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SECTARIAN MURDERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

—BORDER POLL WILL AGGRAVATE VIOLENCE

The recent spate of vicious sectarian murders has stripped the last flimsy vestige of credibility from those pious few who claimed that the violence in Northern Ireland was "purely political" and had "nothing to do with religion". This paper is the last to pretend that there is *no* political dimension to the problem, but mere political expediency does not demand the shooting of a mentally retarded adolescent boy or the random killing of the occupants of a house by shooting at them through frosted windows. It is, of course, possible—even quite probable—that some of the murders have been carried out by gun-happy psychopaths rather than by strictly religious fanatics, but does anyone now doubt that the religious ghetto mentality and sectarian bigotry have, over the years, made a major contribution to creating precisely the climate in which sick killers can operate with impunity and kid themselves that they are heroes for so doing? The advocates of "Christian Love" have been sowing dragons' teeth in Ireland for a very long time.

A foregone conclusion

The sufferings of the ordinary people of Northern Ireland will not be alleviated by the fatuous border poll, whose outcome is a foregone conclusion as everyone knows that the proportion of Protestants to Catholics in the Six Counties is about two to one. It is almost inevitable, therefore, that the I.R.A. will feel goaded into trying to forestall a propaganda defeat by sabotaging the poll. Needless to say the Unionist Party is staunchly in favour of this referendum.

What a different story it would be if the border poll was to be taken on a county-by-county basis! At the end of the day the Unionists would probably be left only with Down and Antrim, and if they were very lucky, perhaps with Armagh or Derry. Such a poll would also doubtless be met with loud protests, public disorder and violence—but from a rather different quarter than at present.

AGAINST CENSORSHIP

Britain is "becoming one of the most censorious countries in the world", says the National Council for Civil Liberties in a recent pamphlet entitled *Against Censorship*, which calls for the abolition "of virtually all existing constraints". The Council has produced the pamphlet "to direct attention away from the superficial and sensationalised aspects of pornography and towards the serious implications for civil liberties of the extremely tough sanctions already available for the suppression of opinion."

Against Censorship assumes from the outset "that freedom of expression is desirable in itself and that limitations on freedom are potentially more harmful than any benefits likely to accrue". The pamphlet is a further contribution by the N.C.C.L. to a subject with which it has been concerned since the 1930s. Then the issue was press and radio censorship; in more recent years the Council has been involved in such cases as the prosecution of *Last Exit* to Brooklyn and *The Little Red Schoolbook*.

The pamphlet gives an outline of the history of censorship legislation, analyses the *Oz* and *IT* trials and "The Case of the Dirty Old Men", and comments on various reports on pornography including those of Lord Longford's commission, the Society of Conservative Lawyers, the Arts Council Working Party, and the United States Presidential Commission. Also included is an extract from a paper by Jonathan Miller who regards censorship as "unwise, improper and unjust".

The real issues

In the introduction Tony Smythe states that "There is only one rational path open to those who oppose the unholy alliance of moralisers, judges and police. The debate must be joined and sanity restored. We must sweep aside the adjectival aftermath of the Whitehouse/Longford bonanza and settle down to the real issues." He continues:

The elements of good law include clarity, fairness and certainty. Obscenity law offers none of these. It confuses the public and . . . the judges themselves. Recent obscenity and conspiracy cases have brought the law and legal institutions into ridicule and contempt.

The police have a virtually impossible task in enforcing the law. It is sometimes hard to decide which is more dangerous: the possibility of corruption or the scope for indulging private prejudices.

"All attempts to license words or images", says Mr. Smythe, "can be used to sustain the power of those who control society". Solzhenitsyn has been attacked for defying the official ideology in the Soviet Union; so, says Tony Smythe, has the underground press in Britain. "If there is a difference it is simply that more people are likely to agree with Solzhenitsyn than they are with the editors of *Oz*. But agreement with what is published is not the issue, but democracy itself . . . Democracy cannot survive when a society devalues the law and allows a privileged minority to define the limits of dialogue and expression."

Copies of *Against Censorship* may be obtained (price 25p plus 4p postage) from N.C.C.L., 152 Camden High Street, London NW1 0NN.

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NEWS

recent history of Ireland, the Middle East or the Indian sub-continent to be reminded of the harmful effects of religions that *are* politically minded!

MALTA GOES SECULAR

There is much wailing and gnashing of clerical teeth at the moment in Malta where Dom Mintoff's Labour government has decided to make religious education a voluntary subject in trade schools, and has taken teacher training out of the hands of Malta's two British-run Catholic institutions in favour of a single secular college. The Maltese government has also relaxed film censorship and removed homosexuality and adultery from the category of criminal offences. It is possible that legislation to permit divorce may be introduced.

For more than ten years Mr. Mintoff's party was at loggerheads with the Maltese Catholic hierarchy, and for much of that time the bishops forbade the faithful to vote for the Labour Party. Indeed, it was not until a reconciliation, in 1970, that Labour's path was cleared to eventual power in 1971. No doubt the Church's conservatives are now wishing they had kept Mr. Mintoff on the prescribed list.

MENTAL 'POLLUTION' ... ?

A recent arrival on our desk is the latest number of the *Viewer and Listener*, the journal of Mrs. Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, which contains the text of a talk given by Dr. D. C. Sturdy at a conference organised by the Christian Medical Fellowship.

Needless to say, Dr. Sturdy's theme was what he termed "mental pollution". "Today's society", he said, "is being attacked by the mental polluters on three levels. The moral, the commercial and the ideological."

On the moral level there are those who have turned their backs on God and His righteousness and who cannot tolerate living as a scorned minority in an uncorrupt world. These men always seek to extend their influence so that they can live comfortably and powerfully in a Godless world. Hence the crusading zeal of some well-known humanists.

Dr. Sturdy goes on to declare that the "mental pollution attack" is being concentrated "on three main fronts—family life—the law—the Christian Faith—all crucial to our survival", and in dealing with the third in detail adds:

... A report recently published on religious education for primary school children recommends that they should no longer be taught sound doctrine but should be left to 'question and doubt', thereby denying them their strongest defence against moral pollution.

It is comforting to know that in Dr. Sturdy's "uncorrupt world" those who dissent from theism and, no doubt, "sound doctrine" would be reduced to the status of a "scorned minority"—perhaps like the Jews in Czarist Russia or in good old mediaeval Europe? At any rate, we are obliged for the warning.

Generally speaking, most humanists are in favour of the family—as a life-style, not as a sacred cow—and have a healthy respect for the law (why else spend so much time trying to reform it?), but have opposed purity brigades ever since the days of the Society for the Suppression of Vice largely on the grounds that such organisations not merely wished to suppress pornography and smut, but also to stifle political dissent and any criticism of Christianity. It is very evident from Dr. Sturdy's talk that this is still the case.

FROM VIETNAM WITH DISHONOUR

It was an ancient Roman who remarked, with biting sarcasm, "They make a desert, and they call it peace." Now we have witnessed President Nixon's "peace with honour" in Vietnam. Needless to say Mr. Nixon announced this grandiloquent humbug with a call for a "national moment of prayer" and declared a "day of national thanksgiving" for the ceasefire. Whatever happened to America's prayers for victory?

"Peace with honour"—what a farce! America lost her honour in Vietnam, and by withdrawing her troops has raised only a weary sigh of relief. As for peace, the Viet Cong now control about half of South Vietnam, and the American-backed client régime in Saigon has hung on to the remainder. Neither side is exactly going to turn its back when they are both heavily armed, ruthless, suspicious and ambitious. If this so-called peace lasts for three months, we shall be very surprised.

A reader has pointed out to us that some people have a peculiarly narrow interpretation of the word 'obscene': when the Warhol film was (temporarily) banned from the television screen the other week it was replaced by a programme which showed dogs running a hare to death. But that, of course, was only sport!

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN MALAWI

According to *The Observer* and other sources Malawi's Jehovah's Witnesses are being subjected to yet another wave of repression and intimidation, involving burning of homes and arrests of many of the sect's leaders. Last September several thousand Witnesses fled to neighbouring Zambia to escape the beating, rape and murder meted out to them by the Malawi Congress Party.

The latest persecution would appear to be directed by senior Congress Party officials, and has been brought about because the returning Witnesses still refuse to buy Congress Party cards as their faith forbids them to have any "worldly loyalties".

To most people the tenets of the Jehovah's Witnesses may seem zany, and possibly ridiculous, but one would have thought that if this sect had anything to be said in its favour it was that it was non-political, and the Malawi government should be darned thankful for that fact and leave the Witnesses in peace. One has only to look at the

S AND NOTES

The *Viewer and Listener* is rather fond of that old quotation, "Evil triumphs when good men do nothing". We quite agree, but would add another quotation: "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance"—which is why, if real decency and democracy are to survive the obscurities of censorship, bigotry, tyranny, poverty and superstition, society needs a freethought movement with sharp eyes and good teeth.

SAFELY RETURNED

It always helps to have friends and influence in the right places. For the second time two ornamental crowns, worth a total of £145,000, were stolen recently from the Queen of Peace Shrine, Brooklyn, New York, and again for the second time they have been mysteriously returned.

Not so long ago the Pope publicly condemned Mafia activities in Italy. And by an interesting coincidence one of the regular attenders at the Queen of Peace Shrine is, according to the *Catholic Herald*, Signor Carlo Gambino, reputed to be the head of the Mafia in America!

ANOTHER BACKLASH

According to a Reuter report from San Diego last month many American parents who once welcomed "Jesus cults" as a means of luring their children away from drugs and promiscuity "now believe that the cure is worse than the disease". They are even resorting to kidnapping and brainwashing techniques in order to bring their sons and daughters home.

At first many parents saw in the fundamentalist Jesus cults "an acceptable outlet for the frustrations and alienation" of their children. "What they failed to take into account, however, was that the cults took the Bible literally. They forgot that Christ himself said that he would set son against father, daughter against mother. And this is exactly what has happened." One of the cults, the "Children of God" apparently encourages its converts to break off all contact with their families. So much for the loudly advertised Christian reverence for family life!

ANY LATTER-DAY IRONSIDES ?

Three weeks ago the Sabbath peace of the capital was reportedly disturbed by a motley band of scurvy vagrants and insolent vagabonds wearing seventeenth-century costume and presuming to call themselves "The King's Army of the West", who marched in procession down Whitehall and laid a wreath before the monstrous idol in Trafalgar Square of that man of blood, Charles Stuart the elder. We ourself observed several more of the knaves as far afield as Windsor, disporting themselves openly and daring to wear side-arms!

Now why should romantic reactionaries have all the publicity and pageantry? For a number of years the Cromwell Society has commemorated the Lord Protector's birthday with a dignified meeting by Cromwell's statue outside the House of Commons, accompanied by a learned talk or lecture. Alas, such events have rarely received any appreciable press publicity. Further, the ceremony is as often as not held on a weekday afternoon, when the honest merchants and apprentices of London and Westminster are engrossed in their daily toil, and only prelates, courtiers and panders have the leisure to walk abroad. Has not the time clearly come for every true Parliament's man to pull out his broadsword—if not his little finger?

We will be pleased to offer the hospitality of these columns to any Commissioner entrusted by Parliament with the task of raising a New London Trained Band in order to deal with the present ominous situation. Surely if the call went out there would be no lack of virtuous yeomen and honest gentlemen to rally to the cause of Commonwealth and Republic. It would only remain for them to be issued with buff coat, back-and-breast, pot helmet, pike and sword, and the next time these poxy royalist malignants dare show their disaffected faces—let alone mince down Whitehall—they would receive a warm reception and their rightful come-uppance.

OBITUARIES

Mrs. E. Altmann-Gold

We announce with regret the death on 16 January last of Mrs. Emmy Altmann-Gold, at the age of 85. She was for many years Hon. Librarian of South Place Ethical Society.

Mr. Peter Cadogan officiated at the funeral, which was held at Golders Green Crematorium on 19 January. Mrs. Gold's remains will be returned to Austria for burial at Rauris (near Salzburg) where she used to spend her summer holidays.

She was a kind, grand old lady, who will be greatly missed by her family and many friends.

Mr. J. B. Coates

We also regret to announce the death last month of Jack Coates, after a long illness, at the age of 81. Mr. Harold Blackham delivered the last tribute at the funeral ceremony.

Jack Coates had a life-long interest in philosophy and founded the Personalist Group, which he ran for a number of years. He was also the author of several books, the best known of which are probably *Ten Modern Prophets* and *A Challenge to Christianity*.

We extend our sympathy to Mrs. Frances Coates.

NINETY YEARS AGO

When the prosecution of the *Freethinker* was started by that mass of pious imposture, Sir Henry Tyler, I half thought that the blow was aimed at Mr. Bradlaugh . . . But now I am perfectly sure that Tyler and his friends wished to do more than strike Mr. Bradlaugh. They wanted to put the *Freethinker* down, and this new prosecution of our Christmas Number clearly proves it . . .

Yes, the bigots are in for an infidel hunt, and their eyes sharpen on the prey. The dearest thing in the world to a full-blown Christian bigot is the persecution of heretics. He remembers his God's brutal cry—"Those mine enemies who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me" . . .

Freethinkers must all rally to the point of attack. It is the turn of this paper today, it may be the turn of another tomorrow; and when the "extreme" organ is put down (ay, when!) the "moderates" will have to bear the brunt of persecution. Thomas Paine well said that defence of another man's threatened rights was a defence of his own. Every Freethinker who holds aloof from our defence is a traitor to his own liberties.

Ever since the bigots yelped against the duly elected Atheist member for Northampton [Charles Bradlaugh], ever since the religious press denied his political rights, I have felt that Christianity is still a dangerous foe to progress in our country, and that it must be constantly assailed. We may say of it what Sainte-Beuve said of savagery. People, he remarked, are too apt to think that civilisation is innate and secure, whereas it is acquired and precarious. The beast of savagery is always there, and you have only to let go the bridle a moment to see how it will act. So with Christianity. It may be quiet for a time, but it is still there, and some fine day or other we feel its claws and fangs. It must not be left in a delusive state of peace, it must be attacked and killed.

—G. W. Foote in *The Freethinker*, 11 February 1883.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

Most of my readers will be familiar with the mediaeval builder's bill of costs for certain church repairs, among which was the item "To repairing the ten commandments, 3d." There is also another story . . . of a labourer who boasted of having had in constant use the same spade for over ten years. During that time he had only had three new blades and four new handles . . . Both stories illustrate what is constantly going on with regard to the Christian religion . . . Christianity defies and defeats its enemies as the labourer perpetuates his shovel . . . All that is permanent in Christianity is its folly, its barbarism, its appeal to the primitive in man, and its disastrous social influence. In sober truth Christianity has never been able to withstand its enemies, save for a time. Sooner or later it has to admit they were right . . . The old Freethinkers did not fight in vain. If they did not live to see the triumph of their ideas, we who come after them have entered into their kingdom. From their graves Voltaire, Paine, Bradlaugh and Foote, force the Churches to do them unwilling and unadmitted homage.

—Chapman Cohen in *The Freethinker*, 4 February 1923.

DRASTIC EFFECTS

According to a report in the *Daily Telegraph* (22 January) the chairman of a large American bank has been warning against the dire consequences of the United States' declining birth rate. These would include "a drastic reduction in home-building, a declining need for university expansion and financial problems for makers of toys and baby foods."

Well, these results might break his heart, but, as a good environmentalist, they will certainly not break ours, much as we like babies. Three cheers for birth control!

THE MINISKIRT THREAT TO CIVILISATION

Although the Republic of South Africa does not as yet have a television service, it does, by the sound of things, possess the nucleus for its own anti-smut lobby in the person of "champion-in-chief of public morals", Mr. Gert Yssel, also known as South Africa's "arch-miniskirt-hater". Recently Mr. Yssel was interviewed by reporter Tim O'Hagan for the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* and duly revealed the story of his crusade.

Seventy-year-old Mr. Yssel is the first to admit that he himself "lusted and desired women—but only until 1954", the year in which he was 'saved' through immersion by his fellow Calvinists. "After 1954," he said, "I began to see the downfall of women. And for a long time I found that nothing would stop women exposing themselves except legislation."

As a result, Mr. Yssel has devoted himself to a campaign to ban miniskirts and bikinis and to substitute for them a more modest form of attire that will cover South Africa's womenfolk "from armpit to armpit and down to the knees". He is also troubled by the way in which many modern women go round "creating the impression they are available to any man who asks them".

Being a good Calvinist, Mr. Yssel naturally believes in the doctrine of hell. "When corpses pass me on the way to the cemetery, I think: when this man was alive he had a clear visa to heaven; now he opens his eyes to hell." And being a good Calvinist, he is also a staunch supporter of South Africa's Nationalist Party. "We, the Anglo-Saxons, are a superb race," he told Mr. O'Hagan. "In that way Hitler was right. We are above the rest and have the opportunity of staying that way"—so long, it would seem, as we do not wear miniskirts. Jackboots, though, would appear to be okay: "Hitler really was a hero, but then he went mad and killed all those Jews. But I sympathise with him to a certain extent until he went mad—just as a lot of womenfolk are going mad."

If Mr. Yssel is right, South African women have a grim choice of either sweltering here or sweltering even more hereafter. Not that an air-conditioned heaven full men in black suits is much of an alternative, anyway.

Ironically, Mr. Yssel's views on dress, if not on race, have been transformed into law in a decidedly different part of Africa—Zanzibar. A new code of dress code recently promulgated there provides penalties of four strokes of the cane for women who wear miniskirts or for men with long hair. From now on women in Zanzibar will be required to cover their knees whether walking, sitting or bending down—or else! Perhaps chilly, decadent old Britain has its charms after all.

ATHEISTS MEET IN INDIA:

G. VIJAYAM

A REPORT OF THE WORLD ATHEIST CONGRESS AT VIJAYAWADA

The first World Atheist 'Meet' was held at the Atheist Centre, Patamata, Vijayawada, India, for five days from 22 to 26 December 1972. 120 delegates and observers from India and two from the U.S.A. attended the Conference. Many would-be delegates could not attend because of the tense political situation around Vijayawada resulting from demands for separate statehood. Many foreign delegates, including Mrs. Madalyn Murray O'Hair (who was to preside over the Conference) and Dr. Garry De Young from the United States, could not attend as visas were not granted in time. (It is strange and deplorable that Dr. Billy Graham was given facilities to tour India—even in Nagaland—while Mrs. O'Hair was not allowed to come to preside over the World Atheist Meet, despite a cablegram of request from the convener, Gora, to the Indian Embassy in Washington.)

At this historic conference many atheists, rationalists, humanists, freethinkers and secularists belonging to dif-

ferent walks of life assembled together. They included social workers, doctors, civil servants, lawyers, university professors and veterans of the Indian freedom struggle. They belonged to varying age groups and represented a cross-section of the country. All the delegates stayed in thatched huts with names such as "Bradlaugh", "Charvaka", "Nasthik" and "Atheist". Young atheist volunteers, mostly teenage boys and girls—looked after the arrangements of the Conference.

The Conference had two sessions a day—9 a.m. to 12 noon and 3 to 5 p.m. The rest of the time was left for informal discussions. Discussions at the conference reflected maturity of understanding and an eagerness to take up positive programmes to propagate atheism. This mood reflected the conviction that each individual had to take up a programme depending upon his or her ability and opportunity, and these individuals contributed to the collective strength of the atheist movement.

Messages of support

In the inaugural session of the Conference, Mr. Lavnam welcomed the delegates and conveyed the fraternal greetings of the Atheist, Humanist and Rationalist Associations from different parts of the world. Messages of support were read from the editors of *The Freethinker* and *New Humanist* and from officers of the New York Society for Ethical Culture, the Atheist Society of Australia, the Humanist Association of Bangladesh, the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, the Rationalist Press Association, the Rationalist Association of New Zealand, the Ceylon Rationalist Association, the Sozoshu Humanist Fellowship (Tokyo, Japan), and the International Humanist and Ethical Union (Utrecht, Netherlands).



Mr. Gora addressing the World Atheist Conference.

Others who sent greetings and messages included the Irish Humanist Association, the Rationalist Association of New South Wales (Australia), the Bund Freireligiöser Gemeinden Deutschlands (West Germany), the Humanist Association of the Philippines, the United Secularists of America (San Francisco), the Society for Civilization (Bombay), the Backward Scheduled Castes and Tribes Federation of India, the Rationalist Forum, Thiruchengode, the Rationalist Forum of Namakkal, and the Kanyakumari Rationalist Association. A number of messages were also received from private individuals.

Mr. Gora's speech

In his key-note address to the Conference Gora said that atheism and theism were two ways of life. Atheism made man independent and responsible whereas theism enabled man to shift his responsibility on to God. As theism was based on the falsehood of God, it bred dishonesty and slavery in society. Even scientists, said Gora, were not free of superstitions. Astronauts who could land on the moon as a result of amazing advances in technology, prayed to God for the success of their project. But without the avowed adoption of atheism, scientific progress was liable to be misused for prosecuting wars or establishing dictatorships.

The World Atheist Meet was convened with a view to co-ordinating the activities of individuals and associations in promoting individual freedom and equality in social, economic and political relations. Gora said, "While those of use who have assembled here feel that the label of atheism is useful for releasing humans from political, economic and social oppression, we also have respect for other labels with similar programmes." He had in mind the humanist, rationalist, and secular societies, the various

peace movements and the women's liberation movement. Gora paid tribute to "stalwarts like Charles Bradlaugh and Charvaka" who had boldly taken up the label of atheism in the climate of theistic superstition. He also praised modern campaigners, such as Mrs. Madalyn Murray O'Hair and Dr. Garry De Young, for openly declaring themselves as atheists, and he welcomed the formation of a number of (specifically) Atheist Associations in India and elsewhere in recent years.

Secularism, socialism and democracy, said Gora were the means to achieve the full development of the individual personality. Theism was a stumbling block as it stressed the dependence of man on supernatural powers and preached the fate theory to distract the attention of the people from real problems in the world. Theism was responsible for maintaining the *status quo* in society and for keeping men unequal and lethargic.

Atheists in ancient India

M. Prabha, Chairman of the Rationalist Association of Kerala and President of the Mixed Marriage Association, presented a paper on the Lokayatas, the first atheists in ancient India. He said that due to religious intolerance and Hindu fanaticism, the Lokayata literature had been completely destroyed and one had to reconstruct the story of Lokayatas by looking at the intense criticism to which they were subjected by the theistic writers in those days. Other papers were given by Sripada Bedekar, M. S. Kirloskar, K. Vasudeva Rao and R. Kasturi. Dr. Garry De Young's speech was read by Mr. Edwin Lideen.

In connection with the Conference an exhibition of atheist literature from different corners of the globe was arranged. Books and periodicals in European and Indian languages were prominently displayed. Exhibits included press clippings and photographs which narrated the story of atheist movements in India and abroad. The exhibits included Gora's now book, *Positive Atheism*.

The World Atheist Meet was also the venue for an inter-caste marriage. Venugopal of the Atheist Centre, Repalle, married Vimala, sister of Suryanarayana (treasurer of the Indian Rationalist Association, Madras). Mrs. Saraswati Gora presided over the marriage function.

The conference authorised Gora to organise an International Co-ordinating Committee of Atheist Activities. The organisation of conferences of atheists in Europe, America and Australia was needed to ensure greater participation in the future. A committee was organised to co-ordinate the activities of atheists in India, and a regional committee was formed for Andhra Pradesh.

The World Atheist Meet revealed to the world that atheism was not wickedness or cruelty or immorality, but in reality atheism meant equality, freedom and democracy and it was a positive alternative to the present corrupt social, political and economic system based on decaying theistic civilisation. Delegates left with hope and trust that it would not take too long for them to meet at the next World Atheist Meet.

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WAS JESUS A POLITICAL REBEL?—PART 2

G. A. WELLS

In Part 1 I was concerned mainly with early Christian literature other than the gospels. But the principal arguments for the 'political' Jesus have always been drawn from the gospels, and I wish here to study some of the passages that have been adduced.

In Mark 12:14-17, "certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians" ask Jesus: "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not? Shall we give or shall we not give?" He replies: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." There is no need to suppose that an historical Jesus made such an utterance. Mark's gospel was written late in the first century for a Christian community which believed in an historical Jesus, and which needed a clear ruling on what attitude to take to the Roman rulers. Under these conditions it was natural for a dictum to be concocted which decreed that Christians were to pay taxes, but not to join in any act of worship of the emperor.

Jesus' words constitute a clear rejection of the zealot nationalist position which regarded payment of Roman taxes as a crime. In Luke's gospel Jesus is asked the same question by "the chief priests and scribes" and returns the same answer. But in Luke's version of Jesus' trial, these same "chief priests and scribes" accuse him before Pilate of "forbidding to give tribute to Caesar" (23:2). This passage has been added by Luke to the material he took from Mark, and those who believe that Jesus was a political rebel think that Luke is here less "circumspect" than Mark, and has let the cat out of the bag, betraying the real reason for Jesus' condemnation.¹

Careful editing

The weakness of this kind of exegesis is that it treats evangelists as mere collectors of traditions, and supposes not only that they assembled their gospels from shreds and patches (which, as form-criticism has established, they certainly did), but also that they put the shreds together carelessly, without much editorial attempt to make a coherent story. Critical theologians today have begun to see that, when an evangelist combined diverse traditions into a narrative, he intended the whole to present an intelligible message to his readers; and study of the way later evangelists assimilated and supplemented the Marcan material they were editing has revealed how carefully it is adapted to serve particular theological purposes of overriding importance.

That Luke adapts Mark in such a meticulous way has been ably demonstrated by the Göttingen theologian Professor H. Conzelmann in a book first published in 1953 and now in its fifth edition.² He shows that Luke's purposes in his Passion narrative were (1) to put the blame for Jesus' execution on to the Jews and (2) to stamp the Jewish leaders as the real rebels against Rome, in contrast to Jesus, whom he represents as politically innocuous. The passages already studied exemplify the first of these two tendencies. Luke changes Mark's account not only by adding a Jewish indictment that Jesus was a rebel, but also by ensuring that the Jews who make this indictment are *the same persons* as had been informed by Jesus that he was not a rebel. We saw that, while in Mark it is "certain of the Pharisees and Herodians" who ask Jesus about tribute to Caesar, in Luke the question is asked by "the chief priests and scribes"; and it is they who later (in the passage without Marcan parallel) indict him before Pilate as a rebel. Luke's purpose is clearly to stamp this indict-

ment as a deliberate Jewish calumny. It is quite unnecessary to assume, as does Brandon, that Luke has committed an indiscretion, and has inadvertently assimilated material which betrays what 'really' happened. Indeed, this interpretation can be excluded by showing that Luke repeatedly adapts Mark for the same overall purpose as is revealed in this allegedly indiscreet passage.

The Barabbas narratives

Relevant evidence comes from the Barabbas narratives. Mark tells that the multitude demanded the execution of Jesus and the release of Barabbas, who was in prison "with them that had made insurrection" (15:7). It is not said that he was a rebel—only that he was in jail with rebels. Luke, however, expressly says (23:19) that he "was cast into prison for a certain insurrection made in the city." Scholars looking for political dynamite in the gospels have supposed that Mark suppressed proper mention of Barabbas' political misdeeds, and that Luke has betrayed the true atmosphere of political ferment which formed the background to Jesus' arrest. But again closer scrutiny shows that Luke is here writing purposefully. He deliberately represents Barabbas as a rebel in order to show that the Jewish leaders, who demand his release, are, like him, rebels against Rome; but they, and not Jesus, whom they lyingly accuse, are the true rebels. The care Luke takes to make his point is shown by his laboured repetition. Having said (verse 19) that Barabbas was in prison because he had committed murder in an insurrection, the evangelist adds that Pilate, pressed by the Jewish leaders, "released him that for insurrection and murder had been cast into prison, whom they asked for" (verse 25). This, then, we are to understand, is the type of person they sympathise with!

Luke not only edits Mark so as to paint the Jewish leaders as unfaithful to Rome; he also, and correlatively, deletes from Mark any suggestion of such infidelity on the part of Jesus. Mark's account of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem represents Jesus as greeted by the crowd as the Messianic king, with Old Testament quotations and shouts of "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David" (11:10). Theologians recognise serious difficulties in the narrative, particularly apropos of its use of the Old Testament. Jesus, for instance, miraculously selects for the ride "a colt whereon no man ever yet sat" (11:2). This makes no sense (even apart from the miracle) as a factual report—he would hardly have chosen an unbroken mount—but is quite intelligible as an echo of the Septuagint of Zechariah 9:9: "Behold the king is coming . . . riding on an ass and a young [lit. new] foal." From evidence of this nature the late Professor M. Dibelius concluded that the triumphal entry is not history at all, but a "cult legend", prompted by the "holy words of the Old Testament", read liturgically in the cult.³ And Dibelius's pupil Professor E. Haenchen comments that the narrative is "not an eye-witness report of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, but a story told by the later Christian community which allowed the Old Testament to provide the material."⁴

Lack of political undertones in Luke

Historicity apart, Mark clearly intends the episode as a Messianic demonstration, but whether of a political character cannot be established by the crowd's shouts about the kingdom of David. Luke, however, makes quite sure that any political undertones there may be in Mark

are eliminated; for in Luke's version there is no mention of David, and so there can be no suspicion that Jesus is acting rebelliously towards Rome. The same purpose is served by Luke's studied failure to ascribe to Pilate any act of condemnation of Jesus. In Mark 15:15 "Pilate delivered him up to be crucified" and Roman soldiers proceed to carry out the sentence. But in Luke Pilate merely delivers him up to the will of the Jews (23:25) and "they" led him away to execution. "They" are not expressly said to be Roman soldiers, as is the case in Mark.

Finally I wish to discuss a Lucan passage which will illustrate how interpreters have seized on details which allegedly betray truths unpalatable to the evangelist, without pausing to ask whether he was trying to say something intelligible and coherent to his readers by including these very details. Just before his arrest, Jesus says to the twelve:

When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet: and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword. For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was reckoned with transgressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough (22:35-38).

An ancient ritual?

This passage occurs in no other gospel. L. G. Rylands, who believed (as indeed I do) that Jesus never existed, argued that "sword" here "properly signifies a long knife, . . . such as would be used for a sacrifice"; and that the injunction to "procure knives" is immediately followed by the words "this which is written must be fulfilled in me", pointing directly to the sacrifice. Rylands concludes: "Possibly we have here a reminiscence of an ancient ritual".⁵ The advocates of a political Jesus, on the other hand, take the injunction to buy a sword as a tell-tale incident which betrays the important fact that, at the time of his arrest, "Jesus made sure his disciples were armed".⁶ But before we thus accuse Luke of random assimilation of inconvenient political facts, we will do well to look at the context in which he sets Jesus' injunction.

Conzelmann rightly emphasises that the evangelist's purpose here is to make a distinction between the time of Jesus' public ministry (represented as an idyllic period, free from persecution and even from want), and the time of the nascent church. The latter is the evangelist's own day and age (the early second century), and he represents it as a period of hardship and of persecution which was inaugurated by Jesus' own arrest and execution. In all three synoptic gospels Jesus sends out the disciples as preachers early in his public ministry, and tells them to take "nothing for your journey"—no bread, money nor extra clothing (Mark 6:8 and parallels). Whatever Mark and Matthew may have understood by these instructions, Luke takes them to designate the carefree existence that Christian missionaries were then able to lead, "eating and drinking such things" as are given them (Luke 10:7)—conditions which, as Jesus points out just before his arrest, are about to be succeeded by sinister times. It is here that he refers to the necessity of obtaining swords, and the context shows that he must be understood metaphorically. As the Rev. V. Taylor says: "Jesus is thinking of the position in which the disciples will find themselves after his death".⁷ The disciples, it is true, take his words literally; but Luke's implication is that they have misunderstood him—as they have repeatedly done when, as here, he had tried to explain to them that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die (Luke 9:44-45; 18:32-34).

There would be no difficulty in multiplying examples from recent books on Jesus (particularly from those which represent him as a political rebel) of interpretations based on passages taken in isolation from their context. A generation or more ago there was some excuse, namely the form-critics' demonstration that evangelists assembled their gospels from disparate traditions; but today it has been established that they were meticulous editors. What Conzelmann has shown in the case of Luke has been shown to be true of Matthew,⁸ and even of Mark,⁹ where the evidence is far less clear, as none of Mark's sources is extant on which to base a comparison. In each case there is an overriding theological purpose (not, of course, identical in all three evangelists) which guides the assimilation of earlier material.

NOTES

¹ So BRANDON, S. G. F. 1967. *Jesus and the Zealots*: p. 348.

² 1964. *Die Mitte der Zeit*.

³ 1933. *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*: p. 119.

⁴ 1968. *Der Weg Jesu*: p. 378.

⁵ 1936. *Did Jesus Ever Live?*: p. 48.

⁶ BRANDON, *op. cit.*: p. 340.

⁷ 1937. *Jesus and His Sacrifice*: p. 192.

⁸ WALKER, R. 1967. *Die Heilsgeschichte im ersten Evangelium*.

⁹ MARXSEN, W. 1956. *Der Evangelist Markus*.

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RICHARD CARLILE, 1790-1843

CHARLES BROOK

This tribute to the great freethought publisher and printer, Richard Carlile, first appeared in 1943 in the April number of the late Guy Aldred's paper, The Word (now defunct), and as the Introduction to Dr. Charles Wortham Brook's booklet, Carlile and the Surgeons (also published by Aldred the same year). In 1972 it was reprinted in the Bulletin of the Thomas Paine Society (vol. 4, no. 3). Dr. Brook's article is published here to mark the 130th anniversary of Carlile's death. (The text has been slightly abridged.)

On 10 February 1843 Richard Carlile died in Bouverie Street, London, at the age of 52. He had little to leave but his body, which he bequeathed for dissection.

A native of Ashburton, Devon, and the son of a cobbler, he was working as a journeyman mechanic in a tinsmith's shop in Holborn Hill when he first became interested in politics and the reform movement, which was then led by William Cobbett and "Orator" Hunt. In 1817 he left his trade to become publisher of an advanced political journal, Sherwin's *Register*. This he later acquired and changed its name to *The Republican*.

He was soon in trouble with the authorities and was imprisoned for eighteen weeks for selling Hone's *Parodies*. Although faced with indictments on further charges of blasphemy, he was present at the Peterloo Massacre and his "Liberty Flag" was taken from his Fleet Street shop to Manchester and figured prominently at that great demonstration. Avoiding arrest, he escaped to London and publicised the whole affair in the *Register*, following this up with letters to the Prince Regent and the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth.

Imprisoned for blasphemous libel

Carlile was apprehended for seditious libel, but, through fear of adverse and hostile publicity, the government ordered his release. However, soon afterwards, at the instigation of the Society for the Suppression of Vice (which was led by William Wilberforce) alternative proceedings were taken against him on several indictments of blasphemous libel. For, despite warnings from the authorities, he had repeatedly and persistently published and sold cheap editions of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* and Elihu Palmer's *Principles of Nature*. After a long trial in which Carlile defended himself with great ability, he was convicted, sentenced to three years' imprisonment, fined £1,500, and ordered to furnish substantial sureties.

Carlile flatly declined to pay the fine or furnish the sureties, although he had many well-to-do and influential supporters including Jeremy Bentham and Francis Place. The poets, Shelley and Keats, protested against the sentence: but the Duke of Wellington considered the penalties too lenient and demanded in the House of Lords that Carlile should be outlawed and transported for life, while the Czar of Russia forbade any mention of the trial in the newspapers of his country.

Passive resistance and triumph

For six years, until 1825, Carlile remained in Dorchester Gaol, but from his cell he organised one of the most audacious and best planned campaigns of passive resistance ever recorded, and, what is most important, his efforts were completely successful. No fewer than 150 of his shopmen and shopwomen in all parts of the country were prosecuted, and many, including his wife and sister, were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. None the less,

volunteers were never lacking: *The Republican* and other Carlile publications appeared with unfailing regularity, and at the end of 1825 he emerged from gaol triumphant, with his fines unpaid and his sureties abrogated.

Not only had Carlile successfully routed the government, Wellington's Constitutional Association and Wilberforce's Vice Society, but he had made good use of his long incarceration. He read widely and wrote prolifically. He developed to the full his greatest and most outstanding gift, perhaps not surpassed by any Englishman before or since, of being able to focus on any problem the spotlight of plain commonsense. To give an example at random: Carlile objected on principle to oath-making, and of sworn evidence given at trials he wrote:

If the oath were valued as giving weight to the evidence, cross-examination would be a very great presumption; for it proves that the oath has not given weight to the evidence and that it cannot give it weight.

During his stay at Dorchester his views on politics and religion underwent great changes. He turned his back on the reformers. "I write for the poor," he proclaimed, and he not only wrote for the poor but published for the poor and sold to the poor at prices the poor could afford. That was his real crime in the eyes of the ruling class.



Richard Carlile
(Courtesy of the T.P.S. Bulletin)

The worst kind of slavery

His desire to serve the proletariat is well shown in his masterly and devastating exposure of the exploitation of the operatives in the Manchester cotton mills; and few today could better Carlile's indictment of the industrial capitalism of those times, when he wrote in 1827: "The human beings are worked with less care than is shown to the machinery, as the latter is expensive and the former costs the masters nothing for renewal."

He lashed out with fury at Wilberforce and other reformers.

It is astonishing that our public professors of humanity should have kept up a clamour about slaves in another part of the world and that they should be blind to this, the worst kind of slavery that was ever inflicted on any portion of the human race, upon any portion of the animal world. Oh! How this religious humanity of Wilberforce and others stinks of hypocrisy. Men and women subscribe money for the prevention of cruelty to animals, but forget to include their own species, the animal man, in the common benefit.

Carlile was prophetic when he discussed the future of the cotton industry, for he expressed the opinion "that the end of the century is very likely to see many of the huge and hell-like cotton mills emptied of human beings and the refuge of bats and owls."

At that time the Parliamentary reformers were holding out promises of the millennium, but Carlile, the social republican, boldly proclaimed: "There will never be any serious attempt to improve the conditions of the working people but among themselves. They must begin it, carry it on, and end it."

Gaoled for sedition

In 1831 Carlile was sentenced to his third term of imprisonment. This time it was 32 months for sedition, for having encouraged insurgent agricultural labourers to continue their strike. He argued that as they were in a state of war, and that in war all destruction of property was lawful, therefore they were, under the circumstances, justified in destroying farm produce. On this occasion Carlile was imprisoned in the Compter in Giltspur Street, and in reply to a message of sympathy wrote:

It may seem strange, but whether from habit or what else, it is no less true that in the course of our great political struggle, I like a gaol, and am more happy here than I could possibly be anywhere else until the time of our political triumph.

Carlile never complained about his own privations, but to others similarly persecuted he was always ready to offer sympathy, wise counsel, and encouragement; as, for example, when he wrote from the Compter to his colla-

borator, Robert Taylor, "The Devil's Chaplain", who was then in Horsemonger Lane Gaol and had complained to Carlile that the gaoler had insulted him.

It is not in the power of man to insult me. Assault is one thing, but insult is another, and there can only be insulting when there is a disposition to court it. Human nature is capable of a dignity that will not leave room for the word insult.

Carlile was a notable anti-militarist writer and publisher, and, in defiance of the Press Acts, he published an unstamped and anonymously written pamphlet characterising militarism as a monster and advocating its boycott by all decent people.

During the last decade of his life he was dogged by ill-health, probably aggravated by his nine-and-a-quarter* years' imprisonment, but his pen was active to the end, and only a few months before his death he wrote to Sir Robert Peel announcing his intention to provoke prosecution as a protest against the imprisonment of G. J. Holyoake.

Carlile was consistently abused during his lifetime, and after his death *The Times* referred to him as "this notorious individual". Almost a century later the Director of Talks of the B.B.C. expressed the opinion that Richard Carlile was not sufficiently eminent to justify a special centenary programme! Perhaps a more accurate reason for this decision is that the present time can scarcely be considered opportune for the average radio listener to appreciate the downright common sense of Richard Carlile.

*We follow the T.P.S. Bulletin text here. Brook's version gives "seven-and-a-half". (Ed.)

JOTTINGS

THE VATICAN AND VIETNAM

The occupants of the Chair of St. Peter are certainly adept at turning adversity to advantage; time and again they have extricated themselves and Holy Mother Church from the most discreditable situations. Cardinal Pacelli, Papal Nuncio in pre-war Berlin, who later became Pope Pius XII, schemed with his co-religionists to bring Hitler legally to power. He supported the most notorious right-wing dictators in Europe (except when on those rare occasions they threatened the Church's interests), but when he departed to the realms of glory in 1958 Pius XII was mourned by millions, including the main Protestant churches, as "the Pope of Peace".

Pope Paul's statement following the American withdrawal from Vietnam clearly revealed that he has little to learn from his wily and ultra-reactionary predecessor. Urging that the Vietnamese people be given immediate aid, including the building of churches, the Pope said: "We are particularly close to all those who have suffered from the war." He could truthfully have added that he was close to those who caused it. For it was the Roman Catholic quislings of South Vietnam, particularly the family of a former president, Ngo Dinh Diem, who plotted and eventually secured American intervention.

Opposition to the dicatorial Diem régime steadily increased during the 1950s, and by 1961 Washington was seriously concerned. In that year it was announced that the United States was increasing the size of its "Military Advisory Group" in South Vietnam. In addition, it would pay the wages of an extra 20,000 soldiers and supply arms for the 60,000-strong Civil Guard. During November and December large quantities of American military material,

including helicopters and fighter-bombers, arrived. The American invasion had begun, and their interference in Vietnam's affairs was welcomed by the government who, quite rightly, regarded it as Washington's endorsement of its reign of terror.

Liberals and left-wingers were the chief target of the South Vietnamese authorities, but it was the developing conflict between the Buddhists and the government that led to a major political crisis in 1963. On 5 May there were celebrations in Hué to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ordination as bishop of Monsignor Ngo Dinh Thué, Archbishop of Hué and a brother of the President. Vatican flags were flying on public buildings, and the leader of the Buddhist community was ordered to send a telegram of congratulation. Because of the government's policy of discrimination and persecution he refused. On 8 May, traditional birthday of the Buddha, the government banned the flying of Buddhist flags and ordered Radio Hué not to broadcast the religious ceremonies. When an orderly crowd assembled to protest at the radio station, police opened fire and nine people, seven of them children, were killed. Three West German eyewitnesses of the killings who informed the world Press and the principal diplomatic missions were expelled from the country.

These killings brought international attention to the rift between government and Buddhists which had been widening for several years. The cause for this animosity was that although seventy per cent of the population were Buddhists and only ten per cent were Catholics, the government was dominated by the latter, mainly through the presidential family. Buddhists were ousted from key positions in the universities, civil service and trade unions, and replaced by Catholics. The government was assisted

WILLIAM McILROY

in its discriminatory policies by a statute which had been introduced during French rule in order to assist Catholic missions.

The President himself was a fanatical Catholic by any standard, but the real extremists in the family were his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, and sister-in-law. Nhu controlled the 8,000-strong Special Forces, which were financed by the American C.I.A. His wife was a convert to Roman Catholicism; like most converts she was much more bigoted and enthusiastic than a cradle Catholic.

Madame Nhu, ultra-conservative, prudish and deeply religious, was a member of the National Assembly where she introduced the reactionary Family Law Bill in 1959. Two years later she brought in another bill which outlawed contraception and birth control propaganda, prohibited all dancing except traditional Vietnamese dances, and banned everyone under the age of 18 from entering cinemas or theatres. When several Buddhist monks committed suicide by setting fire to themselves, she declared: "I would clap my hands to see another barbecued monk show." Her callousness and fanaticism shocked even the American government which she described as "the Communist-inspired shell which is now called liberalism".

The régime of President Diem was eventually overthrown, and some suspect that Washington had a hand in its downfall. America may have been pleased to welcome the Vatican as an ally in her anti-Communist crusade, but it was becoming an embarrassment to be seen as the military musclemán of this bunch of Catholic fanatics in South Vietnam.

It is indisputable that President Ngo Dinh Diem, a faithful son of Rome, welcomed the invaders to his country. A dozen years, and over two million lives later, the last thing the Vietnamese need is more churches for the propagation of the Roman Catholic brand of fanaticism and intolerance.

LITTLE TREASURES

It is reported that Methodist and Anglican clergy in the Midlands have expressed "tremendous support" for an experiment to be carried out at a new estate which is being

built at Hawksley, Worcestershire. Upset, perhaps by criticism that schools have been turned into part-time churches for Christian indoctrination sessions, the authorities have decided that the new church will also be the estate's primary school.

In this situation the community is being called on to finance both a new church school and a church building. The new centre will receive the 80 per cent grant from the Department of Education, and any other financial privileges which are accorded to church schools. Barbara Smoker, President of the National Secular Society, commented in a press statement:

"From the point of view of the ecclesiastical authorities it is certainly attractive, for they are getting a new church without having to pay for it. And this at a time when hundreds of redundant churches in other areas (many of them originally paid for out of compulsory tithes on the whole population) are being sold off to developers at today's inflated prices, and the proceeds pocketed by the Church Commissioners for the benefit of the clergy, instead of being returned to the general public."

Meanwhile in London a campaign has been organised by a group of parents and teachers who are seriously worried by the Inner London Education Authority's plans for reorganising secondary education in their area. The West London Schools Campaign points out that these proposals will mean an increase in church school places. The I.L.E.A.'s plans will include giving several county comprehensive sites to church schools, and the W.L.S.C. demands to know "on what basis will this 'public land' be handed over to these schools? Surely not as a gift. But will they be occupied under a nominal rent? Or sold at less than market price? And what happens to church school sites made vacant through moves to county land? Some of the sites occupy prime sites in Westminster. What will the churches do with them? Who will benefit if they are sold off to speculators?"

Freethinker readers may wish to note that the Campaign's joint secretaries are: Mrs. Pat McLagan, 12 Giles House, 160 Westbourne Grove, London W11; and Miss Jackie Gulstad, 10 Airlie Gardens, London W8.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY of Terence O'Neill.
Rupert Hart-Davis, £2.25

Picking up Terence O'Neill's autobiography, one reads easily through the reminiscences of an uncomplicated and decent man born into the élite of a society built on bigotry and intolerance. Like a top civil servant or insulated Etonian, O'Neill trips through high Ulster society without sullyng his aristocratic hands. Almost above the struggle that burned down Bombay Street or left his province with bloody Sunday and bloody Friday, O'Neill's early memories sound trivial and irrelevant.

However, in a glimpse of Lord Brookeborough, on whom so much of the blame must rest, one sees that O'Neill's instincts were fundamentally right. He could respect the men who had fought for an Irish Republic and his meet-

ings with Seán Lemass were more historic and remarkable than uninitiated outsiders might realise. Similarly he doubtless wished for the object of civil rights but he lacked the will to achieve them.

No Prime Minister can easily drag on unwilling people screaming and kicking into the twentieth century. Like Garfield Todd, Sir Roy Welensky and Ian Smith, Chichester Clark and Brian Faulkner after O'Neill had a certain inevitability. O'Neill could not survive without challenging the very forces at whose head he emerged. Bill Craig, playing the Lardner Burke in the wings, personifies the dark forces against which a lilywhite liberal could not prevail.

However, a whitewash over O'Neill's own failure to stand up to his extremists is a feature of this book, which reveals more than it conceals. In this respect he is less than frank with himself or his readers. O'Neill wants desperately to be seen as the tragic liberal thrown into lonely, if noble, exile. His speech after the battle of Burntollet and his blanket denial of facts which were published by me on behalf of the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster were as repulsive as his wife's renowned advertisement for domestic servants ("Protestants only"). No doubt he

hoped to mould opinion among those whose fifty years' tyranny he sought to defend. In consequence he alienated the minority and appeared weak to the majority.

A gulf as deep as the border separated O'Neill from the constituents whose deference votes began to slip into the populist pockets of Paisley. The bathless houses of Barnside and the hell-fire sermons on Papists and Fenians were the mixture exploited by one who knew the people of Northern Ireland better. This gulf of class was crucial in explaining O'Neill's inability to fight off the challenge from the Right. Betrayed by Chichester-Clark and other more ferocious enemies, O'Neill could at least defend his path in retrospect as he failed adequately to defend it before. He was far sighted enough to understand that a pre-Reformation Northern Ireland had no place in today's Europe.

Had he been born in England he would no doubt have been a middle ranking Minister with civilised instincts and a penchant for praising famous men. As Prime Minister of Northern Ireland he was incapable of combating deep rooted prejudices which were to him irrelevant.

O'Neill's book gives us a glimpse of what it is to be born into a world where such passions are alien but which can exist only so long as they are exploited. That is the contradiction of the liberal-minded Unionist aristocrat in a divided Ireland.

PAUL ROSE, M.P.

RETHINK: A Paraprimitive Solution by Gordon Rattray Taylor. Secker & Warburg, £2.50.

In February 1972 some workers in General Motors' plant in Lordstown, Ohio, went on strike, not for more money, but for more interesting and lower-paced work. Some of them wanted to work on what they called "the Swedish method," in which teams of men are responsible for entire vehicles, instead of carrying out one boring process repeatedly.

Gordon Rattray Taylor, a modern Ruskin, sees this as highly significant. His own "general motivation," in this as in earlier books, is to challenge the "technomaniacs" of our time, those who might indeed have some human sympathy for the Lordstown workers but who would nevertheless insist that the technological revolution is here to stay, that one cannot put the clock back, that any such attempt on the part of "neo-Luddites" is doomed to failure.

Mr. Taylor is not impressed by these counter-arguments. On the contrary, "the time is ripe," he says, "to rethink the whole question of what human beings need: what are the conditions of a humane and civilised existence?"

It is, of course, an enormous question, asked and partly answered in the past by a whole line of writers, including Carlyle, Ruskin, Thoreau, Morris, Lawrence, Murry, Leavis, Galbraith, Skinner . . . the most encouraging feature of which is that so much of this questioning has taken place recently in the United States, the country where the technological revolution has been most successful.

Mr. Taylor concurs with what I wrote in my book *Disagreements* (1950) that no change in the ownership of production, as envisaged by Marx and Morris, would of itself alter the sort of technological slavery against which the workers of Lordstown protested. He also agrees that we might do worse than look at the eighteenth century.

It was no Utopia for the majority, yet it does seem to have learnt from the miseries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—from the religious wars and their attendant horrors—how to conduct its affairs more rationally. The eighteenth century did, indeed, "rethink"; it is up to us now to do likewise, to learn from the mistakes of the past, not to assume that we have necessarily to put up with the legacy our immediate ancestors have left us.

Mr. Taylor's own solution—and he apologises for the jargon—is "a paraprimitive society." He means by this a middle position between what we know of man's primitive, age-old needs and what is most reasonable and humane among his new technological skills. He looks forward to "a paraprimitive world, removed both from the stresses of competitive economics and those of an unstable technological environment." He does not minimise the complexities of the situation, but he is not over-awed by them. I queried several details, as one is bound to do in such a wide-ranging discussion, and I was sorry to find Mr. Taylor using the modern Americanism "miss out on" for the English "miss". But Mr. Taylor has re-thought to some purpose and his conclusions should be read.

R. C. CHURCHILL

THE GHOST DANCE: Origins of Religion

by Weston La Barre. George Allen & Unwin, £6.95.

This is an impressively scholarly survey of the origins of religion. It deserves to rank, as a classic, with Frazer's *Golden Bough* in the comprehensiveness of its scope and the wealth of information it contains. The author argues that religion is an entirely human phenomenon, to be understood in terms of human nature. He brushes aside any theological claims that religion involves special techniques of knowledge or truths not ascertainable through the normal scientific channels of inquiry. In his *Tractatus* Ludwig Wittgenstein observed that the mystery was not why there is a world but *that* there is a world. Religion, says Professor La Barre "is what a man thinks and feels concerning this unique unknown, and what he does with his ignorance."

He is critical of what he terms "use formulations" of religion, as, for example, the Marxist view that religion serves the useful purpose of "narcotizing of the people" so that they can be more effectively exploited by an élite. Such formations La Barre contends overlook the essence of religion. It is conceivable that a religion may not play the rôle of an opiate in the service of a ruling minority while still retaining its essential characteristic of expressing man's ignorance in the face of natural and social forces. "Given its nature," he writes, "religion doubtless can be used for a number of purposes. But to suppose that everywhere the purpose of religion is exploitative is to propound a paranoid-persecutory theory of history." I think many Marxists and freethinkers would agree with this; but they would not regard this as sufficient justification for suspending their efforts to replace religion by more rational approaches to natural and social phenomena.

In his account of the essence of religion Professor La Barre relies heavily on Freudian theory. He quotes approvingly Ernest Jones's words: "religious life represents a dramatisation on the cosmic plane of the emotions, fears, and longings which arose in the child's relation to his parents." God, in other words, is "the psychic ghost" of the father. The family situation, Professor La Barre asserts, is at the base of all religions; in all of them one finds a basic Oedipal story in their myths.

All this, of course, is arguable. It may be said that it depends too much on the family as we know it in Western society from which no universal application can be validly extrapolated. But, I think, in more general terms, one is entitled to say that religion feeds on the less mature, more dependent aspects of psychology, more typical of childhood than of adulthood, impelling the individual, especially in periods of stress, to seek for the guidance and protection that existed during his childhood.

Professor La Barre illustrates his thesis from many cultures. He has studied 15 North American Indian tribes, travelled extensively in Africa, South America, China, India and Ceylon. From these widely separated sources he shows how the Ghost Dance—the main theme of this book—represents the efforts of disparate cultures to summon up ancestors and past leaders to combat natural and social threats. The Ghost Dance, he argues, is the basis of Greek, Christian and Hebrew religion. There is a universal motif representing a common maladaptive retreat from reality in all religions.

I cannot recommend this book too highly. For the serious student of religion it is a *must*.

REUBEN OSBORN

INDOCTRINATION AND EDUCATION by I. A. Snook. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £1.25.

When secularists describe religious education as indoctrination, Christians are apt to accuse us of misusing that term. This controversial concept of indoctrination is examined in Dr. Snook's *Indoctrination and Education*, and his conclusions provide little comfort for Christians.

After a critical examination of various attempts to define indoctrination, Dr. Snook suggests that sufficient attention has not been paid to the teacher's intentions, which he regards as crucial in deciding whether or not indoctrination is taking place. According to his definition, a person indoctrinates if he teaches a proposition (or set of propositions) with the intention that the pupil or pupils believe it "regardless of the evidence".

By "regardless of the evidence", Snook does not mean that the indoctrinator will not make use of evidence, but rather that he will regard the evidence as secondary: "the beliefs are more important than the evidence". If the evidence is disproved, or his logical argument exposed as fallacious, the typical Christian does not abandon his religious belief, as a scientist would abandon his hypothesis in similar circumstances. The Christian reinterprets the evidence or adjusts his 'proof'. The facts are tailored to fit his belief not the other way round.

When Dr. Snook applies his concept of indoctrination to the question of religious education, therefore, he pays particular attention to the motives of those who teach it. He believes that if someone teaches religious propositions "with the intention that they be believed, he indoctrinates", and he goes on to point out that it is "difficult to see what else the teacher of religion could intend".

In the last and least satisfactory part of his book, Snook attempts to find a way to "remove the propositional element of religion" and to change the method and/or content of R.E. "so radically that it cannot be said that the teacher intends the pupils to hold beliefs regardless of the evidence".

There are many valid objections to this line of approach, but one of the most telling criticisms is provided by Dr.

Snook himself. He points out that: "The key factor, it must be stressed, is the agent's intention . . . no method, of itself, can prevent indoctrination." In other words, indoctrination can always take place if the teacher so wishes. Of course the Christians claim that they have not the slightest intention of teaching in a biased or prejudiced manner, but as Snook observes of these teachers: "There is talk of honesty, freedom and authenticity, but a peculiar blindness to the issue of indoctrination and the injustice involved in indoctrinating the minds of the children with beliefs which are doubtful . . ." The secularist case against religion in schools is as relevant as ever.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

PAMPHLET

THE SLAVERY OF OUR TIMES by Leo Tolstoy.

Printed by the workers of Briant Colour Printing, Old Kent Road, London, at the start of their occupation of the factory under workers' control in June 1972.

Published by John Lawrence, 29 Love Walk, London, SE5. (Price 25p.)

This edition of Tolstoy's famous pamphlet is, without doubt, of some historic interest, as the circumstances show.

Tolstoy wrote his essay in 1900, a year before his death at the age of 73. His thesis is that although serfdom was abolished in Russia in 1860, in fact the poor only exchanged one kind of slavery for another. For they entered factories in large numbers, where they had to work under conditions of sweated labour for miserable pay. He instances certain goods-porters on the Moscow railway who worked 37 hours non-stop, without sleep or rest. Incredulous, he had himself gone to enquire of these men. He found they were earning £2.65 a month for this labour, but what they complained about most was the sleeping accommodation—a room with enough shelf-space for 40 men to sleep, was occupied by a hundred.

For the conditions in which poor men found themselves Tolstoy blamed three institutions: private property, the legal system, and the state. Private property meant that the poor were crowded into the narrow confines of the slums, while vast areas remained empty, and also that they had no right to the articles they produced by their work. The legal system of the time was brutal: people were subjected to "blows, to confinement, or even to loss of life" for infringement of the 'rights' of those who made the laws. The state Tolstoy considered unnecessary and harmful, depending as it did on violence organised.

If men were to regain their freedom, Tolstoy argued that all these institutions would have to be abolished. But he was no prophet of violent overthrow; the unjust state depended on violence for its own maintenance, but to change it other methods must be adopted. These were, in short, methods of non-co-operation. There must be no taking part in any government activity, no paying of taxes, a refusal to undertake military service, and no appeal to the government for protection. The fraud which had been perpetrated on the people by "pseudo-religious" education, jingoism and the rest, must be exposed. All this will not lead to disorder, because disorder is created by the violence that men do to others, and the chief author of this is the state and its institutions. Everything depends on the individual personal conscience to change the situation.

Tolstoy rejected the label of anarchist. He is generally regarded, however, as the most distinguished of the paci-

first anarchist philosophers. Gandhi, who had considerable success with his methods of passive resistance to imperialism, owed a great deal to Tolstoy. Workers have shown on numerous occasions that they are quite capable of organising their own affairs, even when this involves running large and complicated industries. However, since in most minds the word anarchy is associated with senseless acts of violence, it is useful to remember that there is this other side. And even those who do not see the total abolition of all government as the way forward today will recognise that Tolstoy's pamphlet remains a powerful indictment of a harsh and corrupt system.

MERLE TOLFREE

ART

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI: Painter and Poet.

Royal Academy until 11 March.

If you have a hankering after Pre-Raphaelite "stunners" or mystical mediaeval daydreams, or if you are interested in the literary and artistic life of the mid-nineteenth century, the Rossetti exhibition will provide you with a feast of variety and imagination.

Not only has the exhibition assembled a staggering quantity of Rossetti's work in various media—oils, cartoons, watercolours, furniture decoration, stained glass, bookbindings and original manuscripts of poems—but Max Beerbohm's cartoons and Lewis Carroll's photographs are also brought in to complete the picture of the fascinating lives of Rossetti and some of his Pre-Raphaelite Brethren.

Much as I adore most things Victorian, I cannot altogether share the fixation that a number of their creative men had for the *Belle Dame Sans Merci* who gazes down so often from Rossetti's oil paintings. For this reason I rather preferred his drawings to his oil portraits, and often the sketches and drawings have a freshness and spontaneity that the finished oils seem to have lost. In the case of the unfinished *Found* (which has not been seen in Britain since 1886) the accompanying drawings are essential for understanding the complex moralistic symbolism.

Since many readers of this paper are Swinburne fans, it is worth mentioning that the exhibition contains several photographs and portraits of the great freethought poet, together with Rossetti's designs for the bindings of several books of Swinburne's collected poems. If you find Pre-Raphaelite earnestness a little too serious, look out for Rossetti's humorous cartoons, particularly of Mr. and Mrs. William Morris "taking the waters", or better still, Beerbohm's iconoclastic 'send-ups' of the Cheyne Walk set—especially the cartoon of Swinburne grovelling ecstatically before the middle-aged (and spreading) Rossetti, seated in a garden chair, while the latter's pet wombat lopes nonchalantly by!

For the enthusiast, it is advisable to arrive early. It takes a good two hours even to flit round all the exhibits once, let alone to try to take any more in. If you enjoyed the Millais exhibition, this latest tribute to Pre-Raphaelite vision and genius will be well worth 40p (25p on Mondays). If necessary, pawn your frock coat.

N.S.

THEATRE

KRAPP'S LAST TAPE and NOT I by Samuel Beckett.
Royal Court Theatre.

If there is such a thing as 'minimal' art in the theatre, then Beckett has achieved it. In *Krapp's Last Tape* we have a

very old man playing through tapes which he has recorded on earlier birthdays. He laughs creakingly, in Albert Finney's convincing performance, at all past memories of innocence and happiness, and then proceeds disjointedly to croak his last bitter message into the microphone. It is a bleak image, and yet perhaps we all have dialogues with our memories, which is the reason why the play has such a compelling effect.

The second play, *Not I*, is the British première of a new Beckett play and Beckett's stature as a dramatist is such that this must be regarded as an event. The single image of the play is a pair of luminous, disembodied lips spouting forth into the surrounding darkness. Billie Whitelaw achieves a *tour de force* in this short event: the variation of her pace always sustains the interest and intensity. Speaking of herself always in the third person she catalogues memories and ruminates on vanished moments of happiness. Now she is sixty, now seventy and breathless, occasionally reaching a muted, agonising shriek, she spews forth an endless stream of words, like one of Dante's lost souls in hell. Her words are delivered, or overheard, by a shadowy, cowed figure, described by the programme as the Auditor; and she does seem to be making some kind of terminal reckoning, so that her interspersed cries for "tender mercy" could be seen as a plea to her conscience, from which she would seem to be aching for release.

The questions I find it hard to answer are: how such bleak material can leave one with a sense of humanity rather than despair? And how such a minimum of stage effect holds the watcher so hypnotised?

JIM HERRICK

SMALL CRAFT WARNINGS by Tennessee Williams.
Hampstead Theatre Club.

In the 1940s Tennessee Williams established his reputation with *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This new play has the same poetry, reveals and elicits the same depth of emotion. It has a stronger comic vein, much of which derives from bathos, and some of which is exaggerated, to the detriment of the play.

The characters are the sempiternal misfits and might-have-beens of modern literature, in a California bar. Their relationships are of secondary importance to their soliloquies in which characters and author reveal themselves. The play was originally called "Confessional", and these confessions give the schematic play strength and cohesion. They are fresh, honest, un sentimental, and all the more haunting because they catch us unawares. One moment we are laughing at a character's drunken posturing, the next, silenced.

Williams' writing is elusive, mercurial and needs to be sensitively orchestrated by the director; this Vivian Matalon achieves. Even when they are in the background the actors at all times remain in character while contributing to the atmosphere of each scene. Cast and set all gave us a sense of weary raffishness. Most of the individual performances were of a very high standard. Tony Beckley as the disillusioned homosexual writer carried off impeccably the formidable task (or privilege) of acting as the author's mouthpiece; and his description of the 'gay-scene' is candid and distressing.

The play is uneven and loose-jointed. Its warnings depress, but Williams' proof of his alertness and resilience gives hope.

VERA LUSTIG

LETTERS

Sexual Honesty and Secular Puritanism

Mr. F. H. Snow (letters, January) asks why I wish "to stimulate others to become pornographers". I reply that I wish only to make people a little more honest about their sexual tastes.

Freethought means what it says; freedom from "religion's repressive dominance" is only a short-term objective, and I have small enthusiasm for leaping out of Savonarola's griddle into the cold fire of secular puritanism. Let us decide now which revolution we are fighting for.

In spite of Mr. Snow's concern to keep freaks like me in the background merely, he says, to preserve the good image of secularism, I suspect that when the good fight is won I shall find myself sharing a tumbrel with a bunch of tremulously chanting priests.

MARTIN CAVENDISH.

Freethought, Pornography and Logic

First it's "the Ding-a-Ling song is only in the good old-fashioned tradition of *double entendre*". Next, it's "dirty old Mrs. Whitehouse to think that's a *double entendre*". And then, "Well, if it is a *double entendre* what's the matter with masturbation, anyway?"

I thought freethinkers arrived at their position by logic?

Your correspondent asks whether adolescents really recognise the noise of orgasm on "Je t'aime"? Does he not know the level at which they play their records? What could it be? A woodsaw? Someone in their death-throes? The record sold a million, by prostituting that private creative noise.

To be serious, there is a serious issue here of trivialisation. I have written a book (unpublished) on Mahler. In it I explain the connections between Mahler's listening to his wife's breathing at night when she was working (he had to have the door open), and the way he would listen to the "breathing of the earth". This we may also relate to two things: his sexual impotence, and his dreadful dread of nothingness—when he lost his faith. This existential dread is, I am sure, felt by all of us who have no religious faith, with only our nothingness before us. Mahler managed to translate the breathing-heart-beat rhythm of Bach's aria "Ah! Golgotha!"—the blackest existentialist moment in Christianity, into the breathing heart-beat noises and rhythms of *Das Lied Von Der Erde* and the *Ninth Symphony*. By this, he sets a meaning—of the gratitude of having lived and loved—against the void.

To debase and corrupt sexual breathing noises, and to trivialise sex in 'pop' songs, for the investments of commercial pop and their profits, is to damage the fabric by which such existential security is achieved by great artists. The children corrupted by the pornographic sounds on "Je t'aime" are thereby cut off from access to the great meanings of Mahler—one of the most courageous of 'freethinkers' of all time!

DAVID HOLBROOK.

Satanism: the Social Problems

From Captain B. Irons of the Church Army

As a regular reader of *The Freethinker* I was highly amused to read your News and Notes item on "The Magical Midlands" (23 December). Although clever and amusing, the article is woefully ignorant of the social problems involved.

Casting religion and indeed witchcraft aside (since this is not what it is), no responsible person or parent can be anything but disturbed by the drugtaking, suicide and blackmail which are some of the products of young people's involvement in this new satanic cult at present spreading over the country.

Perhaps, sometime, through the courtesy of your paper, it would be possible to examine some of the claims of such an involvement and look at some of the positive dangers involved.

BARRY IRONS.

The Urgent Need for World Disarmament

The United Nations have declared the 1970s a "Disarmament" as well as a "Second Development" Decade, because the enormous resources now being diverted to military purposes are urgently required for national development in all countries.

In this scientific age, the need for universal disarmament is obvious; without it, every nation is at risk.

Disarmament is possible through the machinery of the United Nations organisation; the U.N. came into existence "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Therefore there is no valid reason for the long delay in implementing disarmament.

Public opinion must support the political will of governments to agree on disarmament, and women as well as men are involved. However, while men remain in overwhelming control of national and international affairs, the natural urge of women to preserve

life is not finding adequate expression in the normal course of international relationships.

Women for World Disarmament is an organisation enabling women to mobilise their concern, and to make their contribution in this matter of achieving the primary purpose of the United Nations.

(Mrs.) KATHLEEN TACCHI-MORRIS,

President, Women for World Disarmament.

North Curry, Taunton, Somerset.

What Lenin Really Wrote

In typical anti-Marxist style, Judex (letters, January) once again indulges in his hobby of quoting a hotch-potch of comments on Lenin without troubling to read what Lenin actually wrote.

This time, among others, John Lewis is quoted as saying that Marx "repudiated the notion that knowledge was derived from the mere reception of impressions from the material environment" as if Lenin, in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, had departed from this.

But let us refer to the original. In it a whole section is devoted to "The Criterion of Practice in the Theory of Knowledge". Both Marx and Engels are quoted, including Engels's words that "the success of our actions proves the correspondence of our perceptions with the objective nature of the things perceived." And again, Lenin himself concludes the section saying that "the standpoint of life, of practice, should be first and fundamental to the theory of knowledge."

Having made this point clearly in the section devoted to it, Lenin never at any point in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* suggested that he did not take this principle as basic. But we should remember that the whole book was not meant to be a simple exposition of dialectical materialism, but was a polemic, point by point, against those who, while professing to criticise only individual materialists, were undermining materialism as such.

PAT SLOAN.

Common Sense and Ideology

I see my old antagonist Pat Sloan (letters, January) has lost none of his skill at playing "Heads I win, tails you lose". Huge corporations like Standard Oil and Texaco, he says, are more powerful than many national governments, so it's to the barricades to fight them and have a revolution. But then, as I. S. Low says (letters, 30 December), the poor old oil companies cannot stand up to the producers' cartel of oil sheiks who are forcing up world prices—so, bingo! This shows, comrades, that the "exploited countries" are at last turning on their monopoly-capitalist oppressors, just as Lenin said they would, etc., etc., so let's join in the struggle and have a revolution.

It is much simpler to see the oil problem as an exercise in applied economics: given the world shortage of oil, the balance of power has gone over to the producers, so the price goes up. So we all pay more for our petrol, fuel oil and so on, including the "exploited workers" of the capitalist countries who Mr. Sloan apparently thinks have something in common with the fabulously rich oil barons of the Arab Middle East. But I suppose ordinary common sense does not appeal to ardent ideologists like Mr. Sloan, who despite a lot of surface froth does not actually say anything.

PHILIP HINCILIFF.

Two Replies

In his letter (*Freethinker*, January) Pat Sloan says "any suggestion of world government now as a practical policy is far more likely to strengthen those agents of monopoly capitalism . . . bombing Vietnam." May I point out to Mr. Sloan that he has made no attempt to answer my argument (letters, 30 December) that if the international capitalist corporations were as powerful as he says they are we need a world government to control them. This suggests he admits my point; which contradicts his arguments quoted above.

If we had a world government the Vietnam war could not have happened. And if a determined attempt to get world government had been made, starting soon after 1918 when the need became clear, we might have had world government now. And if we do not try to get a world government now the result will either be that some state will develop a super-weapon, enabling it to dominate all the others, or there will be a large scale war with nuclear weapons in which mankind will be wiped out.

I will reply to Miss Brophy later (because of considerations of space). As regards Mr. Byass—I do not think Wagner and Verdi are likely to be sacred-cowed. As regards Wagner, the Royal Family of Bayreuth (in the person of the late Wieland Wagner) have shown a readiness to experiment, innovate and even fool about with Richard's works, which is quite against the spirit of sacred-cowery. As to Verdi, I would say the trouble about him at the moment is that he is not appreciated enough. I. S. Low.

Shared Enthusiasm

I share the enthusiasm of your contributor I. S. Low for *The Ring* at Bayreuth. If circumstances make it possible in 1976 I hope to attend the centenary of the first *Ring* performance at Bayreuth. The atmosphere of the place is most conducive to the sensitive enjoyment of the great works performed there.

If I did not hate religion as much as I do, I should say that the Bayreuth atmosphere was religious in quality. It certainly demands the best from all concerned, both performers and audience. As everyone knows, Adolf Hitler was a regular worshipper at Bayreuth in the thirties. His complete failure to absorb the prophetic message of *The Ring* is a sad chapter in the posthumous history of Richard Wagner. But we can no more blame Wagner for Hitler than we can blame the gospel story (whether fact or fiction) for all the evils inflicted on the world by two thousand years of organised Christianity. PETER CROMMELIN.

Meaning and Existence

It is hard to find anything with which to disagree in Mr. Crommelin's article "One or None" (January *Freethinker*), provided one knew what is meant by the word God.

There is not even indirect evidence, such as the physicist can see by his experiments to indicate the existence of invisible atoms and molecules. The word "Creator does not mean anything. "Do you believe in Abracadabra?" can receive either yes or no as an answer, because the question is meaningless.

Future scientific discovery can never bring an answer to questions that are meaningless. W. R. PRICE.

Atheism, Materialism and Freethought

Whilst not agreeing with much of what Peter Crommelin has written ("One or None", January *Freethinker*) the underlying idea—a possible basis for discussion of the first principles of freethought and humanism—is indeed a timely and progressive suggestion.

As one who lays claim to being an atheist, I feel his case against atheism was not enhanced by some of the important inaccuracies he made. Then, after saying that a humanist never claims for his belief or disbelief anything more than "the natural light of reason", makes the very confusing statement, "All the weight of evidence seems to point to the conclusion that there is no God." He then explains that he cannot be an atheist because "the existence of one God remains a logical possibility." Surely, if natural reason can reject "all the weight of evidence" and embrace mere possibility, then it would be far better for humanists to rely on the toss of a coin in making decisions.

Voltaire and Paine may not have been atheists, but many of their contemporaries were and the pictists of their day often used this 'slur' against them. It should not be forgotten that, heredity apart, the environmental conditions surrounding one's way of life could quite well spur one to postulate a deistical power as a purely strategical act. There again, the dangers of adverse social repercussions may be a deciding factor. Some would argue that it was his concern for the latter that caused Thomas More to veer sharply towards Catholicism.

I must admit surprise in reading the statements of Mr. Crommelin on Marx: "We have no right to deduce . . . Marx was . . . a complete atheist". I would have thought that the expressed admission of Marx and Engels confirmed this. Again: "There is no logical reason why a devout Christian should not become a dialectical materialist." And: ". . . as a philosopher Marx was a disciple of Hegel; he never repudiated his master". Could a devout Christian declare, "Nothing exists outside nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflections of our own essence"? As a Young Hegelian, Marx could correctly be described as a disciple; but as a philosopher his dialectical materialism was the repudiation of Hegelian idealism. Hegel's philosophy reigned supreme until Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* "put materialism back on the throne . . . The system [Hegel's] was exploded and cast aside. We all became at once Feuerbachians." (Engels' *End of Classical German Philosophy*.)

It is true that freethinkers praise the deists Voltaire and Paine and the dialectical materialists do likewise to the idealist Hegel. The reason for this, I would suggest, is that the former pair did to religion what the latter did to classical philosophy—brought it to its final stage of social usefulness. In other words, the absolute and eternal concepts of the old subjective world were now to give way to the objective activities of science. Social progress could only continue by following this process. A little research may well reveal the part this dawning consciousness played when the Vatican in 1870 decided to play its subjective trump-card—infallibility! This theological three-up-and-one-down trick became the prize of the Western nations after their rescue act of 1943. Unlike Constantine, international finance had no alternative ideology, hence the Treaty of Rome is the attempt to superimpose

upon modern Western civilisation these medieval concepts of morality.

Therefore, I would suggest that historical materialism, with its built-in atheism, is still the finest safeguard freethought can have. Personal gods that tolerate atheists can do no harm; providing they do what they are told! Otherwise, as Caligula threatened the pagan gods, they will be made redundant! TREVOR MORGAN.

Relativity

It is a pity that when reviewing a book attacking physicists (*Science at the Crossroads*, January) you did not choose a reviewer who knows something about physics, rather than someone who has to admit that he is not competent to judge whether Professor Dingle is right or wrong "since I do not understand his subject".

Any final year physics student could tell you that Dingle's so-called paradox arises from an incomplete statement of Special Relativity theory. Special Relativity does indeed hold that the moving clock works more slowly, but this implies (and this can be explicitly stated) that the clock is moving relative to the observer. Thus an observer moving with clock A will judge whether it is going slow or not by some other rate process occurring in his frame of reference. To him the clock will thus be correct. However, an observer on a frame of reference moving with clock B and observing clock A (or any rate process in A's frame of reference) will compare it with rate processes in his own frame of reference (which to him is stationary) and judge that clock A (or any rate process in A's frame of reference) is slow. Similarly, clock B will appear slow when observed by an observer moving with clock A; to him B is the moving clock and A is the stationary one. Thus there is no "Dingle's paradox".

An experimentally verified example is the lifetime of a certain fundamental particle. This particle, when of low energy, decays into another particle with a certain lifetime. If the same particle has a high energy, so that its velocity (in our frame of reference) is close to that of light, its lifetime measured by "clocks" in our frame of reference is much greater, and this increase is as predicted by the theory of Special Relativity. If the lifetime of the "energetic" (in our frame of reference) particle were measured in its own frame of reference (in which its kinetic energy would be zero) its lifetime would be exactly that which we obtain for the low energy particle measured in our frame of reference.

Thus, far from undermining the whole of Relativity, Dingle's so-called paradox only serves to fill a book for which we are expected to pay £3. As for the reception by physicists of Dingle's argument, your reviewer should not accept so easily Dingle's own view of it. R. G. TEE.

Soulful Perplexities

The Rev. Ronald Adkins (letters, January) seems to have overlooked not a few perplexities in his seemingly wishful comments about 'souls'. To begin with, belief in the existence of a soul is not the same as a belief that humans—and some animals—can acquire possession of a soul through the exercise of 'love'. In the event of (say) one's cat and oneself each doing what is necessary to acquire the immaterial substance of a 'soul', it is difficult to understand how, after survival following bodily disintegration, either one's cat or oneself could recognise one and the other!

CHARLES BYASS.



"Surely a conference organised by Conservative Central Office would be as unbiased as any other activity."

(By kind permission of *Peace News*)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 4 March, 5.30 p.m.: LORD BROCKWAY, "Humanism and Humanitarianism."

Defence of Literature and the Arts Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Monday, 19 February, 7 p.m.: BEN WHITAKER, MICK FARREN, JOHNNY SPEIGHT, GRAHAM ZELICK, JEFFREY SIMMONS—"The Fight Against the Censors."

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Sundays at 6.30 p.m. 18 February: DAVID HOLBROOK, "Sylvia Plath and Nihilism in Poetry"; 25 February: discussion; 4 March: NIGEL SINNOTT, "Charles Bradlaugh and Ireland"; 11 March: Mrs. M. HILL, "The Work of the British Leprosy Relief Association."

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sundays at 7.30 p.m. 18 February: BRUCE LLOYD, "The Economic and Political Situation in Developing Countries"; 4 March: Annual General Meeting.

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group, University Adult Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street. Friday, 9 March, 7.30 p.m.: C. L. MANCLARK, "Some Aspects of the Environmental Problem."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday Morning Meetings, 11 a.m. 18 February: Dr. JOHN LEWIS, "Jacques Monod and Molecular Man"; 25 February: Professor C. E. CARRINGTON: "The Problem of Decadence—Fourth Century Rome and Twentieth Century Britain." 4 March: Dr. COLIN HAMER, "The Psychology of Priesthood"; 11 March: J. STEWART COOK, "Why Do We Believe in Anything?" Sunday Forums, 3 p.m. 25 February: ROGER GRAEF, "Alternatives to the Motorcar"; 11 March: JACK ROBINSON, NICHOLAS WALTER and S. E. PARKER, "Aspects of Anarchism." Tuesday Discussions, 7 p.m. 20 February: ED BERMAN, "The Community versus the System"; 27 February: panel of speakers, "Public Schools—Private Advantage?"; 6 March: DAVID PORTER, "Psychology of Conflict"; 13 March: RON BAILEY, "Violence—Aid or Bar to Freedom?"

Sutton Humanist Group. Saturday, 3 March (11 a.m.): book sale at Trinity Hall, Hill Road, Sutton. Thursday, 15 March (8 p.m.), Friends Meeting House, Cedar Gardens, Sutton: talk by Mrs. DOREEN CARVER of Sutton Arts Council.

1973 Voltaire Lectures (sponsored by the British Humanist Association), Small Hall, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1. Wednesdays at 7.30 p.m. 7 March: Professor BERNARD CRICK, "Between Violence and Passivity"; 14 March: Professor B. CRICK, "Between Pornography and Puritanism."

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group, Backhouse Room, Hand-side Lane, Welwyn. Thursday, 15 March, 8 p.m.: HARMAN SUMRAY, "Art in Education."

Worthing Humanist Group, Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade. Sunday, 25 February, 5.30 p.m.: COLIN DAY, "The Work of Oxfam."

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