, Italy, West Germany and Japan); by increased publicity and public pressure; by using the machinery of the United Nations for detecting and dealing with sanctions breaking, and extending the blockade of those Mozambique ports through which Rhodesia receives imports.

Copies of *Token Sanctions or Total Economic Warfare?* may be obtained (price 10p plus 3p postage) from the Justice for Rhodesia Campaign, 41 Holland Park, London W11 3RP.

TEACHER BEWARE

A sub-committee of the Educational Institute of Scotland has recommended expulsion from the union of Mr. Douglas Gilchrist, a schoolteacher, who allegedly "acted unprofessionally in making certain statements to the Press on corporal punishment."

According to the *Glasgow Daily Record* (30 October) Mr. Gilchrist complained after his own daughter and two other children had been given the belt by a woman teacher at Our Lady's High School, Cumbernauld. "He also claimed," says the *Record*, "that the belt was grossly misused in many schools and that the code of corporal punishment approved by the Scottish Education Department was ignored daily."

After hearing of the sub-committee's decision, Mr. Gilchrist argued that he had complained in his capacity as a parent. "Membership of the E.I.S. does not deprive me of that right," he said.

The persistence of corporal punishment—the legalised torture of children by adults—is one of the less savoury features of the British educational system. Most continental countries outlawed it years ago, but here it still has enthusiastic protagonists, especially (for some reason) in Scotland and the Isle of Man, and, perhaps more significantly, in church schools. No wonder educationists are worried about vandalism and violence among school-children. The sooner physical punishment, whether in schools or anywhere else, is abolished, the better.

FADING FAITH

"What has religion to offer to the world today? The answer is 'Nothing.' In ages gone by, when people were not so educated as they are today, religion could offer its consolations for the miseries of life in promises of a life hereafter when happiness would reign. Today, however, an increasing number of people refuse to accept this 'pie in the sky by and by' philosophy. They see the world as the product of aeons of time, a world moulded by natural forces and subject to natural reactions in the form of tornados, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes . . . More and more today people are becoming aware that there are no gods to save or to condemn them. More and more they are realising that it is by their own efforts that they can hope to overcome the difficulties that beset them. There is no appeal to a supernatural force."

—James O. Hanlon in the *New Zealand Rationalist & Humanist* (August/September 1972).

EROS REBUKED

The presence of Eros, the Greek god of love, on the new Guernsey crown pieces minted to commemorate the Royal silver wedding anniversary has come in for some harsh criticism.

In a joint statement issued by the Gathering of Gloom and the Amateur Venerological Society under the name of Dr. Ilych Haczetmann, the presence of Eros is described as "yet another example of the recrudescence of filth and neo-paganism in our rotten, 'permissive' society. Not content with subverting the minds of innocent children through television and so-called 'sex education' in our schools, the permissive-leftist-liberal conspirators are now seeking to spread their foul gospel of pansexualism through the issuing and spending of peace."

Another voice raised was that of the clean-limbed, young, Fifth Earl of Ffrenchletter whose *File on Filth* is still selling in Soho 'porn'-shops like rock cakes at a church fête. "I am shocked; nay, appalled," he said, "that in a land that has enjoyed the ineffable blessings of two thousand years of Christian civilisation, the image of a heathen idol can be publicly paraded and spread abroad in this manner. Her Majesty, after all, is supposed to be the 'Defender of the Faith'."

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

"... Why did God inspire St. Joan of Arc to take up arms against the . . . British occupying forces and help rid her country of them?"

—"A Member of a Religious Order" in the *Dublin Sunday Press* (29 October).

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The National Society for Woman's Suffrage have held their annual meeting at Manchester, and the report presented by Miss L. E. Becker shows a steady progress in the working of the society. This is the fifth year of its existence, and the object for which it was specially formed is gaining more and more favour in the country and in Parliament. During the last session no fewer, it is stated, than 843 petitions, signed by 355,801 persons, were presented to the House of Commons in favour of the Women's Disabilities Bill, and a gradually increasing number of members are voting in its favour.

—From the *National Reformer*, 17 November 1872.

NINETY YEARS AGO

We have been just sent a little tract headed "Prepare to Meet thy God." It states that this day may be our last on earth, and that our almost certain destiny is perpetual torment in hell-fire. Rather glad tidings this for a much worried editor expecting to be relieved from the cares of office by an enforced retirement in the calm seclusion of Holloway jail!

—From *The Freethinker*, 19 November 1882.

FREETHINKER FUND

We are most grateful for the generosity of those readers who contributed to the Freethinker Fund during October, and we do appeal to everyone, when renewing a subscription to *The Freethinker*, to add that little extra for the Fund. It all helps "the best of causes" (no connexion with the Editor's vices).

Our particular thanks to: Anonymice [?], £1 and £5; Constance N. Airey, 45p; Jack Benjamin, 80p; Robert Brownlee, £8.70; R. Cadmore, £10.15; S. R. Dalton, £1; R. C. Edmunds, 50p; C. F. Jacot, £1; James Kent, 35p; D. J. King, 35p; Norman Leveritt, £1; T. Logan, 28p; P. J. McCormick, 44p; Professor H. Newman, £1.30; Alice M. Parry, 70p; R. G. Peterson, £1.30; R. Reader, 35p; George D. Roger, £2.45; W. M. Shuttleworth, £2.45; N. Toon, 45p; D. Wright, £1. Total for October: £41.02.

HORRIBLE HERESIES ABOUT MOZART

I. S. LOW

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91) is one of the world's greatest composers; and, among other things, he composed many Masses and similar kinds of church music.

Not for long though. Edward J. Dent, in his book *Mozart's Operas*, says, "At the time of his engagement to Constance Weber [Mozart] had been a sincere Catholic: his great Mass in C minor was begun definitely as a thanks offering for his marriage. He never finished it." This was about 1782. Mozart had gone to live in Vienna where he met many famous scientists and advanced thinkers: Baron von Swieten (who had been ambassador to Berlin), Gottfried von Jacquin the son of a distinguished botanist, and the Mesmer family, one of whom discovered "animal magnetism." A humorous allusion to Dr. Mesmer occurs in Mozart's opera *Così fan tutte*.

In 1785 Mozart became a freemason. As a result he "began to think seriously about problems the solution of which he had hitherto accepted unproved from the mouth of authority" (Dent). He did not formally renounce the Church; but Dent says he probably realised that "the religion of his forefathers did not provide him with so complete a philosophy of life as he had hitherto been led to believe." Dent also says, "After 1782 Mozart never wrote another note of church music until the 'Ave Verum Corpus' of 1791 and the Requiem which he did not live to finish."

A keen freemason

Mozart still believed in a Supreme Being. But he became a keen freemason, and in those days masonic societies were strongholds of advanced thinking and even (at least in Italy) of revolutionary policies; and the Church did not like freemasons. Mozart's famous opera *The Magic Flute* (*Die Zauberflöte*) is a defence of freemasonry which was at the time being persecuted by the Austrian government.

For a long time Mozart was Court musician to the Archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus Colloredo. Most people think Colloredo treated Mozart badly. On the other hand, Ernest Newman thought that the Archbishop's side of the case had not been heard and that the people who condemn him unthinkingly "did not know the difference between a Colloredo Archbishop and a Colorado Archbeatle." Anyway there was no excuse for the conduct of the Archbishop's chamberlain Count Arco, who, after the final breach between the Archbishop and Mozart, got himself into history by literally kicking Mozart out of the room (or as a Victorian English writer put it: "pushed him towards the door with his foot").

Mozart was certainly a great composer. In particular he could compose piano concertos better than anyone else, though I do not agree with the belief that he was the greatest opera composer that ever lived. His operas tend to go with a swing up to the middle and then flop. In *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute* there is a tremendous climax in the middle—and afterwards a series of arias and duets which are individually beautiful but somehow lack fire. In *Così fan tutte* you have the same thing: a rhythm, a pattern up to the middle then a series of pieces of music. Professor Dent admits that when Mozart composed an opera he started with intense enthusiasm, then got tired of it and did no more work on it till the time for performance arrived when he finished it in a hurry. This weakness of Mozart's makes him less of a great opera composer than Wagner or Verdi.

Dent and others credit Mozart with certain innovations: for instance the use of orchestral accompaniment during the recitatives to express emotion and atmosphere, and the introduction of forms such as the quartet. But both of these were anticipated by Handel. It is also said that Mozart was responsible for the long finales which included action and led the way to the continuous operas which later became used by all composers. But as Dent's book shows, other composers at the time of Mozart were using extended finales—in particular Sarti, Martin and Paisiello—though no doubt Mozart did it better than any of them.

Strong humanist sentiments

In Mozart's main operas there are references to the movement against aristocratic privilege that resulted in the French Revolution. At the beginning of *Don Giovanni* the servant Leporello sings an aria saying how horrible it is to be a servant and how he wishes he were a master. The maid Despina in *Così fan tutte* expresses similar sentiments. *The Marriage of Figaro*, based on the second of Beaumarchais's comedies, shows a nobleman behaving in an undignified manner and getting outwitted by his social inferiors. The librettos of all these operas were by a man called Da Ponte. In other operas strong humanist sentiments are expressed. For instance, in *The Magic Flute* Sarastro and his followers (who are supposed to typify freemasons) talk a lot about the brotherhood of Man. But Sarastro is always saying that the male sex must be on top and women kept under. On the other hand, Blonde in *The Elopement from the Seraglio* is Women's Lib. enough for anyone.

Certain legends are in force about the composition of *Idomeneo*, Mozart's first important opera (composed about 1780): I suspect Professor Dent is responsible. It is said that the elderly tenor Raaf held up the new ideas of the enterprising young composer; in particular he opposed the great quartet which is the peak point of that opera. But the point is that the quartet was included; and since Mozart does not seem to have been a forceful character and would not have much influence at the time the assumption is that Raaf acquiesced. And in fact Jahn, the German biographer of Mozart, quotes a letter by Mozart, dated 30 December 1780, in which Mozart says that after a certain rehearsal Raaf "gladly acknowledged himself in the wrong and had no more doubt as to the good effect of the quartet."

Mozart enthusiasts

English writers like to claim that the English appreciated Mozart before anyone else; I wonder. The main enthusiast for Mozart in the nineteenth century was a gentleman with the fine old English name of Oulibicheff. This character was so enthusiastic about Mozart that Berlioz remarked sardonically that the only thing Oulibicheff was doubtful of was whether Mozart was God or not. After considering the matter carefully Berlioz assured Oulibicheff that Mozart was not God.

Mozart's two German operas are set in the Middle East: *The Magic Flute* is in Ancient Egypt and *The Elopement from the Seraglio* in Turkey. This proves that Mozart gave Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany the idea for the 'Drang nach Osten,' the policy of Germany getting a sphere of influence in the Middle East which helped to lead to the First World War, and therefore Mozart is to blame for that conflict.

"Rubbish!" you exclaim after a moment's stunned silence. Of course it is! But it is no worse rubbish than the stupid idea that Wagner caused Nazism.

To sum up: Mozart was a great, but not the greatest, composer of operas. He was almost certainly not a Catholic after 1782 and probably not a Christian, and was sympathetic to humanism though perhaps not one hundred per cent an atheist.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

THE PURITAN EXPERIENCE by Owen C. Watkins.
Routledge & Kegan Paul, £3.75.

Most of the Puritan religious literature of the seventeenth century is, today, almost meaningless or incomparably dull. It contrasts strangely with the fascinating character of Puritan action. The great exception is the works of John Bunyan.

Puritanism redefined the self in terms of a new individualism and used God to do it with. When the definition was complete God was expendable and his parish the Vicar of Bray's. As Owen C. Watkins puts it:

In spite of the incredible variety of God's world, man did not in the Puritan view have an unlimited range of possibilities open to him in the search for the good life. He had, in fact, two models: Adam and Christ, the former being the natural and necessary prototype of everyone who did not choose the latter.

So Bunyan said of *Grace Abounding*: "It is a relation of the work of God upon my own soul, even from the very first, till now; wherein you may perceive my castings down, and raisings up; for he woundeth and his hands make whole."

Man must have some concept of himself to work to, to live to. In the Middle Ages this was provided by the Catholic Church, it was recast by the episcopalian Church of England and more drastically by Calvinism; but these were all essentially authoritarian religions. What was a man to do who looked only to the vernacular Bible and 'the inner light'? Clearly only generations of spiritual agony would be enough to work that out and from the Anabaptists to the Quakers it took 150 years and more. The chaos *en route* was indescribable. Modern rationalism was born of it—the word first appears in England in 1647.

Since we are still today rooted in the seventeenth century, and conditioned more than we know by its ideas of objectivity and cause and effect, the study of Puritan origins is no less than a study of ourselves. More is the pity therefore that Mr. Watkins takes the subject out of its historical, political and psychological contexts and looks at it almost wholly in its own religious terms. It cannot become properly intelligible that way.

In England the great climactic days of Puritanism were in the 1640s. The circumstances of revolutionary civil war meant the end of the licensing power of the Stationers' Company and freedom of the press for the first time. The Archbishop of Canterbury went to the block and sects surfaced by the score. In 1647 England seemed a land of endless promise as the Army rallied to the Levellers' manifesto, *The Agreement of the People*, only to find apparent victory turn to ashes once Cromwell was in the saddle.

The Seekers of 1646 (seeking after truth and doing good) became the Ranters of 1649 (the advocates of a revolutionary personal and group life-style) and the Quakers of the next decade (concerned with the witness of conscience and salvation by 'sufferings'). Puritanism was finding a spiritual substitute for political failure.

But the Puritan phenomenon as a whole was also a strange drama in which the male conscience wrestled with a hopeless sexual dilemma. The very climate of Puritanism denied egalitarian man-woman relations. The violent conditions of emergent individualism meant that the gentler virtues made for defeat and they had to be put down. This in turn put men in an impossible sexual position; they were for ever being obliged to prove a military-industrial supremacy that had no personal or psychological substance. The erotic makes nonsense of excesses of male vanity and that kind of vanity, in self-defence, had to make nonsense of the erotic. The phenomenon is writ large in the difference between Milton and Shakespeare.

The Puritan conscience was a crazy mixed-up thing for this reason. It involved, partly as a result, an appalling ignorance of the nature of childhood and led to the imposition of all kinds of irrational adult religious absurdities on the minds of the young.

Sin was held to be first apparent in the self-centred appetites of children. The Quakers varied this slightly in believing that children were originally innocent but grew in wickedness as they grew in years—so the end product was the same. There was no sympathy with the problems of puberty since all that did was further to establish the fact of temptation and the need for redemption. Salvation lay only in acknowledging the true faith (whatever that happened to be); and this, of course, was an adult matter.

Against this background it is hardly surprising that much of the imagery of the spiritual literature has a highly sexual, albeit disguised, character. Thus the prophets of the day preached 'rolling themselves on Christ,' the 'motion of the Seed within,' and of 'breathings and stirrings after God' and 'the power of the serpent.' Sex, heresy and sin were much of a muchness: "Truly, if ye espy the Dragon, the beast, Anti-Christ, the whore, the false prophet, ye must look at home and read within." Masturbation becomes 'the basest kind of bondage' and 'the master sin.'

Because of the Adam/Christ conflict (seen as always to be fought and never to be resolved) Puritanism is constantly ambivalent. On the radical side notions of power, feeling and enjoyment lead to a frank acknowledgement that the old Adam has broken loose. What were they to do with him? Coppe the Ranter was all for Adam: "Yet I can, if it be my will, kiss and hug ladies, and love my neighbour's wife, without sin." But *that* was a kind of freedom that made nonsense of the rules, and if the rules went what would become of the whole structure of a divided society? The rules therefore had to be upheld and if for anti-authoritarian reasons the rules of Church and State were renounced then other rules had to be defined in the name of the self, God, the Scriptures and Satan. The new Puritanism made the new rules: this helps to explain new waves of puritanism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as new social classes struggled to establish their identities.

The English art, as the consequence of Puritan success, is the art of living. Its finished product of conduct, wherein, with the aid of the Scriptures, divine sanction is found for empiricism.

(Continued overleaf)

The key Puritan document is *The Epistle to the Romans* and the justification by faith that it provides. "The plight of man was his complete self-centredness; he had inherited from Adam a warped organism and could only be rescued by divine initiative, an act of pure grace through the atoning work of Christ"—so runs the argument.

The soul was to be reached by the spoken word and the sermon, the prayer and the hymn were therefore the channels of grace. Preaching was the instrument of God, self-examination was the warfare of the spirit and poetry the only art that escaped the indictment of idolatry.

There is, today, something incredible about the story of the Puritan experience. One can only wonder that human beings were tough enough to survive it. Needless to say failures were innumerable in body and spirit. Perhaps one reason why we got by was that both folk wisdom on the one hand, and aristocratic enlightenment on the other, kept their distance and helped to keep England sane.

PETER CADOGAN

AND THERE WAS LIGHT: The Story of the Nationwide Festival of Light by John Capon. Lutterworth Press, 35p.

The author, in an introductory note, declares himself to be "broadly in sympathy" with the intentions of the Festival of Light; but it soon becomes evident that he is a stalwart supporter of this religio-political outfit. No doubt a detailed and objective study of the Festival and other post-war religious revivals will eventually be made, and when the stone is taken away (as it is written elsewhere) some unpleasant creepy-crawlies will emerge. In the meantime we will have to be satisfied with Mr. Capon's rather gushing and uncritical account.

The Festival of Light saga commenced with the return to Britain of Peter Hill, a missionary who had been on a four year tour of a dozen countries. He arrived two years ago after a stormy Channel crossing from Ostend. Despite the unpleasant journey Peter Hill had scarcely put his foot on British soil before he noticed a poster which "portrayed a shapely, attractive, scantily-clad girl . . ." Such a sight on a grey, November afternoon in Dover would have brought a flicker if not a positive surge of warmth to the cockles of most male hearts; but our returning missionary experienced only feeling of shock and dismay at such a permissive spectacle.

Peter Hill spent a week praying and fasting and—not surprisingly—he saw visions. In due course he contacted other visionaries (including one American lady who, with her husband Elmer, ran a Bible college in Poole), and they all claimed to have seen thousands of people "march for Christ in London and 'taking a stand for righteousness'." Peter Hill set his course; the sinners in other lands would have to paddle their own canoe whilst he rescued the perishing in Britain.

The bandwagon started to move, and on the way it picked up a predictable load of passengers including Malcolm Muggeridge, Mary Whitehouse, Lord Longford, Cliff Richard, Arthur Blessitt and Dr. Robert Browne, of Elim Pentecostal Church, Selly Oak. (Remember Dr. Browne? He is the ethically-minded G.P. who told the parents of a sixteen-year-old patient that she was taking the contraceptive pill.) In addition there was an assortment of evangelical church officials, retired brasshats, politicians and, inevitably, the converted shop steward. John Biggs Davidson, M.P., sent a message of support: "It is not so much a permissive society as a licentious, callous and cruel society, perhaps even a doomed society." (The White and

Right member for Chigwell was referring to Britain; Trevor Huddleston, another Festival supporter, may have described Rhodesia and South Africa in similar terms.)

The money rolled in—perhaps this venture would show better returns than Moral Re-Armament—and the police and authorities were most helpful. There was, for instance, an awkward but firm rule forbidding amplified music in Hyde Park. But, "their application went in and they awaited the haggling. There was no haggling. Everything they asked for was granted." Organisers of left-wing rallies, and even literature sellers at the park entrance who have been constantly harrassed by the police, will be particularly interested in this episode.

There was some rather mindless opposition. Members of the Gay Liberation Front dressed up as nuns and tried to wreck a meeting at Westminster Central Hall. The result was far greater press coverage for the meeting than it would have otherwise received, and another demonstration that there is little to choose between the far Left and the evangelical Right when it comes to intolerance and plain daftness.

The Nationwide Festival of Light attracted a large number of followers; no doubt many were already veterans in the Lord's service, but there was a substantial number of new, young faces. Although it is just over a year since the events recorded in *And There Was Light*, one suspects that many of them have already found another guru, or have even returned to normal.

WILLIAM McILROY

THE MAGICAL REVIVAL by Kenneth Grant. Muller, £3.50.

It has long been noted that periods of stress and uncertainty are accompanied by upsurges of irrational belief and behaviour. In our present troubled times traditional creeds seem to have lost much of their appeal. Not a few of those who would once have sought comfort in Christianity are turning instead to occultism of one kind or another, a trend reflected in the number of books on the subject which have recently appeared. Kenneth Grant is a former associate of Aleister Crowley, the most notorious of modern occultists, and like him a firm believer in the effectiveness of "magick," as he and Crowley spell it.

The main purpose of *The Magical Revival* is to establish the essential continuity of magical theory and ritual, from their earliest ascertainable origins in Sumeria and ancient Egypt to the present day. Much of the old tradition has been recovered by Crowley himself, admittedly with some assistance from his personal daemon or "guardian angel." The Great Beast is here presented not as the evil libertine of his public image, but as an earnest and greatly misunderstood seeker after truth, firmly convinced that he and his kind held the fate of civilisation in their hands.

Poisoning the brain with psychedelic drugs, while indulging in revolting sex practices, is no doubt an excellent method of bringing into the open the fantastic denizens of the subconscious mind, and projecting them as hallucinations. Mr. Grant maintains that such visions can be given a degree of objectivity by appropriate rituals, and compelled to perform the will of the magician. Some remarkable achievements are recorded, though their witnessing leaves a lot to be desired, as magicians for some reason are reluctant to perform in public. The mental instability of the fraternity in general is well, if unintentionally, brought out in this book. Their utterly credulous attitude to astrology, numerology and spiritualism, and their susceptibility to psychomatic illness—Crowley is not the only

asthmatic to grace these pages—are further factors to be considered in assessing the probability of magical claims.

Though drugs rank high in the world of magic, the phallus is clearly king. It is, says Mr. Grant, "a talisman of universal application . . . As the sun radiates life and light throughout the solar system, so the phallus radiates life and light upon earth . . ." The organ's apotheosis is attractively set out in terms of the established religion:

The Knights Templars . . . are said to have paid homage to an old and venerable Head. This was the symbolic Head of the Christ, the 'Greased One,' the Head of the One Only Creative Deity that was anointed, or greased, at puberty by the unction of its virile oil.

There is not, it appears, a great deal of magical power in normal sexual intercourse; copulation with the old, the grotesque and the hideous produces the right kind of ecstasy in superabundance. Any reader who is by now having second thoughts about adopting an occult career can take heart; the most magically potent sexual partner of all is the Earthenware Virgin, a species of individually tailored bottle.

It will have been gathered that much innocent fun can be extracted from this book; but in fairness it does give a tolerably clear idea of what occultism is about. Students of anthropology will find some interesting suggestions. For example, it is claimed, in all seriousness, that succubi really exist, engendered as a result of "wet dreams." The belief in such creatures could well have originated in this way. The chapters on Egyptian magic are based to a large extent on the researches of Gerald Massey, whom older secularists may remember as one of the most radical of all exponents of the "myth" theory of Christian origins.

Occultism is supposed to lead to the realisation of one's True Self, but for many the rewards have been insanity and death. No doubt there are demons, in a sense, lurking in the dormant nine-tenths of the brain. Mr. Grant's book is a warning to let sleeping dogs lie.

R. J. CONDON

SEX AND LOVE by James Hemming and Zena Maxwell. Heinemann, 60p.

Sex in human life poses problems that have vexed thinking people for centuries. How has it come to be surrounded, especially in the Western world, with so many taboos, so many fears? There is no parallel for any of the other basic needs of life. One cannot imagine a campaign against gluttony, for example, waged with the same fierce intolerance as that waged against pornography; or the language relating to eating practices being subjected to the same taboos and circumlocutions. In spite of Freud's enlightening efforts we remain largely baffled—no entirely satisfactory theory of sexual life in a human context has emerged.

This little book does not remove this bafflement. But it does, in a most effective manner, offer guidance on sexual behaviour in modern society. Its excellence is such that an enlightened government would arrange for its free distribution to secondary school children as an essential part of their educational programme. It is lucid, wise and informative.

The authors make an important distinction between sex and love which relates the former to the biological pressures which we share with the rest of the animal kingdom on which love, as an encounter between personalities, builds transforming and enriching human relationships. A code of sexual morality is tentatively suggested, as follows:

1. Everyone has a right to strive for sexual fulfilment, but *not* at the cost of others, by deceiving or exploiting them in any way.
2. Mutual consideration is the basis of sexual relations, just as it is the basis of all other interpersonal relations.
3. The criterion of sexual life should be its quality as a shared experience.
4. It is an absolute obligation on all who make love to take precautions to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

There is a warning against the over-romanticising of love—the notion that for every man there is just one right woman and vice versa. Where there is tolerance and a sensitivity to the needs of others the foundation for a happy relationship exists. The contemporary changing attitude towards sex, its liberation from guilt and shame, makes possible the synthesising of the biological drive of sex with the human yearning to love and be loved.

The book contains several appendices dealing in a factual, down to earth manner, with contraception, unwanted pregnancies, venereal disease and sexual deviations, together with a glossary of sexual terms in everyday use and suggestions for discussions and activities. I strongly recommend this book.

REUBEN OSBORN

THEATRE

A DOLL'S HOUSE by Henrik Ibsen. Greenwich Theatre.

Ibsen's plays would not seem ideal for an open stage such as the Greenwich theatre possesses; Ibsen wrote the play as viewed through the proscenium arch, where the audience was privileged to observe through an open fourth wall the reality of life. Yet Michael Wearing, the director of this production, has taken full advantage of his stage facilities, for we have instead of hidden wings, outer rooms, passages, corridors—and these shadowy places echo and support the play's mood of brooding crisis in a way that parallels the relentless weight of the past that lies heavy on all the characters.

The tragedy in Ibsen's plays lies in the situation rather than in the central characters: the trap has been sprung and the characters suffer the inexorable process of the disintegration of their lives. "It's too late," says Dr. Rank, played with delicate accuracy by John Grillo; he is speaking of his own disease-ridden body, but the phrase could as aptly be applied to this disease-ridden society so carefully sustaining a veneer of health. It is too late for Nora to escape the consequences of her past innocent forgery, and, once her husband, Torvil, has betrayed the bourgeois conventions which are all that upholds their marriage, it is too late for him to prevent his wife's departure. The final *Women's Lib* homily, very tame for the 1970s, quite outrageous in the 1890s, exposes the fragility of this convention of marriage, and it now seems too late to hope for the "miracle of miracles" in which a man and woman may live together in equal partnership.

It is a tribute to Susan Hampshire's powers as an actress that the verbose, polemical, concluding speeches are spoken with such calm, deep-felt assurance that my attention was held to the last moment. Nora, the woman around whom the play revolves, is seen by her husband as "my squirrel . . . my skylark . . . my spendthrift . . . my singing bird," and Susan Hampshire gave us a rare performance in which

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she could convince us of all this and yet show the depths beneath the depths needed to make the conclusion plausible. The pace seemed constantly set by her quicksilver changes of mood, so that the whole production displayed brittleness beneath fluency and weight beneath a desperate frivolity. My only cavil is that the underlying uneasiness was perhaps too near the surface from the beginning—the polite conventions of a polite society should perhaps have been more solidly established. Yet, taken as a whole, this production gave us Ibsen where the passion and the agony burst through the ice of bourgeois gentility.

JIM HERRICK

LETTERS

The Old Spooks and the New

Cyril Marcus (*Freethinker*, 4 November) states that "an action is right if it brings happiness."—A seemingly straightforward and innocuous proposition, but in reality one riddled with ambiguities. For example, a sadist might claim to be happy when inflicting pain, or a puritan when regulating and repressing the sexual activities of others. Does Mr. Marcus find they are 'right'?

In fact, concepts of 'happiness' are so amorphous and vary so much from individual to individual that one can only meaningfully say, "This makes me happy, although it may not make you." One man's hap can easily be another's mishap.

Similarly, 'right' escapes concrete definition except in the limited sense used by James L. Walker in his *Philosophy of Egoism*: "The word *right* has the same fundamental meaning as *straight* . . . A man's right is the straight way to the satisfaction of his desires."

Mr. Marcus also invokes those perennial 'blah-blahs', "men of goodwill" and "the good of mankind." Who will admit to being of *badwill*? From Hitler to Stalin, from Manson to Mao Tse-tung, are they not *all* of goodwill? Let us leave this windy abstraction to priest and politician. As for the "good of all mankind," what does this mean? How does Mr. Marcus and his fellow goodwillers decide what is this "good," except by preconceived ideas as to what mankind's "good" ought to be?

I cannot see what is gained by abandoning the spook of God, only to replace it by spooks like 'right' and 'mankind'.

S. E. PARKER.

The Dangers of Being 'Nice'

The news item in the 4 November *Freethinker* concerning the demolition of St. Mary's Church, Savile Town, instead of selling it to the Moslems should earn our blessings to the Christians. Unless we are on the alert we shall be scorning the Jesus boys for taking such action and sending a donation to the Moslem Movement.

The biggest bigots of our fair isle claim a religious creed. A freethinker must not be tied to the apron strings of doing the 'nice' thing. There have been too many lives lost in warfare to praise the dear little souls in out mist. This includes the Moslems.

We must work in mental deeds—not indoctrination of the child to accept that it is but a sinner before it has discarded its first nappies.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

The Editor comments:

If by "being nice" Mr. Francis means being mealy-mouthed and hypocritical in dealing with something (or someone) objectionable, then we would surely all agree with him. There is, however, a difference between forthright, honest opposition, which leaves room for fair dealing and common courtesy; and bigotry and petty spitefulness, which is certainly 'opposition', but usually counter-productive. It seems to most reasonable people, including, one would imagine, many liberal Christians, that pulling down this particular building, rather than letting the Moslems buy it at

a fair price, was an instance of petty spitefulness. It does not compromise one's opposition to both Christianity and Islam to say that these ideologies are entitled to raise their own buildings (so long as they pay for them) or their members to enjoy the same standards of civil liberties that we expect for ourselves.

Square Numbers

It was surprising that Mr. Reader (letters, 4 November) "cannot even hazard a guess" as to "where Mr. Reed's 800 yards came from." After all, it is possible that Mr. Reed had at the back of his mind the square for four houses (with four persons to a house).

What is meant by "the drastic reduction of human numbers"? Birth control is one thing, but reducing human numbers . . .

CHARLES BYASS.

The Character of Dr. Joad

Mr. F. A. Ridley (letters, 4 November) has chosen a singularly unfortunate example in his attempt to justify his claim that the late Dr. Joad was a modern successor of Mr. Facing-Both-Ways.

Dr. Joad retained his pacifism throughout the Thirties, and only abandoned it when he became reluctantly convinced, after much soul-searching, that the triumph of Nazism would be a greater evil even than war. His reasons for his change of position are movingly set forth in his *Journey Through the War Mind* (1940), a book in which the author's complete integrity is revealed in every page.

JOHN L. BROOM.

John L. Broom (letters, 21 October) tells us that the late Dr. Joad had complete integrity. Those of us who greatly enjoyed his part in the famous B.B.C. "Brains Trust" during the War would like to think so; but Joad's reputation was somewhat tarnished when he was caught travelling by train without a ticket a few years before his death. (Most of us were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that it was an affair of personal eccentricity in a man who was nearing the end of his life.)

His rather odd book, *Recovery of Faith*, made Joad very popular in religious circles; but for a man who had made his name as a philosopher and debater it was based on those rather naïve assumptions which would seem quite at variance with his earlier style of reasoning.

It is of interest to note that according to David Tribe's *100 Years of Freethought* it was generally considered that Cohen had won in their famous debate.

Perhaps like Annie Besant (and Malcolm Muggeridge?) Joad saw himself as a sort of reforming missionary after his late conversion to religion. It would seem that great iconoclasts often have a peculiar blind spot when it comes to religion, and are often prepared to swallow any creed, however absurd it may be.

CLAUD WATSON.

H. G. Wells and Freedom

I am a very practical worker, always close to nature and the elements and involved with the achievements of others in dozens of ways, and therefore I know that most of the remarks of Mr. Jim Little and Mr. Nicholas Reed in their letters of 23 September, 21 and 28 October, especially about H. G. Wells, are a lot of tripe.

Mr. Little (28 October) talks about "social engineering" in China. "Engineering" means "applying machinery to the solution of problems." The word "social" implies people. Applying machinery to people suggests brainwashing. How nice of Mr. Little to tell us this goes on in China and that the Chinese are good at it!

Mr. Little seems to have evolved something suspiciously like a variation on the technique of Senator Joe McCarthy in the 1950s; if you do not like a man's ideas, just call him an elitist. I suppose an elitist is someone who is in favour of ruling classes; H. G. Wells opposed the British ruling class (and other ruling classes) again and again throughout his life. Also Mr. Little and Mr. Reed talk a lot about being "liberated"; Wells stood up for the right to talk freely about sex (and go in for it!) in days when to do so was a lot more dangerous (and progressive) than it is at present, and I doubt if today we (including Messrs. Little and Reed) would have the freedom we have in this respect if it had not been for H. G. Wells and people like him.

I. S. LOW.