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YECCCH! '73

—THE BILLY GRAHAM JESUS-CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN

"As a dog returneth to his vomit," we read in the Book of Proverbs, "so a fool returneth to his folly." Thus, in the wake of the 1971 Festival of Light and last year's amphibious extravaganza, the Festival of Jesus, decadent, godless London has recently been entertained by a further wakes example of what Barbara Smoker, the President of the National Secular Society, has described as "the annual wakes week of Christian revivalism". This year's Jesus-circus, starring Billy Graham, Johnny Cash, Cliff Richard and a lavish American-style back-up team of pop groups, P.R. men and glossy brochures, was entitled SPRE-E 73: trendy copy-writer's cant for SPiritual Re-Emphasis 1973. SPRE-E is also the title of a pamphlet written by Barbara Smoker, and which was distributed by members of the National Secular Society and readers of *The Freethinker* to those attending the Billy Graham rallies at Earls Court and Wembley Stadium, but in this case SPRE-E took on a more precise meaning, namely: SPurious RE-Evangelism '73.

Revivalism—a financial investment?

Everything about SPRE-E 73 is spurious, says Miss Smoker in her pamphlet. "This one-week Billy Graham Show is said to be costing a quarter of a million pounds, and it would be very interesting to know to what extent religious revivalism in Britain is financed by American big business—with obvious socio-political motives." A similar point was made in a statement to the Press by the N.S.S. General Secretary, William McIlroy, who wondered "how many of Billy Graham's well-heeled friends really believe the simplistic, fundamentalist superstition he preaches." But, he said, they recognised a good investment.

A couple of months ago Dr. Graham announced that he would really like to retire from big stadium rallies and return to the life of a simple, small-town preacher. His latest performance recalls the lines of a song immortalised by the delightful Miss Eartha Kitt:

*I'm just an old-fashioned girl:
Violets are for me.
I'll have 'em made in diamonds
By the man at Tiffany!*

Arousing teenage sexuality

"Does Billy Graham really think about the immoralities and atrocities in the word of the Lord that he preaches?" asks Miss Smoker in her pamphlet, citing as an example the Old Testament massacre of the Midianites. Like its predecessors, she points out, SPRE-E 73 "is aimed at the teenager—and aimed very deliberately below the belt. Say, eleven inches below the belt."

—For the jazziness of the brochures, the pop-festival style of the advertised events, and the atmosphere to be generated throughout the week, are obviously designed to arouse the sexuality of the young, so that this can be channelled, at least temporarily, into emotional zeal for the work of the Lord—just as the Nuremburg rallies of the '30s were designed to channel the same emotions of the same age group into emotional zeal for the Nazi régime. Adolf Hitler, like Billy Graham, used the gift of the gab to exercise manipulative power over immature minds.



Barbara Smoker
(photograph by Robert Broeder)

However, if the Wembley Stadium rally was anything to go by, SRE-E 73 was not so much like a Nazi rally as a cross between an American political convention and one of those 'spontaneous' youthful pageants so popular in many of the 'People's Democracies': if the intention was to whip up mass-hysteria, it seems to have failed. Many of the young members of the audience, whilst colourfully dressed, seemed—apart from the official cheer-leaders—downright bored.

That old slave-ethic

The general theme of the official SPRE-E 73 propaganda was that people must change from a "self-controlled" life—(leading to "hypocrisy, anger, lust, jealousy, guilt, worry . . . [a] critical spirit" and so on (our italics)—for a "Spirit-filled" life, leading to "love, joy, peace, patience,

(Continued overleaf)

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kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness. . ." In other words, it advocated the old slave ethic, beloved of political and religious despots throughout the ages for their minions. In a democratic age of self-reliance, it is unlikely to get very far.

"This generation cannot escape Christ," said Billy Graham at one of the Earls Court rallies. With the amount of advertising that SPRE-E 73 could afford, this was, in a sense, true. We can, however, react with a patient, but self-controlled yawn.

Copies of SPRE-E (SPurious RE-Evangelism) 73 may be obtained from the National Secular Society, 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

"I thank God for men who, in the face of public denouncement and ridicule, go loyally on in their work of exposing the pinks, the lavenders, and the Reds who have sought refuge beneath the wings of the American eagle."

—Dr. Billy Graham, during the McCarthyite witch-hunts in the United States (quoted by Colin Smith in *The Observer*, 2 September 1973).

ROYAL TRIBUTE TO MURDERER

A thanksgiving service, attended by Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, was held at Bath Abbey on 9 August last, so that the Establishment might celebrate one thousand years of English monarchy. The only light relief to this fatuous pantomime seems to have been an incident where a toy poodle took a bite at Prince Philip's finger as he was walking round the Abbey after the service. All the other poodles sang lustily, reverently and loyally.

The royal worshippers were giving thanks to God for the coronation at Bath in C.E. 973 of one Edgar, ineptly termed "The Peaceful", reputedly the first crowned king of all England. Little is known about Edgar, but what is known indicates that he set the tone for some of the loathesome specimens who held the English throne in the centuries that followed. The loyal British press has kept fairly quiet about all this, but 'Down Under' they are, thank goodness, less mealy-mouthed. The Australian *Daily News* of 2 May last had this to say of good King Edgar:

NEWS

Among his other misdeeds he reputedly ravished a nun (who became pregnant with his bastard son), and murdered a close friend so he could sleep with his widow, while he already had a wife of his own.

The *Daily News* also adds that Edgar died only two years after his lavish coronation, "(not surprisingly) from chronic exhaustion at the age of 32". And after a thousand years, this nasty little thug of the Dark Ages is commemorated by priests and princes.

Readers of *The Freethinker* may well ask when they may hope to witness another commemoration: that of the first anniversary of the long-overdue proclamation of the English Republic!

THE 'CRIME' OF BLASPHEMY

The Director General of the Islamic Foundation in Leicester has recently 'put his oar in' on the subject of the English blasphemy laws. In a letter in *The Times* (5 September) Mr. K. Ahmad proposes "a kind of international convention" to frame a moral code on "the way the lives and personalities of the prophets should be treated", including, of course, Jesus and Mohammed. Then—

This convention should be woven into the moral fabric of society primarily through educational means. Legal provisions can be enacted in the light of this convention. . . . If it is a moral and legal crime to slander the honour of an individual or a family, it should be a greater crime to play with the honour of the moral leaders whom people respect more than their parents or family dignitaries.

At the risk of inciting Mr. Ahmad to a *jihad*: over our dead body!

WITHOUT COMMENT

According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (24 February) a priest at the Sacred Heart Church, Darlinghurst, Australia, has issued the following warning to parishioners:

"Please, when coming to communion do not leave personal belongings—handbags, purses or umbrellas—in your seat. We have had complaints from people who have had their possessions stolen while at communion."

ADOLF ON ABORTION

In last month's News and Notes we stated that diatribes against abortion by the Ugandan leader, Sergeant Idi Amin, were entirely in line with the sentiments of the late unlamented German Corporal, of whom Amin is an admitted admirer.

We have since been kindly provided with Adolf Hitler's own words on the subject, namely and to wit:

The use of contraceptives means a violation of nature, a degradation of womanhood, motherhood and love. . . . Nazi ideals demand that the practice of abortion. . . shall be exterminated with a strong hand. Women inflamed by Marxist propaganda claim the right to bear children only when they desire. First furs, radio, new furniture, then perhaps one child.

As we have commented before, no sensitive person approves of abortion *per se*, except as a humanitarian expedient; but where, gentle reader, have you often heard the Nazi Führer's words echoed—almost to the letter—in a contemporary setting?

S AND NOTES

"HUMANISM AND GLASGOW" EXHIBITION

This year Glasgow Humanist Society responded to a general invitation to participate in a local fiesta called Clyde Fair. The Society mounted a small exhibition in June illustrating the impact of humanism on Glasgow, and of Glasgow humanists on the world at large.

ANNA McLAREN writes:

The core of the exhibition consisted of six double-sided screens, of a size readily transportable by car, which featured half a dozen personalities: Adam Smith, Robert Owen and Gilbert Murray from the nineteenth century, and Dr. James Welsh, Guy Aldred and Lord Boyd-Orr from the twentieth. Other screens depicted writers and lecturers popular in Glasgow fifty years ago, current activities of humanists in Glasgow, and brief statements about humanism.

It will surprise nobody to learn that we had great trials and tribulations about getting this exhibition on view. Clyde Fair Committee made encouraging noises, but in practice could not offer us display space anywhere. Eventually we got permission from the Queen Margaret Union (the union for women students of Glasgow University), where the exhibition was seen by several hundred people attending various revues and a documentary drama staged there.

We were pleased with the amount of interest shown in the exhibition, and felt that we had made a genuine contribution to Clyde Fair. Our budget for the display was about £50—and a good deal of time—and we consider both time and money well spent. We were extremely grateful for the practical help and useful suggestions we got from Kenneth Furness of the British Humanist Association, and also from Christopher Macy of *New Humanist*, Nigel Sinnott of *The Freethinker*, and from readers of these publications.

We have plans to use the exhibition again, for example, as an accompaniment to speakers when we are asked to talk to other bodies. We think we could extend it, and seek further opportunities to display it, and we will welcome further material for it.*

* Contact Mrs. McLaren at 6 Glassford Street, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 8DS (telephone: 041-956 1566).

Poster on the side of a gospel hall near Morley, Yorkshire: "THE COMING OF THE LORD DRAWETH NIGH!" Notice on the front of the same building: "THESE PREMISES FOR SALE."

THEN AND NOW

"We stand for Christian Nationalism which is an ally of Nazism."

—Quoted recently by the *New Zealand Rationalist & Humanist*; these words were uttered in 1942 by one, Balthazar J. Vorster, who was interned by the General Smuts's government during the Second World War for his pro-Axis views. The gentleman quoted is now Prime Minister of the Republic of South Africa, which proudly boasts of its modern "Christian National education system".

SEMPER IDEM

According to the August issue (No. 26) of *Humanist in Canada*, there has been strong criticism of the new concordat between the Vatican and the Colombian government, signed on 13 July last. Amongst other things, the concordat requires the Colombian government to provide tax aid to Catholic schools, and requires the state, "when necessary", to "collaborate in the execution of the decision of the Ecclesiastical Tribunals". Further, whilst the state is now allowed to challenge the appointment of bishops and archbishops, once appointed they will be exempt from civil prosecution.

Colombian educators have complained that the new concordat will damage public education and worsen social class differences, already in a bad state. One educator even described tax paid for Catholic private schools as 'contrary to Christian principles'.

In the middle of the last century, Colombia was a secular republic. It is now being shunted back to the Middle Ages. Let the rest of us be warned.

OBITUARIES

Miss Lita Jarratt

Miss Lita Jarratt, a retired musician who was for many years a member of the National Secular Society and a reader of *The Freethinker*, died recently in hospital at Newton Abbot, Devon. She was 93.

The cremation took place (without ceremony) at Torquay Crematorium on 20 August last.

We extend our condolences to the late Miss Jarratt's family and friends.

Mr. William Collins

It is with deep regret that we have to announce the death on 26 August last, at the age of 79, of William Collins of Marple, Stockport.

In an address given at Stockport Crematorium on 30 August Mr. H. I. Bayford said that Bill Collins was a man to whom freethought spelled straightforwardness, honesty and constant inquiry. "He was a man totally disinterested in personalities; he was charitable in his judgements, but had an abhorrence for the liar. He was the acme of tolerance."

Among the many local freethinkers who attended the committal ceremony were Messrs. Birchall, McQueen and Mills, Mrs. Bayford and Mrs. Rogals. The National Secular Society was represented by Messrs. W. Griffiths (trustee) and W. McIlroy (General Secretary).

Mr. Collins was a lifelong supporter of the Co-operative movement, the Sons of Temperance, *The Freethinker* and the National Secular Society, of which last he served on the Executive Committee and was for a number of years a Vice-President. He was for many years the Secretary of the former Manchester Branch of the N.S.S., and gave a great deal of his time to the movement locally—speaking on its behalf in public, distributing secularist literature and selling *The Freethinker*.

Bill Collins was one of the movement's most charming old 'characters', one who will be greatly missed, not only in the Manchester area, but by all—both young and old—who had the pleasure of meeting him at many freethought functions in London and elsewhere. We offer our sympathy to the deceased's niece, Mrs. Marion Phillips, and to his other relatives and many friends.

TRENDISSIMO !

Falling attendances at the Sunday school of Elim Pentecostal Church, Nottingham, have been restored by the ministrations of a robot preacher which speaks like a television Dalek and has red eyes which flash when it talks. The machine has now been promoted to reading the lesson at adult services.

No, we are not making this up as we go along, nor is it from one of Peter Simple's 'spoofs' in the *Daily Telegraph*. Our information comes, in fact, from the oracle of right-thinking trendy leftism itself, *The Guardian* (20 August), which further relates that "the 4 ft. 9 in. robot was built by the Rev. John McKenzie, an engineer before he became a minister."

O tempora! O mores! Mind you, from a religion that has got away with weeping Madonnas, bogus shrouds, and reliquifying blood, anything is to be expected. We hear that the People's Revolutionary Atheist Daily, *The Episcopophagist*, is launching a Ray-Gun Fund appeal to counter the present menace.

The Divine Light Mission, whose 15-year-old 'guru', Maharaj Ji, travels around in a £20,000 Mercedes, has been called upon by the Charity Commissioners to submit its accounts for scrutiny "following requests from the public" (Daily Telegraph, 16 July). How about a few more public requests for radical reform of the Charity Laws?

NUNC DIMITTIS

There is an old saying that radical papers are published not so much to make a profit, or to inform their readers, as to satisfy their editors' vanity. Like many generalisations of this type, it embodies a truth, but it is only true in part.

I cannot claim, during my editorship, to have done much in the way of making profits for *The Freethinker*. As with many other propagandist papers, it is published at a hefty loss in order to give the movement it serves a platform, and I, together with rising prices, have probably added to these losses. It has certainly satisfied a somewhat ample vanity, I hope without giving too much offence to others. However, I have endeavoured to put first the cause for which *The Freethinker* exists to champion, and to inform and entertain its readers. If in any measure I have succeeded, I hope that on that account my ponderous compositing might be forgiven me.

Freethinker editors come and go; they may use their own personalities to improve or mar the paper, but without articles, reviews and letters, all of which are contributed without payment, and which are its life-blood, the paper could not run at all. As editor, I soon came to appreciate, with considerable gratitude, the many talented and very busy people who give of their time and ability to write articles or produce reviews (and then wait patiently for months for their work to appear).

Nor is this all: my work has been aided enormously by the kindness of a number of readers who have sent in reports of local events, or forwarded press cuttings, sometimes—indeed often—from the other side of the globe. I also owe a debt of thanks to the editors of a number of overseas freethought journals whose friendship I have made and who have given *The Freethinker* free advertising space, and thereby gained us new readers. (I must apologise for not having repaid these compliments

to date, largely because of shortage of space. Perhaps my successor will be able to do so eventually.)

Christopher Morey, who now takes over the paper, is, unlike the outgoing editor, a modest young man, but despite this handicap will, I feel sure, wear the mantle of Foote and Cohen with grace and competence. No doubt the pretentious antimacassar-and-potted-palm image will have to go, but readers need not fear that it will be replaced by modern, trendy 'stances for living', nor that the canny old tomcat of fighting freethought will be emasculated down to a polythene-wrapped, 'relevant, meaningful and positive' apologetic quadruped, bearing an unhealthy resemblance to a church mouse. He will, I think, be well tended and well fed.

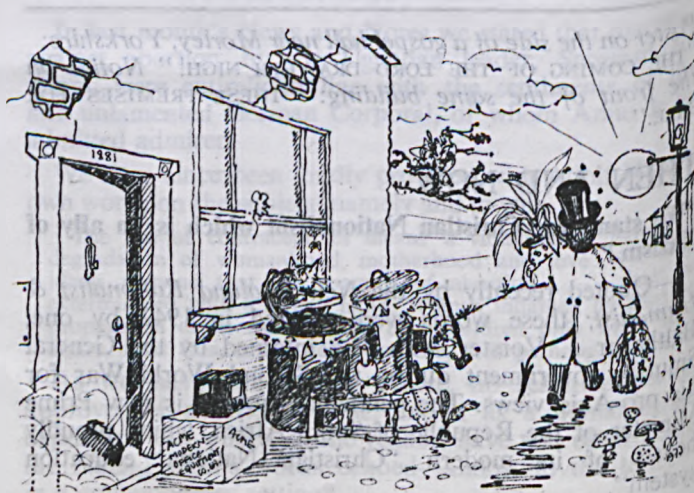
One plea on behalf of my successor. He will be editing the paper in *addition* to a full-time job, a task which will eat very heavily into his free time. Will contributors therefore take especial care not to add needlessly to his workload, such as by sending "did you receive my letter of two days ago"-type notes, or by submitting material that is so illegible that it has to be re-written. Please write very clearly, leaving wide margins, and in the case of typescripts, please *double space*.

To all who have, in their many capacities, contributed to, and helped bring out *The Freethinker* during the past twenty-one months, I tender grateful thanks. May you show my successor the same generosity: if so, he will find his task, as I did, somewhat exhausting, but exciting and very satisfying.

Freedom, tolerance, justice and progress have not merely to be won, but also to be maintained and upheld once they are achieved. The history of the twentieth century shows how much tyranny, if not watched, can sweep away "at a stroke". Moreover, we delude ourselves if we think that all the battles have been fought and won, and that we can retire from the field. In an age of many tyrannies, superstition and organised religion are by no means the only enemies of freedom and truth, but they are enemies none the less, and they have not capitulated. It is still true that he who would be free must wear a sword, and it seems to me that the best weapons for our purposes are the pen and the printing press, which, as Bradlaugh said, "best teach the littleness of kings". That is why *The Freethinker* must go on.

And now my time has come to depart: to hang up my sledgehammer, collect my silk hat and frock coat, and bid you good wishes and success for the future. By your leave, *il faut cultiver notre aspidistra*.

NIGEL SINNOTT.



A VICTORIAN DOUBTER

ERIC GLASGOW

Dr. Eric Glasgow was formerly a teacher, and now devotes his time to historical research. His particular interest is in nineteenth-century England, and he is currently engaged in writing a book on Victorian Southport (Lancashire), where he lives "in a large and rambling house, inhabited mostly by the constantly expanding proportions of its books".



Arthur Hugh Clough
—after an engraving by C. H. Jeens
(Courtesy of The Mansell Collection)

"Say Not, the Struggle Nought Availleth" is, of course, A. H. Clough's best-known poem: for him it is fair to say that the struggle—for intellectual integrity and spiritual avowal—was not in vain, and its harvest is still beside us for our permanent use and inspiration. Matthew Arnold was right, therefore, in his selection of Clough "as the shining instance of Homeric simplicity in writing and in living".

I found by accident the other day, in the Liverpool University Library, a copy of J. I. Osborne's absorbing book on *Arthur Hugh Clough* (1920). Its pages provide some rich insights into the complicated mentality of one of the most outstanding examples of the "poets of doubt" of the Victorian Age, and of the most anguished of all those who tried to demolish the façade of Victorian complacency. I write this in Liverpool, of a Liverpool-born poet, although Clough (1819-1861) thereafter pursued his education at Rugby and Oxford, where he became a Fellow of Oriel College. This distinction then meant, of course, that he was expected to take Anglican Orders; but his conscientious scruples against so doing caused him to resign his Fellowship in 1848. So, like so many of the other distinguished outcasts from the Victorian religious establishment, Clough had to live by his pen, as poet and author. He was, however, brilliant enough to attract the friendship and the support of such discerning people as Emerson and Lowell in the United States; and in 1853 he obtained a minor appointment in the London Education Office.

Today Clough is remembered mostly for his poetry, with its deep and poignant yearning for religious certainty, and its equally strong refusal to be content with any of the convenient religious packages which were then so readily available. Clough had many appreciative readers amongst his contemporaries, until the public fell away with the beginning of the twentieth century. But the new 1951 edition of his poems (edited by H. F. Lowry, F. L. Mulhauser and A. L. P. Norrington) disclosed his very real poetic merits, which at long last could then be separated from the mass of theological prejudices which had often obscured them from earlier generations. So, within the last twenty years, A. H. Clough has been revealed again as a poet of high originality and quality, whose work has suffered chiefly from the fate of being too premature in its unattached notions, and too undogmatic for the acceptance of most of his contemporaries. But these very deficiencies in the frequent judgements of the Victorians, have now become ostensible virtues and commendations for many readers and thinkers in the twentieth century. Today, Clough's poetry can be read and appreciated as literature, divorced from any theological suppositions and that is surely how it should always be judged and evaluated.

Worth reading today

A. H. Clough was the most prominent of all the Victorian "poets of doubt"; but his work was by no means negative, destructive or indecisive. He had his own durable and positive message of the bonds of reason, humanity, intelligence and literature; and it is one which must be more than ever acceptable and coherent today. After all, neither 'faith' nor 'doubt' have kept anything like their Victorian connotations: in the realm of poetry, at least, it is fair to regard both as mostly irrelevant and obstructive concepts, to be set aside in the wider intensions of literature and art. Given that proposition, A. H. Clough emerges as an English poet of surpassing merit, whose work still deserves to be read, reflected upon, and digested.

TWO CITIES, 1890

St. John's Wood, scented,
Softly serenaded:
Girls glide in satin dresses
—Bright eyes, white breasts,
And jewel-encrusted hair.
—Champagne and flunkeys,
Chandeliers and Broughams,
Shelves and leather bindings
Flickering by firelight.

Acres of misery
Framed in crumbling terraces,
Lit by gutting gaslamps;
Walls that run with slime
From Whitechapel to despair.
—An old drunk, slumped,
Dying by a bakery;
—A prostitute
Whimpers with the cold.

L.G.B. (1972)

MITHRAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

R. W. MORRELL

Robert Morrell is general secretary of Leicester Secular Society and hon. secretary (and co-founder) of the Thomas Paine Society. He has a keen interest in the origins of religions as well as in geology, archaeology and the study of molluscs. He lives in Nottingham.

Of the various rivals Christianity had to face during its long rise from obscurity to dominance none frightened it more than Mithraism. The early fathers of the church viewed the cult with considerable apprehension, an unease which is reflected in their writings. They had good reason for this, for the two religions had much in common. This fact has caused many scholars to maintain that Christianity borrowed much from its rival, although at least one, the late Bishop Barnes, argued that the traffic was not all one way.

Barnes was of the opinion that Mithraism made no appeal because its "theology was a naïve mixture of solar pantheism with fragments of the teachings of Zoroaster, to which were added astrology and primitive fables".¹ Recent studies have demonstrated that Mithraism was far from being the 'naïve' cult Barnes imagined it to be, but perhaps the good bishop's opinion was coloured by a desire to enhance the status of his own superstition. In any discussion of Mithraism we are faced with a formidable difficulty in that we have very little material on it, as following its triumph the Christian church took steps to eradicate as many traces as possible of its late rival. The main sources of information on Mithraism are epigraphic, usually brief in content, and a few monuments. This, taken with archaeological data and the comments of hostile Christian writers, is almost the sum total of information sources. From this it is clear that there are very considerable difficulties involved in reconstructing a major ancient faith.

There will always be, one suspects, areas of dispute concerning Mithraism; indeed it is likely that some questions will never be adequately answered. However, one thing is clear and it is that Mithraism, contrary to what Barnes maintained, did make an appeal on the intellectual plain as much as on grounds of faith. Eric Birley, in a contribution to the report on the excavations of the Carrawburgh Mithraeum (Carrawburgh is the site of a fort on Hadrian's Wall), states that the cult drew its strength from the senior ranks in the army, and its members were "necessarily men of some education".²

Evolution of Mithraism

During its history Mithraism underwent considerable evolution, and in its late period was very different from the cult introduced to the Roman world in the first century B.C.E. by the soldiers of Pompey following their suppression of the Cilician pirates. By the third century C.E. Mithras had been elevated from the status of just minor deity to that of supreme deity, or first cause, as the dedication on the main altar from another Wall fort, Housesteads, illustrates. This particular stone shows that Mithras had been united with his father and so indicates a line of development similar to that which in Christianity led to the trinity.

In the east Mithraism had a considerable general following; in the west, though, its support came in the main from the military and the merchants. Mithraic temples are

common on military sites and in large commercial centres such as London. In Wales the only temple so far excavated at a Roman military site was dedicated to Mithras.³ According to Richmond and Gillam, "the instigation and interest of a commanding officer seems always to have been the motive force in establishing or re-establishing the cult",⁴ an opinion that lends support to the observation that the cult appealed to the educated classes in the Roman world. This is further born out through a study of Mithraic inscriptions: of the ten dedicators of inscriptions from sites along Hadrian's Wall nine were senior officers—six prefects (commanding officers), two centurians (senior staff officers), and a beneficiarius (staff officer). The remaining monument was dedicated by an individual with the eastern name Herion, whose status is unknown but who might well have been a civil servant or possibly a merchant.⁵

Secretive

In army circles Mithraism was something of an exclusive cult, or as one authority puts it, "a private religious brotherhood". In a study of the Roman army, Watson supports this and terms the cult "a secret society".⁶ Both observations illustrate the strength and weakness of Mithraism; it was, in effect, a form of masonic brotherhood which accentuated its masculine qualities. This secretive attitude made it difficult for Mithraism to be used as a force to unite the Roman empire when the authorities wanted such a force. The last non-Christian emperor, Julian, a soldier, sought to make a highly modified Mithraism the state religion. His action came too late, and he fell in battle, killed, so many think, not by the other side but by a Christian assassin from within his own ranks, one of the first of the many millions murdered by the followers of 'the Prince of Peace'.

Christianity was never popular with the Roman army, which after its triumph became the last refuge of the old gods. Traces of Christianity on military sites in Britain are very rare, and the same can be said of civil sites; indeed, Sheppard Frere tells us that "Fourth century relics of urban Christianity . . . are curiously rare",⁷ and goes on to suggest that this was because it lacked popular support. He further illustrates this point by drawing attention to the fact that British bishops had to accept imperial charity to enable them to attend the Council of Ariminum in C.E. 359.

Blood baptism

Knowledge of Mithraic liturgical ideas is scant, and many of the sources, being Christian, are hostile. This is probably the reason why there is so much misunderstanding of Mithraic ritual such as the *taurobolium*, a ritual described as "a repulsive ceremony"⁸ (the initiate was supposed to lie under a grill over which a bull was slaughtered and the blood allowed to drip through the grill). This in fact does not appear to have taken place, for in Mithraic theology the killing of the bull in order that it shed its life-giving blood was a once-only act by Mithras himself: in short it was symbolic, not actual. A form of blood baptism (by sprinkling) was used as a purification rite, and this has an echo in the Christian concept of being "washed in the blood of the lamb". Blood, it appears, played an important rôle in many mystery religions. In Christian theology man is saved by the spilling of Christ's blood.

hence the horror the Christian fathers felt in respect of the Mithraic formula, "*Viros servasti eternali sanguine fuso*" (you have saved men by the spilling of the eternal blood). There are many other points of similarity between Christian doctrine and that of Mithraism, and an interesting hint is given in 1 Corinthians 10:21, which warns believers not to partake of communion outside their own cult, clearly being suggestive of the fact that to many Christians communion from non-Christian sources was felt to be as effective as that from their own.

Professor Wells, in his recent study of Christian origins, refers to Origen and Justin explicitly claiming that Jesus was born in a cave, and goes on to refer to the fact that this was also the case in respect of Mithras.⁹ He also follows the Belgian authority on Mithraism, Professor F. V. M. Cumont, in drawing attention to Mithraic monuments which show the new-born babe being adored by shepherds, who offer 'first fruits'. The parallel here with the birth narrative in Luke is obvious, indeed so much so that at least one Christian writer has sought to refute the similarity. However, he is forced to draw the conclusion that "we do not think that there is a very close resemblance . . ." ¹⁰ Until it was Christianised, 25 December was celebrated as the birth of Mithras. Another interesting association is found in the gradation of orders in the Catholic priesthood and those of Mithraism, the objection to this parallel that Mithraic orders were mainly lay in character loses its force when it is remembered that this is also the case in respect of Catholic orders up to and including the sub-diaconate.

The mother-goddess cult

I have already alluded to the male characteristic of Mithraism (unlike Christianity in which women played a major rôle, even if excluded from holy orders) at least by the third century of the Christian era. This was one of Mithraism's principal weaknesses; however, there is some evidence to indicate a change in policy during its final stages. In two Mithraea small statues of a mother-goddess with a child in her arms have been discovered. The first was found some years before the last war at Dieburg in Germany, and the other more recently at Carrawburgh. Both were in a small anteroom to the nave of their respective temples, what in Catholic churches would be described as lady-chapels. When the Carrawburgh Mithraeum was destroyed by a Christian mob early in the fourth century, the mother-and-child statue was significantly left untouched *in situ*. By the fourth century the cult of the mother-goddess had become entrenched in Christian circles, possibly being adopted and adapted from Egyptian sources, for the Christian church had spread rapidly in Egypt from a very early time, and it is possible that at a late stage the Mithraic priesthood had started to make a desperate attempt to stave off the Christian threat by playing down the distinctive masculine aspect of their cult.

Christianity emerged the victor in its fight with the rival faiths of the Roman empire. There is no evidence to support the oft-made assumption that it won out because it managed to convert a majority to its side, indeed it is clear that it was very much a minority cult. However, it was highly organised, and in this lay its source of strength, while its basic authoritarianism made it a good tool in the hands of the secular authorities. In contrast, Mithraism kept very much to itself, it scorned the Christian policy of vigorous proselytism, and was in attitude very tolerant. Had it been like Christianity, open to all and highly organised, it would probably have won a fight with the

Christian church hands down, thus we might have had a Mithraic pope in the Vatican (itself the site of a Mithraeum).

In fact, the cult of the saviour in a cap went down before that of the man on a cross, and humanity found itself with a religion that preached love on the one hand and persecuted on the other. Had Mithraism won, many millions who perished in the Christian bloodbath because they would not conform would have lived. If there is a parallel between Mithraism and Christianity that one would not suggest, it is that both resorted to stake and torture chamber to maintain and promote themselves; it was only the followers of the God of love who resorted to this, and when humanity eventually rids itself of the Christian cult and it becomes, like Mithraism, a chapter in the history of human superstitions, posterity, I suspect, will have a higher regard for Mithras than for Christ.

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- 2 BIRLEY, E., in RICHMOND, I. A., & GILLAM, J. P. 1951. "The Temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh." *Archaeologia Aeliana* (4th ser.), vol. 29: p. 47.
- 3 NASH WILLIAMS, V. E. 1969. *The Roman Frontier in Wales*: p. 63.
- 4 RICHMOND, I. A., & GILLAM, J. P. 1951. *Loc. cit.* (note 2): p. 28.
- 5 COLLINGWOOD, R. G., & WRIGHT, R. P. 1969. *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, vol. 1: Inscriptions No. 1395-98, 1544-46, 1599, 1600-01.
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NINETY YEARS AGO

Her Majesty's Prison, Holloway, August 24, 1883.

DEAR AVELING,—I write to you as before . . . Although I cannot say I am ill, confinement is telling on me generally, and the horrible monotony of this life is very depressing. Yet by an exercise of will I manage to dwell mostly far above this human kennel and its mean distractions. The worst half of my journey is done, and the rest of the road, though rough, is all down hill.

I still go to chapel by way of inoculation. Besides, it's a change. After the sermon I often think, "Heavy tragedy all the week, and high comedy on Sunday."

. . . My thanks to the contributors, one and all. I don't know how the *Freethinker* is going on, but I have no apprehensions. It is my fixed resolve to make my terrible bantling a greater terror than ever . . .

Yours ever,

G. W. FOOTE.

—From *The Freethinker*, 9 September 1883.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

For some years Mussolini has been carrying on in Italy a rule which can best be described as Bolshevism inverted. He has carried on a terroristic rule in the name of God and the King by precisely the methods which our yellow press attribute to the Bolsheviks in Russia . . . The Pope, who has sent several hypocritical letters to the nations talking of his desire for world peace, remains silent in the face of a recurrence of the same kind of incident which landed Europe in the "Great War". Mussolini is an ally of the Church, and no one expects the Church to round on its friend. It is true that this friend may succeed in wrecking European civilisation, but the Church would not lose by that. The less civilised we become the more Christian we are likely to remain.

—Chapman Cohen (on Mussolini's bombardment of Corfu) in *The Freethinker*, 9 September 1923.

POPPER'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHILOSOPHY

RALPH CHAMPION

Sir Karl Popper, who turned 70 last year, has been described as the greatest philosopher of science of all time and the greatest all-round philosopher of his generation. This year his career was crowned by the award of the Sonning prize for "contributions to European civilisation". The prize is given by the University of Copenhagen, and carries a cash award of £12,000.

The range of Popper's interests and his sustained productivity make him a fascinating figure but his vigorous polemics have earned him many enemies. He is forced by poor health to live a secluded life and so his warmth and sensitivity are revealed only to a close circle of friends.

He was born in Vienna in 1902, the only boy in a family of three children. His father was a barrister and solicitor and also a poet, historian and classical scholar. In 1918 Karl was too young to matriculate, but he was fed up with school so he enrolled as an unmatriculated student at the university. The Austro-Hungarian empire had collapsed after World War I and Popper was "hopeful and eager for a better world"; but at that time of social unrest and political confusion "few of us thought seriously of a career—there was none. We studied for the sake of studying".

Popper's varied apprenticeship

He followed no formal course and he attended lectures in science, mathematics and philosophy. Many of his evenings were spent at concerts because music was one of his abiding passions and he seriously considered a career as a musician. His activities were not all academic: he worked for some time in one of Alfred Adler's clinics for children in the Viennese slums and later he apprenticed himself to a cabinet maker. He completed this apprenticeship although his mind was apt to wander from the job in hand to the philosophical problems which intrigued him. One job which gave him a great deal of trouble was an order for a dozen writing desks and years later, when he obtained his first academic post as a philosopher, he commented that he had at last found a way to combine satisfactorily his work on writing desks and philosophy.

In 1922 he became a matriculated student, studying at the University of Vienna and also at the Vienna Institute for Education, where he met his wife. In 1928 he was awarded a Ph.D., and two years later he found a job as a secondary school teacher. He continued to work privately on philosophical problems similar to those which concerned the Vienna Circle. He was not a member of this group and one of them named him "the official opposition". In 1934 he published *Logik der Forschung* (The Logic of Discovery) as an attempt to solve some of the major problems of the philosophy of science.

A timely opportunity

The book was very well received and in 1937 it earned Popper the post of senior lecturer in philosophy at Canterbury University College, New Zealand. This was a timely opportunity because Popper would have been

classified as a Jew by the Nazis when they invaded Austria. He began to write his next major work, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, on the day that he received news of this invasion. He described this book as his war effort; in it he criticised various historical and social theories which undermine the critical approach to politics which is required to maintain an open and democratic society. His main targets were Plato, Hegel and Marx.

Towards the end of the war he applied for jobs at universities in Perth, Sydney and London. He was rejected in Perth in favour of a local man and in Sydney a storm blew up over his appointment. He was politically suspect and questions were asked in the Federal Parliament. The Labour Prime Minister, John Curtin, was prepared to support him, but he was offered a post in London which he accepted.

Popper left New Zealand in 1945 to become reader in logic and scientific method at the University of London where he became a full professor in 1949. He has remained there ever since, although he has made many trips overseas to deliver lectures on special occasions.

Further books and essays

With the assistance of Dr. and Mrs. Freed, he translated his first major book himself and it was published in 1959 under the title, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. In 1963 a large collection of his essays was printed as *Conjectures and Refutations*. In 1965 he was knighted, having earlier become a naturalised British citizen.

He retired in 1969, although he claims that he is now working harder than ever before. Last November another collection of his essays was published under the title, *Objective Knowledge* (see *Freethinker* reviews, April 1973). This roused quite a stir and all the paperback copies in London were sold within a few weeks of its release. Late this year the Popper volume in the Library of Living Philosophers series should appear and next year another collection of essays, *Philosophy and Physics*, should be published. Bryan Magee's book on Popper for the Fontana Modern Masters series has recently been released and this slim volume should obtain for Popper some of the popularity which he has so far been denied.

FREETHINKER FUND

We are much obliged to those readers who kindly contributed to the Freethinker Fund during August. The Fund helps to defray the printing and distribution costs of *The Freethinker*, and thus ensures that the paper sells as cheaply—and therefore as widely—as possible.

Our thanks to: Anonymous (£1), W. Armstrong (82p), Jesse Collins (£5), A Foster (£2), A. E. Garrison (£1), S. Hillier (15p), Corliss Lamont (£3.50), A. F. M. MacLennan (25p), Max P. Morf (£1), Madalyn Murray O'Hair (50p) and F. T. Westwood (£2). Total for August: £17.22.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

POPPER by Brian Magee. Fontana/Collins, 40p.

Of all the philosophers who have worked in this country during our century Sir Karl Popper is the one whose philosophical ideas have had, and deserved to have, the greatest influence.

Of course, the name of Bertrand Russell became known to a far wider public. But Russell's various and famous—or, in later years, notorious—public stands were neither derived from nor rationalised by his philosophical ideas: signing Muscovite 'peace' manifestos and rooting for the Vietcong are not commitments logically required either of the author of the metaphysics of neutral monism or of the Lenin of the great revolution in logic embodied in *Principia Mathematica*.

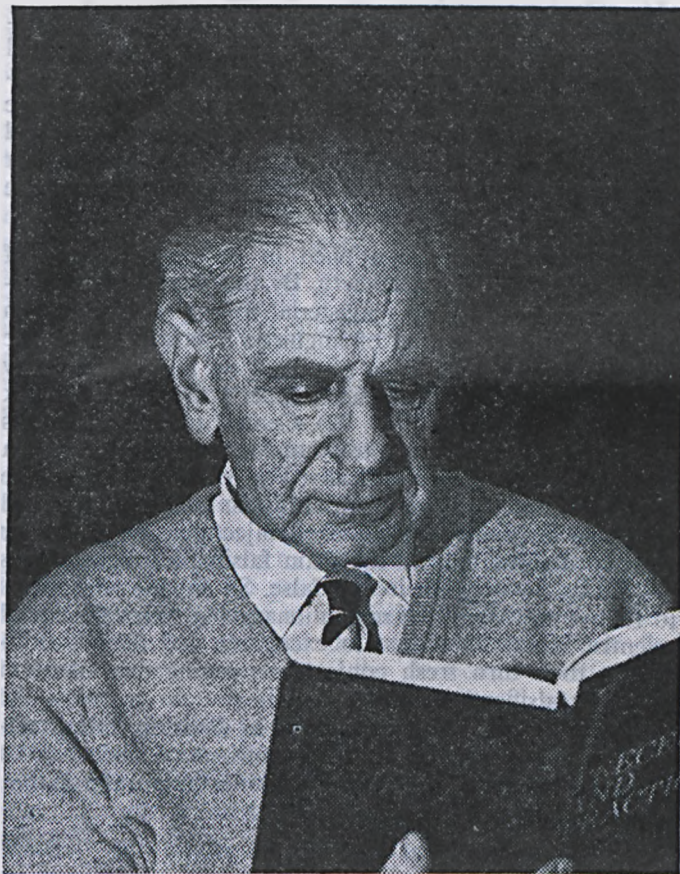
Again, Russell's most brilliant pupil Wittgenstein is known to a lay public mainly as someone who often acted like a charlatan pretending to be, what in fact he was, a man of genius. The only popular application of Wittgenstein's notions appears to be in attempts by certain obscurantist disciples to make religious and even magical beliefs immune to criticism. Moore, Austin, and even Ryle are similarly philosophers' philosophers. Their direct influence has been, and will be, almost entirely upon their colleagues and pupils; and indirectly upon the pupils of those colleagues too. This is not something to be despised or depreciated. For the chief value and justification of academic philosophy to the general public must be in the quality of the intellectual training which it provides for students who will put that training to use in quite different spheres, and in the example of fastidious integrity and argumentative vigour which it sets.

But Popper is the very rare one who has much more to offer. The Popper slot was, therefore, one of the most important in this Fontana "Modern Masters" series. Frank Kermode, the editor, is to be congratulated on picking in Bryan Magee another winner. Magee's properly enthusiastic and deeply sympathetic presentation can stand alongside the necessarily negative accounts of those pretentious pseudo-masters *Lévi-Strauss* and *Marcuse* provided by, respectively, Edmund Leach and Alasdair MacIntyre.

The fundamental contribution which earns tributes from Nobel prizewinning scientists—Magee quotes some of these in his 'Introductory'—is his account of the nature of true science. This, like many other great philosophical insights, starts from an elementary logical remark:

[Popper] begins by pointing to a logical asymmetry between verification and falsification . . . although no number of observation statements . . . allow us to derive the universal statement 'All swans are white', one single observation statement, reporting . . . a black swan, allows us logically to derive the statement 'Not all swans are white' (p. 22).

The crucial consequence is that no open universal statement, and this includes all possible candidates for the status of laws of nature, can ever be confirmed beyond all possibility of future correction. The complementary implication is that some candidates can be decisively rejected. The enormously exciting moral drawn by Popper is that science must be a matter of endless striving and endless



Professor Sir Karl Popper.

(Photograph by Andrew Mummery)

inquiry. No law or theory can ever stand beyond the possibility of revision. The best we have or ever could have can and could be only at best the best so far.

Popper's rejection of all ultimacy in science, a rejection inspired especially by Einstein's overthrow of the Newtonian establishment, does not, however, constitute a licence to abandon all standards: quite the reverse. Certainly science requires openness, and bold conjectures. But all conjectures must be subject to criticism. It is indeed only and precisely in so far as we are ready to abandon any hypothesis and any theory in face of decisive contrary evidence that what we are doing can be rated as science at all. It is accordingly an essential mark of a scientific hypothesis that it should be in principle falsifiable. A theory, like that of Newton, which is eventually shown to be false is not thereby shown to have been unscientific. What would make a theory unscientific is, rather, that there should be nothing which conceivably could show that theory to be false. "We cannot", as Popper says, "identify science with truth, for we think that both Einstein's and Newton's theories belong to science, but they cannot both be true, and they may well both be false" (quoted, p. 28).

For Popper, "*Falsifiability is the criterion of demarcation between science and non-science*" (p. 43: italics original). The fact that Freud was always able and eager to show that any and every apparently incompatible fact would be or was after all what his own theories should have led us to expect, constitutes, as Popper himself argues, the decisive reason for saying that, whatever Freudian psychoanalysis is, it certainly is not science.

Curiously it was left to one of those 'Linguistic Philosophers'—who have, Magee complains, never appreciated Popper—to apply the same Popperian objection to religious accounts of the cosmos. The concluding challenge of a now twenty times reprinted note on "Theology and Falsification" thus reads: "What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?"

The same ideas are applied in Popper's critique of Marxism in *The Open Society*. By the way: Magee himself quotes from Ryle's magisterial tribute to this book in *Mind*, "the chief journal of linguistic philosophy". Magee himself also says, "I must confess I do not see how any rational man can have read Popper's critique of Marx and still be a Marxist" (p. 92). Central to this critique is Popper's insistence upon treating Marx respectfully as a scientist, and therefore critically. For Marx himself, unlike those who today still claim the Marxist name, put forward bold, and in principle falsifiable, conjectures. What Popper does is to show that all the main falsifiable consequences of Marx's theories are in fact false. So anyone who wants to follow not Marx the revolutionary but Marx the social scientist must labour first to excogitate and then to criticise in their turn fresh conjectures, paying due attention to those falsifications. What he will not do is follow the vast herds of the Marxist devout in devising 'interpretations' which save his contributions to social science from falsification only at the cost of making these unfalsifiable, and hence unscientific.

Applied to political and social affairs the "critical rationalism" of Popper's philosophy of science becomes "piecemeal social engineering". Back in 1962 Magee published a book, *The New Radicalism*, urging that this Popperian approach should replace "the garbled mixture of Marxism and liberal-minded opportunism which passes for political theory on the democratic left . . . while making it clear that Popper is no longer a socialist, I want to claim his ideas for the democratic socialism in which he was so deeply enmeshed when he began to produce them" (p. 84).

I myself accept the same Popperian approach to practical political and social questions, wholeheartedly. So the most useful thing I can do here and now is to suggest that Magee ought not to find it as obvious as he does that such an approach must lead into the Labour Party. For that party most surely is, in precisely that sense in which Magee concedes "that Popper is no longer a socialist", socialist:

As a Social Democrat he had become convinced that the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, which constituted the foundations of this party's platform, could not of itself solve the problems it was intended to solve, yet might well destroy the values which the party held most dear (p. 83).

Only the wilfully blind, or those wishing to lull the well-founded anxieties of a public not sold on their experience of socialism, will deny that the British Labour Party, unlike the German Social Democrats, is now as much or more than ever committed to a continual and irreversible advance towards socialism, in this Clause Four sense. (Having myself been privately ridiculed by Magee for insisting upon this very obvious though to him embarrassing fact, I note with wry humility Magee's reluctance publicly to dismiss Popper's repudiation of the Clause Four ideal as irrelevant to the issue of support for the Labour Party!)

This basic socialist commitment, whatever its intrinsic merits or demerits, is in two respects radically incompatible

with the Popperian approach. In the first place, it constitutes a paradigm case of the kind of wholesale programme for total social transformation which Popper utterly rejects:

To claim rationality for sweeping plans to change society as a whole is to claim a degree of detailed sociological knowledge which we simply do not possess (p. 103).

In the second place, nationalisation is most emphatically not put forward by the Labour Party as a policy to be tested by experience; and to be extended, revised or abandoned in the light of that experience.

It was certainly not in that Popperian spirit of tentative, inquiring, meliorist, piecemeal, social engineering that Clause Four was written into the party constitution; or that it still is, in a slightly revised form, reprinted on every membership card. Nor is it in that spirit that today *Labour's Programme for Britain* first insists that, of course, the few modest measures of denationalisation dared by the Conservatives must all be reversed before the party goes on to what the Shadow Chancellor has very accurately described as—even waiving the still disputed question of the top twenty-five—a further "massive extension of public ownership".

To the true Popperian it is the boasted aim of irreversibility which must be anathema. To insist that nothing which has once been nationalised may ever be denationalised, while also insisting that every period of Labour rule must be marked by much or some new nationalisation, is in a finite world necessarily to be committed to ultimate total socialism. To insist that any institutional arrangements, whether proposed or actual, must be in this way sacrosanct is to make those arrangements, rather than the welfare of those concerned, your incorrigible end, and not your tentatively suggested means.

Magee, with his usual sympathy and understanding for Popper's ideas, says: Popper's social philosophy is "as plainly anti-conservative on the one side as it is anti-totalitarian (and as such anti-Communist) on the other" (p. 83). So it is, if to be anti-conservative is to refuse to accept that any institution should be beyond criticism, improvement, or replacement. But to be anti-conservative in this sense is not at all the same thing as to be, as Magee would wish, anti-Conservative. Still less is it to be, especially at a time when that party is more than ever before biased towards the Marxist and para-Marxist left, pro-Labour.

ANTHONY FLEW

SOUUPERISM: Myth or Reality? by Desmond Bowen.
Cork: Mercier Press, £2.25.

Souperism, the charge that Protestant clergymen used the free distribution of food as a means to encourage the conversion of starving Roman Catholic peasants during the famine years (1846-8), has become an entrenched part of Irish political mythology. Like so much else in Irish political mythology it is undergoing re-examination by a new and remarkably able generation of Irish historians. The Rev. Dr. Bowen was particularly well equipped to undertake the study under review; an Irish Canadian by birth, he became a Church of Ireland minister after service in the Second World War and worked as a curate in a number of western parishes before moving into the academic world. He is now Professor of History at Carleton University, Ottawa.

Charges of souperism (like charges of racial or religious discrimination) are notoriously difficult to prove or dis-

prove. Dr. Bowen tackled the problem by selecting territory he knows, the dioceses of Killala, Achonry and Tuam, which were among the worst hit in the famine years. He makes a detailed examination of the character and attitudes, and particularly the attitude to proselytism, of the Church of Ireland clergy active in each parish, and of their relationship with the local Catholic priesthood and with the ultra-Protestant missionaries who were battling doggedly towards the mirage of a 'Second Reformation' in Ireland. These latter zealots, financed in the main from England, do not appear in an attractive light; a few leading figures like the Rev. Alexander Dallas, founder of the Society for Irish Church Missions to Roman Catholics, compel a grudging respect, but the rank and file of the proselytising 'ultras', the narrow, ignorant and fanatical Scripture Readers are repellent and, although there is little hard evidence, it is easy to believe that some at least of them would seize on any expedient that might advance their cause. Certainly they proved an embarrassment to the great majority of the clergymen of the (then) Established Church who were, after all, educated gentlemen. Many parsons resisted pressure from the evangelical Bishop Plunkett of Tuam and refused to allow them to disrupt the even tenor of their lives and parishes. One's sympathy is reserved for the considerable number of unfortunates who were converted and suffered in consequence a vicious persecution by their neighbours. Most were eventually driven to emigration and Connacht reverted to a simple, trusting peasant Catholicism.

The Anglican clergy of the west of Ireland make a fascinating study. Dr. Bowen's researches show that only a small minority—four out of forty in the united dioceses of Killala and Achonry—may possibly have been guilty (if that is the term) of proselytism, a fact that makes it clear that any general charge of souperism against them must fail. Labouring in a field that was metaphorically—as well as literally—stony, they saw their rôle as that of resident Christian gentlemen, working for harmony rather than discord, and when the tragedy of the famine descended upon the land they gave themselves unsparingly to the relief of suffering. In that respect they are beyond criticism. And yet questions remain. What is the function of a Christian minister in a society that does not share his faith? Is he justified in interpreting his rôle as a purely social one? Does not paternalism, in the long run at least, do more harm than good? Most disturbing of all, did not the "mad and frenzied Gospel men" display a spiritual integrity that was lacking in the civilised and cultivated clergy of a latitudinarian minority church? Dr. Bowen does not attempt to answer these questions but it is a tribute to his scholarly book to say that it not only makes an important contribution to our knowledge of the social and ecclesiastical history of nineteenth-century Ireland but also, as good history should, raises issues of importance in a much wider context.

T. K. DANIEL

BLACK AND WHITE: The Negro and English Society 1555-1945 by James Walvin.
Allen Lane The Penguin Press, £3.95.

Those who are concerned with the tensions arising from post-1945 immigration will discover a wealth of material and a good many parallels for today's problems in a book which abounds in well-researched quotations. To discover Elizabeth I asking for repatriation, and the mid-eighteenth century spiritual predecessors of Powell advocating the

same, is to divest Enoch at least of his originality. Mr. Walvin's historical objectivity does not conceal a genuine sympathy with his subject.

There emerges the curious ambivalence of English Society towards 'lesser breeds'. The dehumanisation of black slaves considered along with other 'merchandise' as no more than commodities, contrasts with the kindness of many poor whites to runaway slaves and the humanitarian movements against slavery. The element of paternalism which overlays much of the more kindly aspects of white Christian attitudes is also in contradiction to the remarkable tolerance of mixed marriages and sexual relations in a society replete with sexual myths about the black man's potency and racialist rantings by so many propagandists.

White was synonymous with purity, and black had connotations of dirt and evil combined with the mystery of the 'dark continent'. It fostered curiosity, unbridled cruelty in the slave trade, and yet notwithstanding the prejudice, a willingness to accept a large black community in Britain without the persecution and pogroms that have attended the acceptance of such minority groups elsewhere. In this little has changed in British attitudes over five hundred years, other than the economic relationship. Nevertheless, the economic relationship of master and slave was frequently more personalised, so that some slaves became free and often earned a dignified place in the community. In that, at least, English society three hundred years ago was an advance upon apartheid in South Africa today.

This curious mixture of prejudice and intolerance, fear, ignorance, indulgence and even common feeling is so evidently similar to the emotions aroused by latter-day black immigrants that any contemporary sociologist will find Mr. Walvin's study both fascinating and invaluable. The combination of deep psychological prejudice understood by Shakespeare—not least in *Othello*—combined with the profiteering of Mr. Hawkins, and was aided and abetted by Elizabeth I with the tacit consent of the Spaniards who needed black labour in their colonies. Little has changed in the years between, save for the growing consciousness of larger and more significant numbers of black people in every continent, challenging both the slavemaster mentality and the paternal condescending attitudes of so many whites.

Neither a purely psychological nor entirely economic explanation suffice to explain this phenomenon. The Marxism of, say, Professor John Rex only takes on a real meaning if one accepts that prejudice has roots far deeper than economic motivation.

Lord Mansfield's judgment in Somerset's case is given a full chapter almost as interesting historically as the phenomenon of "the free black voice" of Sancho and Equiano whose writings and lives portray the "assimilated and yet isolated" nature of early black communities. Mansfield's historic judgment conceals his own previously scandalous behaviour towards the slave held in captivity for seven months and his own 'change of heart' eventually reflected in Parliament's conversion. Lestor and Bindman in their study of the law relating to race brought out the same point, much to the chagrin of the lawyer's conventional view of Mansfield's historic dictum that "the air of England is too pure for any slave to breathe".

Mr. Walvin takes the story up to the Second World War through the 'Voice of Reason' and the race riots against black minorities in many cities, not least in Liver-

pool and Cardiff. Trade union attitudes to coloured labour were not something to be proud of, and the mood of xenophobia generated in the aftermath of a century of jingoism is reflected in the prevailing intolerance towards other immigrant groups played upon by the Blackshirts in the inter-war years. Irish, Jews, blacks and Asians have frequently been among those attacked by the ignorant, the lumpen, the politically motivated and the psychologically disordered.

Alone among them the black cannot change his skin as the Bible shrewdly observed of the Ethiopian and the leopard. As a consequence he remains the most permanent object of aggression and exploitation with no inner strength to support him, having been stripped of his own language and culture and called by the name of some former slave owner. In considering current attitudes, this account of the relationship over 500 years of black and white in English Society is invaluable if we are to understand the roots of prejudice.

PAUL ROSE, M.P.

AMBROSE REEVES by John S. Peart-Binns.
Victor Gollancz, £3.90.

In South Africa the relations of church and state have long been peculiar. It would not be true to say that church and state are at loggerheads because the most powerful of all, the Dutch Reformed Church, always stands solidly and immovably behind the Nationalist party which has now held office for 25 years.

For 150 years, however, there has continued a missionary tradition. The earliest critics of apartheid were Nonconformist clergymen, of whom the greatest was Dr. John Philip whose name is still hissed by Afrikaners who first met it in their school history books.

The first thing to stress about the Rev. Ambrose Reeves, the subject to this biography, is that he is an Anglican who, to his own surprise, was elected Bishop of Johannesburg in 1949. Although he was not a missionary to Africans alone, he belongs in the tradition. Why he was chosen as Bishop is not made clear. He was known to have played a part in settling a strike when he was a priest in Liverpool in 1945. A year later there was a great strike of African workers on the gold mines of the Rand. It is just possible that some leading Anglicans believed that the church could help to make industrial relations less explosive. If this was their hope, it was deeply disappointing. For it took Reeves only a year or two to realise that it was not communism (which was outlawed, anyhow) but apartheid which was the enemy of social justice. For ten years he then consistently denounced racialism—until he was summarily deported back to Britain in 1960. That was the year of the long "national emergency" which began with the police firing on an unarmed black crowd at Sharpeville, near Johannesburg.

In that crisis Reeves made a mistake, for which he paid dearly. Acting on bad advice (including, I believe, some from lawyers) he fled to the neighbouring British colony of Swaziland, and then to England. Because Reeves certainly had nothing to hide, it was an error of judgment to "run away" (as his enemies put it). The only thing he had to fear was possible imprisonment without trial, which the law allowed. I doubt if the Government would have imprisoned him. In any event, his detention could not have lasted longer than five months, the period of the emergency; and he would have come out with flying colours.

As it was, leading Anglicans (who included mine-owners) tried to persuade him not to return to Johannesburg. But many, probably most, people in his diocese were loyal to him and this fact encouraged him to return. The odd thing is why the Government did not simply declare him a prohibited immigrant while he was out of the country. The reason may be that tyranny is sometimes tempered by inefficiency.

Reeves is wrongly described on the jacket of this book as "a revolutionary", a word that should not be used loosely in the South African context. In fact, in the eyes of the Government his offence lay in lending the prestige of his office to the cause of those who, throughout the 1950s, were trying in vain to resist, by peaceful means, the onslaughts made by the Government. The Anglican community was specially affected by the take-over of all its independent black church schools. The Nationalists wrongly believed that these were teaching sedition in one form or another (such as the truth about South Africa's history). In fact, only a few good secondary schools were giving Africans a mildly liberal education, since primary schools have no scope for politics. Whether its white members relished the rôle or not, the Anglican church had to defend the interests of its black members, who are in fact the majority.

Here the central dilemma of the church is revealed. In the inevitable conflict between the races, which side will politically-minded white Christians take? Reeves had no doubt where his duty lay and he paid the penalty for doing it with great courage.

His biographer seems pained by the chilly reception the Church of England gave him on his enforced return. The author seems to wonder why Reeves was not rewarded for his courage by appointment to a vacant bishopric. But this is to misconceive the deep difference between the churches at home and in South Africa. (They are, of course, two independent organisations.) In England the established church is a force for conservatism. In South Africa the Dutch Reformed is in effect the established church. Virtually all other churches sooner or later find themselves in conflict with the authorities bent on preserving an unequal society. To denounce racial inequality in its myriad forms is to be a critic of the very basis of the society you live in. That still did not make Reeves anything like a Communist, which the Nationalists labelled him after his expulsion. In their eyes, the worst of his radicalism was his readiness to work with allies, including Jews and Moslems or Hindus, who shared his own immediate aims.

Mr. Peart-Binns has written a straightforward and very readable account of the career of a brave man whose experience and conscience moved him gradually to the left. In its unpretentious way this is a valuable record, even if it leaves a more penetrating analysis of church and state in South Africa still to be undertaken.

JOHN GILD

PRANCING NOVELIST: a Defence of Fiction in the Form of a Critical Biography of Ronald Firbank by Brigid Brophy. Macmillan, £8.

At first sight it is unbearable: the hugest and most pugnaciously clever of books devoted to (in terms of quantity) the slimmest of writers, whose own intelligence operated far below the levels of examinable rationality. And once inside this immensity of a book, one may be a

bit frightened. I was. Miss Brophy is waiting, in the echoing entrance hall, with a massive lecture to deliver. It is called "In Praise of Fiction", and at times, as I tried not quite to catch her brisk eye, I thought it was marvellous, and at other times I didn't. I thought it was marvellous about the quality of good fiction ("A fully created novel . . . carries its creativeness into its design by causing the design to analyse the creativeness of the material") and about the arts and agonies of novelwriting: I was uneasy about a claim it pegs out for Firbank as the first writer of a fiction set free from the task of filling a reader's idle hours with naturalistic narrative. Fiction had been a doubtful art (this is the argument), and really a disgraced one, because it was seen as the provider of 'the narrative-drug': and the shame was compounded because this trivial narcotic was held to come from the same shelf as the day-dream-drug. Because Firbank's delicious fictions are non-naturalistic, their idiom and technique set the writer of fiction free to exploit the resemblance of a novel of psychoanalysis, and so to be truer to nature. They also enabled fiction to do "what cinema cannot but what music has been able to do for centuries".

There are at least two reasons, it seems to me, for finding this wrong-headed. The greatest fiction has always, under whatever surfaces, put the reader in direct touch with great subconscious patterns and meanings. Miss Brophy makes the point herself about Jane Austen and Dickens. I remember trying during the war to persuade a friend that I found Jane Austen's novels more profoundly and excitingly fit for the times than any other writing more obviously violent and massive (and, in terms of narrative, relevant) in its drama. And the cross-reference to music surely will not do. "A music lover," says Miss Brophy, "would think it absurd to hear a symphony or an opera once with enjoyment and then never dream of hearing it again." One of her claims for the order of fiction pioneered by Firbank is that it makes the reading of a novel a repeatable experience like the hearing of particular music. But surely the scale of the experience must be considered. To any one piece of music we give time measured usually in minutes, at most in hours. The reading of a novel may take days. And in fact, and despite this, novels are, and always have been, read over and over again. It strikes me that I have read one of Miss Brophy's own novels, *The Snow Ball* (not her most Firbankian) at least three times.

But that is almost the worst of Miss Brophy's book. Now she turns to Firbank himself, and at once she says things of that grossly misappreciated writer that could hardly be better said. "Firbank is a mosaicist, and one who designs with the shapes of the gaps as well as the shapes of the pieces." In that sentence, the excitement of reading Firbank is perfectly hit off. He causes the reader to learn how to leap between images. In the leaping—in sensing the change in direction between gap and gap—lies the special delight of reading him. Miss Brophy is the surest possible guide to this felicity. But she is much more than that. Stirred to rage by the biography of Firbank by Miriam Benkovitz, she sets out to piece the man together truly: and this is the cue for a display of literary detective work (fruit of what she calls her "own irrepressible speculativeness") that, most of the time, is as convincing as it is exhilarating. At the heart of it is the tracing of the central fantasies of Firbank's existence, written into his work, to childhood and youth lived in a house in Chislehurst that had, at its gates, the Catholic church patronised by the Empress Eugenie. Napoleon's exiled court, the persisting legend of the empress (dissolving, for Firbank, into his

feelings about his mother), the rites—and the ridiculous qualities—of Catholicism (he became a convert in the year the house was sold)—all these elements are traced and raided for meanings: many of these, the meanings, being teased out by way of the inspection of words and names used (Firbank was a rich name-maker), facts found at the edges of other facts, or indeed facts transmogrified. This detective work is then capped by another burst of it, designed to show that Firbank set out to absorb, so that he might exceed, the influence of Oscar Wilde: which involved making himself known to all the survivors of Wilde's circle—at the cost to Firbank, in the case of Wilde's son, of getting himself admitted to an absurdly unsuitable Cambridge college.

What emerges from this intricate study, deeply courteous to its subject (at one point she broods over the delicacy of referring to him as "Firbank", with its echo of the "English public-school habit of man-to-manly address"), is that Firbank's work is a triumph of the aesthetic spirit over the philistine rules of English conduct, achieved on the dark edge of the field where Wilde himself was horribly slaughtered.

Prancing Novelist is not always easy to read. This is not because Miss Brophy is ever less than lucid or lively. It is partly because she has adopted her subject's brevity of paragraph: and for exposition, this becomes tiring. She sends a reader back and forth to this or that part of her own argument; you are constantly leaving the main path to step into interesting, but fatiguing, jungle of annotation and cross-reference. At times, that busy, bustling quality of her good mind makes one long, yes, even for a touch of relaxing obtuseness. My own reading was spun out because I was driven constantly back to Firbank's novels: but that is a mark of the excellence of the study—she fills one with an appetite for the work of a man who, in the full sense of the phrase, was one of the most *beautifully funny* writers in the English language. (One of the sharpest points she makes is that "in defying the rules" of that language, Firbank "was defying . . . English social rules about sex".)

Today, when it might be thought that the shameful drift of the disgracing of Oscar Wilde had been reversed, Firbank ought to be widely read. We should be making massive amends for having obliged this fine artist to publish all his work at his own expense. Perhaps Miss Brophy's study, which makes it shameful for anyone to persist with the old negligent uninformed estimate of the man (someone to whom I talked of him recently said: "Ah yes—greenery-yallery!"), might at last drum up the body of delighted readers he deserves.

EDWARD BLISHEN

ICARUS: or, The Future of Science by Bertrand Russell. Spokesman Books, £1.

This is a facsimile reprint of an essay first published in 1924 in Kegan Paul's "Today and Tomorrow" series. It was written as a reply to J. B. S. Haldane's optimistic *Daedalus: or, science and the future*. Russell does not speculate about the likely developments of science, but considers the already apparent social effects of scientific developments. Science and its technology might enable us "to gratify our passions more freely", but Russell fears that—

science will be used to promote the power of dominant groups, rather than to make men happy . . . Science has not given men more self-control, more kindness or more power of discounting their passions in deciding upon a course of action.

In demonstrating this, in view of the limited scale of the work, he treats a remarkable number of topics of continuing concern. He repeatedly deplores the conditioning that passes for education. This enables ubiquitous propaganda to pre-empt free choice in both political and economic matters. From this and from the increased scale of organisation follows alienation and either indifference or desperation. He explores the ramifications of national and international political and economic power. He points out the logical necessity of birth control and the political impracticability of eugenics, the latter a preoccupation of that era.

Fifty years later we are still struggling with same problems. As one would expect, these pages are full of provocative insights, but unfortunately no solutions.

C. J. MOREY

THEATRE

CROMWELL by David Storey. Royal Court Theatre.

Several of the recent 'topical' Royal Court plays have shown confrontations between statusquocians and activists, and the internecine conflicts within those two opposing factions. Plays like Christopher Hampton's *Savages** and Howard Brenton's *Magnificence* have universal implications that transcend their topicality, but they do not aim at being profoundly philosophical.

David Storey, novelist turned playwright, has written plays as diverse in subject-matter and genre as *In Celebration*, *The Changing Room* and *Home*. His latest play, *Cromwell*, is an interesting follow-on to those mentioned above, because it is a predominantly 'philosophical' work, a sort of Everyman rather than an historical play. It is even written in blank verse.

Cromwell follows the fortunes of a group of people thrown together by a war in which both armies look alike, a confused and trudging ritual of a war. Gradually, Storey isolates Proctor, the idealist, and focuses on his quest for The Light. Proctor debates with others and with himself, and is swayed by his vicissitudes, before finally reaching the Boatman, who ferries him across the River.

This sounds both preposterous and dreary in synopsis. Factual prose can do scant justice to a finely-wrought play, so skilfully constructed that it flows and rises with seeming inevitability from the physical to the metaphysical, encompassing action on so many planes.

Jocelyn Herbert's exquisitely spare design enriches the play, and lends it cohesion, while the grouping and movement of the actors on the stage amplifies the currents and rhythms that lie in the writing.

I would suggest that David Storey had to write this sober, worthy but not very memorable play as part of his development as a writer (I know he would quarrel with that description of it). It cannot suggest, however, that *Cromwell* has to be seen.

* Christopher Hampton's *Savages*, with Paul Schofield, has transferred to the Comedy Theatre. (Recommended.)

VERA LUSTIG

THE PETTICOAT REBELLION.

The National Youth Theatre.

The suffragette movement was at its peak during the 1908-14 period: it was fanatical, courageous, extremist and a symptom of an England that was going through one of the most uneasy periods of its history. Now, in an

enjoyable history lesson, the National Youth Theatre have gathered together some fifty girls to enact the precursors and the campaign itself, interlacing a collage of social documents, pointed scenes and gutsy songs to provide an entertainment that was at once enjoyable and instructive.

The late Victorian period, in which the position of women was rapidly changing, was sharply displayed. The condition of working maids was highlighted as was that of working women in the sweated labour sewing shops. Education was rapidly extending to women and an amusing scene shows girls being taught to enter a cab without showing their ankles; and another enjoyable scene shows Elisabeth Anderson being rejected as a medical applicant, despite the brilliance and erudition of her thesis. Women's position *vis-à-vis* marriage, women's employment societies and the outrage of bloomers are all vividly documented. The first act ends with a stirring speech taken from J. S. Mill.

Once the campaign gets under way we are given a picture of the Women's Rights champions being ignored at Speakers' Corner, and Emily and Christabel Pankhurst defending themselves at Bow Street. The performance of Emily Pankhurst had authority and a restrained power that carried well above the mass of campaigning women. There was perhaps a tendency to allow the scenes to stretch beyond their natural length: Asquith could have been interrupted three times rather than six, and the window breaking could have taken place twice rather than five times. As a result of the most unpleasant details of forcible feeding of imprisoned women, and despite their incendiary activities, we remain sympathetic to these courageous women fighting for their rights; but perhaps the streaks of fanaticism could have been ridiculed a little: who would sympathise with the activities of the Angry Brigade today?

The Great War is graphically delineated at the end of the play. "Tipperary" and "Goodbye Dolly" are interspersed between graphic depictions of bombs and destruction. And it is rightly made clear that women's part in the war effort advanced their cause much more than the previous fanatical exploits.

The conclusion to the play is rather weak: a brief recital of the voting achievements leading to 1928; and the play peters out with an incongruous bow to Women's Lib. But this is not to deny the energy, the superb crowd movements and the precision with which Gareth Thomas's production tells this invigorating story.

JIM HERRICK

LETTERS

The Jesus-Story as Myth

We owe a debt to Professor G. A. Wells for his *Jesus of the Early Christians*. However, if Jesus did not exist, as set out in the gospels, then the story of Judas Iscariot is not factual; but there it is—why?

Is this Judas story perhaps a kind of cryptogram? Some scribe, knowing his was making a fair copy of a 'cook-up', put 'his oar in'?

"Judas" could represent the "House of Judas", that is, the Zealots. The thirty pieces of silver come straight from Zechariah 11:12 & 13, which relates to the fall of Jerusalem. "Iscariot" is perhaps a punning word meaning both *sicarius* and "bearer of the bag", pointing to the Zealots who must bear the burden of the blame for the destruction of the temple. Was the kiss to identify Jesus as a Zealot, and Judas's suicide because the Zealots committed suicide at Masada?—So many coincidences; could they all be random chance?

Further, Barabbas may have meant "Son of the Rabbi". Now Judas, the first of the Zealots, was "a Rabbi with a sect of his own".

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The gospel Jesus had brothers James and Simon. If Barabbas was the son of Judas the Rabbi, then he also, according to Josephus, had brothers James and Simon. For what it is worth, both were Galileans, and both said to be in prison at the same time, at the same place, for the same offence: sedition. All just coincidence?

As to Josephus, the Christians added to his record in order to support their case. If necessary, they would also delete with the same end in view.

I offer these remarks with humility, being new to the subject. Above all things I would value Professor Well's comments (even if they hurt!).

CHARLES M. WHITE.

Professor WELLS replies:

Theologians are well aware that Matthew and Luke are embellishments of Mark. It is therefore misleading of Mr. White to write of "the Story of Judas", when what we have is Mark's story enhanced by further details in later gospels. The thirty pieces of silver and the traitor's suicide, for instance, are embellishments of Matthew.

If Mr. White's suggestion (that some scribe wrote the Judas story as a kind of cryptogram) is to be taken seriously, then (1) the cryptogram must be complete in one extant document, and we must not have to reconstruct it by harmonising three or even four gospels; and (2) we must be clear what the decoded cryptogram alleges. As to this later point, all that I can gather from Mr. White is that he thinks some reference to Zealotism is implied. He takes five details of 'the' Judas story as such references, and infers that such an accumulation can only have been deliberately contrived. But in fact four of the five can be linked with Zealotism, only by fanciful exegesis, and the fifth (the name "Tscariot") might (according to H. H. Rowley's *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. Judas) mean any of half a dozen things unconnected with Zealotism.

Mr. White will still ask, why is Judas's treachery narrated if not true? He will find some help here from Cheyne (art. Judas in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*) and J. M. Robertson (*Jesus and Judas*, London, 1927). Robertson's discussion of the documentation has been admitted by Bultmann (*History of the Synoptic Tradition*) to have been perspicacious.

Missing the Point

With all due respect, I feel that your editorial comment rather misses the point of my letter (July). I was not proposing a conspiracy of freethinkers to bring about the physical destruction of all churches, chapels, mosques, synagogues, and so on, although I feel that the world would be a better place without these things. In this matter we must be content to leave things to the natural process of evolution. But if we find that the religious owners of sacred edifices are willing to sacrifice their property for some material gain we may applaud their rationality. There is certainly no need for us to blame their disrespect for sacred but inanimate objects.

Apart altogether from the temples dedicated to the worship of false gods, there are plenty of things in the world to feed and nourish the human sense of the sublime and the beautiful.

PETER CROMMELIN.

Dogmatism—Religious and Sceptical

Mr. Peter Crommelin (letters, August) says, of his "purely secular humanist conscience" that, "This I have come to feel as the only moral force capable of generating genuine freedom of thought, as something totally different from the mental confusion generated by the 'media', or the many other ways by which a free people are stopped from thinking."

The implication of this is that thought is only free if it proceeds from the presuppositions of secular humanism, and that you can only think freely if you start from an ideological position.

It seems to me that Mr. Crommelin has exchanged dogmatic Romanism for dogmatic scepticism. How can a "free" people be "stopped from thinking"?

Peter Crommelin sees "nothing to regret in the demolition of church buildings" because "they are haunted by their evil association with religious bigotry". He also views the sole motivation of religious belief to be "the illusory sense of having been called by God to suppress and kill the heretic". One wonders whether, if Mr. Crommelin had the power, he would return the compliment and forcibly tear down all places of worship.

I am reminded of the old peasant, at the time of the French Revolution, viewing the destruction of the churches and being told, "We are destroying anything that will remind you of God". He replied: "Then you may as well tear down the stars".

DAVID J. M. LEYSHON.

Why Not Dual Currency ?

Why is our monetary system so unsophisticated? A dual system, with the pound Sterling distinct from a domestic pound, would offer security and stability. Sterling would be protected, not being subject to the inflationary tendencies in Britain. Such changes would be reflected in the exchange rate of Sterling/domestic £. Equally, inflation elsewhere would thus enhance the value of Sterling in other currencies.

WALTER CONNOLLY.

Marxism and Freethought

In her review of *On Religion* (August), Patricia Knight claims that the book "comprises in date order every single statement made by Marx and Engels on religion".

This Soviet compilation does not, however, include, or even mention, Marx's youthful essay, "On the Union of the Faithful with Christ according to John 15:1-14, described in its Ground and Essence, in its Unconditional Necessity and in its Effects", from which I quoted an extract in the June *Freethinker*, or his "Thoughts of a Young Man on Choosing a Profession". English texts of these Essays, which reflect a passionate faith in God and in the mediation of Christ, may be found in Robert Payne's *The Unknown Karl Marx*.

As regards the extracts from Engels's "Dialectics of Nature", included in *On Religion*, it is not, I think, generally known that, as related by Professor Sidney Hook (in his *Reason, Social Myths and Democracy*, 1966), the whole of Engel's manuscript was seen and judged by Einstein. Einstein's judgment was that, "Its content is not of any special interest either from the standpoint of contemporary physics or of the history of physics."

Engels, indeed, believed that "The cell is the Hegelian being-in-itself" and, following him, Lenin wrote that "oats grow according to Hegel" (*Works*, vol. 7).

It is here that freethinkers can "clear the ground a little and remove some of the rubbish that lies in the way of knowledge" (John Locke).

JUDEX.

Marx's Stages of Communism

Through you I say: Come off it, Judex!

Judex's latest diatribe against me starts with the misleading suggestion that I have made a "palpably false" statement that Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* spoke of a "socialist society". Of course he did not; he never used the word 'socialism', and I never said that he did. But he *did* distinguish a "first" and a "higher" stage of Communism, and I see no disadvantage whatever in the later adoption of the term 'Socialism' for the first and 'Communism' for the higher stage.

Once the point about stages is mastered—most of what Judex says Hobsbawn, Medvedev and the rest say boils down to a common failure to appreciate the need for development by stages and the fact that the *path to Communism* (or to Marx's "higher stage") is a long one depending on the rate at which the "springs of co-operative wealth" can be made—by public ownership, planning and technology—to flow more freely than ever before in human society. This vital point is neatly bypassed by Judex's latest reading list.

By the way, Sakharov may have "compared" Stalinism and Fascism. But we in Britain today would be much better served by "comparing" Heath's antics in Northern Ireland with the worst of Stalinism and with Fascism. The 'knock on the door' in the middle of the night was the symbol at one time of both. But now it is reality in Heath-occupied Northern Ireland!

PAT SLOAN.

Black Shirts and Beer

With reference to Denis Cobell's review (July) of *The Fascist Movement in Britain*, may I as an ex-member correct some of the statements in the book.

Two organisations, both anti-Semitic, existed before the General Strike of 1926: the British Fascists, and the National Party who also called themselves the National Fascisti; I belonged to the latter.

The British Fascists wore only a badge with "B.F." appropriately upon it. The National Fascisti at meetings more obnoxiously copied the Italians and wore black shirts, khaki knee breeches, knee boots or boots and puttees and officers' Sam Browne belts.

At the age of twenty I joined the National Fascisti the day before the General Strike and on that day marched behind their Union Jack from Hyde Park to their headquarters in Chapel Street, Edgware Road. We were harassed all the way by hundreds of 'Reds'.

They later moved to premises in Beadon Road, Hammersmith, where after a kangaroo court trial I was expelled and narrowly escaped the castor oil treatment for seducing the Leader's mistress.

(continued on back page)

(At such a tender age surely it must have been the other way round.) I was later reinstated after they had moved to Hogarth Road, Earls Court, and was active for a couple of years in organisation in the N.1, N.W.1, N.W.2 and N.W.6 areas where we had quite a few hundred members and supporters. Incidentally, my immediate superior a few years later took the Cloth and became a Catholic priest.

I can confirm that we always had police protection; we carried coshes (purely for defence, of course) and mixed intimately with many members of the Primrose League. We were always welcome at the Conservative Party Rooms in Upper Street, Islington. The British Fascists considered themselves rather more respectable and a cut above us; they deplored our street fights with the 'Reds' and there was little fraternisation between the two parties.

In later years I have come to the conclusion that the rank and file Fascists understood as little of Fascism as the Hyde Park 'Reds' did of socialism or Communism. They were all only there for the beer.

W. E. CHAPMAN.

Ideological Carousing

Mr. R. Stuart Montague's ideological carousel: "battles—or bottles long ago" (August *Freethinker*), of membership of the British Fascist Party, C.P. and subsequent allegiance to "Marxism" hardly express consistency. Consequently, the non-dialectical view contained in his criticism of F.A. Ridley's book review on Plekhanov is hardly surprising. "Ridley," we are told, "should have known better than to call Russia 'the first socialist state'".

This constant objection from one who claims to have made an "intensive study" of the philosophical works of Marx and Engels is of precisely the same vein as the 'That's not socialism!' attitude that tried to counter the views of Marx and Engels regarding the Commune of Paris. Mr. Montague should remember that Engels called these types "social-democratic philistines". He should also remember that it was the Commune, more than any other single event, that transformed the thinking of these two. Nor should it be forgotten that Marx was quite hostile to this Bakuninist-inspired revolt, before it happened.

Agreeing that the Commune was not "socialism", Marx nevertheless pointed out: "The Commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economic foundations upon which rests the existence of classes and therefore class rule . . . They [the workers, and the peasantry] have no ready-made utopias to introduce . . . they will have to pass through long struggles . . . historic processes . . . transforming circumstances and men . . ." And further: "It is generally the fate of completely new historical creations to be mistaken for the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life . . ."

Plekhanov, like Kautsky, great theorists though they were, capitulated when faced with concrete reality. They failed to understand the *dialectical* aspect of Marxism in *practice*. In other words, they built a vehicle with a remarkable engine and superstructure but never understood—it needed *wheels*! Lenin provided these.

Mr. Montague may not accept this, but at the International Monetary Conference at Bermuda in 1971 (tickets for the three days: £252), speaker after speaker confirmed: "If it wasn't for Marx . . . If it wasn't for Lenin . . . then we wouldn't be here discussing this monetary crisis." The "lever" Marx spoke about has been at work for quite some time—you can call it capitalism if you like, but . . . they know!

TREVOR MORGAN.

Agnosticism, Science and Philosophy

There is a sort of aeriform fluidity about Trevor Morgan's letter in the August *Freethinker*. I take it that Mr. Morgan is writing in defence of science and materialism and in opposition to some philosophical 'third way' which afflicts agnostics and leaves them both physically and mentally (?) 'paralysed'.

If I take it more or less right, then Mr. Morgan is surely confusing a *scientific* outlook and a *philosophical* position. Surely, one can be both an agnostic and a 'believer in' science and materialism, without also being incapable of *acting* rationally—or even irrationally!

CHARLES BYASS.

Celestial Chauvinism

If it is true, as Miss Barbara Smoker avers (June *Freethinker*), that the Judaeo-Christian God is "the original male chauvinist pig", are we justified in assuming that Heaven is so much Sty in the Sky?

AELFRED MEADE

Thank you very much; kindly leave these columns! (Ed.)

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).

London Secular Group (outdoor meetings). *Thursdays*, 12.30 a.m.—2 p.m. at Tower Hill; *Sundays*, 3—7 p.m. at Marble Arch. (*The Freethinker* and other literature on sale.)

Humanist Holidays House Party, Brighton, 23-27 December. Visits, theatre, table games etc. Total cost £22 including full board, Yuletide fare, gratuities and V.A.T. For full details contact (as soon as possible) Mrs. Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone: 01-642 8796).

National Council for Civil Liberties/Progressive League joint conference, High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts. 2-4 November, "Civil Liberties in the 70s". Further details from Kenneth Dobbie, 162 Gunnerbury Avenue, London W3.

Because of the new postage charges, the postal subscription rates of *The Freethinker* have had to be increased. The new rates are given on p. 130. Existing subscriptions will be adjusted.

EVENTS

Brighton & Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 7 October, 5.30 p.m.: Professor Sir HERMANN BONDI, "Karl Popper, Science and Politics."

Freethought History and Bibliography Society, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Tuesday, 18 September, 7.45 p.m.: Dr. EDWARD ROYLE, "Secularism's Lost Leader—the reputation of G. J. Holyoake."

Humanist Holidays. 21—23 September: Weekend in Coventry, based at the Croft Hotel, Stoke Green. Will include sightseeing tour, theatre visit, and tour of Bradlaugh haunts at Northampton (led by BILL MCILROY). For further details contact Mrs. Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone: 01-642 8796).

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. *Sundays*, 6.30 p.m. 30 September: Annual General Meeting; 7 October: PETER CADOGAN, "In Defence of Utopias against Sir Karl Popper"; 14 October: discussion.

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. *Sundays*, 7.30 p.m. 16 September: Dr. MUNGU MUKHERJEE, "Race and Intelligence"; 7 October: Dr. JAMES HEMMING, "The Religious Confidence Trick." (30 September: ramble in Greenwich/Blackheath area—details from Nick Minton, 01-864 5251.)

"Salute to Robert Owen", Saturday, 13 October: train/coach trip to Newtown, Montgomeryshire and the Robert Owen Museum, followed by tour of mid-Wales. £3.50 return from London. For further details contact Mr. J. M. Alexander, 37 Belsize Park Gardens, London NW3 (telephone: 01-722 9503—home—or 01-629 9496 ext. 225—office).

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 24 September, 3 p.m.: Annual Reunion (guest of honour, RICHARD CLEMENTS). *Meetings begin again* on Sunday, 7 October.

Thomas Paine Society Tenth Anniversary Dinner, The Phoenix, 14 Victoria Street, London SW1. Saturday, 6 October, 6.30 p.m. Tickets £3.25 each from the Secretary, T.P.S., 23 Pinders House Road, Nottingham NG2 3EG.