

The FREETHINKER

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WIND UP THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND!

—SAYS NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

The National Secular Society has called for the winding up of the Church of England following the admission, at the last annual meeting of the Church Commissioners, that it is becoming impossible to pay Anglican clergy a living wage, despite the fact that the Church has inherited capital of £500 million, yielding a tax-free annual income of £27 million a year. Commenting on the fact that some clergymen have their stipends supplemented from social security, N.S.S. President Barbara Smoker said that this was "a shameful state of affairs." She added: "Other ideological bodies, such as humanist organisations, have to cut their coat according to their cloth; and moreover such organisations, being denied charity status, have their meagre income plundered by the taxman. They too would like to employ thousands of full-time workers, but have to scrape by with the few they can afford."

Dwindling anachronism

Miss Smoker pointed out that the vast fortune held by the Church Commissioners was used "solely for the benefit of the clergy—to supplement collections in church. So it is obvious that the collections are negligible as congregations dwindle away."

"Since there is so little demand for C. of E. clergy," said the President of the National Secular Society, "why not stop recruiting them, gradually make them redundant, and wind up the affairs of this anachronistic church? The £27 million a year paid to them could then be devoted to socially useful projects, while the church buildings could be handed back to their rightful owners: the population at large. For the compulsory tithes and mortuaries which originally paid for them were imposed on the whole population, not just the ancestors of the present-day minority of believers."

Better housing and social services

If the Church of England went into liquidation, Miss Smoker suggested that the land taken up by underused churches could be made available for much needed housing, while at the same time churches of architectural or historical merit could be preserved for public use "as libraries or community centres."

"At present many redundant churches are being sold each year by the church authorities to the highest bidder, the proceeds being pocketed by them as though they were the sole, rightful owners. The churches that remain unsold are generally underused, often to the extent of being locked up six days of the week, while thousands of families live in intolerably overcrowded conditions."

"Any other multi-million pound concern whose business was declining so fast that it could no longer pay its way would fold up," Miss Smoker emphasised.—"Why not the Church of England?"

MUSIC WHILE YOU MASTURBATE

We can envisage fewer occupations less enjoyable than monitoring the productions of the pop music industry in a frantic search for suggestive or indelicate wording. However, Mrs. Mary Whitehouse, like other members of the public, is entitled to her hobbies; whether she and the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association should have a licence to impose their tastes upon the rest of the community is quite another matter.

Last week the B.B.C. cravenly dropped Chuck Berry's song, "My Ding-a-Ling", after receiving a protest from Mrs. Whitehouse, who was "in no doubt" (of course) that the wording of the record was "intended as a deliberate stimulation to self and mutual masturbation." Verily, when sex rears its sinful, priapic head in unexpected quarters, the evangelical eye is all-seeing. A spokesman for Philips records is reported as saying that any double meaning in the song was "in the grand tradition of British humour." He had overlooked another grand British tradition, nay, institution: Mrs. Grundy.

Naughty nursery rhymes ?

Doubtless it will not now be long before we find the B.B.C. filling unswept cattle trucks with the entire staff of *Listen With Mother*, all sentenced to transportation for life to the Far Forest Mint Sauce Mines for the unspeakable crime of broadcasting "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

The time is clearly ripe for Mrs. Whitehouse and other crusaders for virtue to purge our decadent nation of permissive nursery rhymes that positively whinny with depravity and unnatural vice of mind-boggling proportions: "Jack and Jill", "The Grand Old Duke of York", "There Was a Little Nut Tree", "Here Comes Muffin the Mule", "Ride a Cock Horse" and others that modesty forbids us to print, not to mention the sadists' anthem, "Three Blind Mice".

THE FREETHINKER

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The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

Promenade Gallery, Hornsey Central Library, Crouch End, London N8. 16 December—6 January (Sundays excepted): Exhibition of paintings by Oswell Blakeston.

EVENTS

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Sunday, 10 December, 6.30 p.m.: Dr. J. L. Crighton, "Drugs and Society."

Merseyside Humanist Group, Sandon Music Room, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane. Liverpool 1. Friday, 15 December, 8 p.m.: J. Rogers, "The Work of a Community Relations Officer."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 10 December. 11 a.m.: Lord Brockway, "The Challenge to Humanism"; 3 p.m.: Dr. E. F. Schumacher and Victor Anderson, "Decentralization." Tuesday, 12 December, 7 p.m.: Harcourt Roy, "Eating for Entertainment or Survival."

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group, Backhouse Room, Hand-side Lane. Thursday, 14 December, 8 p.m.: Mrs. Sonoko Strong, "Personal Impressions of Japanese and British Life."

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE FREETHINKER

Readers and friends of *The Freethinker* will learn with much regret that it will appear as a weekly publication for the last time on 30 December; from January 1973 it will be published monthly. It will consist of 16 pages and will cost 6p.

The Directors of Secular Society Limited and G. W. Foote & Company reluctantly came to this decision after two meetings to consider the current financial position and future prospects of *The Freethinker*. Production costs have sharply increased during the last three years, and many similar journals forced to publish fortnightly or monthly; some have gone out of existence. But for the generosity and co-operation of our printers, G. T. Wray Limited, it is very likely that *The Freethinker* would have ceased weekly publication some time ago.

The rationalisation of the position provides an opportunity to build up the *Freethinker* circulation, and to strengthen its finances. It would be a serious setback for the Movement if a journal which has been in existence for over ninety years were forced to close down. But the future economic situation is most uncertain. Unless circulation increases and more donations and legacies are forthcoming it is not possible to guarantee *The Freethinker's* long-term existence.

We sincerely thank all those who have loyally supported and worked for the paper down the years. At the same time we appeal to individuals and groups to join in the campaign substantially to increase the circulation and the influence of *The Freethinker*.

BACK TO SQUARE ONE

In News and Notes of 22 April last we noted, with regret, that the Unitarian paper, *The Inquirer*, and the I.L.P.'s *Socialist Leader* were having to discontinue weekly publication owing to financial difficulties. We wrote at the time:

Papers of this type provide a useful platform for minority opinions, and with this general decline of the weeklies, and the contraction of the press as a whole . . . we shall receive comment and opinion more and more from a very small number of large-circulation publishing corporations on the one hand, and from the near-monopolistic broadcasting media on the other. Such a prospect is neither desirable nor healthy in a free society.

Ninety-one years ago *The Freethinker* started off as a monthly, but rapidly went fortnightly, and finally became a weekly. It would be tragic if ever this trend had to be reversed simply because of monetary considerations . . .

We had little idea at the time that our fears would come to pass, and so soon, and it is the more sad that that blow should fall at a time when this office has more than enough copy in hand to fill 8 pages a week, let alone 16 pages a month. It is an ill day for rationalism when the oldest freethought weekly in the world has to go monthly in order to make ends meet financially, but let no one be deceived: the old tomat of fighting freethought may be back to square one, but he has put neither his teeth nor his claws into pawn, and if his financial means are not on a par with those of the cosseted lapdogs of tyranny,

S AND NOTES

superstition, cant and mindlessness, his teeth and his claws are as sharp and as strong as ever, and they will continue to be used to the full, never fear!

In the meantime, we appeal to readers of *The Freethinker*, old and new, to do all in their power to support the paper, by renewing subscriptions promptly and giving a little extra to the Freethinker Fund; and also by encouraging friends to take out a regular order. One benefit of going monthly is that the new annual subscription will be within the range of almost everyone's pocket. Finally, it is worth mentioning that a generous legacy or two would go a long way to putting *The Freethinker* back on a weekly basis, so please remember "the best of causes" when making a will.

Notice to Contributors

As reviewers and contributors are aware, even at the present rate of publication, a considerable backlog of copy has built up, and contributors are often having to wait for two months before their offerings can appear. The latest decision will exacerbate this problem, and we apologise to writers and implore their patience.

As far as possible we will do all in our power to publish MS. copy accepted to date, though hereafter fairly drastic reductions may have to be made as our annual flow of print will be cut by more than half as a result of going monthly.

Until further notice, therefore, will critics with books outstanding please exercise the utmost economy of words with their reviews. The same applies to correspondents. We will still welcome articles, particularly of 600 words or less, but authors would be well advised to contact the Editor before writing up unsolicited articles of any considerable length. Thank you.

HEENAN ON RUSSELL

On 26 November last we were treated to a splendid exhibition of Christian concern for tolerance, charity and Absolute Truth by a column in the *Sunday Times* entitled "Heenan's Diary."

The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster solemnly informed us that Bertrand Russell, the great mathematician and rationalist philosopher, "might have become an exemplary Christian had his father, a monumental bigot, not robbed him of the chance to learn about God."

Russell's father died when his son was only two, but that does not daunt Cardinal Heenan:

Russell senior was a militant atheist. His hatred of religion must have been pathological.

Although he did not live to affect his children personally . . . his will laid down the strict injunction that his children must receive no religious instruction of any kind.

To make sure that his last wishes would be carried out he appointed as executors two atheists.

So therefore, Cardinal Heenan would have us believe Bertrand Russell "inherited unbelief as an Irish or Polish child inherits the Catholic faith or an Arab the creed of the Prophet."

The realities of the case are very different, and if Cardinal Heenan wrote this drivel in ignorance he can be forgiven for not being well versed in the facts, which reflect little credit on Christianity.

What really happened is that the will referred to above was challenged by nice Christians, and, despite strong protests from the freethought movement at the time, was set aside by the courts. The young Russell was handed over to be brought up by his devout Christian grandparents. He eventually broke from the church in his late 'teens.

Cardinal Heenan has been one of the loudest campaigners in recent years for State aid for Catholic Schools, where children "learn about", that is to say, are inculcated with the idea of, God. No doubt if this prince of the Church had his way "pathological" "bigots" who dare to disagree with the fundamentals of Christianity would not only be obliged to finance Catholic schools from their taxes, but they would be obliged to send their children to them as well. Does anyone still doubt the need for a militant freethought movement in the 1970s?

NEW PAMPHLET ON HUMANISM

Kit Mouat, the well-known freethought (secondhand) bookseller and author of *What Humanism is About* (as well as a former *Freethinker* editor) has just produced an excellent 41-page pamphlet, entitled *An Introduction to Secular Humanism*.

Mrs. Mouat's encyclopaedic booklet deals with religion in general, and Christianity in particular, together with the various rationalist critiques of theology. In the second part she deals with humanism and its historical rôle in education, science, in the emancipation of slaves and of women; and the effects of "Humanity's Gain From Unbelief." For good measure the author adds a few pages at the end giving basic definitions and a comprehensive bibliography for newcomers to the freethought movement. We hope that individual readers and, in particular, humanist groups, will see that this pamphlet receives a wide distribution and sale.

Copies of *An Introduction to Secular Humanism*, by Kit Mouat, may be obtained, price 45p plus 3p postage, from G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL.

NINETY YEARS AGO

Royalty is all very well in its way, but it is rather an expensive luxury. It is only the figure-head of the ship of state, but it takes a great deal of gilding. We pay five thousand a year to the man at the helm, and more than half a million for decorating the effigy on the bowsprit. Some people call this loyalty; we call it imbecility. And the worst of it is that the figure-head begets other figure-heads, every one of which requires gilding; and nobody can see the end of the costly process. By-and-by we shall be obliged to pitch them overboard or else to leap over ourselves, for the ship is getting too small for all of us on the old terms.

—G. W. Foote in *The Freethinker*, 10 December 1882.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

America seems to favour the existence of Christians with the mentality of men of the Stone Age, rather more than does this country—at least, they are less chary of exhibiting themselves in public. Thus we note that the Kentucky State Association of Baptists, representing 275,000 members, have solemnly denounced the doctrine of evolution because it contradicts the Divine account of creation as given in the book of Genesis. It also protests against public money being spent on institutions in which evolution is taught. And yet we believe that nearly everyone in the United States is able to read and write!

—From *The Freethinker*, 10 December 1922.

THE LONGFORD THREAT TO FREEDOM

by BRIGID BROPHY

FOREWORD: Barbara Smoker

10p plus 3p postage

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL

APHRA BEHN: A RESTORATION WRITER RESTORED

JIM HERRICK

Aphra Behn, now almost forgotten, was, in her heyday during the second half of the seventeenth century, a well-known and controversial figure. She was probably the first woman to make a living from writing and showed great courage in entering the field of the theatre as a dramatist, some of her plays having considerable success, despite the hostility they also aroused. Her circle of friends included many of the well-known literary figures of the period such as Dryden and Otway and she clearly had the facility to make friends and enemies with equal ease. The independence of her thought and approach and her originality as a dramatist and novelist make her a figure worthy of greater attention than she has received. Much of the material in this article is based on the biography *The Incomparable Aphra* by George Woodcock, published in 1948.



Aphra Behn
(from a portrait by Sir Peter Lely)

A paradoxical character

Her origins are obscure and controversy surrounds the facts concerning her period in Surinam as a young woman, but her later writing shows much evidence of direct experience of colonial life. It is clear, however, that she acted as a spy for Charles II shortly after the Restoration, trying to obtain information about the intentions of the Dutch in their conflict with Britain. Her only reward appears to have been a brief period in prison as a result of debts incurred in her activities. But it was in the sphere of literature, in particular the revived theatre, that she was to achieve success, controversy and ultimately to die after long illness and poverty, as was the fate of many a writer who lacked patronage or extensive private resources. She was a paradoxical mixture of Tory and anarchist, royalist and rebel, a champion of women's rights and a sceptic concerning the institution of marriage, almost certainly sceptical of religious institutions, an early castigator of the cruelties of slavery and an important contributor to Restoration drama and the early development of the novel.

Aphra Behn was the first woman to earn her living from writing and in the face of scurrilous hostility she constantly affirmed the rights of women to be heard. Actresses had only recently been admitted into the theatre and manage-

ment and writing were regarded as essentially male preserves. She was frequently claiming that much of the criticism (in an age of attack, abuse and polemic) directed against her was merely because of her sex. In the Epilogue to one of her most outspoken plays, *Sir Patient Fancy*, she vigorously defends herself:

*I here and there o'erheard a Coxcorn cry,
Ah, Rot it—'tis a Woman's Comedy,
One, who because she lately chanced to please us
With her damn'd stuff, will never cease to tease us.
What has poor Woman done, that she must be
Debar'd from Sense, and sacred Poetry?*

The fact that, like other playwrights of her time, she could be sexually outspoken led to charges of indecency; again her defence was vigorous and she justifiably complained that what was applauded in male writers was reproved in her, simply because she happened to be a woman. In an article in the *Biographica Britannica*, Doctor Kippis, at the end of the eighteenth century, preparing the way for Victorian prudery, remarks of her:

The wit of her comedies seems to be generally acknowledged, and it is equally acknowledged, that they are very indecent, on which account I have not thought myself under any obligation to peruse them.

Aphra, who frequently in the introduction to her plays on publication urges her critics to read the works before criticising, would doubtless have been able to counter Doctor Kippis with remarks as scathing as those she made in her own lifetime; for instance:

I printed the play [*Sir Patient Fancy*] with all the impatient haste one ought to do, who would be vindicated from the most unjust and silly aspersions Women could invent to cast on Women; and which only my being a Woman has procured me: *That it was Baudy*, the least and most excusable fault in Men writers, to whose plays they all crowd, as if they came to no other end than to hear what they condemn in this: *but from a Woman it was unnatural*: but how so Cruel an unkindness came into their imagination I can by no means guess . . .

She seems particularly indignant that women themselves seemed in the forefront of the critics. Her plays frequently demonstrate the indignities which women suffer in marriage, particularly in the by no means uncommon forced marriages of the period. Her own marriage, possibly to a Dutch merchant, is clouded in obscurity, but his early death in the Great Plague (this is conjectural) seems to have been a relief, judging by the bitterness of some of her comments on marriage. There is no evidence that she was personally promiscuous, other than obviously unreliably scurrilous innuendoes, but the evidence of her plays certainly suggests that she felt love could exist meaningfully and sincerely outside the institution of marriage. Many of the plots of her plays hinge round the attempts of her heroines to evade a forced marriage. One, appropriately called *The Forced Marriage* contains the lines:

*According to the strictest rules of honour,
Beauty still should be the reward of love,
Not the vile merchandise of fortune,
Or the cheap drug of a church ceremony.*

The final phrase could easily be assimilated into a Women's Lib pamphlet of the 1970s. Indeed, far from being an advocate of promiscuity, she seems to be an early example of someone who did not equate morality with institutional religion but could conceive of the integrity of loving relationships without the sanction of the Church. Her most

popular and successful play, *The Rover*, which survived well into the eighteenth century, contains a hero who speaks lightly of marriage vows and extols the importance of love:

No, no, we'll have no Vows but Love, Child, nor Witness but the Lover; the kind Deity enjoins naught but love and enjoy. Hymen and the Priest wait still upon Portion and Joynture; Love and Beauty have their own ceremonies. Marriage is as certain a Banc to Love, as lending money is to Friendship.

Her mention of a "kind Deity" suggests an extremely pagan view of divinity and though it is necessary to be careful in attributing the views of an author's characters to herself, there is evidence that her attitude to religion was sceptical. She was probably reluctant to express such views openly or frequently for two reasons: atheism at the time was associated with lewdness and profligacy, and because she remained a loyal supporter of the Stuart monarchy. But certainly she seems to have been derisive towards the sectarian bickering endemic to the period and could readily turn her hand to caricaturing the hypocritical cleric. She was associated with Rochester, a renowned atheist and apparently sustained a fruitless and disappointing love for the libertine homosexual John Hoyle, an avowed disciple of Lucretius. When Dryden, with whom her relationship had always been cordial, became a Catholic convert, she is said to have written a bitter poem *On Mr. Dryden, Renegade*.

Intense dislike of slavery

Her one excursion into prose on the subject of religion was an adaptation of Van Dale's *De Oraculis Ethnicorum*; this was published in 1687 as *The History of Oracles and the Cheats of the Pagan Priests* which is, in the opinion of George Woodcock, "an interesting pioneer work in religious anthropology." Another area in which Mrs. Behn's ideas were clearly not in accord with most of her contemporaries was in her attitude to slavery and to "natural man." Her period in Surinam gave her vivid insight into colonial life, as it was then beginning, and two late works clearly draw on these experiences. The least important is a dramatic reshaping of a widely reported scandal in Virginia called *The Widow Ranter; or the History of Bacon in Virginia*. Much more important was *Orinooko*, which still gets occasional mention in potted histories of the novel and, like her plays, has not really been given the attention it deserves. This work concerns a native prince, his betrayal by a two-faced governor and his cruel execution. The plot is much more intricate, but what stands out quite clearly is the writer's intense dislike of cruelty, slavery and the ill-treatment of indigenous races together with a strong belief that "primitive" man could be as noble and dignified as any "civilised" man. It is necessary to remember that Hobbes had recently based a whole theory of government on the idea that the life of man without rule and civilisation was "nasty, brutish and short" and a century was to pass before Rousseau was to idealise the noble savage. Her grim description of Orinooko's stoical and courageous behaviour when killed, beside being much more realistic than the lurid details of the average romance of the time, displays a great admiration for the fortitude of the ill-treated black man:

He had learn'd to take Tobacco; and when he was assur'd he would die, he desir'd they would give Him a Pipe in his Mouth, ready lighted, which they did: And the executioner came, and first cut off his Members, and threw them into the Fire; after that, with an ill-favour'd Knife, they cut off his Ears and his Nose,

and burn'd them; he still smok'd on, as if nothing had touch'd him; then they hacked off one of his Arms, and still he bore up, and held his Pipe; but at the cutting off of the other Arm, his Head sunk, and his Pipe drop't and he gave up the Ghost, without a Groan, or a reproach.

When one considers the lurid details of Jacobean tragedies or the exotic excesses of some Gothic romances, the description seems remarkable in its terseness and clear detestation of the atrocity. Her respect for Orinooko seems to have stemmed from a belief in the instinctive goodness of man when not hindered by the trammels of "civilised" life: she wrote of the Carib Indians in Surinam.

. . . These people represented to me an absolute *Idea* of the first state of Innocense, before Man knew how to sin; and 'tis most evident and plain, that simple Nature is the most harmless, inoffensive and virtuous Mistress.

Now fantasies of a Golden Age of innocence and theological postulations of pre-lapsarian man were not uncommon in the seventeenth century; and since Montaigne and Caliban writers had been fascinated by the issues posed by the discovery of tribal civilisations; but Aphra Behn seems exceptional for her time in her detestation of slavery, which many would have accepted as a part of a divine Natural Order, and her ability to draw on her actual experience in Surinam, which enabled her to replace vague theories and fantasies by tangible details. Even her long poem *The Golden Age*, whose title evokes typical ideas of primitive anarchism, such as the Levellers had held, is much more specific in its attack on society than was common:

*Then no rough sounds of Wars Alarms
Had taught the World the needless use of Arms;
Monarchs were uncreated then,
Those Arbitrary Rulers over men:
Kings that made Laws, first broke 'em, and the Gods
By teaching us Religion first, first set the World at odds . . .*

Ardent supporter of the Stuarts

It may seem ironic that the writer of these lines was an ardent supporter of the Stuart monarchy and closely associated with members of the emerging Tory party. Her monarchism may perhaps be explained by the Stuart support of the theatre and in considering her connexion with Tory cliques it should be remembered that early Tory and Whig groupings bore little relationship to what might now be categorised as Right and Left. It may also be allowed that paradox and contradiction are often to be found in writers with ideas of originality.

Aphra Behn's ideas seem to me to merit more detailed study, and the vitality of her plays could perhaps justify a revival of at least one of them. This would doubtless provoke the indignation of the prudes still with us today—in which case it would be a pity she could not rise from her grave in Westminster Abbey and defend herself with the incisive wit and scathing energy that she used in her own day.

NUCLEOETHICS:

Ethics in Modern Society

by DAVID TRIBE

Price £2.95 plus 9p postage

G. W. FOOTE & Co. Ltd.

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL

BOOKS

TO CHINA WITH LOVE: The Lives and Times of Protestant Missionaries in China 1860-1900 by Pat Barr. Secker & Warburg, £2.75.

China, in the year 1866, stank in its every part as it always had. It was a medieval-size stink that could be tasted as well as smelt and it was made up of putrefying corpses in stagnant canals, faeces smeared over paddy-fields, decayed garbage, overflowing sewers, sun-rotted animal viscera. Introduction by omnipresent effluvia is fitting because it was the very first assault on the senses of every arriving Westerner and, as he recoiled in nausea, his every pore told him he had come to a backward, primitive country.

Early in *To China With Love* appears this description. But Pat Barr's book is not in the missionary tradition of my youthful Sunday-school prizes, but is an authentic and dispassionate survey of certain Christian missionaries and their motivations. Indeed he is somewhat embarrassed by his task: "It is difficult, these days, to make a committed, dyed-in-the-wool Evangelical sound attractive." In this attempt, if attempt it be, he certainly does not succeed.

At the end of this saga of "a persistent and restive company"—Dr. James Legge, Hudson Taylor, Timothy Richard, the Cambridge Seven (not a sporting team), James Gilmour of Mongolia, George Moule and the rest—one can only agree with the Duke of Somerset: "A missionary must be an enthusiast; if he is not an enthusiast he is probably a rogue. No man would go and live up one of those rivers unless he were an enthusiast, and being an enthusiast he is the more dangerous." It was fitting that the only Westerner who could defeat the heretical Christian fanatic, Hung Hsiu-ch'uan of the Taiping, was the equally fanatical Christian General Gordon.

Some of the missionaries left England with neither spiritual nor temporal enthusiasm but to escape the rigours of Victorian society or to find a husband in a situation of limited white competition. Some obeyed the parable of the talents and set up in business for themselves, assuming, like the merchants, that "the people would buy up massive quantities of Manchester textile goods, lamps, locomotives and bottled beer if only they could afford them." But, whatever their initial motivation, most of them lived, and many of them died, doing their duty as they saw it. Since this involved importing a religion markedly more superstitious than that which it sought to replace, and bolstering an imperialist system which simultaneously imported physical "opium of the people," we cannot escape the conclusion that in life "doing one's duty" is not enough. The duty must be spelt out.

Most of this work is presumably based on diaries and correspondence by those involved so that we can assume the background colour, if not the personal heroics, is authentic. But when the author relates his theme to the wider world he falls into occasional lapses like confusing William and Samuel Wilberforce.

DAVID TRIBE

NUCLEOETHICS: Ethics in Modern Society by David Tribe. MacGibbon & Kee, £2.95.

The title of this new book by a former editor of *The Freethinker* is a word of his own coinage. It is defined as meaning "a study of the social factors which collectively mould morality" (p. 7). In the same initial "Glossary of Terms" the word 'moral' is in its turn defined as "concerning 'voluntary' behaviour which directly affects others in what they deem important matters of duty."

FREETHINKER

Suppose we waive any questions provoked by those hesitation quotes around the word "voluntary", and follow the reference given. We shall read with amusement of a pop festival in which "young people took off their clothes and some copulated to cries of 'Do your thing'. The police . . . were unable to arrest those guilty of 'indecent exposure' because there were so many offenders." Tribe makes the point "that if there were so many the exposure was not 'indecent', and to keep one's clothes on might have looked ostentatious or unfriendly" (p. 53).

So far, so good; indeed quite excellent. But this Isle of Wight case is not sufficient to support the proposed definition of the word 'moral'; or the contention that if others think that what we are doing to them "is immoral, and we know what they think, then it is immoral" (p. 53). Certainly what degree of exposure is decent or indecent is a function of the customs and expectations of the social group confronted by that exposure. But morality is different, and what Tribe has just said about that carries consequences which he as well as I must surely find unacceptable. For Tribe's proposed definition apparently implies that I wrong someone else only insofar as I hinder him from performing what he deems to be an important duty; while Tribe's general contention does certainly entail that—provided only that "we know what they think"—no one can be mistaken in the belief that he has been wronged.

These are both very serious and fundamental objections to what they are objections to. But, to anyone who appreciates Tribe's authentically critical approach and his width of interest, such objections will seem relatively unimportant. For Tribe is a thoroughly up-to-date specimen of the fine old freethinking radical. As such he is far removed from most of those who nowadays call themselves Radicals; his radicalism is an enquiring and deeply critical caste of mind, rather than the acceptance of one particular set of prepacked responses.

One statement made by Tribe in a note could have served as a motto for the whole book, as well as a touchstone to test the quality of possible readers:

Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for the Social Services in the Heath government, is impressed by the argument that £40 million spent on free contraception under the National Health Service should save £400 million in social services for unwanted pregnancies and children" (p. 318).

To this the response of too many of our contemporary Radicals would be to wax indignant against the alleged heartlessness of the *Conservative Enemy*, or even to burst forth into the characteristically mindless and now familiar chant: "Heath out! Heath out! Heath out!" Yet the true radical, if he is also concerned about human welfare, will welcome every such suggestion of cheaper means to greater good; asking only, but sharply, why, if this really is a good argument, as it is, more is not being done to achieve so multiply beneficial an economy. As for heartlessness, he at least will see nothing heartless in Browning's line: "Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also."

Tribe has a very clear-eyed way with every sort of fashionable guff. He is not, for instance, included to discern light from the east. (I was reminded of Gilbert Ryle's off-the-record confession: "In my view nothing rises in the east except the sun.") Tribe writes: "Indian history shows not only a failure to abolish greed and war but a notable capacity to spread pestilence and beggary" (p. 22).

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Further east, he notices, "Chairman Mao displays traditional qualities of the mandarin, which was, after all, a form of meritocracy" (p. 83). Tribe might have noticed here that the thoughts of Chairman Mao—like those of Confucius or Mencius, but unlike those of Marx or Lenin—are presented as a series of disconnected apothegms.

A similar illustration of the continuing power of national traditions can be seen in the fact that when Tribe wants to quote an authoritative statement on the indispensability to a socialist economy of that great bugaboo of the high-brow left, advertising, he finds what he needs in an Armenian Commissar. I can think of a lot of doors upon which it would be salutary to pin these words of Anastas Mikoyan:

"The task of our Soviet advertising is to give people exact information about the goods that are on sale, to help to create new demands, to cultivate new tastes and requirements, to promote the sales of new kinds of goods and to explain their uses to the consumer" (Quoted, p. 222).

ANTONY FLEW

PAMPHLET

WIDER HORIZONS: Suggestions for Modern Assemblies by Betty M. Bull and others.
British Humanist Association, 30p.

The compulsory act of worship, with which every state school is legally obliged to begin each day, is a piece of immoral hypocrisy. The British Humanist Association has produced this booklet which is apparently aimed at ending the religious monopoly of this morning ritual.

The booklet is made up of a number of contributions, and the first of these is by a woman who teaches in an infant school. Unfortunately her piece is embarrassingly like a Joyce Grenfell caricature of an infant school mistress. She suggests that in an infant school "the assembly we really want is an act of celebration, rather than worship. There is value in bringing the whole school together for a short time each day with dignity and formality, to celebrate our happinesses. "Her idea of a schoolful of infants coming together "with dignity and formality" seems something of a curiosity, and surely she is pulling our legs when she tells us that "Such an assembly would never be divisive, strained or boring." She instructs teachers to use hymns in these assemblies (provided that they are "old" and "simple"), and this may arouse secularists' suspicions, particularly since she assures us that assemblies run on her lines will be "near enough to the idea of worship."

Fortunately not all the contributions are as fatuous or as precious as hers, but they all have the same flavour of 'pious humanism'. This is particularly apparent in James Hemming's contribution. He pompously defines the purpose of an assembly in a secondary school as a 'celebration' of "the values that are recognised as fundamental to wholeness and richness in personal and social life." He believes that the content of assemblies should be responsibility of different groups of children and/or staff in turn, and he declares, "Assemblies should have a religious content if and when the group concerned wishes this to be the case." But what about the wishes of those who are obliged to attend these assemblies? In view of Hemming's association with the Social Morality Council, one suspects that he would not approve of children opting out.

Another of the contributions is an "invitation" from a headmistress to her staff. She is prepared to have some non-religious assemblies: "Please feel free to choose a religious theme if you wish to do so. But also feel free to choose any other theme you feel suitable." There is, however, a catch to her generosity. In return for her concession to secularism, she wants "all members of staff" to attend morning assembly. So much for the rights of those teachers who object to attending religious assemblies.

It is a pity that a publication of the B.H.A. should show so much disregard for the rights of humanists. It seems opposed to opting-out, and even recommends a way of making this impossible! The contributors do not seem to understand that *less* religion in schools is not the same thing as *no* religion in schools. As long as religious practices and teaching continue in our schools, secularists have a duty to oppose such things.

Of course it is tempting, for tactical reasons, to ask for less than one actually wants, but minor concessions to secularism may, paradoxically, strengthen the Christian's hands. Once a few humanist proposals have been accepted, the Christians are able to boast of 'humanist approval' for their schemes, whilst carrying on their policy of indoctrination much as before. This is the danger of humanist trimming, and to settle for less than the exclusion of acts of worship and religious education from our schools would not only be a betrayal of our principles, but also an example of the sort of hypocrisy which is best left to the Christians. It is ironical that in advocating "Wider Horizons" the contributors seem blind to the issue that is right in front of them.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

LETTERS

World Government—the Danger

If I. S. Low (letters, 25 November) would for a moment drop crying "world government" and study what is really going on, I think both he, and rationalists in general, would gain. May I suggest he reads a recent book by the editor of the *Times Business News*: Hugh Stevenson's *The Coming Clash*.

Mr. Low can hardly read this book without realising that "world government" is well on the way; not in the open, but in a very sinister form. This is, in fact, world government by the directors of the main international giant companies which today wield far more power than many national governments. Hitherto it has been only Marxists who warned of this danger.

PAT SLOAN.

Ethics and Dehumanisation

In reply to Gerald Samuel (letters, 25 November) I would first refer him back to his letter in *The Freethinker* of 14 June 1969, and ask him: does he still "heartily deplore" R.I., and does he still maintain there is such a thing as being "a victim" of R.I.? Consider, then, the "situational ethics" in a situation where the children of Muslims have "an equal right" with the children of Christians to become "victims of R.I." Granted that the right in question is equal, would Mr. Samuel not grant that it is also somewhat unethical.

On the question of privilege, it seems to me that Mr. Samuel has involved himself in something of a category mistake: I see no reason to oppose the 'privilege' which allows *anyone* "to be consulted."

By the way, I note that David Holbrook (letters, 25 November) writes about dogma. But has not Mr. Holbrook already declared (letters, 17 June): "I know, from my ten years' research, and my million words of analysis of meaning, that the obsession with sex in our culture is a madness, a psychopathology"? Well, as one who does not share that knowledge, I would suggest that every culture has its preoccupation with sex, and that if in the openness

and explicitness of today's preoccupation there are some "de-humanising" aspects, there are many humanising ones as well. If I may so, I think the Editor's comments (25 November) are most humanising.

CHARLES BYASS.

Our Lack of Cultural Freedom

I still find the attitude of *The Freethinker* strange, over our cultural freedom. Is everything to be free in culture, as it is not, in any other sphere of life, and in no other society, past or present? In London it is now possible to buy a book called *Homo Boys*, showing children of 8 and 9 in sexual activities, as Mr. Raymond Blackburn has found. Have we no concern for those boys being exploited in such ways for commerce? Anyone who gloats on their exploitation is involved (in existentialist terms) in the humiliation of the young. To me this is appalling. Yet when I talked recently to the South Place Ethical Society many there seemed to take it as the biggest joke in the world that some boys at a public school had been corrupted into brutal sadistic acts by older boys using pornography as an instrument of their degradation. I can hardly bear it, that 'rational' people have such total lack of concern for the way in which depravity is being exercised over young people—as by the distribution of pornography in schools today.

In London it is also possible to buy a picture of a woman sucking the penis of an Alsatian dog, as Mr. Blackburn found. Any woman capable of such an act is surely sick, and should not be open to increasing exploitation, by being allowed to make money out of degrading herself so, and those who watch her, by proxy.

In all this there is a refusal to feel concern about a new kind of slavery which makes my blood run cold. Yet public concern (as over cock-fighting) has always been that people should not be exposed to temptations by which they can become debased.

And while there is so much concern for 'freedom' for the pornographer, what concern is there for our almost total lack of freedom to choose our own culture? As Raymond Williams points out in his excellent book *Communications* behind technological culture and advertising there is a philosophy—and this proclaims that a small group of extremely dictatorial individuals have the right to educate the public at large. They—the TV moguls, the ad-men, and the manipulators of the mass media and other forms of entertainment, are totally beyond democratic control or even influence. If one studies papers like *Campaign* they have nothing but contempt for public protest. And in the world of cinema, if rape and brutality are necessary to bring in the customers, then rape and brutality is what we shall get. Recently, the film distributors reacted violently to some local authorities who banned certain films. They proclaimed that these authorities would not get any films at all if they behaved like that. 'Take the stuff we send down—or get nothing!' This is their attitude; and we passively put up with it, and even defend their freedom to exploit us if they so choose to do so.

Culturally, we have no freedom. As the Danes told Lord Longford, the freedom of pornography there was secured by a small minority of journalists and photographers (who are now millionaires); there was no public demand. There was no public demand for Tynan's filthy show, with all its humiliation of woman, and its expression of a hatred of sex. Yet we have not even the activeness to hiss it off the stage, or to picket it: people today are craven, in the face of debasement. They no longer care. As the Jewish magazine *Patterns of Prejudice* said recently, "The long suppressed freedom of opinion is being manipulated into exhibitionism and politicians tremble before the illustrated magazines and their power-conscious publishers."

How pathetic, in such conditions of cultural slavery, and oppressiveness, faced with a mass conditioning of the public to enjoy perversions, with all their cruelty and humiliation, to bleat about the need to preserve 'freedom' at any cost! For decades freethinkers have campaigned, splendidly, against the degradations of oppressive religion (like its bans on, say, masturbation): but when the same kind of debasements are perpetrated by commerce for money, they are, for some reason, no longer objectionable!

DAVID HOLBROOK.

Colin Wilson on Pornography

In your comment on David Holbrook's letter (25 November) you cite his quotation of Colin Wilson's description of pornography as "nasty, infantile and vicious" and retort: "I don't like it, so you shan't have it."

The implication is that Colin Wilson supports Holbrook's demand for the banning of pornography. In fact, he does not. In a letter to *Peace News* (27 October) he explicitly dissociates himself from Holbrook's demand.

S. E. PARKER.

The Secular-Religious Foundation of Life

Ralph Champion (letters, 25 November) says that Popper "does not make the national state fundamental to his theory," which makes me wonder if he has read Popper's "Public Opinion and Liberal Principles" (1954) which appears in *Conjectures and Refutations* (p. 350). There Popper states: "The State is a necessary evil, its powers are not to be multiplied beyond what is necessary," and much more to the same effect.

Suitably provoked by this exchange in *The Freethinker* I have changed the subject of my lecture projected for 28 January at South Place. It will now be: "In Defence of Utopias—Against Sir Karl Popper," and all readers are invited.

About the other matter that Ralph raises: the point I was trying to make in my article on Iris Murdoch's book *Sovereignty of Good* is that if we ultimately define words in terms of other words we go round in verbal circles. At some point we have to get off and define them in terms of experience. Thus G. E. Moore's famous observation in his *Principia Ethica* of 1903: "There is no possible definition of good . . . I shall use the word in the sense in which I think it is ordinarily used." It is significant that in recent years humanistic psychology has come down very firmly for this kind of experiential definition. There is, after all, no definition of truth, beauty, goodness and love. You have either experienced them or you have not, and if you do not know them from experience then words will get you nowhere. Given the experience then words (or music or other forms and symbols) can do the rest.

We need the notion of sovereignty in ideas and experience if we are not to be shifty, rootless buck-passers or mere shallow empiricists coping with today's crisis only. In Iris Murdoch's view the good is sovereign; others might think it is freedom, justice, peace or truth, or beauty or love. My suspicion is that they are all aspects of the same thing. They are the secular-religious foundation of life. Reason helps us to think them out.

PETER CADOGAN.

The Date of the Gospel of Mark

External evidence suggests that Mark was written well after A.D. 70, and the purpose of my recent article was to show that evidence internal to the gospel is also compatible with such a late origin. Mr. Hinchliff (letters, 25 November) justly points out that one Marcan passage I mentioned, the evangelist's prediction of the destruction of the temple (which was actually destroyed in A.D. 70), is not relevant to the dating of the gospel, since an observer of the strained relations between Jews and Romans might conceivably have guessed, almost at any time during the first century, that Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed as a result of Roman action against an insurgent people. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility that the Marcan logion "no stone shall be left upon another" first arose in a Christian community which knew of the destruction of the temple and wanted to believe that Jesus had predicted it. But Mr. Hinchliff thinks there is strong evidence that the logion originated earlier than A.D. 70. Indeed, in order to understand this argument at all, I take it (a) to imply that Jesus did in fact make the prophecy about A.D. 30, and (b) to consist of the following four points (the final two of which he does not state, but must be added if the first two are to be regarded as relevant):

(1) Mark states that "false witnesses" accused Jesus at his trial of himself having threatened to destroy the temple; (2) this story, in which the charge is clearly represented as a Jewish calumny, must derive from a version of the trial put out by the Jerusalem Christians which aimed to convince the Jews that Jesus had never threatened the temple. The implication of this alleged source material underlying Mark is (3) that if the early Jerusalem Christians had to rebut such a charge, the historical Jesus must have said or done something which occasioned it; and that (4) this something included Jesus' statement, recorded elsewhere by Mark, that no stone of the temple would be left standing. It will be obvious to the reader that this complex argument involves assumptions which can fairly be questioned. Mr. Hinchliff, however, implies that, unless one accepts it all, one necessarily becomes "involved in difficulties." I wonder wherein these consist.

G. A. WELLS.