

The FREETHINKER

Registered at the Post Office as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Vol. 93, No. 7

JULY 1973

6p

POPULATION, FREEDOM AND PEACE

—BEGINNINGS OF ANOTHER BACKLASH ?

Ten or fifteen years ago warnings about over-exploitation of resources, industrial pollution and the population explosion were usually dismissed as the imaginings of neo-Luddites, stone-ground wholemeal flour-eaters or cranky biologists with a grudge against babies. In recent years, partly because of economic factors bringing home the effects of the population 'bulge', and partly as a result of the splendid work of the Conservation Society, the idea of conservation has finally caught on so well that it is almost in danger of being swept off its feet by the tide of its success: 'ecology', 'pollution' and, above all, 'the environment' have become virtual cant-phrases to be trotted out by with-it educationalists and others at every conceivable opportunity. They are given immense lip-service, but how much real meaning? Under the circumstances it comes as no surprise to observe what may be the beginnings of a backlash against conservation, directed particularly against population stabilisation and control.

Population "Fascists"

The attack has come from two quarters. In the radical press recently articles have begun to appear attacking population control as a capitalist, white middle-class conspiracy to keep the workers and the 'Third World' deviated and 'in their place'. Secondly, the spokesmen for organised religion, such as Mr. Nicholas Fogg, the editor of *Christian Action*, have been denouncing "population doomwatch peddlers" and calling them "Fascists with human faces", much to the delight of the Catholic press. In fact, neither of these ploys is new; they are basically up-dated versions of the arguments that were used thirty years ago and more to try to stifle and suppress the family planning movement when this was in its infancy.

The attempt to paint the population lobby with the Fascist brush is a little disingenuous, to put it mildly. Fascists, both of the Italian and German kind, regarded contraception as 'negative': the only form of population control of which they approved was "the father of all things", war, which by some mystical means was supposed to 'purify' the national blood. Even before they came to power, the Nazis tried to push pro-natalist legislation through the Reichstag. "Whoever undertakes to prevent the natural fertility of the German people", one bill ran, "... is liable to be punished with hard labour for treason to the race." A Nazi theologian, Professor Ernst Bergmann, pointed out that "Christ is supposed to be a 'good shepherd', looking after His sheep. But a good shepherd is, in the first place, a good breeder."

Genetic arrogance

Genetic arrogance, which is a sort of Fascism, is by no means the prerogative of those who practise birth control. The phenomenon is not unknown of trendy, self-important suburban couples who announce their intentions to have large families so that the fertile, but "unintelligent" working class will not swamp the future human gene pool. Perhaps, though, the world can manage to stagger along without the gift of such 'intelligence'.

For another example of arrogance one has only to look at the Dutch Reformed Church (G.N.K.) of South Africa. A member of its Broad Moderation, the Rev. H. J. C. Sniijders, recently pronounced that "a couple who use the pill to prevent births are indulging in prostitution—even in marriage." He, of course, had whites in mind; but another G.N.K. minister, the Rev. M. Steyn, has suggested that the contraceptive pill "could help the blacks because they are not as educated as the whites. They should definitely get the pill free because they already indulge in free sexual communion, whereas the whites do not. The morals of the blacks are so low already that they cannot get more promiscuous." To its credit, the South African press has roundly rebutted Mr. Steyn's racist smear, but in the matter of birth and population control it is vital that people do practice what they preach. Otherwise, the Third World has every right to be contemptuous if it sees the rich advocating birth control for other people only.

No single solution

Certainly hunger and poverty can, and must, be alleviated by better distribution of world resources. Population control, by itself, is not enough; but neither, by itself, is redistribution. It may be possible to cultivate the whole of the earth's surface and distribute the produce properly, but population would continue to rise. Then what?—A miracle? In any case, who wants to live in an endless, intensive market garden where there is no wilderness, no forests, no wild beauty left, nowhere to 'get away from it all' for a while? It would be a factory-farmed hell.

Clearly population control has its problems and its caveats. An over-rapid decrease of population in a community could, for example, bring about serious social repercussions. The world's problems, and their solutions, are often complex. But let no-one be deceived: in the end the only people who stand to gain satisfaction from the concept of excessive growth and over-breed are the tyrants, the exploiters, the obscurantists and, inevitably, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

THE FREETHINKER

Editor: NIGEL SINNOTT

698 Holloway Road,
London, N19 3NL

Telephone: 01-272 1266

U.K. ISSN 0016-0687

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

POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Inland and Overseas

Twelve months: £1

Six months: 50p

U.S.A. and Canada

Twelve months: \$3.00

Six months: \$1.50

Please make cheques, etc., payable to G. W. Foote & Company. (Foreign subscriptions by cheque or International Money Order, please.)

The *Freethinker* can also be ordered through any newsagent.



OATH OR AFFIRMATION

Whilst reading the Unitarian paper, *The Inquirer*, a little while ago, we were pleased to see that Mr. Cyril Smith, M.P. for Rochdale, intended to alter the 1888 Oaths Amendment Act so that people wishing to affirm, rather than take a religious oath, could do so as of right, without further inquiry into their personal opinions or beliefs.

A more recent proposal, published just after our June issue went to press, comes from Justice, the all-party group of lawyers. Justice proposes the abolition of the oath, and would replace it by a simple declaration and promise to tell the truth. Further, the scope of the law against perjury would be broadened, so that victims of a convicted perjurer would be able to sue for damages or obtain criminal injuries compensation. The new law would also enable action to be taken against persons giving false evidence to tribunals (national insurance, social security, planning, rent, and so on) where at present the Perjury Act does not apply.

Freethinkers have been advocating universal affirmation for some years now, and it is to be hoped that Justice's proposals will have a smooth and swift passage to the Statute Book.

HUMAN SACRIFICE

According to the *Daily Telegraph* of 30 June, a young officer in the Ivory Coast army killed five fishermen as a human sacrifice designed to ensure the success of a plot to overthrow the régime of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Evidently the gods were not particularly receptive to this gesture, for the plot was discovered and 12 army officers were arrested.

Meanwhile, in 'civilised' Europe, human sacrifices are a matter of daily occurrence in Northern Ireland, where, so it would appear, psychopathic killers are hired to murder those who neglect to worship at the approved shrine of the God of Battles. Religion, as we have so often observed, is such a comfort.

COMPREHENSIVE CONTRADICTION

Following an earlier allegation that Church schools were 'creaming off' bright pupils to the detriment of local State comprehensives in West London, we read a report in the *Evening Standard* (19 June) that Anglican education chiefs had agreed to abolish selection and allow Church of England voluntary aided schools in Inner London to go comprehensive. The I.L.E.A.'s delight at this news was not matched by the response of the *Times Educational Supplement*, which commented (22 June): "It may turn out to be little more than a paper promise. Only the governors of church schools have the power to agree to their going comprehensive."

George Bernard Shaw once described a Catholic University as "a contradiction in terms". If that is so, what, one wonders, is a sectarian 'comprehensive'—Catholic, Anglican or otherwise?

REPRESSION IN BRAZIL

To their credit, 13 members of the Brazilian Catholic hierarchy got up last May and accused their country's government of the murder, mutilation, torture and wrongful imprisonment of its opponents. We have since read in *The Observer* (17 June) that some 1,300 people have been murdered in Brazil by 'Death Squadrons', composed of off-duty policemen. Brazil's military régime claims that its objects are to "halt Communism" and to defend (no prizes for guessing this one) "Western Christian civilisation"—just like some other dictatorships we can think of!

N.S.S. RESOLUTIONS

Because of our press dates we were only able to give a brief résumé of some of the resolutions passed at the National Secular Society's A.G.M. in the June *Freethinker*.

The meeting of 10 June, "whilst admitting the National Secular Society's share of the blame for the fact that so many C. of E. churches are becoming redundant", took "strong exception" to the pocketing by the Church Commissioners of the proceeds of sale of churches and land "which were originally paid for by the whole population (through various means of extraction, including compulsory tithes)". It was also "gravely concerned at the wanton destruction of old church buildings of architectural merit".

NEWS

S AND NOTES

The A.G.M. accordingly called for "an amendment of the law so that the proceeds of sale of church property, less the cost of direct replacement only, would be paid to the local authority for public amenities in the area, and that interesting old churches would no longer be exempt from preservation orders".

The full text of the resolution on abortion (carried unanimously) was as follows:

This Annual General Meeting (1) strongly advocates responsible contraceptive methods, and not abortion, as a means of family planning; (2) nevertheless, it calls for the legalisation of abortion on request in order that bureaucratic and medical delay can be obviated, and abortions carried out early in pregnancy and by the simplest and safest techniques possible. (3) Furthermore, this meeting trusts that our legislators will see the current emotive campaign by the anti-abortion lobby, even against the present Act, in its true colours: as being primarily a tactical rallying point for Roman Catholicism.

Another resolution, pointing out the anomaly that homosexual soliciting by males carried penalties of up to two years' imprisonment, whereas other forms of soliciting carried only small fines or were not even regarded as illegal, called for the extension of the provisions of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, with regard to homosexual practices in private, to Scotland and Northern Ireland, and for amendment of the Act "to bring the age of consent for homosexual males into line with that for heterosexuals".

Mrs. P. Knight, Mrs. M. McIlroy, Miss K. M. Tolfree, Mrs. L. Van Duren, and Messrs. R. J. Condon, C. J. Morey, N. H. Sinnott and E. Willoughby were elected by the A.G.M. to the N.S.S. Executive Committee.

NOT ENOUGH TIME ON THE AIR

says B.H.A. Report

"A major cause for worry", says the tenth annual report of the British Humanist Association,¹ "continues to be the failure to obtain adequate broadcasting time" for humanism. The report points out that publicity for humanist causes has been easier to obtain in the local press, and local groups and individuals are praised for their efforts in this field. The report also appeals to members to make full use of radio and television 'phone-in' programmes.

The report will be presented to the B.H.A. Annual Conference in London later this month. Unfortunately, bookings for this conference will have closed by the time this issue of *The Freethinker* is published. However, the theme of the conference, "Positive Humanism", has already aroused the ire of our old acquaintance, Dr. Ilych Haczetmann, "dedicated pornoclast, Aryan whippet-breeder, 'positive' humanist, and founder member of the National Union of Warmongers",² who claims proprietary rights over this title. The conference organisers had better watch out for this gentleman: he can get quite nasty!

¹ 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG.

² *The Freethinker*, 7 October 1972: p. 322.

The Rationalist Press Association's Conference, on the theme of "Manipulating Minds", will be held in Manchester from 17 to 19 August. Bookings close 31 July. For list of speakers and other details see under 'Events' (back page).

BACK TO HOLLOWAY ?

An anonymous correspondent, noting our change of address, writes: "Is *The Freethinker* now to be printed and published from Holloway Gaol? Holloway can provide at least freedom to think."

Well, *The Freethinker* has had what one might call 'close associations' with Holloway Gaol in the past. Our founder, G. W. Foote, was imprisoned there for 'blasphemy' in 1883/4, and this enforced seclusion certainly did not deprive him of his freedom to think—the old Christian threat of "Holloway here and Hell hereafter" (to quote Foote himself) held no terror for him, nor does it for his successors

We were surprised to find out recently that Foote was released from Holloway on 25 February 1884, exactly sixty years to the day before the present editor of this paper was born. Spiritualists, theosophists and astrologers may well regard this as highly significant, though we prefer to regard it as pure coincidence (though with a little perverse pride). At any rate, even if Foote's present successor does come to an ignominious end, it is unlikely to include H.M. Prison, Holloway*: since our founder's day his Alma Mater has been changed to an all-women establishment.

The Freethinker will, of course, continue to be printed in Andover (Hampshire) by our good friends at G. T. Wray Ltd., and it will be published from Holloway Road. Will readers please note that each number is issued in the middle of the month (not at the beginning).

*An Australian reader informs us that Horatio Bottomley was also imprisoned at Holloway, but we have no desire to emulate him.

PRISON BIBLE PRIZEWINNER

From the columns of the *Glasgow Daily Record* (5 June) comes the intriguing news that Ronnie Kray, serving a minimum of 30 years' imprisonment for murder in Parkhurst Prison, has won a bible study certificate. Together with brother Reggie, also behind bars, he has started going to the prison chapel.

The source of this information is the brothers' "one regular pen-pal, Father Richard Hetherington, who has known the twins since he was an East End vicar 25 years ago". According to the *Daily Record*:

In a recent letter to him, Reggie said: 'I get much pleasure in writing to you, although not quite as much as visiting you and your church.'

The Kray twins are evidently running neck-and-neck with Myra Hindley for the next award of *The Freethinker's* Horatio Bottomley Medal.

OUTLINE OF NAMIBIA

South-West Africa, or—as it was renamed by the United Nations in 1966—Namibia, first came into the international news in December 1971 with a series of strikes against the South African Government's contract labour system; and at the beginning of this month the (London) *Sunday Times* carried a report to the effect that more than two hundred South African soldiers and policemen are believed to have been killed by guerillas operating in the Caprivi Strip area. The International Defence and Aid Fund have now published a pamphlet, *A Dwelling Place of Our Own: the story of the Namibian nation*, written by Randolph Vigne, which gives a brief outline of this country, from

its colonisation by the Germans in the 1880s and eventual hand-over, under League of Nations mandate, to South Africa in 1920.

In 1966 the U.N. General Assembly revoked the South African mandate over South-West Africa, and called upon the Pretoria government to withdraw from the territory. South Africa has shown no intentions of leaving, and rather than grant the whole country independence started dividing the territory into 'self-governing homelands' which would give the non-European population nominal control of only 39 per cent of Namibia's soil. "Comic-opera legislatures with uniformed officials and gowned illiterate councillors are," writes Mr. Vigne, "a thin cover for the take-over of reserve lands, or their substitution for deserts."

Copies of A Dwelling Place of Our Own may be obtained (price 15p plus 4p postage) from the International Defence and Aid Fund, 104/5 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AP.

POTTY LEGISLATION

The Home Office recently announced that the smoking of cannabis would be made legal (under strict control) for research purposes from 1 July. On the same day the Misuse of Drugs Act, 1971, came into force, which provides penalties of up to 14 years' imprisonment for intentional cultivation (other than under licence) of the drug.

The new law has prompted the formation of CARO, the Cannabis Action Reform Organisation, which, in a

letter sent recently to all M.P.s says that the new penalties are unjustified on legal, social and moral grounds. CARO intends to campaign for the abolition of all criminal penalties for the possession of cannabis, and for the establishment of channels of distribution, "subject to appropriate controls". Mark Eaton, CARO's organiser, emphasises that it is not the Organisation's policy to promote the use of the drug.

CARO has also sent packets of cannabis seeds to various M.P.s, peers, magistrates, and to this office. The seeds, we are informed, are legal—strictly as bird seed! Is there a hungry budgie in the house?

CARO's address is 65 Edith Grove, London SW10.

SEX MISEDUCATION

As a result of pressures being brought to bear against the Exeter council, a sex education booklet for schools has been 'revised'. A passage stating that homosexual relationships were "not necessarily harmful" has been expunged, and the first edition's liberal comments on masturbation have been altered to read:

When undesirable practices such as masturbation do occur, they should obviously be discouraged . . .

Would somebody please explain what is "undesirable" about masturbation—apart from the fact that it is one of the few forms of sexual activity that can have virtually no undesirable side-effects?

OIL, ENERGY AND COMMON SENSE

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

In the past few years, the bargaining stakes for oil—this magic commodity that drives our cars, heating systems and industry—have suddenly become very much higher. The so-called energy gap now opening up for the industrialised countries of the world has already brought about unprecedented changes in American energy policy, which have not done more than postpone the day when the increasing shortage of energy, caused mainly by the galloping rate at which we burn up the world's resources of fuel, may lead to dramatic changes in Western society.

What the Americans have done is to sweep away restrictions on the import of Middle Eastern oil, which means they will become more and more dependent on the Arab countries to meet the apparently insatiable demand for energy which now characterises the advanced countries, and in particular America. This is bound to have an unpredictable, and highly consequential, impact on world politics.

Growing importance of the Middle East

The essence of the oil problem is, in fact, very simple. With the slow decline in oil production in traditional sources of supply like Texas and Venezuela, the Arab Middle East bulks larger and larger in importance. In 1972, Middle East production was 900 million tons, nearly half the total world output of oil, yet this year total world demand for oil may well reach 2,600 million tons. Demand doubled in the 1960s and is expected to double again in the present decade. By 1985, the world will need another three Middle Easts if the growth in the demand for oil continues at present rates. Yet two-thirds of the world's

proven reserves of oil lie in the Arab countries, and there is little prospect of equally productive oilfields being found and developed this decade. The hard fact is that the Middle East will have to meet the worldwide clamour for oil, unless sweeping changes are made soon in our patterns of energy consumption.

What are the options facing governments in the advanced countries? There are broadly four alternatives.

1. *Carry on relying on the Middle East for oil until some other source of energy can be found.* This is overwhelmingly the most likely short-term 'solution' to the problem, yet it assumes that the Arabs will fall obligingly into line and step up their output to whatever extent required. It does not take a cynic to see that there is precious little reason why the Arabs should do anything of the sort. Any economics textbook will point out that a monopolistic cartel of producers like the Arab oil states will find it in their own interests to restrict production, rather than expand it. This would not only permit them to prolong the life of their most useful asset, but would inexorably force up the price of oil products. This is exactly what has been happening. A series of deals between the giant oil companies which refine and market the crude oil and the Arab nations which produce it has led to vast increases in the revenues paid to the oil barons and to high profits for the companies. The person who pays is, inevitably, the consumer.

The first trial of strength between the oil companies and the Arabs, in 1970 and 1971, led to easy victories for the self-styled 'revolutionaries' such as Libya's Colonel Gaddafi, who uses some of his oil revenue to send arms

to the I.R.A. terrorists in Ulster. The oil companies capitulated to the demand for a total price rise of £10,000 million over the five years to 1976. Wholesale nationalisations of Western oil interests followed.

By restricting production, as indeed Libya and Kuwait have already done, and thus forcing up the price of oil, the Arab countries quite literally have the West over a barrel. The vast accretions of oil revenue that will flow to the Arabs for the next twenty or thirty years could well prove highly dangerous for world peace and prosperity, for an obvious way for the Arabs to spend their riches is on arms for use against Israel, or even in the deliberate engineering of world monetary crises through speculation against Western currencies. The huge payments deficits that would open up between the Western nations and the Arabs would mean a decisive shift in financial power to some of the most reactionary, irresponsible and fanatically religious countries in the world.

2. *Use other forms of energy as far as possible.* The obvious choices here are coal and natural gas. There is no immediate problem of coal shortage, as the world probably has as much as five hundred years' supply left—though it will become increasingly expensive to mine all the coal required. And humanists may well question the propriety of compelling men to work in one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs going. Another important point is that a big extension of coal mining will damage the environment, particularly where open-cast mining techniques are used. In the United States, President Nixon has already asked for a relaxation of the tough standards imposed by the American version of our Clean Air Acts to allow more mining and burning of coal. However, there is no doubt that coal will resume its former importance as an energy source in certain fields, though not in the critical one of transport.

Natural gas is an efficient and pollution-free fuel, but unless new techniques can be found to convert coal to gas cheaply and efficiently, natural gas does not have much of a future: for on present consumption rates the world has perhaps another fifty years' supply left. The North Sea gas fields, for instance, are not generally expected to last much beyond the turn of the century.

3. *Another possibility is to develop new forms of energy.* This still lies in the realms of science fiction, for the ultimate answer to all our energy problems—the harnessing of the incredible output of energy from the sun—simply has not been invented. The American programme of research into new sources of energy recently announced by Nixon will include work on the utilisation of solar energy, yet no one expects quick results. Ironically, one suggested way in which the sun's radiation could be put to use involves setting up gigantic mirrors in desert areas of the earth to trap and reflect the sun's energy to generate electricity; a good idea, were it not for the fact that the best place to site such mirrors would be the Arab Middle East and North Africa.

Nuclear power is a long-canvassed answer to the energy gap, yet is proving in practice increasingly unreliable and doubtful; though this has not prevented countries like Japan, frightened by its almost total dependence on imported energy, from pushing ahead with nuclear power as fast as possible. It has been calculated that if an American state like California, greedy for electricity, were to switch to nuclear power to provide for the anticipated growth in demand until the year 2000, then fast-breeder reactors

would line the California coastline at the rate of one every two miles. Breeder reactors are not only massively ugly, but there is a grave doubt about their long-term safety. They are, after all, nothing except a controlled nuclear explosion. Whilst the chances of an accident are very rare in any one year, they must clearly multiply with the number of nuclear power plants coming into operation. And an accident, if one were ever to happen, would be devastating in its destruction; which is why nuclear power plants must be situated far away from large centres of population.

There also remains the gigantic output of highly radioactive nuclear waste to dispose of if nuclear power were to become the main source of electricity generation. The United States Atomic Energy Commission has already been accused of culpable negligence by some American scientists in its disposal of nuclear wastes—yet nuclear power forms only a tiny fraction of energy used for heating in the U.S.; as this fraction rises, the disposal problem will prove enormous.

4. *The conclusion one is forced to is that, somehow or other, the frenetic lust for energy of all kinds will have to be curtailed.* It is absurd that massive amounts of stored-up fossil fuel energy, in the form of coal, are converted to electricity and used in air-conditioning systems to dissipate the heat of the sun that made the coal possible in the first place. It is absurd that we build houses with elaborate heating systems and then allow the heat to leak out again, because all too often, even with modern housing, there is not enough insulation. It is absurd that we permit industry and office development to drive up the price of land in our cities so much that people are forced to live many miles from their work and consume scarce energy in getting there and back again. Yet the technologies that would make energy-conservation possible are still in their infancy. Instead, the governments of the advanced countries rush ahead with prestige-projects like Concorde which will waste energy on a hitherto undreamt-of scale.

The grim fact is that even if new sources of energy are developed, such as nuclear power and the American shale fields, there will simply not be enough fuel to go round the developed countries, let alone the industrialising third world. Unless, that is, there is a massive shift in our priorities towards conservation, not reckless consumption. If such a shift does not occur—and there is no real sign of it—the dinosaurs may well have the last laugh on us. After all, they were the dominant life-form on the planet for 145 million years. Man has been around for only three million.

ELEGY

To that deep sleep let her go gently now.

The loving heart, the wit, the brilliant mind
Submit, relaxed, to Time's eternal power:

The trees are bare; what comfort do we find?

In love's enclave, from sorrow free, the light

Perpetual shines for her. This is the hour

Of loneliness, but love outlives the night.

To that safe sleep let her go gently now.

SYLVIA WINCKWORTH

WHAT IS HUMANISM?

RALPH CHAMPION

The author of this article describes himself as "an itinerant pamphleteer"; his interests vary from the sublime to the ridiculous, from Sir Karl Popper's philosophy to Barry McKenzie, the great Australian folk-hero. He has served on the committee of the New South Wales Humanist Society, and is at present secretary of the Sydney University Humanist Society (—Ralph Champion, not Barry McKenzie!).

What is humanism all about? What is this protean monster poised to engulf those hallowed institutions which have presided so benignly over the moral and spiritual affairs of the western world ever since Constantine saw the light and let the Christians come out of the sewers and catacombs so that they could get into education and real estate? Bertrand Russell described Nicholas V as the first humanist Pope because he gave papal offices to scholars whose learning he respected regardless of other considerations. He might have been the last humanist Pope because things have changed since then—could you imagine Bertie in papal office?

In the last two hundred years there has been a rise of organised humanism, notably the French, American and Russian revolutions.

But what does humanism mean?

The Marxist humanist thinks Marx was a great guy, although he is a bit upset by Stalin so he often retreats into the incoherence of the Young Marx which protects him from the people who attack Marx's method and unkindly point out that his predictions were wrong.

The existentialist humanist is very upset because God does not exist. He is prone to nausea and verbal diarrhoea. He shows incredible skill in making fairly straightforward propositions sound complicated. He loves impossible choices because they make him despair even more.

The scientific humanist usually believes in determinism, the materialist theory of mind, the justification of belief by probability and in the inductive scientific method which will increase our understanding of the world and sweep away ancient prejudice. If he is an evolutionary scientific humanist he will also hope that progress is inevitable and he will be very worried about Freud and Ardrey.

The cultural humanist believes in good table manners and the value of a traditional literary culture which he keeps alive amidst the ever-accelerating decline of civilisation which is caused by the stupidity of the masses on one hand and the crass materialism of the scientists on the other.

The new humanist is very like the cultural humanist except that he thinks that the human race is justified by the occasional new humanist that it throws up.

The rationalist keeps alive the declining tradition of Bible studies as he lists inconsistencies in Christian doctrine and repeatedly proves that God does not exist.

The secular humanist, secularist or freethinker may be seen making his way along the Holloway Road clad in stovepipe hat and frock coat. He is very upset by the effect of carbon monoxide and petrol additives on his aspidistra and he hopefully anticipates ecological doomsday which he thinks will mean the return of gaslights, horsedrawn carriages, and decent train and postal services.

The Christian humanist is a bit like the man on the flying trapeze. It is fun to watch him doing his stunts but where does it get him? Teilhard de Chardin is a striking

example. His main achievement was to lower even further the standard of rationality of debate in progressive Christian circles.

So much for the variations that can be rung on the theme of humanism. But having abused everyone else, where do I stand myself? And what does humanism mean in practice?

Liberation by enlightenment

I will attempt to explain briefly my own position with regard to knowledge, action and values. I believe in liberation by enlightenment, so that as our knowledge grows we may be freed from some of our ills. We have to a large extent been freed from disease and pestilence, so we may be freed from hunger and perhaps we may be saved from a great deal of neurosis. The growth of knowledge requires the cultivation of reason and criticism, so we should listen to other people's criticism in case we can learn something from them. Reason is sometimes blamed for our problems but we can be sure that even if reason will not by itself solve all our problems, none will be solved without it.

We are not liberated by knowledge or reason alone. We are liberated by actions based upon our knowledge and guided by our values. Thus we need principles which can be used to regulate our activities and evaluate their consequences. As I have repeatedly suggested, our principles might well be: the minimisation of suffering, the avoidance of tyranny and the promotion of tolerance. Our activities will be partly concerned with the criticism or replacement of institutions and traditions, and partly with changing people's attitudes and behaviour. The end result of our actions must be measured in terms of their effects upon individual people and so we should attempt to understand the function of institutions before we replace them, even though it may seem to us that they are totally destructive.

In practice, humanism for me means trying to be clear about the problems that I am working at, trying to make clear the assumptions that I am using all the time, and trying to learn from my own mistakes and the mistakes of other people in the past.

NINETY YEARS AGO

The religious bodies of Aberdeen apparently think that if cleanliness is next to godliness it may be kept at a respectable distance. They have memorialised the Aberdeen Town Council to prohibit bathing in the Dee on Sunday as a practice "highly offensive and detrimental to good morals." What reasons can exist against the Sunday bathing which will not apply to every other day of the week we cannot imagine, unless the service of the Lord is best performed with a dirty skin.

On Wednesday St. James's Hall was crowded in every part by a meeting which was held to protest against the Blasphemy Laws and to agitate for the release of Messrs. Foote and Ramsey. The Rev. William Sharman (of Plymouth) occupied the chair, and there were present the Rev. E. M. Geldart, the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, Mr. Bradlaugh, Dr. Edward Aveling, Mrs. Besant, Mr. Moncure D. Conway, Mr. Joseph Symes, and Mr. H. Burrows. . . . The Rev. Mr. GELDART [a Unitarian minister] . . . moved, "That this meeting demands the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, as contrary to the spirit of the age, and as endangering that freedom of speech which is a condition of all progress." . . . The resolution was . . . carried with great applause, there being only two dissentients.

—From *The Freethinker* of 15 and 22 July 1883.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE AND "THE INSURRECTION": A STUDY OF MARK'S NARRATIVE

G. A. WELLS

G. A. Wells is Professor of German at Birkbeck College, London, and has made a detailed study of early Christian and New Testament origins, giving particular attention to earlier work in this field by German scholars. He is the author of The Jesus of the Early Christians and The Origins of Christianity from the Pagan and Jewish Backgrounds.

When, in the early second century, Christians began to believe that Jesus had suffered under Pilate, it is intelligible enough that some of them should also have supposed that Pilate had executed him as a political rebel. There is thus no difficulty in accounting for the origin of such traditions, and even for their partial survival in the gospels, although I argued in a previous article that the evidence often adduced to show that certain gospel incidents are to be interpreted as such survivals is far from convincing. I also mentioned obvious difficulties against the supposition that an historical Jesus was actually executed as a rebel; if such an episode as the cleansing of the temple was not a religious act (as the gospels allege) but an armed attempt to capture the building and to precipitate a general insurrection, then why does Josephus say nothing of it? As the Strassbourg theologian Professor Trocmé has observed, a military attack on the temple would not have been ignored by this writer who was so concerned to show the dangers of revolt and of violence.¹

The late Professor Brandon held that the temple "cleansing" was a revolutionary act, and the direct cause of Jesus' arrest.² Mark's version of the incident runs (11 : 15-18):

And they came to Jerusalem: and he entered into the temple and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers. And the chief priests and the scribes heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, for all the multitude was astonished at his teaching.

The temple sacrifices were of sheep or (in the case of poorer Jews) doves. Pilgrims purchased them in the temple forecourt instead of bringing them to Jerusalem, for if the animals were injured in transit, the priests would reject them as unfit for sacrifice. Hence the presence of "them that sold and them that bought in the temple". Money changers had also to be there, since it was not permitted to pay the temple tax in pagan coins: these had to be exchanged for coins minted in Tyre (regarded as the best approximation to Jewish currency in a Judaea which, under Roman rule, was not allowed its own mint). Commentators agree that the sale of animals and the exchange of money were "unobjectionable institutions",³ and that it is extraordinary that Jesus should condemn them as "robbery". Furthermore, the Old Testament quotations on which this condemnation is based do not support it.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 56 : 7 as if it meant that the temple should properly be a place of prayer, not of sacrifice; and that the concomitants of sacrifice (sale of animals and exchange of money) have made it a den of robbers. But what Isaiah in fact says is that foreigners who have adopted the Jewish faith may, with Jews, offer sacrifice in the temple to Yahweh, who here declares: "Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine

altar." It is in the light of these words that the following ones (which Jesus quotes) must be understood: "For mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples."

Just as little to the point is Jesus' reference to Jeremiah 7 : 11. What is there said is that Jews who commit robbery and other crimes must not think that they will be safe from Yahweh's wrath merely because they come and stand before him in his temple: if they do, they are making the temple a den of robbers. Mark, then, is using Old Testament passages in a sense they will not bear. Either the episode is historical—that is, Jesus distorted scripture in the interests of his own polemic—or a Christian community, accepting a tradition that he had proceeded in some way against the temple, tried to find scriptural justification for his behaviour and, in the usual manner, paid but scant attention to the real meaning of the biblical passages resorted to.

Historical difficulties

Commentators readily concede that, as history, the story is "not without its difficulties".⁴ For instance, how could Jesus—single-handed according to Mark—have driven out both buyers and sellers and have controlled the whole floor space ("He would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple")? Professor Nineham notes that "St. Mark probably thought of Jesus as exercising the supernatural power which would naturally belong to 'the Lord' when 'he suddenly comes to his temple'." Quite so. The difficulty of understanding how Jesus, unaided, could have done what Mark reports, did not exist for an evangelist who saw his behaviour as "fulfilment" of Malachi 3 : 1, Zechariah 14 : 21, or Hosea 9 : 15. Nineham summarises: "The story correspondes very closely to Old Testament prophecies, and some critics have traced its whole origin to them".

Commentators who try to discern some historical incident underlying it have to suppose that Jesus did not act alone, but was aided by a crowd of supporters. But this supposition raises its own difficulties. Why did the temple police not intervene? (Brandon answers: they probably did, but the record has been "carefully edited" so as to suppress the fact.) Why was there no reaction from the Roman garrison occupying quarters overlooking the temple, and strengthened at the time of Passover to deal with rioting? (Brandon calls this Roman inaction "curious".) Why was the whole matter not mentioned at Jesus' trial? To this Brandon supplies a complicated and ingenious answer, based on Mark's statement that "false witnesses" accused Jesus, at his trial, of having threatened to destroy the temple:

And there stood up certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands (14 : 57-8).

This passage is an incident in the wider context (14 : 55-65) of Jesus' unanimous condemnation by the Sanhedrin for blasphemy. Some theologians regard this nocturnal Sanhedrin trial (absent from Luke and John) as "a report inserted by the evangelist himself, without recourse to any received tradition".⁵ Whether this is so or not, Jesus' reference to "three days" does not inspire confidence in

the historicity of the logion, and suggests that it was concocted by someone familiar with the tradition of the resurrection. It is a floating logion (set in other contexts by other evangelists), and is clearly Messianic; the renewal of the Jerusalem temple is the sign of the Messianic age (Ezekiel 40-48). Mark has adapted this idea to Christian use by making the renewed temple signify the resurrected Jesus. At the same time he cannot represent the words as genuinely spoken by Jesus, but only as a Jewish calumny; for if Jesus had really threatened to destroy the temple, the Jews' condemnation of him would not have been the monstrous crime which Mark represents it to be.

Brandon's interpretation of the narrative is that Mark took it from a document composed by the original Jerusalem Christians who were anxious to persuade the Jews that Jesus had never threatened the temple, and who to this end put out a version of his trial in which the accusation that he had made such a threat was clearly repudiated as "false witness". Brandon further infers that, if the early Jerusalem Christians had to rebut such a charge, the historical Jesus must have said or done something which occasioned it; and that this something was in fact his "revolutionary act" in attacking the temple trading system—an attack which "was achieved by the aid of an excited crowd of his supporters and was attended by violence and pillage", and which led to his arrest.⁶ Brandon thus posits (i) a revolutionary Jesus and (ii) Jerusalem Christians who gloried in his nationalist behaviour, but were embarrassed by his attack on the temple, and who therefore set about to convince Jews, some of whom must have witnessed or heard of his revolutionary act, that he had never committed it. On this view, the truth must be reached by correcting not only Mark, but also Mark's hypothetical Jerusalem source.

Only hearsay?

Even if Mark wrote as early as A.D. 70 about a Jesus who had in fact been crucified about A.D. 30, his gospel represents a redaction of oral and written tradition which had accumulated during a period of forty years. As H. V. Bearman has pertinently asked,⁷ what kind of accuracy can be expected of such a document or of such underlying material? According to Mark himself, Jesus' disciples forsook him and fled at his arrest, and so Christian knowledge of his trial could be nothing but hearsay. Can we really presume to correct not merely Mark, but the scraps of material on which he drew?

Brandon's use of Mark 15:6-7 well illustrates how he seizes on any scrap which seems to betray that Jesus existed, although not as the person the evangelist alleges him to be:

Now at the feast he [Pilate] used to release unto them one prisoner, whom they asked of him. And there was one called Barabbas, lying bound with them that had made insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder . . . And Pilate, wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus . . . to be crucified.

Mark does not explain what "insurrection" he has in mind. Brandon takes the passage as evidence that, at the time when Jesus led an attack on the temple, a Zealot insurrection occurred; that both attacks failed, so that Jesus was crucified by the Romans for sedition with two Zealot conspirators at his side.

Now Mark's account does not stand much scrutiny. Pilate leaves the Jews free to choose between Jesus and Barabbas, even though the high priests have brought a

heavy charge against Jesus, who himself has not denied Pilate's imputation that he is "king of the Jews". Mark may well have utilised a tradition about a zealot named Barabbas who had been involved in an uprising and pardoned, and this tradition may even have been true. But Mark's use of it—his linking it with Jesus—is visibly guided by the desire to burden the Jews (particularly the high priests) with responsibility for Jesus' death. To that end they are represented as urging Pilate to set a murderer free, and to have the true saviour executed.

In sum, there is no need to take the reference to insurrection and murder as Mark's unwitting betrayal of a tense political atmosphere. The story can be understood as deliberately introduced by him for the purpose of establishing a theological tenet.

NOTES

- ¹ TROCME, E. 1968/69. "L'expulsion des marchands du temple." *New Testament Studies*, vol. 15: p. 16.
- ² BRANDON, S. G. F. 1967. *Jesus and the Zealots*: p. 331 ff.
- ³ HARVEY, A. E. 1970. *The New English Bible Companion to the New Testament*: p. 173.
- ⁴ NINEHAM, D. E. 1972. *The Gospel of St. Mark*: p. 301.
- ⁵ BURKILL, T. A. 1970. "The Condemnation of Jesus." *Novum Testamentum*, vol. 12: p. 334 and refs.
- ⁶ BRANDON, *op. cit.*: pp. 332-335.
- ⁷ "Scholarly Myopia." *Modern Churchman* vol. 14 (1971): p. 276.

OBITUARY

Edward Price

We regret to announce the death on 3 June last of Mr. Edward Price. He was 89.

Edward Price was brought up in Wales where, at the early age of 12, he became a miner. He later abandoned this occupation, and then for many years ran a small-holding until his retirement, when he came to London to live at the Humanist Housing Association's Burnet House.

In London, Mr. Price involved himself in the cause of freethought: at one time he used to help dispatch *The Freethinker*, and in later years would help Mr. and Mrs. Len Ebury sell the paper at outdoor meetings in Hyde Park or at Whitestone Pond, Hampstead. He will be particularly remembered for his great sense of humour, a love of natural history, and his championing of his heroes, "the two Charlies"—Bradlaugh and Darwin.

The secular committal ceremony was carried out at Golders Green Crematorium on 8 June by Mr. William McIlroy. Organisations represented there included the Humanist Housing Association (Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay Burnet and Miss Rose Bush), the London Secular Group (Mr. and Mrs. Ebury and Mr. George Miller), the National Secular Society (Mr. McIlroy) and the Rationalist Press Association (Mrs. Ruby Siebert).

FREETHINKER FUND

We are most grateful to those readers who kindly contributed to the Freethinker Fund during June.

Our thanks to: Anonymous (£5), Charles Byass (50p), W. Gerard (64p), Professor L. B. Halstead (£2), E. C. Hughes (45p), R. T. Lawley (£4), David J. M. Leyhan (£1), and Derek Parker (£1). Total for June: £14.59.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

CHRISTIANITY ON TRIAL Book One: **How Can We Know If Christianity Is True?** by Colin Chapman. Lion Publishing, 75p.

This is the first of three books to be published under the general heading of *Christianity on Trial*, designed both for educational course use and individual study. While Christianity certainly has a lot to answer for, it is not that kind of trial which is meant; the sub-title of this volume is: "How can we know if Christianity is true?" The author's method of dealing with the question is to set down the opinions of a number of prominent people, some for Christianity and others mildly against, together with the views of various theologians and philosophers. Students are supposed to make individual assessments of this mass of subjective material and opt for one of two given frames of mind, according to which one or other of the remaining books in the series is recommended for further study. It is not thought that any will reject religion outright at this stage.

An Anglican minister, Mr. Chapman makes no pretence of impartiality, his personal commitment to Christianity giving his book a decided bias in that direction. One gathers that truth is to be understood as largely pragmatism—Christianity is true if it provides satisfying answers to the mysteries of the universe. This is not to say that the importance of historical truth has not been recognised. Mr. Chapman's short way with doubts and difficulties is to inform his readers that the events recorded in both Testaments were confirmed, or could have been, by the people who were living at the time! Mind you, he has to admit that "We are no longer in a position to carry out precisely the same tests that people involved in the biblical events were able to carry out." But at any rate there are "very good historical reasons" for believing that Jesus rose from the dead, though we shall have to wait for them until the third volume appears. In the meantime veteran secularists may care to ponder on one of the author's quotations from C. S. Lewis:

Early in 1926 the hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good. 'Rum thing,' he went on. 'All that stuff of Frazer's about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once!'

Now who on earth could that have been?

R. J. CONDON

THE DIVINE IMAGE: Religious Humanism from Homer to Hammarskjöld by John McLachlan. Lindsey Press, 45p.

Whether in political or philosophical manoeuvring the Church always tries to have it both ways. These six lectures on the development of *Christian humanism* (compare title) apply the same technique to history. The problem Dr. McLachlan faces is what, while Christianity's transcendentalism is assured, its humanism is problematical. To make his point it is necessary for him to hold with Edward Caird that Christianity "went astray" as early as the teaching of Paul, the earliest extant Christian teaching. He

admits that the continuous tradition, from Paul through Augustine and Luther, of man's utter depravity "lacerated human nature", yet he sets out to show that Christianity was really Christian humanism all along.

The Old Testament prophets are claimed for humanism because they express "disgust at any form of religion that tends to emphasise the cultus or promote religious formalism". Yet, the Law, which does this *par excellence*, is held to be humanistic because it attempts to regulate the minutiae of *human* conduct. He apologises for the barbarity and immorality of much of the Old Testament, and notes a marked development in a humanist direction when Judaism became intermingled with Hellenism; but fails to draw the obvious conclusion. Although discounting a unique divine incarnation in Jesus and commending the way he is supposed to have challenged accepted views, he proceeds to set him up as archetypal. (He seems to accept the New Testament narrative as a reliable record of the actual words spoken by Jesus, but there is no attempt to explain the humanism of "generation of vipers" and "everlasting punishment".) He claims that Jesus' "attitude to women and children completely changed the social code . . . though [he confesses] it has not wholly thrown off the traditional Jewish bias against women." No such bias existed among the upper classes in the Graeco-Roman world, but, as Dr. McLachlan himself admits, he does not do justice to the classical background of Western humanism.

It appears that with the lone exceptions of John Scotus Erigena and Francis of Assisi Christian humanism disappears for the next millenium or so, until it re-emerges during the Renaissance as more and more classical works became available. For example, as Dr. McLachlan says, Erasmus's *Enchiridion* owes more to Epictetus than to Paul. After discussing the religious movements of the seventeenth century, of which he has made a special study in connection with the origins of Unitarianism, he comes up against the eighteenth century and the *philosophes*. His attitude seems to be that they may not have done much for religion, but—never mind—they were certainly humanists, and therefore all grist to the Christian humanist mill. Thomas Paine and William Johnson Fox are also given prominence, but who are their inheritors today?

Secular humanism is mentioned several times in the book, only to be confused with a voracious scientific utopianism. Yet, he (with Jesus) believes in the *infinite* possibilities of human personality, capable of closely approaching, if not achieving, moral *perfection*. Surely, Christian utopianism is no more productive than any other kind.

This book will make very cosy reading among liberal Christians. Dr. McLachlan holds certain views and attempts to authenticate them by distilling what he can from the cesspool of Christian history, and with a large dash of special pleading calls it a "stream of undogmatic Christianity, which has not received the attention it deserves". Any wonder?

C. J. MOREY

CRIME OR DISEASE? by Antony Flew. Macmillan, £2.20.

It has long been almost an axiom among progressive thinkers that many so-called criminals and moral deviants are really mentally ill people who require psychiatric help and treatment rather than punishment. In this stimulating book, Professor Flew (who is, of course, no stranger to

Freethinker readers) seeks to show that this attitude can constitute a grave threat to man's dignity and responsibility, since "it treats him as a thing to be shaped at the psychiatrist's will, not as a person with the capability and rights to make decisions for himself". The psychiatrist too often behaves like one of Plato's Guardians or Orwell's Big Brother, informing people they are mentally sick, and then forcibly trying to cure them. As Professor Flew points out, in the case of a physical disease it is usually the sufferer who voluntarily approaches his doctor, but in the case of a so-called mental disease it is frequently the other way round.

Clearly, the extent to which a man can be held to be responsible for his actions depends upon how much free-will he possesses, and Professor Flew discusses the age-old problem with his usual skill and thoroughness. He makes a useful distinction between what he calls respectively "movings" and "motions", the former being actions controlled by the will, and the latter being either completely involuntary, or inflicted by violence on the subject. As the Professor acknowledges, "freewill" in the philosophically libertarian sense of totally uncaused behaviour is a non-sense.

The expression 'of my own freewill' refers to the absence not of causes, but of compulsion . . . that I voted, or married, freely and not under compulsion does not show I did not do the one because I wanted to keep the other lot out, or the other because I wanted to be married to this one.

Yet even when we are in a "compulsive" situation we still have a choice in the sense that we can refuse to do what we are ordered to, although our refusal may result in our death.

Professor Flew gives examples of three types of moral deviant who, he claims, are not suffering from any form of mental illness: homosexuals, malingerers and psychopaths. While I think he puts up a good case regarding the first two, I am not so sure about the third. As we have seen, the Professor holds as a paradigm that sufferers from a genuine disease always know they are ill and wish to be cured, but, he argues, this does not apply to psychopaths and therefore they are not mentally ill. But is the paradigm valid? Alcoholism is a form of psychopathy, and yet as a recovered alcoholic myself, I can testify that for years I refused to admit I was ill, and had I not finally been more or less forcibly hospitalised and given psychiatric treatment, I would probably not be alive today.

However, even if we accept that such psychopaths as liars and swindlers are bad rather than mad, it does not follow that they should be committed to prison instead of a mental institution. Professor Flew states dogmatically that "the prime and proper function of a penal system is neither particularly to reform offenders nor to deter them from recidivism. It is generally to prevent offences". This is by no means self-evident, and indeed if a penal system results in persistent recidivism (as ours undoubtedly does) it is surely an abysmal failure. However, even if we agree with Professor Flew that "a penal system's most vital and fundamental task is maintaining by its silent presence the general framework of law and order", the threat of confinement in a mental hospital would perform this task much more efficiently than imprisonment. For, as Professor Flew himself stresses during an interesting discussion of Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, most people would infinitely prefer to be imprisoned than "certified". And certainly psychiatric treatment could have no worse effect on the criminal than the present method of allowing him to rot in our insanitary and grossly overcrowded gaols.

In spite of these criticisms, I thoroughly recommend *Crime or Disease?* Professor Flew writes with a dry wit, though occasionally he is unnecessarily obscure, and he displays an over-fondness for double negatives. There is an adequate bibliography, but an index of subjects as well as names would have been useful.

JOHN L. BROOM

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MONIST VIEW OF HISTORY by G. Plekhanov ('N. Beltov'). Progress Publishers/Lawrence & Wishart, £1.25.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was the end result of long revolutionary activity that extended to both the practical and theoretical spheres. Not only did a whole sequence of revolutionaries agitate and plot against the Russian monarchy and its still semi-feudal social system, from the Decembrists of 1825 up to Lenin and his Bolshevik Party (founded in London in 1903); but concurrently, a whole series of revolutionary thinkers and scholars demolished the intellectual basis of the Tsarist social order. The intellectual tradition of Marxism was always respected by the Bolsheviks, and the final form taken by the Russian Revolution in 1917 was itself highly theoretical. Lenin was an eminent Marxist scholar, the author of the classic comment that, "Without a viable socialist theory, a viable socialist practice is ultimately impossible".

Persuant upon this dictum, Lenin manifested a high regard for his intellectual predecessors in the Russian socialist movement, in particular for George Plekhanov (1856-1918), who may perhaps be called the pioneer Russian Marxist. During the formative generation that preceded the First World War, Plekhanov's theoretical work gave an impressive intellectual foundation to Russian Marxism and won for its author an international reputation comparable to that of the then leading exponents of European socialism such as Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg. Like his Western colleagues Plekhanov eventually adopted a critical attitude towards Bolshevism and opposed Lenin's conception of the monolithic one-party state. However, this in no way affected the value of his brilliant contributions to Marxist theory in the eyes of his Bolshevik critics. While they might deplore Plekhanov's practical deviations, Lenin and the Bolsheviks continued, right down to the Revolution, to regard Plekhanov as the authentic master in Marxist theory. Lenin himself pronounced this valedictory comment upon Plekhanov: "You cannot hope to become a real, intelligent Communist without making a study, and I mean a study, of all of Plekhanov's philosophical writings because nothing better has been written on Marxism anywhere in the world."

Following this spectacular testimonial the Russian state publishing institution have produced international editions of Plekhanov's theoretical works. His pioneer classic, *The Role of the Individual in History*, is already widely read in cosmopolitan editions. It is now joined by a more general survey of Marxist historiography, entitled *The Development of the Monist View of History*, appropriately prefaced by Lenin's valediction quoted above. Under this rather formidable title our Marxist author surveys the various theories of the historic process advanced by both earlier and contemporary scholars, and contraposes them in masterly fashion to the Marxist 'monist view of history'. The book also surveys earlier controversies in which Plekhanov took part. The 'Great Man' interpretation of history, advanced by Thomas Carlyle in his well-known book, *Heroes and Hero Worship*, probably represents the extreme antithesis to Marxist historical theory.

By and large, one could describe as the initial protagonist of the monist view of history that unknown genius who went on record with the historic comment, "*Primum vivere, deinde philosophari*" (First keep alive, and then philosophise). Plekhanov pointed out in impressive detail the complex truths that lie behind this simple statement: for first, life must continue before any further deeds can be accomplished. To think, or to act, one must first keep alive! If the struggle for life, "bare existence", absorbed all human time and energy, civilisation could never have appeared. All higher cultural activities, the entire 'superstructure' of human society stemmed from this obvious fact. Human culture is exclusively the creation of leisured classes or individuals. If, for example, Shakespeare had been, say, an Eskimo at the mercy of the Arctic blizzards, there would have been no Shakespearean drama! Individual genius presupposes suitable material conditions for its exercise.

Naturally, the relationship of the material basis of society with the various aspects of its superstructure often present complex problems. Man is the creation of circumstances; and civilisation, the social superstructure, the precise subject matter of universal history, begins when, and only when, the struggle for animal existence leaves off. All the individual genius and heroism in the world could not have created human society had the material conditions been as uniformly unfavourable as they are perhaps in other planets in the solar system.

Such, briefly, is the 'monist view of history' summarised and defended by Plekhanov with encyclopaedic knowledge and remarkable lucidity. Both on account of its outstanding merits and of the profound influence exercised by its author upon the creation of the first socialist State, this major contribution to the philosophy of history can be doubly recommended.

F. A. RIDLEY

THE FASCIST MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN by Robert Benewick. Allen Lane The Penguin Press, £1.60.

In this 'permissive' age many parts of the English language are bandied about in conversation and as forms of abuse that formerly held precise, even of obscene, meanings. 'Fascist' is one such word. The young demonstrators of today who yell "Fascist pigs!" at police and other opponents, misuse the term. Fascists were a small and notorious group in this country in the 1930s who derived from the authoritarian political creed founded by Mussolini in Italy in 1919. Their emblem, the fasces, a bundle of rods with a central axe, was a symbol of state power in ancient Rome. The uniting point between Fascist parties in Italy, Germany and Britain was anti-communism.

Strangely, both Communism and Fascism practised totalitarian power at the hand of a leader or dictator. Where they differed, until Communism in Russia lost effective interest in internationalism, was in their attitude to the nation-state. Fascists claimed to be patriots, Communists internationalists. But as an ordinary citizen it would be equally abhorrent to live under a régime ruled by either force. Both prohibited freedom of speech and action, both believed in central directives, and for different reasons both became anti-Semitic.

In Britain the Labour and Conservative parties found themselves in a similar position in the 1930s to the one they are in today: unloved and unable to remove apathy and economic stagnation. The Liberals were then still a party only recently in decline. This opened the way for

Sir Oswald Mosley—a power seeker. He had started his career as a Tory, later becoming a Labour M.P. and junior Minister. He became dissatisfied with slow progress, and in 1931 founded the New Party, which Joad, who was a member said, "had come into being not to introduce Utopia, but to prevent collapse". Mosley was also a powerful speaker; Randolph Churchill was to write of him in action at Leeds in 1934: "Sir Oswald's peroration was one of the most magnificent feats of oratory I have ever heard."

The New Party seemed to be the answer for an orthodox electorate. Mosley cashed in on this, but his enthusiasm was shortlived when it was diluted with ballot-box failures. Mosley encouraged a party of action and youth with "energy, vitality and manhood to save and rebuild the nation". When he was jeered at he commented: "That is the crowd that has prevented anyone doing anything in England since the war." This contempt for the masses was the essence of his Fascism.

This book describes three phases through which the British Union of Fascists passed. Until the General Strike in 1926 there were only militant anti-communists; afterwards they proposed positive political solutions through a corporate State; only later in the 1930s did they become truly Fascist on the Italian model. One of the B.U.F.'s forerunners, the British Brothers' League, was founded in East London in 1902 to oppose immigration from Eastern Europe; this meant in practice it was anti-Semitic. The classic *People of the Abyss*, by Jack London, describes these prejudices against Russian immigrants.

Initially B.U.F. policies were constructive, derived partly from Mosley's ideas when he was in the Labour and New parties. It was not until October 1932 that black shirts were worn as a political uniform by Fascists. Only in later days was anti-Semitism a political policy. By then Mosley had lost much 'respectable' support, and considered Fascism and National Socialism synonymous. But the roots of the British Fascist movement were to be found in, amongst others, the Boy Scouts, the Conservatives and various patriotic groups. After the infamous Olympia meeting of 7 June 1934, Baldwin said of Fascism, "It takes many of the tenets of our own party . . ."

Lord Rothermere used his *Daily Mail*, *Evening News*, *Sunday Dispatch* and *Sunday Pictorial* to promote Fascism from the beginning of 1934. But Rothermere was more interested in Conservatism, anti-communism and anti-socialism than Fascism. Of Mosley's meeting at the Albert Hall, the *Sunday Dispatch* wrote on 22 April 1934: "the sort of policy that the Conservative Party ought to stand for but does not owing to sentimental and weak-kneed leadership".

During another meeting at the Albert Hall in 1936, protest assemblies were prohibited for within half a mile of the hall, as violence had by this time come to be regularly associated with Fascist meetings, from anti-fascists. The N.C.C.L. observed police activities, and came to the conclusion that the police were far from impartial in favouring Fascism, and not its opponents. In fact, much of the violence at meetings commenced at the hands of B.U.F. stewards. I have been told by a contemporary supporter of Fascism that he was once arrested in company with Communists after a demonstration. The Fascists were let out at once, the Communists were charged. Harold Laski also wrote of injustices by the police he had witnessed at Tonypany. We learn in this book of a Fascist meeting at Oxford in 1936, where Lord Longford "was roughly handled"; he seems less inclined to oppose the forces of repression today! The tendency for police to

curtail protest demonstrations was resisted in the 1930s, but the author warns against encroachments on civil liberties by the police, which he thinks greater today.

The uniting of anti-Semitic groups with the anti-communists did not occur until Mosley founded the B.U.F. following Mussolini's success in Italy. There was a latent anti-Semitism in East London stemming from immigration there during the first decade of this century. 'Jewry, sedition and socialist malpractice' were linked in various ways. A Fascist speaker called Jews "venereal-ridden vagrants who spread disease to every corner of the earth", and the *Morning Post* described Communists as "germ-carriers of the revolution". Obviously Fascists and Tories alike regarded themselves as political disinfectants!

Rothermere's *Daily Mail* gave some support to Mosley's form of anti-Semitism: "The Jews do not dominate certain professions in Britain as they do in Germany". The implication is clear, and in 1939, although Rothermere had long withdrawn from the B.U.F., he wrote that the Jews had emerged stronger at the expense of the "native race" in some European countries.

The B.U.F. considered Russia a state controlled by Jews, and was therefore overwhelmed in its decline with the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939. This was the final kiss of death to the British Fascist movement. But Mosley and other prominent members were interned in the war, only to be later released; as an act of clemency, or an admission of their ineffectiveness?

Benewick's interesting history of British Fascism is well documented, and warns that we need not think ourselves immune from similar dark forces in the 1970s. I counted at least 969 references, mostly from contemporary newspapers and magazines; this gives the appearance, in parts, of a work put together in the disjointed but honourable 'scissors and paste' tradition.

DENIS COBELL

TO TAKE ARMS: a Year in the Provisional I.R.A.
by Maria McGuire. Macmillan, £1.95.

The sea of troubles in Ireland, to continue Maria McGuire's Shakespearean metaphor, naturally looks different according to whether the observer is in the Six Counties or the Twenty-Six, is Protestant or Catholic. Till I read Miss McGuire's narrative, however, I was under the impression that all Irish people, whatever their situation or political/religious persuasion, knew all about Irish politics from birth upwards and could tell the difference between the Officials and the Provisionals as easily as between the I.R.A. and the U.D.A.

It is refreshing to learn that this is not always so, that Irish politics confuse Irish people almost as much as they do foreigners like myself, some of whose ancestors were not guiltless of causing the original confusion in the seventeenth century. A non-practising Catholic in Dublin, Maria McGuire decided to join the I.R.A., but neither she nor her parents knew who the Provisional I.R.A. were or what the precise difference was between them and the Officials. She learnt by trial and error, threw in her lot with the Provisionals, took part in 1971 in a somewhat bizarre attempt to smuggle arms from Amsterdam, quarrelled more and more with Seán Mac Stiofáin about the increasingly violent methods used in the North, and eventually left the I.R.A. and Ireland altogether, publishing in the *London Observer* an account of her experiences and the reasons for her "defection".

Whether the inverted commas are justified is a matter of opinion. Personally, I see no reason to doubt her statement that her "attitude towards the aims of the Provisional I.R.A. has not changed. But I no longer consider that its methods are justified." As violence has bred violence between the writing of this book and its publication, the validity of the distinction she makes has increased.

She wants a united Ireland—but not at any price. She welcomed the truce between Whitelaw and the I.R.A. and was distressed when what she rightly calls "mindless, senseless killing" caused its collapse. Though no one would want to minimise the complexities of the situation, nor to exaggerate the importance of either the Provisionals themselves or any defection from their ranks, one is bound to recognise that it took some guts, both to join the I.R.A. in the first place from Miss McGuire's comfortable middle-class background, and then to leave it when violence escalated and ruthless men took over from the comparatively moderate. A brave book on the whole, whose final sensible chapters make up for the false heroics of some of the early ones.

R. C. CHURCHILL

BERNARD SHAW: Collected Letters 1898-1910
edited by Dan H. Laurence. Max Reinhardt, £6.

Professor Laurence has devoted himself wholtime to the task of collecting, collating and editing Shaw's letters. This is the second volume, edited with all the precision and scholarship that marked the first: the most obscure works and individuals have been resurrected in order that Shaw's voice may come through the clearer.

The twelve years which this volume covers see Shaw the man of success but still devoted to many activities which he later gave up: letters to Wells and Webb form interesting accounts of the internal squabbles, strengths and tasks of the Fabian Society. There is also the work in local government, where Shaw apparently pioneered women's public conveniences! And while this is also the volume of the first years of married life, Mrs. G.B.S. plays no great rôle in the letters; she is always in the background. But they are Shaw's letters and it is he who dominates the whole work. There is Shaw and G.B.S.: the "monster" (as he once called it) that he created for public consumption and the infinitely kind, charming, courteous, thoughtful, helpful individual. This volume also encompasses the early English and foreign success of Shaw but his character, as far as we can judge from these letters, does not seem to have been greatly altered by it; there were still the complaints about money, although he had married "my green-eyed Irish millionairess".

When a publisher approached Shaw shortly before his death with the idea of an edition of the letters, Shaw wrote back: "Put it out of your head; there are billions of them." Professor Laurence puts the number at something like a quarter of a million, and this more than nine-hundred-page volume contains three-quarters that have been hitherto unpublished. No one reading them will doubt their enormous value in telling us something of Shaw—though the man's revelations are rare if not non-existent—and certain of them to Archibald Henderson, his biographer, are valuable biographical material. Few will be unsatisfied by them for there is something here for everyone: the keen theatregoer can have insights into Shaw's dealings with his actors and actresses, as well as his ideas on stagecraft and playwriting, while the merely curious can browse; devoted Shavians become yet more devoted.

while students of morals, politics, art and thought can have personal insights into the development of those movements in the early years of the century. It is more than the feast that one reviewer has suggested, it is a glorious banquet.

TERRY PHILPOT

THE LIFE TO COME; and other stories by E. M. Forster. Edward Arnold, £2.50.

Only two of this collection of fourteen short stories have previously been published and they now form the first volume in the projected complete edition of E. M. Forster's works, to be called the Abinger Edition and edited by Oliver Stallybrass. There are probably two reasons for their failure to be published during his lifetime: his doubts about their quality, and the overtly homosexual theme of some of them—a theme which he was too reticent to display during his own lifetime.

These stories, spanning his life, seem to me of uneven quality and in places a little dated. This is the world of 'cads' and 'silly asses' and "'Pon my honour!"—a genteel world occasionally drifting into the "corners of the unknown" or brought into contact with tough, idealised working-class men. The stories divide roughly into those where the supernatural hovers beneath the surface and those where homosexual fantasies dominate. At times these two aspects overlap, as in *Albergo Empedocles*, a story in which a young man visiting a Greek temple in Italy seems to have leapt two thousand years and become the lover of men that he had once been in a previous life. Here are both the fascination for Greek and Italian culture, seen in some of Forster's major novels and also admiration for male strength and vitality. Forster speaks of the need for a "physical and intellectual centre", a balance which few of his characters achieve. Some of the stories where the borders of the supernatural are approached seem to be whimsical, almost fey, and lack the power of his well known *Story of a Panic*.

The stories where homosexuality plays an important part often seem to be very close to crude fantasy and frequently display a gratuitous violence. Yet they do instance a typical polarity between the mind and the body, between the arid world of books and the solid beauty of nature. As in his recently published novel *Maurice*, the improbable fantasy of a simple, understanding, virile, working-class young man recurs. "Our lower nature has its dreams," Forster writes, and he seems to indulge uncertainly in such dreams. In *Arthur Snatchfold* a man staying with boring friends in the country establishes a brief liaison with a milkman; and in the much more powerful story *The Other Boat* a British officer enjoys an affair with an Indian on a long boat journey. Neither of these relationships have much prospect of developing and it is perhaps this failure to see a homosexual relationship developing through the difficulties of a long period of time and yet surviving with honesty and intensity that brought about his failure to write another major novel after *A Passage to India*.

Yet his subtle irony is present throughout this collection and no more so than in the entertaining title story *The Life to Come*. A missionary has a brief sexual encounter with a tribal chief; fraught with guilt the missionary urges the chief to love only Jesus Christ. The chief quite misunderstanding the missionary's meaning converts his tribe and continues to love the missionary. The comedy achieves its ironic twist when the chief stabs the missionary in the hope of a more fruitful acquaintance in the after-life.

Subtle irony and perceptive comments on personal relationships abound, showing glimpses of the great novelist that Forster was. Perhaps what is most valuable in publishing these stories, whose intrinsic value is so variable, is the insight they give us into the preoccupations of Forster's major novel: the weight he places on the power of affection between men, in particular, as seen in the relationship between Fielding and Aziz in *A Passage to India*. The skill with which he delineates the minutiae of personal relationships is seen in passages such as the following from *Albergo Empedocles*:

Had she only realised that it is only hypocrites who cannot forgive hypocrisy, whereas those who search for the truth are too conscious of the maze to be hard on others—then the bitter flow of her thoughts might have been stopped and the catastrophe averted. But it was not conceivable to her that he should forgive—or that she should accept forgiveness, for to her forgiveness meant a triumph of one person over another.

Stories which achieve such delicately perceptive passages are certainly worth reading for, despite certain weaknesses in some of the stories, the humanity and humanism of a great writer shines through.

JIM HERRICK

BOOKLET

A WELSH HERETIC: Dr. William Price, Llantrisant by Islwyn ap Nicholas. Ffynnon Press*, 40p.

Dr. William Price was one of those fascinating old eccentrics who cropped up here and there to provide a leaven of colour and notoriety in the grey world of nineteenth-century bourgeois respectability. Starting life in a seemingly 'proper' profession, medicine, he ended up having to flee to France as a result of his involvement in the Chartist rebellion in Newport in 1839. In exile in Paris he came across a precious stone in the Louvre bearing a portrait of the "primitive bard addressing the moon" together with a number of indecipherable hieroglyphics. He eventually decided that the meaning of the inscription was that "he was the elected successor in office of the ancient Druids, and that a son would be born to him who would restore the Druidic system to its ancient glory".

Besides becoming a Druid, Price won notoriety, if not fame, for his advocacy of vegetarianism and nudism, and for his contempt for orthodox religion and the repressive social system of his day. He denounced the "pills and potions and poisons" of the medical profession, yet won quite a reputation as a nature-healer and surgeon. He befriended unmarried mothers and denounced the institution of marriage. But above all, he advocated the cremation of the dead!

In 1884 Price created a national uproar by attempting to cremate the body of his natural son, Iesu Grist. After a long legal battle he succeeded in carrying out the cremation, and to remind his irate neighbours of his triumph would also, from time to time, cremate some of his cattle. When he himself died in 1893 he was "consigned to the fire" with the elaborate ceremony that he had arranged previously.

During his lifetime, Dr. Price appealed for funds to build a public crematorium. This was unsuccessful, but as a result of the publicity surrounding his do-it-yourself efforts, the legal acceptance of cremation was markedly

* Ffynnonwen, Llangwryfon, Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, SY23 4EY.

hastened. Nowadays we have a network of crematoria throughout Britain, and more than half of disposals of the dead are by cremation. This very sensible change owes not a little to the moral courage and flair for publicity of what Islwyn ap Nicholas aptly terms this "turbulent, provocative old visionary".

NIGEL SINNOTT

THEATRE

NUTS: a Nightly Party given by Joan Littlewood.
Theatre Royal, Stratford.

The music hall songs blare in the bar before you enter the theatre. Once inside a sense of disorganisation and chaos is set up, which never quite leaves the theatre throughout the evening.

This is an attempt at community involvement which seems to me an insult to the community it is trying to involve. Interposed between songs and feeble comedy numbers are a few genuine pleas for community interests. A West Ham Trades Councillor explains why he is sitting on a commission, a dockworker launches at attack on Lord Vestey, a lady makes an appeal for support for the protest against a motorway to be bulldozed through Epping Forest. But what happens in between is so feeble and trite that one blushes to acknowledge that it takes place. Material is banal, performances are shaky, and the level of entertainment is abysmal. What has happened to the boisterous and incisive Joan Littlewood that we have known? It is to her shame that such material is offered to an audience—however unsophisticated it may be presumed to be.

Surely this is the wrong way to set about community involvement in the theatre. To take an eiderphone (video-tape) and use it for nothing in particular is merely a gimmick. To expect audiences to respond to lengthy sketches on the origin of braces is too much. If we want community involvement we must offer the very best, possibly taking a theme of local interest and making it into a riveting play, or simply putting on shows of a quality to which any community can be expected to respond. A saddening evening for the theatre.

JIM HERRICK

STRINDBERG by Friedrich Dürrenmatt. Hampstead Theatre Club.

In 1900 Strindberg wrote *The Dance of Death*, a grotesque study of a couple locked in matrimony. More recent plays, notably *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, present us with a similar ritual of recrimination, regret and cruelty. Now Dürrenmatt has reworked Strindberg's play to give us a stylised, witty, neatly choreographed entertainment.

The setting is one of those turn-of-the-century drawing rooms, as green as a stagnant aquarium. Sweetly taunting music from a neighbour's dance fills the room. The atmosphere of the period is evoked, and so are the dramatic conventions. We have the eternal triangle, completed by a prodigal cousin, who acts a catalyst and confessor. Skeletons rattle provocatively in cupboards, trump cards are played and bluffs called.

Yvonne Mitchell, bearing her teeth in a seductive smile, between bouts of theatrical self-pity, is a joy to watch. Patrick Allen, as her cousin and lover, is an excellent dancing partner, charming, bland and menacing. Freddie Jones is amusing as the pitiful, boorish husband; unfortunately he found his performance amusing too. Although I am aware that it is very difficult to keep a straight face while playing comic scenes, I could not help remembering—churlishly—Olivier's magnificent performance in *The Dance of Death* several years ago.

By the end of the evening I was wishing that the exquisite 'staginess' had been dropped momentarily so that the audience could be emotionally involved in what is, after all, a commonplace but very painful situation.

VERA LUSTIG

LETTERS

Censorship Again

It is often claimed by those advocating censorship of eroticism that the present upsurge of violence and crime is due to the wide dissemination of overt and salacious fictional material. I think this is the wrong way round. The widespread demand for violent and sensual displays are only a *symptom* of the wider release of violence and sensuality in our society, not the cause. If such fictional material *caused* depravity David Holbrook surely should by now be incontrovertible proof, long since overwhelmed by concupiscence and brutality. But he is not so, and has possibly even increased his disgust for both the fiction and the reality.

Nevertheless, this does not prove that good will come if salacious material is to be freely available. We are not all David Holbrooks and atheists/agnostics are foolish to assume that we are all spontaneously as rational, humane and high-minded as Mr. Holbrook must obviously be.

When society relinquishes God it must operate successfully without the Big Stick that evolution fashioned (the Big Stick of supernatural intervention—developed from the cruder herding instinct into organised religions), and for a godless society to have any great future, not just morality but also authority (and this includes censorship) will still be essential to keep order and peace.

The gains we make by supplanting the moral coercion of blind belief in God and immortality must not be offset by losing all of that unthinking obedience which is implicit in religion. This ability to show rigid partisan obedience to authority is essential in the organisation of large complex communities numbering human beings in their millions. I cannot help thinking that the much lauded Open Society is a very long way off, if attainable at all in practice. The Open Society is a sort of heaven of the Humanist movement—pie in the Humanist sky? ARTHUR E. MORRIS.

Freedom of Expression

Richard Handyside ("Censorship and Society", June *Freethinker*) is presumably not suggesting that writers and artists are a materially privileged class! There are, of course, exceptions to prove all general rules, but artists, in particular, are not renowned for their luxurious financial means.

As regards "inadequate education" leaving most ordinary people in this country inarticulate, is it not a vital condition of *adequate* education that the articulate should be heard without being censored "by the tiny minority who hold effective power in our society"?

Moreover, I would have thought that "freedom of expression for writers and artists" was one of the pre-conditions for that "radical change in society" which Mr. Handyside has in mind—and writes about.

CHARLES BYASS.

Marxism's Impatient Critics

In his article "Christ, Hegel, Marx and Lenin" Judex evidently wishes to harness these great names to his regurgitation of S. Feuer's pronouncement that Marxism-Leninism has become an "opium of the people". He 'learnedly' parades 14 references for

his numerous quotations, but as only three of these refer to his principals, the rest are not more than statements that at some time some person has said.

Judex should really study Marx. Marx, of course, did say in 1844 that the achievement of Communism would mean "the complete return of man to himself as a social being." But in 1875 he discussed in detail the stages in which this would come about, in the famous *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. He there distinguished the new society as it "emerges from capitalist society . . . tainted economically, morally and intellectually with the hereditary diseases of the old society"; and then, at a higher stage, when "labour has become not merely a means to live but is itself the first necessity of living, after the powers of production have also increased and all the springs of co-operative wealth are gushing more freely together with the all-round development of the individual"—then only—"society will inscribe on its banner: 'From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need.'" It is well known that no socialist society ("modern communism" in Judex's words) claims to have reached this stage yet, and therefore the 1844 words do not apply to Judex's "modern communism", but to the sort of society at which they are aiming.

For 55 years impatient critics have condemned the U.S.S.R. because it is not yet a state of society enjoying an Age of Plenty in which 'each receives according to his needs'. Okay, but read Marx and you will see that this was not yet to be expected given the economic resources available and the world situation in which vast reserves have had to be set aside for defence. PAT SLOAN.

"The Turban Saga"

For how long has *The Freethinker* been the champion of irrational religious dogmatism against commonsense legislation? To turn your own argument round: what would have been the reaction of *The Freethinker* if Christians had been exempted from the legislation on similar grounds?

Leaders of the Moslem community in Bradford are demanding of the Education Authority that Moslem girls should be allowed to go into *purdah*. It appears that they can expect the support of *The Freethinker* in overcoming the obstacle of the local authority's refusal.—A refusal that you, no doubt, will also describe as in "the hallowed British tradition of petty governmental stupidity"!

The Freethinker should fight dogmatism wherever it is found, including that of religious minorities. R. G. TEE.

The Editor replies:

It seems to me that there is a good deal of difference between an adult Sikh wanting to wear his turban and a Moslem (or anyone else) attempting to enforce the isolation of a child (that is, someone else) from society. To use an analogy: a conscientious atheist should surely have the right, on civil liberties grounds, to affirm in a court of law. I doubt whether he should have the right to compel his 12-year-old daughter to stay indoors in case she runs into a revival meeting on the street corner.

I agree that the wearing of turbans can be regarded as an instance of religious irrationalism, but that is not sufficient reason for making it illegal for 'consenting adults' (criticism is quite another matter).

It seems to me that unless we stand up for the right of minorities to exercise what is to them basic personal freedom, then our hand will be weakened when it comes to opposing unreasonable demands, such as *purdah*, or demands for state-maintained sectarian ghetto schools.

My reaction if bishops and cardinals had been allowed to wear mitres and birettas on motorcycles?—Sardonic amusement, probably.

Would You Believe It ?

Being an atheist I do not attend religious services except on occasions such as baptism, marriage or death when I wish to show friendship or respect for those concerned or their families.

I recently attended the funeral of a friend, who had not only risen to the top of his profession but who was admired and loved for his integrity, wisdom and charm by all who knew him. Imagine my astonishment when, in a prayer, we praised God fervently for having removed him from our midst. "We give thee hearty thanks," we said, "for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world." In the next breath we asked God to hasten the end of the world and the destruction of all of us. "Beseeching thee that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly . . . to hasten thy kingdom; that we . . . may have our perfect consummation."

A. A. H. DOUGLAS.

Chauvinistic Pigs

My reading of Chinese and Greek literature is insufficient and my knowledge of animal husbandry too imperfect to challenge your

esteemed President of the N.S.S. on the matter of the originality of the Old Testament god as the first "male chauvinist pig". I should have thought that rationality demanded this title to be given to the writer of that part of that fine educational document—Moses. However, when the good lady goes on to suggest that the god of Genesis is the god of Judaism, of Christianity and of Islam I fear she betrays a wealth of ignorance.

We are sometimes amused by the Russians, who, it is said, believe that England is very much as it was in Dickens's time. Miss Smoker's cradle religion taught for two millennia that Judaism was frozen in the pattern suggested by the New Testament writers. Both are false. Perhaps her cradle religion prevented her from reading the Book of Isaiah and her subsequent indoctrination with nineteenth-century prejudices—as perfected by Winwood Reade—has prevented her from any subsequent objective study of the idea of a unitary God.

It is interesting that *The Freethinker*, which denies the historicity of the Bible, nevertheless is advertising its Indian missionary document by W. Reade which does just that—treats the Bible as history (see June *Freethinker* and Reade's chapter on religion). Perhaps Miss Smoker might tell me a few of the names of women who have emerged from societies which are not of one of the three monotheistic faiths (two plus a benefit of the doubt). Did Greek humanism produce anyone earlier or to match Deborah, the prophetess and judge?

The writer or writers of the early chapters of Genesis reflected the fact that women—then as now—were getting the worse end of the human stick. If she reads on she will find that these first five books of the Bible also suggest duties of the husband towards his wife—including the duty to make love to her, whilst avoiding her during certain times of the month. Primitive, it is true, but where can one find a parallel which is contemporaneous or earlier? Did Jewry become a matriarchy because of, or despite Judaism? Reade too reflects the imperialism and racialism of his time and it is fitting that the body of people for whom *The Freethinker* is the representative organ should choose a half-educated chauvinistic (in its true sense) pig like Winwood Reade as its literary genius. Anyone who is mislead into thinking the N.S.S. radical or progressive is recommended to read his chapter on religion. One hopes that in a secular state such as India it might be banned. GERALD SAMUEL.

The Freethinker does not, in fact, have any official 'line' on the historicity of the Bible. Reade's Religion in History has been published by the Indian Secular Society, not by the N.S.S. (Ed.)



"—Seems there's something more than fish in this Iceland business, Henry."

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

In referring to the late earthquakes in Italy, the *Times* correspondent states that scores of victims were buried under the ruins of houses in Treviso and Belluno, and 36 bodies were found under the Church of Feletto alone . . . The Pope, however, has made a speech on the subject, exulting in this "judgment" on the revolutionists. "What shall we say," exclaimed his Holiness, "of this glorious display of God's justice?"

—From the *National Reformer*, 27 July 1873.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL (telephone: 01-272 1266). Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL.

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.

Humanist Counselling Service, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG; telephone 01-937 2341 (for confidential advice on your personal problems—whatever they are).

EVENTS

Humanist Holidays. 18 August—1 September: Summer Centre at Ilfracombe, N. Devon. Exclusive use of small hotel very near beach and hills. One family room still available both weeks, and a few doubles for second week only (good reductions for juniors). Details from Mrs. M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey; telephone 01-642 8796. (Freethinkers in the district welcome to visit party at the Albemarle Hotel, Arcade Road, Ilfracombe. Please notify in advance if possible.)

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8, Sunday, 15 July, 7.30 p.m.: MIKE ANDERSON, "What is News?" (Sunday, 29 July: ramble to Charles Darwin's House, Downe, Kent—for details ring 01-789 7176 or 01-579 4847).

Rationalist Press Association: 1973 Conference on "Manipulating Minds", Hulme Hall, University of Manchester, 17-19 August. Speakers include Dr. JAMES WRIGHT, Dr. CHRIS EVANS, JUDY LANNON, J. WALTER THOMPSON and Prof. PAUL HALMOS. (Coach from and back to London.) Details from R.P.A., 88 Islington High Street, London N1 8EW (telephone: 01-226 7251). *Bookings close 31 July.*

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 15 July, 11 a.m.: Prof. MEREDITH THIRING, "Ethics of an Equilibrium World." (Meetings recommence 7 October.)

Sutton Humanist Group, Friends' Meeting House, Cedar Road, Sutton. Thursday, 19 July, 7.30 p.m.: NIGEL SINNOTT, "Charles Bradlaugh and Ireland."

PUBLICATIONS

TITLE	AUTHOR	Price	Post
Against Censorship	N.C.C.L	25p	4p
The Origins of Christianity	G. A. Wells	20p	3p
The Case Against Church Schools	Patricia Knight	20p	4p
Broadcasting Brainwashing			
Conditioning	David Tribe	25p	4p
An Introduction to Secular Humanism	Kit Mouat	45p	3p
The Longford Threat to Freedom	Brigid Brophy	10p	3p
Nucleoethics: Ethics in Modern Society	David Tribe	£2.95	9p
Rebel Pity	Eddie & Win Roux	45p	7p
Club Life and Socialism in Mid-Victorian London	Stan Shipley	60p	9p
Boys and Sex	W. B. Pomeroy	25p	7p
Girls and Sex	W. B. Pomeroy	30p	7p
Life, Death and Immortality	P. B. Shelley and others	10p	3p
The Freethinker 1972 Bound Volume	Edited by Nigel Sinnott	£2.50	25p
Religion and Ethics in Schools	David Tribe	7½p	3p
Religious Education in State Schools	Brigid Brophy	12½p	3p
Ten Non Commandments	Ronald Fletcher	12½p	3p
The Cost of Church Schools	David Tribe	20p	3p
Humanism, Christianity and Sex	David Tribe	2½p	3p
Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare	David Tribe	10p	3p
The Nun Who Lived Again	Phyllis Graham	2½p	3p
The Secular Responsibility	Marghanita Laski	10p	3p
A Humanist Glossary	Robin Odell and Tom Barfield	20p	4p
Morality Without God	Chapman Cohen	3p	3p
Humanist Anthology	Margaret Knight	60p	9p
The Martyrdom of Man	Winwood Reade	60p	12p
Rome or Reason	R. G. Ingersoll	5p	4p
Materialism Restated	Chapman Cohen	25p	10p
Thomas Paine	Chapman Cohen	5p	4p
Religion and Human Rights	David Tribe	3p	3p
Comparative Religion	A. C. Bouquet	50p	8p
Objections to Christian Belief	Various	17½p	6½p
Objections to Humanism	Various	17½p	6½p
Rights of Man	Thomas Paine	35p	8p
The Dead Sea Scrolls	John Allegro	35p	8p
100 Years of Freethought	David Tribe	£2.50	14p
What Humanism is About	Kit Mouat	52½p	11½p
Impact of Science on Society	Bertrand Russell	60p	8p
Authority and the Individual	Bertrand Russell	35p	8p
Political Ideas	Bertrand Russell	30p	7p
The Conquest of Happiness	Bertrand Russell	60p	9p
Unpopular Essays	Bertrand Russell	45p	8p
Roads to Freedom	Bertrand Russell	60p	8p
Power	Bertrand Russell	65p	8p
Legitimacy versus Industrialism	Bertrand Russell	37½p	7½p
Bertrand Russell: A Life	Herbert Gottchalk	25p	7p
The Bible Handbook	G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball	65p	8p
The Vatican Versus Mankind	Adrian Pigott	20p	7p
President Charles Bradlaugh M.P.	David Tribe	£4.00	25p
Birth Control	N.S.S.	20p	3p
Christianity: The Debit Account	Margaret Knight	3p	3p
The Little Red Schoolbook	Soren Hanson & Jesper Jensen	30p	6p
The Misery of Christianity	Joachim Kahl	40p	7p
A Chronology of British Secularism	G. H. Taylor	10p	3p
Did Jesus Christ Exist?	Chapman Cohen	3p	3p
Did Jesus Ever Live?	Historicus	5p	4p
Controversy	Hector Hawton	60p	10p
Faith Healing	Louise Rose	30p	7p
Education and the Social Order	Bertrand Russell	60p	9p

- Please make cheques, postal orders, etc., payable to G. W. Foote & Company.
- The above list is a selection of publications available. Please send for complete list.

G. W. FOOTE & Company
698 HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON N19 3NL
Tel. 01-272 1266

The MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP'S latest Reports :

- * No. 11. *The Biharis in Bangladesh*
- * No. 12. *Israel's Oriental Immigrants and Druzes*
- * No. 13. *East Indians of Trinidad and Guiana*
- * No. 14. *Rom: Europe's Gypsies*
- * No. 15. *What Future for the Amerindians of South America?*

45p (plus 6p post and packing)

ORDER FORM

To: M.R.G., 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG.

- Please send me Report Nos.....
- Please send me details of your other Reports.
- I am interested in doing voluntary work for M.R.G.
- I enclose the sum of.....

Name.....

Address.....