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## POPULATION COUNTDOWN

### —URGENT ACTION NEEDED TO AVERT WORLD CHAOS

At a press conference in London to inaugurate Population Countdown, a campaign which it is hoped will make a major contribution to World Population Year 1974, the campaign's director, Mr. Ron Dick, said that urgent action was necessary to reverse present population trends if world chaos were to be avoided. With a daily increase in world population of some 215,000, it is estimated that between thirty and fifty million people, many of them children, died last year as a result of starvation or the diseases associated with malnutrition. Mr. Dick said that hopes of some "green revolution" feeding the seven thousand million people expected to inhabit this planet by the end of the century were becoming more and more remote. Throughout the world, nations are becoming aware of the need for a population policy. "The alternatives—mass starvation, violence, political unrest and finally chaos—are too grim to contemplate. We must reduce, halve and eventually reverse the present population growth rate. Only by so doing will we improve our chances of avoiding chaos in the future. It will be a long and difficult task. The sooner we start, the better our chances."

#### Late comers

The campaign has the support of leading churchmen. Eleven of them, including six Anglican bishops and one Roman Catholic, predictably Archbishop T. D. Roberts, have signed a letter to all churches. The letter says that "as Christians we are called to be good stewards of all God's gifts to us and this alone would lead us to endorse this cause." Readers of *The Freethinker* will no doubt welcome these late comers into the family-planning fold, but will wonder what good appeals to God are when we are simultaneously being urged to be good stewards of his gift "life", which must be promoted and protected in all its forms and conditions however degraded. Even the suffering, we are told from other pulpits, is part of the plan. However, the stewardship argument seems to be catching on. The Jesuit periodical *The Month* suggests that many Catholics are sceptical about the existence of a world population problem. "They fail to see how fulfilment of the divine command 'to increase and multiply' can lead to disaster, though it is limited by the injunction 'and fill the earth'. They make use of the concept of Providence which takes little account of the corresponding doctrine of human stewardship and responsibility for history."

More and more Catholics are realizing, however, that they cannot wait for their leaders to manipulate their constant tradition sufficiently to enable them to jump on the bandwagon. It was reported in *International Planned Parenthood News* (February 1973) that a survey conducted in the United States found that two-thirds of Catholic women were ignoring the 1968 papal encyclical and using methods of birth control banned by their Church. In the 20-24 age range 78 per cent were using disapproved methods, while the 1965 the figure had been only 51 per cent. It was also found that among women under 45 who received communion at least once a month a majority were defying their Church. A Catholic cleric is reported as having cleverly commented that it was a highly questionable assumption that people who talk easily about their sex life represent the totality of Catholics. However, dis-

tinguished Catholic sociologist, the Reverend Andrew Greeley, commented that so many surveys had shown the same result that the situation is no longer seriously in doubt.

Even in Eire a Bill is at the moment passing through the Dail which would legalize the importation, advertisement and sale of contraceptives. The Irish bishops seem to be taking a new line. In a statement they said that the decision was a matter for the legislators. The Church's teaching was clear on the point, but from this it did not follow that the State must prohibit the importation of contraceptives. Legalized contraception would, they said, lead to increased marital infidelity and venereal disease. What mattered was the effect on the quality of life in society. This indeed seems to be what will sway the Dail in favour of contraception, but they are likely to take a different view of what contributes to "quality of life" from that held by a load of hide-bound celibate priests.

#### Church and State

It will probably be a long time before the Irish hierarchy follow their Columbian brothers-in-Christ. It is reported in the *Sunday Times* (15 July) that faced with a population explosion of from 23 million now to 60 million by the end of the century the Cardinal and bishops have ruled that all forms of contraception except sterilization and abortion are acceptable. This is particularly incredible in a country where civil marriage and divorce are impossible. Apparently, in most countries in Latin America there are no government family-planning programmes on account of the control of the Roman Catholic Church over public policy, the only exceptions being Cuba and pre-coup Chile. In most Latin American countries most of what birth control facilities there are, are made available through funds from the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

The I.P.P.F. recently celebrated twenty-one years of existence with a conference held at Brighton in October, attended by delegates from eighty countries, international agencies and more than one hundred family planning associations. In 1973 it will spend thirty million dollars on its activities throughout the world. It is hoped that by 1975



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its budget will be fifty million dollars. It is through the I.P.P.F. that Population Countdown will make its international effect.

One of the speakers at the conference, Dr. Fred Sai, criticized developed countries for being over cautious in insisting that the pill be only available on prescription. This highlights the change that will occur in Britain's family planning services from 1 April 1974, when the Family Planning Association clinics will be gradually absorbed into the National Health Service. This will have the unfortunate effect of imposing prescription charges in those areas where the service is now free. Several local authorities are seeking legal advice as to how they might be able to continue to make the service available free. While recognizing the Government's difficulty in making contraceptives available free while charging for potentially life-giving medicines, it would have been a nice gesture of the seriousness with which they view the population situation, if they did. However, the F.P.A. will still have a major role to play. For with unwanted pregnancies running at 250,000 a year, there remains a great deal to be done in the way of education and advice.

It is as part of this effort that the F.P.A. is sponsoring Population Countdown. The campaign has the dual rôle of making the people of Britain aware of the world's growing population and the inevitable consequences of unrestrained population growth, and of raising money to support voluntary family-planning projects throughout the world. The present campaign seeks to raise money by interesting as many small contributors as possible. The aim is to raise £150,000 in the first year, rising to one million pounds by 1978. Universities and women's organizations will be approached and there will be a major education campaign aimed at schools. It is also hoped to set up one hundred local groups. Readers may feel that there is little scope for a population campaign in this country. However, even with Britain's modest population growth, to meet the needs of projected population for the end of the century would require three million more homes and two thousand more primary schools. In these terms the pressure of population in this country can easily be appreciated. A measure of the possibilities worldwide can be gauged from the example of China. Here family planning remained a matter of individual choice, but a social norm was established in which the population growth became manageable.

# NEWS

## THE DEVIL AND ALL HIS WORKS

While the trendies continue to peddle their insipid de-mythologized religion, the rest of Christendom continues in its traditional, reactionary way, taking every thing literally, however bizarre it may seem in the light of modern thought. One of the obvious examples of this is belief in a personalized power of evil—and why not if you are capable of believing in a personalized power of good? Unfortunately, whereas belief in a power for good can be nice and cosy and reassuring, belief in a power for evil can have singularly nasty repercussions. Yet this is undoubtedly a part of orthodox Christianity with masses of Biblical support, and sure enough the Christians are in there spreading the nastiness.

Satan in recent times has hit on a highly successful strategy. Using an army of psychiatrists, materialists, humanists, freethinkers and modernist clergy, he has spread the comfortable notion that he does not exist, thereby tempting the ordinary Christian to lower his spiritual guard.

So an editorial in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 25 November greeted the appointment by the Bishop of London of the Reverend Prebendary Henry Cooper as diocesan adviser on exorcism. Putting the God-of-the-gaps to good use, Mr. Cooper pointed to mental disturbances which neither medicine nor psychiatry could cure. These were cases for the exorcist (who need not be specially trained, but preferably would be the local parish priest. A correspondent has sent me a clipping from *The News* (Portsmouth) in which it is reported that in addressing a conference of social and parochial workers, the Reverend. E. S. Hayden of Calbourne, Isle of Wight, claimed that "an eminent doctor" had estimated that only half the people suffering from mental illness today actually had a physical disorder of the brain. The rest were suffering from a form of spiritual disease. Mr. Hayden said that generally the only way to distinguish between physical or biological brain damage, and spiritual disease, was to ask the sufferer to pray. "If people are incapable of prayer, one can infer that they have a spiritual illness."

One can imagine that a service of exorcism can only make people already disturbed, even worse. This is borne out by the case of the theological student who became "possessed" during a lecture on exorcism, as reported in the October issue. In 1972 a commission of Anglicans and Roman Catholics convened by the Anglican Bishop of Exeter produced a report entitled *Exorcism* (S.P.C.K., 50p). In the section on the exorcism of persons, continual reference is made to the possibility of violent reaction from the "afflicted person". If a woman, another woman must be present to restrain her. In no circumstances should such a person be left with less than two others to restrain him. The sufferer should be prevented from leaving during the exorcism lest he be free to roam in a state of acute distress. There should always be more than one priest present, so that in the event of the would-be exorcist feeling himself being possessed he can withdraw. After the evil spirit has been commanded to leave the person, the exorcist may then exhale deeply or sprinkle the "patient" with holy water. (Presumably, if the officiant has a cold the two actions are combined.) But "if as occasionally happens there are somewhat violent physical reactions, the patient should be firmly held down, and a form of exorcism should be repeated."



# AND NOTES

Exorcism can also be applied to places. In August 1972 at Yeovil in Somerset a man was found hanged. He was a fetishist who among other things used partial strangulation as a means of sexual stimulation. The man's wife, a credulous daughter of the Church, came to the opinion that the room the man used was possessed of a ghost or some evil spirit. The priest was called and the room duly exorcized. The exact circumstances of the discovery of the man's body were not reported, but it is certain that if his wife had heard her husband strangling, she would have fled the house at the sound of what she believed to be a diabolical manifestation. Here is an example where the Church's support for superstitious beliefs of the crudest kind may have had disastrous results.

Doubtless these same superstitious beliefs are taught in Church schools at our expense, the highlight for Catholic kids being a trip to the church to kiss the relic, a sure protection against demonic influence. The Bishop of Exeter's report reassures us that "God and the good angels never invade or attempt to dominate human wills". I am not so sure. I think that perhaps the devil brigade need a touch of their own medicine: "Deliver this place (room, house, church) from . . . all vain imaginations, projections and phantasms." (*Exorcism*, p. 32).

## EMERGENCY

The lack of a written constitution in this country leaves its citizens very much exposed to excessive reaction by the Government. This danger is highlighted by the present state of emergency. It is so easy for a Government to invoke these powers which are extremely wide covering such things as requisition of property, and there is no obligation on the Government to have to justify its invocation of these extraordinary powers before a Supreme Court. The question arises in this case as to whether the present Government is not being rather reckless in its acquisition of these powers and in so doing posing an unnecessary threat to civil liberty. This Government has had recourse to them no less than five times in three years despite the fact that in the field of industrial relations the Government has specifically given itself other remedies—cooling-off periods and compulsory ballots.

A final confirmation of the Government's lack of judgement in this matter is its exemption of places of worship from its ban on the use of electricity for heating certain buildings. Ministers of religion will also be eligible for additional petrol allowances, should rationing be introduced. Clearly Ted Heath knows which side the Churches will be on in any confrontation with labour.

## THE LARGEST LOBBY

What is claimed to have been the largest parliamentary rally ever with over 9,000 participants marched on Westminster on 20 November to lobby M.P.s to amend the Abortion Act. The rally had been organized by Mr. Leo Abse and Mr. James Dunn (R.C.; Labour, Liverpool Kirkdale) for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. Addressing the lobbyists Mrs. Jill Knight said

that an amendment of the Act was inevitable, as parliament had not voted for abortion on demand or for abortion being used as a means of contraception. Mrs. Shirley Williams, until recently Opposition spokesman on home affairs said that those opposed to the Act should argue from facts, not emotions, but went on to sloganize to the effect that the National Health Service should cure not kill. Mr. Gordon Oakes, Labour's parliamentary spokesman for local government and the environment suggested that the number of babies born with congenital malformations had risen since the passing of the Act. This statement led Mrs. Diane Munday, General Secretary of the Abortion Law Reform Association, to point out later that gynaecologists had attributed the rising incidence of malformations to the fact that medical science was keeping more babies alive, even before they were born. A remark made at the rally that typifies the attitude of those opposing the Act was that of Mr. Selwyn Gummer, Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party who said, "I do not care much what Mrs. Justice Lane's report may say—it is a whitewash."

A body from the same stable as SPUC is the innocuously named Human Rights Society. It recently organized a one-day seminar at the London School of Economics entitled "Population and Human Rights" with a distinguished list of speakers from medicine and the social sciences. Despite its broad sounding name the organization is particularly concerned with what it regards as the myth of the population explosion, and discussion of this usually leads on to such topics as abortion or euthanasia. Its literature contains such bizarre suggestions as that the "Population Explosion" hysterics are inducing among schoolchildren the sense that they have no right to be alive. I wonder how many of those who spoke at the seminar had bothered to read their literature carefully. Donald Gould, writing in the *New Statesman* (16 November) points out an interesting link between SPUC and the H.R.S. Phyllis Brown who is the press officer of SPUC is none other than the Phyllis Court who is Director of the Foundation for Education and Research in Childbearing. This organization, which is almost entirely concerned with abortion, shares its offices with the Human Rights Society of which Phyllis Court is a founder member.

Representatives of the National Secular Society participated recently in two broadcasts. Barbara Smoker, president of the N.S.S., was one of the speakers in a discussion on Sunday observance which was included in *Woman's Hour* on 28 November. R. J. Condon, a member of the N.S.S. Executive Committee and a frequent contributor to the columns of *The Freethinker*, discussed the Bible with a member of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the London Broadcasting Company programme *We Believe* on 2 December.

## QUESTIONS OF CENSORSHIP

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## UNINVITED CHAPLAINS ROW

The Churches in this country benefited enormously from the Second World War—not directly, but from the sentimental indulgence of religion that pervaded the policies of Governments of whatever complexion at that time. The most notorious example is, of course, the Education Act of 1944. Four years later with the establishment of the National Health Service a similarly excessive accommodation of superstition occurred. Ministry of Health circulars issued in 1948 required that hospital authorities “should give special attention to provide for the spiritual needs of both patients and staff”; “whenever the size of a hospital justifies it, a room should be set apart for use as a chapel”; and “the Management Committee or Board of Governors should appoint a chaplain—or chaplains for more than one denomination—for every hospital for which they are responsible.”

The objectionable results of all this are well known to readers of *The Freethinker*—the unjustified use of limited public funds to furthering superstition, the forcible registering of patients as “C. of E.” and the resulting unwanted visits, the taking over of hospital wards for religious services. And all this not perpetrated by fanatical infiltrators, but aided, abetted and funded by the hospital authorities. As a recent report of the Joint Committee of the Churches entitled *The Hospital Chaplain* says:

The most important change effected in 1948 was that the chaplain was paid for his work, and was paid by the State by money provided by Parliament. His position in the hospital was recognised and the importance of that position emphasised. The number of official chaplains increased because every hospital was required to appoint them rather than the spiritual ministry to patients being left—as it was in some cases before 1948—to the perhaps changing goodwill of local church and hospital.

Doubtless the Churches would deny that the opportunity of the sick bed is taken to proselytize. However, one assumes a hospital chaplain's religious views are strongly held, and it is only natural for him to take every opportunity to put them across, however irrelevant they may be to the patient's need. As the report says, “Many patients may not be in any conventional sense practising a religion, but very many of them are apprehensive and fearful and are perhaps facing the great questions of life and death for the first time for many years. They gave the trained hospital chaplain an opportunity and a challenge.”

The use of the phrase “not in any conventional sense practising a religion” is telling, for this must represent a growing number in this post-Christian country. Perhaps this is the reason behind the report's recommendation that the means of assessing how much spiritual servicing a hospital requires should be changed. At present this is done by counting the number of admittances nominally attributable to each denomination. This the report calls “the increasingly unreal counting of patient's heads” and recommends a more “objective” method related to the number of *beds* for various categories of patients. This is a typical Church manoeuvre to ensure that even if the whole population were to become atheist the institutional Church could carry on undisturbed and as far as possible at public expense. We would still be asked to pay for the 120 full-time and 5,000 part-time hospital chaplains.

There are hopeful signs, however, that younger members of the medical profession may wish to restrict access of these latter-day witch doctors with their psychologically disastrous doctrines at a time when patients are likely to

be emotionally disturbed enough without being led into some sacerdotal slough. Allan House, joint-editor of the *Saint Bartholomew's Hospital Journal*, writes in a recent issue:

The place of the orthodox religions of this country in everyday life is not what it was . . . Today the hospital's links with the two churches of St. Bartholomew are more structural than spiritual, and contact with “living religion” resides in the chaplains to the hospital and in a vociferous minority among the working body. Both impinge more upon the daily lives of those around them than their importance justifies. The difference between them is that while one may readily ignore the strident advertising of the Christian Union, the patient has to accept willy-nilly that confidential details of his progress may be obtained by, and that he may receive an uninvited visit from, a representative of a religion the views of which he does not hold and with which he may violently disagree.

A person who is actively religious in health will readily express the desire to remain so in sickness, and one who is not should not be expected to make the point when he is least able to deal with controversy.

This is not to say that there is no place in a hospital for those whose functions are not strictly medical . . . The critical difference lies in the more or less transparent motives of the different visitors.

Needless to say, the medical establishment reacted to condemn these views. Former consultant, Sir James Paterson Ross, called the editorial “singularly ill-informed”, saying, “It is *vital* that the students of St. Bartholomew's should not be led into thinking that the assistance of a minister of religion is of no value.” It is easy to see how, in a medical context, a kidney machine can be “vital”, but not a chaplain. Clearly, the sooner the medical profession is democratized the better.

## WATERGATE AND CHURCH SCHOOLS

As Richard Nixon justifies his *soubriquet* “Tricky Dicky” by skilfully keeping the wolves from the White House steps with the skilful management of disclosures in the Watergate saga, one such disclosure has implications for the freethought movement in America. A list has come to light, which included the names of individuals and organizations that differed from the President on certain issues and were marked down for whatever damage could be done to them. It is reported in *Church & State*, the organ of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, that one of the names high on the list was that of Dr. Samuel M. Lambert, recently retired executive secretary of the National Education Association. The reason for his name being on the list is his strong opposition to federal aid to parochial schools.

Senator Sam Ervin, who is chairman of the Senate's investigating committee, is a member of the National Advisory Council of Americans United. On hearing this, he commented in utter amazement, “We have people being enemies whose mere offense is that they believed in enforcing the First Amendment as proclaimed by the Supreme Court of the United States just about a week ago.” In his testimony Nixon's former adviser John Dean said that there was a list of tax-exempt organizations that were known opponents of presidential policies. These were marked down for harassment and possible deprivation of exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The complete list has not been made public, but leaders of Americans United are now wondering if this explains the cancellation of their tax exemption by the Internal Revenue Service in 1969.



# DIVORCE AMONG MUSLIM WOMEN IN INDIA

HAMID DALWAI

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Certain provisions of Muslim personal law have for some time past been the subject of animated discussion among Muslims as well as non-Muslims in India. The traditional leadership of the Muslim community has started a systematic campaign to prevent any reform in the existing laws of marriage, divorce and inheritance governing the Muslim community.

Proposals for reform are opposed on the ground that the Shariat, which they claim is given by God, is perfect and hence can be in no need of change. Even if some of its provisions, such as those permitting polygamy and unilateral divorce by men, appear unjust to women, the incidence of polygamy and unilateral divorce, they argue, is negligible among Muslims. All talk of reforming Muslim personal law, it is pointed out, is therefore ill-conceived and would only aggravate the sense of insecurity from which the Muslim community has been suffering since the partition of 1947.

It is interesting that not one of the eighty-odd universities in India has so far undertaken a systematic study of the incidence of polygamy and unilateral divorce among Muslims. Some years ago, Dr. Kanti Pakrasi of the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta carried out a sample study of this kind among the Hindus and Muslims in a few urban centres. A much more comprehensive study of Muslim attitudes has been practically completed by Dr. Gopal Krishna of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi but its findings are yet to be published. Apart from these two, I am not aware of any other study in this field.

## Survey needed

In view of this, the Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal undertook a survey of Muslim divorces in different parts of the country a couple of years ago. The study is still going on but already about 500 women who have been divorced or deserted by their husbands have been interviewed. They come from Bangalore, Bombay, Bulandshahar, Calcutta, Cochin, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolhapur, Lucknow, Sholapur and some smaller towns. The data were collected by the workers or sympathisers of the M.S.M. It is proposed to give below some findings of this survey.

Among the 500 women covered so far, the oldest is 53 and the youngest 17. Some are teachers in elementary schools, one is a nurse, one is a clerk and the rest are ordinary, mostly uneducated housewives. Among the latter, especially in Maharashtra, some are doing low-paid jobs for earning a livelihood.

The duration of married life before divorce or desertion varied from case to case. One woman was divorced only eight days after her marriage; another, after more than 40 years. Many of them have had children, most of whom live with the mother while some live with the father. In some cases, children have been forcibly taken away from the mother. In one case, the woman was divorced while she was pregnant. Within less than a week after the delivery, some persons from her husband's family came and took away the child. The child soon died of neglect, but the mother was not even informed of it.

The woman who was divorced after 42 years of marriage had never before done anything besides house-keeping in her life. The husband did not at first divorce her after marrying a second time, and she too voluntarily continued to live in the same home. But soon the husband began to harass her in a number of ways, leaving her no option but to get out of the husband's home. A few days later she was divorced through a letter sent by post. No maintenance allowance was offered to her. She now lives with her relatives, but the children are with the husband. She is planning to study nursing to earn her livelihood.

## Maintenance

It is only in a very few cases that any maintenance allowance or *mehr* (dower money) has been received by the women after they were divorced. There is a set pattern in most of these cases. The husband finds some excuse or another for stirring up a quarrel and sending away the wife. After she has gone to her parent's home, he charges her with having taken away ornaments worth, say about Rs. 2,000 if the amount of *mehr* agreed upon at the time of the marriage was Rs. 500. The lawyer's notice that she receives demands the return of the ornaments before her claim on the dower money can be considered. The poor woman has not means to contest the husband's charge in a court and he escapes scot-free from the obligation to pay the *mehr*. Incidentally, the value of the *mehr* varies from Rs. 51 to Rs. 2,500. In most cases this is not paid at all.

The interviewees were asked some questions about Muslim personal law and the replies they gave provide a valuable insight into the thinking of ordinary Muslim women. For instance, to the question whether the right to divorce should be available to both husband and wife or to only one of them, most women said that it should be available to both. However, one woman said that only the husband should have this right since only the male can be the master of the house. On the other hand, some women were of the view that neither the husband nor the wife should have the right of divorce. A few also felt that divorce should be possible only by mutual consent, but they had no clear idea of how this could be ensured.

To the question whether the husband should have the right to contract a second marriage during the lifetime of the first wife, all but one replied in the negative. One woman said that the husband should have a right, but only with the consent of the first wife. On being asked whether she would herself marry a man whose first wife was alive, every woman who was interviewed gave a categorical "no" in reply.

## Mode of divorce

One of the questions referred to the mode of divorce. Almost all the women were of the view that the present practice of oral and unilateral divorce should go. They suggested different alternatives to it. According to some, as far as possible, divorce should be avoided and the *jamaat* (local community) should try to bring about a reconciliation between the husband and the wife. Some others were of the view that divorce should not be possible at all; only when divorce is prohibited, they said, would men behave well with their wives. A large proportion of the women thought that divorce should be possible only through a court of law.

(Continued on next page)



Most of the women also believed that in case of divorce, the husband should be compelled by law to provide a suitable maintenance allowance to the woman. They also felt that both men and women should have an equal right in the matter of divorce. To the question whether the present law of the Muslims should be changed to ensure protection to women, almost all of them replied in the affirmative.

During the survey some other questions were also asked. For instance, one of the questions was "Should Muslims practice family planning?" It was interesting to find that almost all the women said "yes" in reply. In the same way, almost all of them were of the view that Muslim women should receive more education than at present. (According to Mr. Basheer Ahmed Sayeed, a retired judge of the Madras high court, only one-half per cent of the Muslim women are literate today.)

To the question whether they would be willing to join an agitation for securing the rights of Muslim women and for improving their social status, most women in Maharashtra replied in the affirmative. Those from outside Maharashtra gave a variety of answers. Some said that they would participate in such an agitation, while others

expressed their unwillingness or inability to do so. A few were of the opinion that it is the responsibility of men to carry on such an agitation since it is men alone who agitate about anything in public life. Some others said they were unable to join an agitation because they were prisoners of social conventions. A few were of the view that the agitation should be carried on by educated women; they themselves would not be able to do so because of their lack of education and standing in society.

During the M.S.M. survey, workers had to face a number of handicaps. There was a shortage of funds and volunteers, especially outside Maharashtra. In many cases women who were divorced or deserted by their husbands could not be contacted because their fathers or brothers were unwilling to permit M.S.M. workers to do so. Sometimes even when such women could be contacted, they dared not talk freely for fear of their menfolk.

The findings should be looked upon only as a preliminary exploration, however, it is safe to assert that they err on the conservative side; the actual nature and magnitude of the problem would be much worse than suggested by this survey.

## EPISTEMOLOGY AND DIALECTIC

JUDEX

In his book on Nietzsche (1968), Walter Kaufmann draws attention to some close affinities between the philosophies of Nietzsche and Hegel. Hegel postulated a basic cosmic force, an Absolute or Spirit in a state of creative tension, with an inherent necessity to embody itself, to become incarnate, in the realm of nature and world history. He saw the Absolute as essentially a process—a dialectical pattern of development through conflict. Hegel, says Max Eastman, was "the most ingenious of all disguised theologians" and his words, Cassirer tells us, "contain the clearest and most ruthless programme of fascism that has ever been propounded".

### Hegel inverted

It was the "inversion", or reversal, of Hegel's philosophy—or, rather, what Marx and Engels understood, or failed to understand, of its meaning—which found expression in the doctrine of dialectical materialism. As Dr. J. F. Hecker, a teacher of philosophy in Moscow, put it, "The absolute spirit of Hegel reappears in Marxism thought simply as 'nature' or 'matter' and Engels justly calls Hegelianism 'materialism turned upside down'." More recently, S. Avineri (*Marx's Socialism*, 1973) has remarked on Engels' ignorance and misquotation of Hegel and many commentators have pointed out that it is a fundamental error of the theory of dialectical materialism—and of the Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge—that it attempts to apply Hegelian dialectics and the terminology of logic to the material universe. Whilst rejecting the basic assumptions of Hegelianism it continues to argue in Hegelian fashion. Thus, Professor Jacques Monod, one of the world's most able molecular biologists, speaks of the "bankruptcy of dialectical materialism", its lack of any kind of critical epistemology, and the "confusions and nonsense" to which the dialectical interpretation of natural phenomena was bound to lead, for example in the work of Engels, Lenin, and Lysenko. (*Chance and Necessity*, 1972, pp. 40-8.)

Others have shown how the Marxist doctrine of practice

as the criterion of truth and the guarantee of the authenticity of our knowledge—like the Soviet dogma of the "absolute truth" of Marxism-Leninism, of the "absolutely exact agreement of thought with its object" (M. N. Rutkevich)—implies a tacit reversion to the basic assumption of Hegel's metaphysics, the essential identity of thinking and being. For how, otherwise, could practice be said to solve the problem of whether, say, the Russian Revolution proves the truth of Marxist theory, when there are many who hold that it not only fails to confirm the theory but actually refutes it? As Alfred Schmidt has said, even most simple perceptions presuppose abstraction and contain conceptual elements. "The only theory of knowledge which can be valid today", declares Sartre in *The Problem of Method*, "is one which is founded on that truth of microphysics: the experimenter is a part of the experimental system". Both Monod and Ervin Laszlo have indicated how contemporary neurophysiology and experimental psychology challenge the basic pronouncements of Marxism-Leninism. In the last resort, Laszlo maintains, we perceive that which is of significance for our neurological—and also cognitive, aesthetic and scientific—purposes and not merely that which is "out there". The fact that the nervous system homeostatically controls its input channels entails the downfall of the concept of perception as sensory *reception*, and of Lenin's (1908) "copy-theory" of knowledge which effectively denied the active rôle of human consciousness and, says Schmidt, only represents the abstract antithesis of the subjective idealism of Mach, Avenarius, and their Russian supporters (*The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 1971). Lenin's subsequent assertions that "the individual is the universal" and that "opposites are identical", and his notion of "essence", confuse logical categories with those of the real world and represent a reversion to mysticism and the Middle Ages, to the doctrine of the *coincidentia oppositorum* of Nicholas of Cusa, and the philosophy of William of Champeaux.

(Continued at foot of next page)



# ADAM SEDGWICK: GEOLOGIST

ERIC GLASGOW

A centenary which ought not to be overlooked in 1973 is that of Professor Sedgwick (b. 1785), the great Cambridge geologist, who died on 27 January 1873. Nowadays, I suppose, geology almost rivals archaeology as a popular pursuit, especially by the young; though they may not remember its important Victorian pioneers.

Adam Sedgwick remains one of the greatest among these: for it was he who first gave system and method to the British school of the new science. Professor of Geology at Cambridge from 1818, he was President of the Geological Society in 1831, and of the British Association in 1833. He did much to establish geology in this country as a reputable scientific discipline, and it was he who laid the foundations of the geological collections of his University. He was an energetic and effective publicist, too; and to a large extent he bridged the crucial Victorian gap between science and religion, because he had taken Holy Orders in 1816, and so, being a clergyman, he was appointed as a prebendary of Norwich in 1834. In those days, of course, there seemed to be nothing at all incongruous or unusual in combining the twin rôles of cleric and scientist: in any case, it was long before Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) which, in the end, Adam Sedgwick was strongly to oppose.

## Energetic and sustained

Sedgwick's geological studies were energetic, sustained and dedicated. Moreover, he travelled widely in their pursuit throughout the British Isles. William Wordsworth's descriptions of Cumbrian scenery, in his *Guide Through the Lakes* (1820-1853), gained Adam Sedgwick's attentions; and so he added, to the book's fourth (Kendal) edition of 1853, five very interesting and informative letters based upon his own geological researches and adding the factors of science to the themes of the rocks and the scenery of the Lake District. Yet, perhaps rather strangely, Adam Sedgwick only very rarely ventured beyond the limits of the British Isles. Only four visits of his to the mainland of Europe have been recorded: to Chamoix in 1816, to Paris in 1827, to the Eastern Alps in 1829, and to Germany and Belgium in 1839.

As a geologist, Sedgwick had unrivalled powers of long and concentrated work, unruffled patience, and clear, deductive insight. At least in the academic field, he virtually created the British science and study of geology; and all the subsequent work in that quest has been built upon his. It is fitting, therefore, that Cambridge should still have its great Sedgwick Museum of Geology and Natural History established to his memory and honour.

## Lasting legacy

While we should remember Adam Sedgwick for his brilliance as a professional geologist, we should not also forget his many admirable qualities as a man. For he was a very generous and warm-hearted human being, who was fond of children, and who had many discerning friends. He could be an eloquent and effective speaker, and he had a superb memory. Perhaps his only obvious weakness was his lethargy in literary composition, which meant that when he died he left behind him far fewer works of merit than his knowledge and dedication warranted.

But "of the making of books there is no end," as Montaigne said, long ago; and Adam Sedgwick's reputation is probably better sustained by the achievements of



Adam Sedgwick

(by kind permission of the Mansell Collection)

his students and followers, and by the legacy which he left to his own University of Cambridge, than it could ever have been by the dusty bulk of a whole company of Victorian tomes. At least the centenary of his death should serve to revive and to support interest in him, both as a man and as a scientist and also, to remind us today of something of the stature of one of the best and the most inspiring of the many great scholars of the lost Victorian Age.

(Continued from previous page)

As the Australian philosopher, Professor John Anderson, saw, nearly forty years ago, dialectic is necessarily authoritarian or "fideist" to use Lenin's term—it substitutes faith for knowledge—and the conception of "contradictions", of something which can both be and not be, is admittedly adapted to the purposes of the unscrupulous and corrupt leadership. Writing in 1971, the Soviet historian Roy A. Medvedev said, "The closed mind, the refusal to think independently, was the epistemological basis of the cult of personality. It was not only degenerates and careerists who supported the cult; there were also sincere believers—they became participants—and many subsequently became victims." It was Anderson's belief that "The development of a pluralistic or 'freethinking' philosophy must harmonise with the general movement for a producers' society, and the latter can only gain from the removal of philosophical errors and the rejection of monistic and teleological conceptions" (*Studies In Empirical Philosophy*).



# RIDICULE, SLAVERY AND PORN

WILLIAM McILROY

The Reverend Eddy Stride labours diligently in the Lord's vineyard being prominent in the "clean-up", i.e. pro-censorship, movement and in Christian journalism. His articles are as predictably fatuous and simplistic as one would expect from a Low—nay, rock bottom—churchman writing in publications which provide intellectual nourishment for the devotees of Jesus Christ, Cliff Richard and Billy Graham. But his piece entitled "Slavery and Porn: Ridicule for the Reformers" which appeared in the November issue of *Challenge* (described as "The Good News Paper") truly plumbed the depths.

Mr. Stride recalls the furore which the Longford report created just over a year ago, but sorrowfully notes that publishers and the media have since turned to other matters. Furthermore, "for the ordinary person it is difficult to say whether it is right to impose controls on fellow citizens". But Mr. Stride and his friends in the Nationwide Festival of Light and the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association seem to be untrammelled by such squeamishness, and he attempts to justify the censorious activities of these prodnoses by a curious and quite misleading analogy. Lord Longford and the purity brigade are compared to those who campaigned for the abolition of slavery and other social evils during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He correctly states that the slave trade "was as respectable as it was profitable . . . and yet Wilberforce was bitterly attacked for daring to campaign against the freedom to trade in this commodity".

It would, perhaps, be expecting too much from someone of Mr. Stride's religious views and commitment to have added that the main opposition to Wilberforce on this issue came from his fellow-religionists. Instead, he flies in the face of historical truth with this characteristic Christian distortion: "The 'liberal' voices of his day emphasized the good fortune of slaves rescued from primitive tribal conditions and housed, fed and cared for by the many benevolent slave-owners". Of course this argument was employed to justify slavery when the abolitionists were beginning to make an impact and to influence opinion. But it was not used by those to whom Mr. Stride sneeringly refers as "liberal voices". For the liberal voices were mostly anti-Christian opponents of slavery, and the Quakers who were regarded by Christians as infidels.

## The Bible and Slavery

Certainly there was an insignificant minority of Christians who were better than their creed. But in both Britain and America they, too, were attacked and ostracized by Christians who had the advantage of biblical support for their pro-slavery stance. Christian abolitionists vainly tried to extract some passage from the Bible to strengthen their case; the pro-slavery lobby had no difficulty in publishing a specially annotated edition of the New Testament which became their chief propaganda weapon.

Christians—particularly the pious, unctuous type so common amongst our own "cleaner-uppers" and Jesus movement enthusiasts—were the most notorious defenders of a system which flourished on the buying, selling and breeding of slaves. George Whitfield, one of the greatest evangelicals of his time, strongly advocated the introduction of slaves into the plantations of Georgia and was himself a slave-owner. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel owned a large number of slaves; in America the Presbyterian Church seized a debtor's goods which included some Negro slaves—the proceeds of the sale of the slaves were devoted to missionary purposes. There were

many clerical supporters of the slave trade, while Christian churches and organizations provided a veritable arsenal of propaganda for the anti-abolitionists in the form of statements and resolutions affirming that slavery was not contrary to the will of God.

When Mr. Stride writes indignantly that "women and children toiled in appalling and slavish conditions" he is, like many of those who were genuine reformers, rather late in condemning the horror and misery that existed 150 years ago. This is simply a last-ditch attempt to whitewash the social record of Christianity, for it was the Eddy Strides of nineteenth century England who were the most ardent defenders of the tyrannical ruling class and the rapacious exploiters of the weak and helpless. Every attempt to alleviate the conditions of the working people were regarded as an assault on the Christian religion. The repressive Combination Laws—whose staunchest supporter was Wilberforce—resulted in the imprisonment and transportation of those who tried to improve their lot.

## Christianity and Social Reform

The Established Church was savage in its condemnation of reformers but the evangelical organizations which flourished at the time were much worse. Cobbett described the Methodists as "the bitterest foes" of reform, and the historians Barbara and J. L. Hammond wrote: "The teaching of Methodism was unfavourable to working-class movements; its leaders were hostile, and its ideals, perhaps, increasingly hostile".

The Church of England was suitably rewarded for its efforts to induce the poor to accept their station in life. During the 1820s a grateful Government donated nearly three million pounds for building new churches and a further one million pounds to augment the salaries of the clergy. (This was at a time when one Englishman in seven was a pauper.) The "liberal voices" which spoke out in protest were mostly anti-Christian voices; not a squeak of protest came from the churches, the Christian Knowledge Society, the Church Missionary Society, the Religious Tract Society or any of the Christian journals to which Mr. Stride would have been a contributor had he lived in those days of faith and religious revival.

It is quite false to claim that Wilberforce's Christian conscience prompted him to embark on his anti-slavery work. As a young man he mixed with people who were rationalist in outlook, and his mother was surprisingly anti-religious. It was these early influences which laid the foundation for his great achievements as an abolitionist. He supported the Government's vindictive suppression of the reform movement, and advised working people that "their more lowly path has been allocated them by the hand of God". He was hated by the workers of London and, like Lord Shaftesbury, had to barricade his house against them. And how unjust it is that reputation of Thomas Clarkson, the greatest abolitionist of them all, should be overshadowed by that fierce opponent of liberalism and reform like Wilberforce.

There was one episode in Wilberforce's career which will, one suspects, endear him to the Rev. Eddy Stride even more than his career as an abolitionist. When, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Sussex village of BRIGHTHELMSTON—now Brighton—was gaining popularity as a health resort, some of the local religious prudens organised a petition against the indecent practice of bathing in the sea. Heading the list of protestors, with a generous subscription, was the great Christian reformer William Wilberforce.



# REVIEWS

## BOOKS

**QUESTIONS OF CENSORSHIP** by David Tribe.  
Geo. Allen & Unwin, £4.75.

David Tribe has written a lively, entertaining account of most aspects of censorship, starting with a short historical survey, and covering in some detail all the celebrated cases from the late 1950s: *Lady Chatterley*, *Last Exit*, *Fanny Hill*, *Flesh*, *Schoolkids' Oz* and *The Little Red Schoolbook*. The 1960s was the decade of a major censorship battle. The erosion of moral strictures illustrated by T.W.3, "kitchen sink" plays, and the Underground Press, and culminating in the famous occasion when Kenneth Tynan said "fuck" on TV., led to a confrontation between Mary Whitehouse, the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association and religious opinion, on the one hand, and the N.C.C.L., Society for the Defence of Literature and the Arts, progressive publishers (Calder and Boyars), and secularists on the other. David Tribe gives the National Secular Society full credit for its part in the anti-censorship campaign.

Readers will find a mine of information on the wide range of censorship which exists, including the Obscenity and Indecency Acts (I liked the definition of obscenity as "who or what makes anybody, anywhere, at any time, for any reason, indignant"), the Libel Laws, film licensing, censoring of books by booksellers (W. H. Smith being notorious for refusing to sell *Private Eye*, *Oz* or *IT*), by libraries, and by the British Museum—there is a fascinating account of the obstacles put in the way of readers who wish to consult books in the B.M.'s Private Case Catalogue or "Suppressed Section". It even appears that V.A.T. on newspaper adverts, may, by raising the cost of publication, have a censorship effect similar to that of the nineteenth century stamp duties.

The connection between censorship and support for traditional religious attitudes is well documented with a description of the Reith era at the B.B.C., when the announcers, though they could not be seen by the listening audience, dressed in dinner suits, and "what they read was dominated by the doings of the Almighty in the atmosphere and of Royalty on earth"; and Mrs. Whitehouse and her supporters demanding TV. programmes "which justify faith in God and bring Him back to the heart of our family and national life". Hilarious episodes of the censorship controversy are recounted—for example Lady Birdwood and her friends at the end of a performance of the anti-religious satire, "Council of Love", reciting a verse of "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow", to exorcize the theatre. And there are the more sinister methods of the would-be censors such as Lord Longford's description of people who like porn as "sick" and in need of a cure, which is ominously similar to the U.S.S.R.'s confinement of political opponents in mental hospitals.

There is a useful section on censorship abroad. This includes the U.S.A. (with a summary of developments from the Comstock Laws to the Pentagon Papers); Australia and New Zealand, where customs restrictions on imported material are important (apparently David Holbrook's book *Quest for Love* was inadvertently refused admission into Australia); France, U.S.S.R. and

India, which has the distinction of being the first country to have a Statute of Obscenity (in 1856).

David Tribe is correct to stress the function of censorship of preserving the political and social *status quo*, and of bolstering up the churches; the book is especially apposite in view of the Government's new Cinematograph and Indecent Displays Bill. But in some respects it is too indiscriminating and too uncritical a eulogy of all varieties of freedom of expression. It is difficult for instance to picture as an unfortunate victim of censorship, Mr. Paul Raymond, who is reputed to have made a fortune out of sexist shows like *Oh! Calcutta!* and *Pyjama Tops*, which portray women simply as sex objects. The most apparently progressive books and films may express a reactionary attitude towards women. Martin Cole's sex education film *Growing Up*, displayed an astonishingly outdated view of women's rôle, men's jobs being shown as driving bulldozers and managing offices, while women's work was looking after children. On one occasion Women's Lib and Gay Lib took over the platform at a London meeting of the Underground Press, asserting that the underground press was just as sexist in viewpoint as the overground. David Tribe mentions both these examples but draws no conclusions from them.

He also suggests that racist viewpoints should be allowed to be freely expressed on the grounds that "the truth may be unpleasant but it must be faced." The liberal view that the "truth" always emerges out of a free for all discussion, implies of course equality between the two sides, assuming wrongly, that black people have the same opportunities to express an opinion as the right wing politicians and press. Likewise the condemnation in the book of the "censoring" of the anti-trade union *Jak* cartoon, by electricians at the *Evening Standard*, ignores the whole question of the anti-trade union bias of the media. The problem is that "censorship" and "freedom of expression" are not abstract concepts but operate in particular social contexts; ignoring the in-built conservative bias of society and arguing for freedom for right wing and male chauvinist elements, merely results in less freedom for the rest of us and less opportunity to make social changes. Unfortunately *Questions of Censorship* neglects some of these important questions of analysis.

PATRICIA KNIGHT

**FIRST CHRISTMAS** by Paul L. Maier.  
Mowbrays, £1.95.

The *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, a celebrated Christian work of reference, has an article on the Nativity in which it is frankly stated that the story as given in the gospels of Matthew and Luke is little more than legend, with virtually every detail derived from pagan mythology. Attempts to give historical credibility to the tale are usually confined to the journalists of the popular press—theologians know better. In *First Christmas* a professor of history tries his hand at the futile game. Dr. Maier is clearly the kind of Christian who thinks it impious to submit the sacred records of his faith to the scrutiny a historian would normally apply to source material. In his book he sets out to find "fresh information and interesting sidelights on the Nativity" by dealing "less with the familiar story of Jesus' birth and more with its background", as if a work of fiction could not be given a precise historical setting.

It would be tedious to do more than glance at a few of the arguments presented here. Dr. Maier commences



with the much-disputed taxation edict of Caesar Augustus which, according to Luke, required people to go to their home towns for registration. He adduces in support a similar order of A.D. 104 summoning all persons to return to their "own hearths". This completely misses the point, for Joseph would have been under no obligation to leave his native Nazareth and go to the city of his ancestor David (Luke 2:4). He had no home in Bethlehem and had to seek accommodation at an inn. In any case Luke is contradicted by Matthew, who knows nothing of the taxation journey but has Joseph living in Bethlehem from the start in what is inferably his own house (Matthew 2:11).

"The Star of Bethlehem", we read, "has puzzled astronomers for centuries"—though not our historian. There were, it appears, quite a number of astral phenomena around the beginning of the Christian era whose astrological significance might have alerted the Magi and sent them on their pilgrimage. Or Matthew may have known of the similar story in the Persian *Zend Avesta* and copied it, though that possibility is not considered here.

The Massacre of Innocents is just the sort of thing Herod would have done, says Dr. Maier, citing from Josephus a long list of atrocities committed by that monarch. He might have asked himself why, if it really happened, neither Josephus nor any writer other than Matthew thought it worth recording.

The shepherds who watched their flock by night inspire a chapter on the manners and customs of Palestinian shepherds. We learn, as if it mattered, that the chief breed of sheep in Palestine is the broad-tailed variety (*ovis laticaudata*), the ones still grazing around Bethlehem possibly "descended from the very sheep whose foraging was so extraordinarily interrupted that night of nights". Oh yes, the angelic visitation really happened.

And if anyone wonders how Luke could have known so much about that first Christmas, our professor of history has the answer—the Virgin Mary told him!

R. J. CONDON

### **SOUTH AFRICA: Civilization in Conflict**

by Jim Hoagland. Geo. Allen & Unwin, £4.50.

"South Africa" is both a political and a geographical term, and it is one of the merits of Jim Hoagland's excellent book that the geographical aspect is never forgotten. Though Mr. Hoagland gives the greater part of space to South Africa in the political sense, his Part II, entitled "Outside the Laager", is even more rewarding to read for the British or American reader, because of its relative unfamiliarity and its possible hope for the future. It is typical of South Africa's complicated problems that some of these "outside" states, like Lesotho, are in fact "inside".

The author is an American of liberal, humane outlook, who was brought up in South Carolina. Some of the articles on which this book is based were originally published in the *Washington Post*. Mr. Hoagland has seen for himself all aspects of both South Africa and "Southern Africa", including the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, and he is not reluctant to draw certain parallels between the white-dominated Republic run by John ("Only disconnect . . .") Vorster—no relation to E. M. Forster—and the American treatment of both Indian natives and African slaves. He rightly sees that in modern times, the comparison is more of a contrast,

though not, he admits, a complete contrast. He is not afraid of the accusation "holier than thou". When the "thou" is so un-holy, he pertinently remarks, it is no bad thing to be a bit holier.

It depends what you mean, of course, by "holy". There is no doubt at all that many modern Afrikaners consider themselves "the chosen people" almost as sincerely as their redoubtable God-fearing ancestors who took part in the Great Trek in 1836. The doctrine of Apartheid has theological as well as racial roots, going back to that date in history when Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father Noah, and that curious reaction on the part of Noah when he cursed, not his erring son, but his innocent grandson, saying: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren".

South Africa is, in theory, a non-permissive society, however much in practice the Rand is randy. The existence of so many mulattos proves that it always was so. It is a matter of pride in Angola and Mozambique for a Portuguese settler or soldier to father several half-breed children, whom they generally acknowledge and help to bring up. It is a matter for shame in South Africa, and the children are generally unacknowledged. The Victorian juvenile classic *Black Beauty* was very nearly banned in South Africa, before somebody in the censor's office happened to glance through the book and realized that it was about a horse.

"We are religious and conservative people", chief censor J. J. Kruger told Mr. Hoagland. "The people don't want the sweet moan of pornography." He wished the outside world would "remember that sex is as old as Adam". As old as Eve, he presumably meant. Adam, I have always understood, was quite a clean-living man, mainly interested in gardening and nature study, before Jehovah took his spare rib, bringing into the world Eve "and all our woe".

Mr. Hoagland is not optimistic about the future, particularly the near future. But he does see a faint possibility of some kind of "federation", taking Southern Africa as a whole, including the so-called "Bantustans" set up under the Apartheid doctrine. This is a long-term solution, a compromise not altogether dissimilar to proposed federations for Ireland. Much historical prejudice, on the part of Orange Free State men, like Orangemen in Ireland, will have to be overcome, besides the massive economic difficulties, which are not overlooked by the author.

He points out that in recent years both white leaders and black leaders have moved away from a multi-racial solution. Therefore some kind of federation of white-ruled and black-ruled states seems the only alternative to continued white domination leading eventually to black revolution. To hoist the Afrikaner with his own petard, to develop Apartheid in a true economic sense, would indeed be a peaceful way out. It is not very likely, as Mr. Hoagland admits, but "South Africa retains mighty potential for proving prophets of doom wrong."

R. C. CHURCHILL

### **HERETICS' GREETING CARDS**

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**HOMO SAPIENS IN DECLINE: A Reappraisal of Natural Selection** by Gerhard Kraus. New Diffusionist Press, £1.

Mr. Kraus thinks the human race is degenerate. He is also an extreme biological reductionist for whom technology and civilisation, by protecting the weaker specimens of homo sapiens, have interfered with natural selection and thereby adulterated the human stock. Mankind has sunk into a secular biological decline, attested *inter alia* by a reduction in average brain size since the days of Cro-Magnon man about 35,000 years ago. As modern man will not revert to a culturally primitive mode of life which might halt the slide into biological decay, the only alternative is "biological decline and eventual extinction". And there is no joy to be had in putting Mr. Kraus' own recommendations into action, since he thinks that even then it would quite likely still be hopeless.

It is a pity that Mr. Kraus starts his book with such a string of highly provocative remarks, for his first few chapters are an absorbing and learned account of evolution and its effect on man; if only he had put his arguments before his conclusions, one might not have felt so unsympathetic. Yet Mr. Kraus does make some good solid points. There is, as he says, no inherent reason to suppose that man is actually progressing in his evolution, nor that natural selection has any purpose other than the straightforward preservation of the species: quite a neat disposal of progressive ideologies like Marxism which suppose entirely the reverse. And there is some evidence that man may have reached a kind of plateau brought about by civilization: modern medicine keeps people alive who would formerly have died, thus accelerating a long-standing trend towards diminishing intensity of natural selection and evolutionary decline. One has to be careful here, though: with the so-called sex-linked recessive diseases like haemophilia, for instance, the spread of defective genes through society is certainly encouraged by survival to maturity, yet chance genetic mutations would in any case cause the disease to reappear in each generation.

If cultural progress leads to biological regression, as Mr. Kraus believes, then how to explain such aspects of civilization as rising health standards, longer life expectancy, ever greater athletic achievements and the rest? For these are surely incompatible with biological decline. According to Mr. Kraus, however, there is not much evidence that these improvements are linked to human heredity. And in modern technological civilization, all sorts of social props are available to the genetically less well endowed, who are thus able to share the benefits of affluence without necessarily contributing much to society; hence social advance can mask both physical and mental decline.

The rest of the book is a bit of a pot-pourri, in which I had to dig hard to find a unifying theme. It is this: cultural advance throughout man's history is not a function of his biological evolution, since this came to a halt some hundred thousand years ago, but is a "diffusionist" process whereby basic elements of civilization spread from one culture to another. Similar cultures have an original source; they do not arise independently. Mr. Kraus thus accepts the fundamental cultural and anthropological unity of man. This fits in nicely with his view that mankind is not fundamentally an aggressive creature; the prevalence of war and violence, apparently a direct refutation of human

benevolence, seems to be related to the "unnatural stresses" of civilization. And Mr. Kraus is very scathing about man's alleged intellectual prowess, for his super-brain has not only brought about civilization but all its attendant evils such as pollution and the population explosion. The intellectual pirouettes of religion, metaphysics and abstract philosophy are, according to Mr. Kraus, pernicious, for they represent a harmful diversion from the urgent task of preserving the species. The proper study of mankind is man.

Altogether, then, a rather gloomy prospect. Whether we can do anything about it all is a bit doubtful, and failure is likely anyway, but Mr. Kraus feels we ought to have a go. He wants an end to industrial pollution, planned production of waste and overpopulation. This is all good conventional wisdom, but Mr. Kraus calls also for "the world-wide liberation of political and educational institutions from existing ideological and doctrinaire fetters". Good luck to him.

Fortunately, though, I feel the more dismal of Mr. Kraus's jeremiads don't really hold water. In the first place, his arguments about decreasing brain size are full of great, gaping holes. We know nothing about the average I.Q. of Neanderthal or Cro-Magnon man, and, therefore, cannot make any sort of direct comparison between their intellectual capacity and our own. Nor is brain size necessarily a good guide to intelligence, as Mr. Kraus himself admits without seeming to realize that he thereby knocks a prop from under his argument. What is more important is the layer of convolutions of the cerebral hemispheres of the brain: dolphins and chimpanzees have the most complex brains in the animal world after man, and are accordingly the most intelligent, though the dolphin's brain may weigh up to four times as much as the chimp's. To argue, then, as Mr. Kraus does, that the last 35,000 years of human history—a period of cultural, scientific and technical explosion—saw a reduction in mental capacity owing to a recession in average brain size of about 200 cc is not only implausible, but—as it stands—unreasonable. This is not to say that Mr. Kraus's theory about human intelligence is necessarily wrong, but rather that he ought to go away and reconstruct his arguments.

So is Mr. Kraus worth listening to or not? In some ways, he is. It is certainly useful to point out that there is some evidence that the average I.Q. of western man may be on the decline, since "there is no selective process which prevents biologically lesser-endowed individuals from surviving, marrying and producing children. Consequently, the intellectual level of modern man must inevitably decline". That "must" does not follow in the least. And Mr. Kraus may well be right that institutions like the family, based on instincts of co-operation, trust and love, are more conducive to human survival than the exercise of reason (it depends how, and for what purposes, one exercises reason). Yet I think Mr. Kraus does not really appreciate the significance of modern civilization. For the first time in history, man can control his environment and, shortly, his own heredity. He has given himself a future. And by doing this, he can learn to control his evolution. Whether he will do this in time is another matter: if he does not, it will be because of his failure to use his intellect, not because of some awful biological doom.



**CULTS OF UNREASON** by Christopher Evans.  
Harrap, £3.

This is a lively, readable account of various odd cults which are seeking to fill the gap left by increasingly discredited religious orthodoxies. At least half of the book is devoted to a study of Scientology and its remarkable founder L. Ron Hubbard. The rest of the book looks at flying saucers, black boxes and various forms of Eastern mysticism. They are grouped together as cults of unreason because of their small dependence on factual evidence, their appeals to fears and hopes deeply embedded in the human psyche. Dr. Evans' approach is critical without being malicious. He pokes fun in places—his guided tour of the byways of Scientology has moments of hilarity—but his examination and exposition of these cults is a serious and important contribution to understanding the power they have over some people's minds.

I found his account of Hubbard fascinating. A man of great intelligence and ability, a figure of charisma able to command extreme loyalty and devotion from followers, so that claims that seem patently absurd, go unchallenged by them. His visits to Heaven, among other trips, are presented factually by Hubbard and one feels compelled to ask whether this one-time science fiction writer has lost the ability to discriminate between reality and fantasy. As Dr. Evans remarks, people like Hubbard present a challenge to psychology. If we could identify the quality of magnetism they seem to possess we should know much more about human nature than we do today. I would add, too, we need to know more about the needs of people who respond to these cult figures, who find in them answers to the human quest for understanding key problems of human life. These answers, we may recognize as humanists and rationalists, satisfy only the uncritical and ignorant, those who need the emotional support of a cult figure. An over-intellectualist approach, the notion that pointing out the logical absurdities of these cults, is the way to combat them, is to show blindness to the character of their appeal. It is a pity that psychologists are often more concerned to establish their scientific credentials by restricting themselves to the measurable and experimentable—and mostly trivial—aspects of human behaviour. Perhaps Dr. Evans, having expressed the view that we need to know more about the psychology of cult-figures, will make this the subject of his next book.

REUBEN OSBORN

**ARTICLES from the NEUE RHEINISCHE ZEITUNG 1848-49** by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.  
Lawrence & Wishart, £1.

A collection of articles published in 1848 and '49 is of interest to historians, and also to all others who are students of the techniques of Marx and Engels in their approach to contemporary problems of their day. We find certain phrases which, transposed to our own day and country, still ring true.

"The Assembly bores the German people instead of inspiring it or being inspired by it." So wrote Engels of the German National Assembly. Substitute 'Parliament' for Assembly and 'British' for German and you have fair comment on our own Labour Parliaments since 1946.

"A nation which throughout its history allowed itself to be used as a tool of oppression against all other nations must first of all prove that it has been really revolutionised." This epitaph on imperial Britain was actually written of the Germany of 1848.

The editing of these articles includes selection; and the editors at the beginning promise notes in square brackets where clarification is necessary. Unfortunately this has not been effectively done. For example, an article by Engels concludes with the words: "What the motives were, we shall see tomorrow" (p. 101). Unfortunately 'tomorrow's' article is omitted, and no editorial note explains why, or summarises the promised "motives". So the reader is left in the air at least until he gets hold of either the original in German or the promised *Collected Works* still to come in English. A bit of editorial explanation would have helped the reader.

Whether by Marx or Engels, and the book includes articles by both, the same characteristic style inspires all the articles. There is no mincing of words, and a clear class analysis, in all the comments on the stirring events in the Europe of 1848-49 in Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, and other countries, especially in what is now termed 'Eastern Europe'. All who are interested in Europe at that time, or in the work of Marx and Engels, should arm themselves with this book which is moderately priced by current standards.

PAT SLOAN

**DOROTHY RICHARDSON: The Genius They Forgot**  
by John Rosenberg. Duckworth, £2.95.

Dorothy Richardson is not a name to conjure with. Her biographer sub-titles the book "The Genius They Forgot". One reason they forgot was her secretiveness and allusiveness. Asked for a photograph to accompany an article, she sent along a snapshot of a baby. Novelists cannot afford a sense of humour in dealing with the great world, at least until they are established.

Mr. Rosenberg is intent upon resuscitating Dorothy Richardson's literary reputation. He may well succeed. Referred to by John Cowper Powys as "the greatest woman genius now living", she was greatly admired by the cognoscenti. Like Gerhards and Meyerstein, she was singular, esoteric, little read, but highly regarded by a few.

She was born into genteel middle class insecurity in 1873, one of four daughters of an unsuccessful Victorian financial speculator with a taste for Darwin and rationalism. When his investments prospered, family life blossomed, and large houses with gardens, servants and tennis parties dominated the scene; when his shares plunged, he hastily moved his family from complacent, suburban Barnes, to small, mean villas in dim seaside resorts. In 1890, he was finally bankrupted, a hideous fate for Victorian daughters with no careers in prospect. The mother committed suicide. The girls became governesses and school teachers and eventually married.

Dorothy herself started writing: it became an addiction. She abandoned full-time work and devoted herself entirely to her art. She had a love affair with H. G. Wells, and, like Rebecca West, Amber Blanco White, and several more, became pregnant by him. After a grim visit to a suffragette friend locked up in Holloway prison, she had a miscarriage. In 1917, after years of writing in grinding poverty, she married Alan Odle, a starving painter, many years younger than herself, who was thought to be dying of tuberculosis. She nursed him devotedly, and he surprised everyone by surviving until 1948. She died in 1957, still writing, still poor.

This is an interesting, if depressing account of the life of a dedicated, if joyless, artist. She was the creator of



the 'stream of consciousness' method, and a forerunner of Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Mr. Rosenberg gives a careful account of her development and describes her books in detail. If there is a Richardson revival in the near future, much of the credit will be due to this excellent critical biography.

MADELEINE SIMMS

### THE FEMALE ORGASM by Seymour Fisher.

Allen Lane, £5.

This is a big volume in two parts (either part would make a book). There are 533 pages *in toto* and a reference list running to no less than forty-seven pages. Research findings are tabulated in more than three dozen tables.

Part One—"What is Known About Sexual Behaviour and Sex Role in Women?"—is a detailed survey of research findings over recent decades. A variety of ideas are examined: correlation of sexual responsiveness with a number of factors (psychological health, education, social class, religion, age); the relation of personality to general sexual responsiveness; factors that shape a woman's ability to be sexually responsive; sex-role learning, and so on. It is hard to find a page that does not cite some research study.

Part Two gives an account of a sequence of studies undertaken by the author to gain insights into psychological factors that influence a woman's sexual responsiveness and her adaptation to requirements of the feminine rôle. His findings are related to the existing literature dealing with female sexuality.

It is quite impossible adequately to summarize Fisher's research findings. It is of interest, however, that a number of current attitudes are challenged, for example, the view that there is a correlation between mental health and orgasmic potential, and that male sexual technique correlates with a woman's orgasmic consistency. The most real threat to a woman's sexual response is a feeling of insecurity about the loved one.

I cannot imagine many people sitting down to read this immensely detailed volume from cover to cover. Nor need they do so. An effective index means that the book can be dipped into for intriguing sections on aggression, cigarette-smoking, nudity, and schizophrenia as they relate to sex. At the price, there will not be many buyers but this dauntingly thorough book would be an asset to any library.

G. L. SIMONS

### FREETHINKER FUND

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

Our thanks to: Anonymous (90p), H. Alexander (45p), J. L. Allison (£3.90), W. Armstrong (£1), A. R. Aspinall (90p), P. Barbour (£3.90), I. F. Bertin (90p), W. Bickle (40p), R. D. Birrell (90p), Mrs. F. Campbell (90p), E. F. E. Carlson (75p), A. C. F. Chambre (40p), S. Clowes (50p), W. H. Dobson (40p), W. Donovan (£1), A. Foster (£2), Dr. D. Haler (90p), E. H. Hewitt (90p), W. Holland (90p), E. J. Hughes (£3), Judex (£2.25), N. Leveritt (£1.50), A. V. Montagu (£3), T. Morgan (£2), T. Myles-Hill (£2.90), E. A. Napper (£2), M. N. Nash (£1), J. Nichol (40p), Mrs. K. Pariente (90p), F. Pearson (£6), G. Raphael (40p), M. D. Silas (£1), Mrs. L. F. Stupart (£3.90), A. Vogel (£1.50), D. Wood (90p). Total for November: £54.55.

## THEATRE

THE TRIAL adapted from Kafka's novel by Steven Berkoff. The Round House.

Steven Berkoff, founder-director of the London Theatre Group, is a very gifted actor and exponent of mime, and a controversial adapter of texts for his total theatre. In this he courts the disapproval of purists, traditionalists, and those of us who cherish fixed ideas about the literary classics from which he extracts the themes that pre-occupy him. Mr. Berkoff has brought into focus Man's search for identity, his inexplicable sense of guilt and terror, his violent, erotic fantasies and the dehumanizing routine with which the bowler-hatted few constrict and madden the masses.

Berkoff's world is that of Genet and Capek, which is why he has not yet adapted *The Maids* or *The Insect Play*. He likes to work in part against the text; his reworking of Strindberg was titled *Miss Julie versus Expressionism*. Friction, and what Berkoff calls "minimizing" need not be Philistine or belittling. On the contrary, they can bring us closer to the author's true meaning, while generating that explosive heat which is at the core of any true theatrical experience.

Whenever I have seen the London Theatre Group in action, I have been drawn into just such an experience, and been deeply impressed, too, by the Group's artistic integrity and discipline. They dispense with elaborate costume and distracting sets, using to the full their rigorously trained bodies and a few props, such as portable door-frames and a length of rope, in movement that is ingenious, exacting, meticulously executed, and vividly expressive. There is no room here for individual performances. The Group's style is set by Mr. Berkoff. Sound and light are used with economy to give sharpness and rhythm to the changes of mood, and to create a nightmare atmosphere. Most important of all, the audience's imagination is brought into play. This is because Berkoff's work is exploratory rather than explicit; his is not the language of metaphor, but of suggestion.

True, the busy everyday world is wittily evoked, with its listlessly jogging strap-hanging, wheedling ad-men, pruriently self-righteous landladies, its alarm clocks; telephones and typewriters. But the black and grey shadows on the white backdrop bring to mind an infinity of situations which reach far beyond the predicament of Joseph K, and so extend its significance. Atrocities of the past and present, perpetrated in fiction, allegory and reality, are hinted at.

Taut, clear, but not specific or limited in its implications, this is a very refreshing production. Refreshing in that, influenced by his own experiences, both direct and vicarious, by his own character and pre-occupations, each individual member of the audience is seeing different images. Yet, as the "credits" at the end of the play remind us, we are all watching the same team of dedicated actors.

Last month, flu prevented me from reviewing Charles Marowitz's treatment of *The Taming of the Shrew* at The Open Space Theatre. This is an excellent, if harrowing production, and Thelma Holt's performance as Katherine makes it memorable.

VERA LUSTIG



# LETTERS

## Lady Lothian and the New R.E.

*From the Head of Religious Studies, James Graham College, Leeds.*

In view of the front-page article in the November issue of *The Freethinker* may I perhaps draw the attention of readers to the correspondence currently taking place in the *Times Educational Supplement* on the subject of Lady Lothian's representations to Mrs. Thatcher. There are many religious studies specialists (among them Christians like myself) who are seriously distressed by the survey. The questionnaire was slanted in such a way that a favourable response was predictable. Almost the only alternative was to tear up the paper, though one hopes some teachers who refused to fill in the questionnaire wrote to the Order of Christian Unity to say why.

Might I, however, ask your readers not to be stimulated to a rigorous campaign for the abolition of religious studies, but to joining the growing number of teachers who support the Lancaster Schools Council approach. Many of your readers may believe that religion is superstition. Whether it is or not, religion is also a 'reality'—real enough, I note, for Miss Smoker to have to advertize Heretics' Greeting Cards! For a child to understand the world in which he lives, he must possess some knowledge of the phenomenon of religion. The phenomenon is real, whether the ultimate reality of God is real or not.

Perhaps I could end with a plea. Muslims, Jews, Humanists (for example, Harold Blackham), Christians and people who would reject any label are working together in the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education. We are gradually helping teachers to present a variety of religious and non-religious stances with fairness. I would ask humanists and atheists to help people like myself in this venture, especially for providing materials for use in schools—not anti-religious, negative statements, but positive ones. This, it seems to me, is a worthwhile exercise. Because the Order of Christian Unity tries to put the clock back, should the rest of us adjust our watches? I hope not. My interest is in a harmonious, pluralistic society, not in the sectarianism of the past.

W. OWEN COLE.

## The Scandal of Circumcision

*The Freethinker* is to be congratulated on publishing Dr. Beadnell's article on the absurdity of routine circumcision. It is high time the general public realized that this ritual mutilation of male infants is completely unnecessary and should be stopped.

It is a relief to realize that since the advent of our National Health Service in 1949 ritual circumcision has gradually almost completely died out. Few self-respecting surgeons will now perform it unless there are strong medical reasons for doing so, and these are very rare.

The greatest scandal surrounding this archaic procedure is that in spite of every precaution a small but statistically significant proportion of babies used to die every year from circumcision—either as a direct result of the operation itself, or because of unexpected complications such as post-operative bleeding. In addition a larger proportion suffered from deformities due to post-operative infection of the wound, and in some appalling cases it even lead to gangrene of the penis and virtual castration. A young life blighted at its start.

The basic absurdity of circumcision is the humbug that surrounds its purpose. The pretence that the foreskin is a useless and harmful vestigial structure that is best removed at birth is complete nonsense. It always has been a ritualistic religious procedure and attempts to justify it on medical grounds are ludicrous.

It can only be a source of amazement that the medical profession have so long continued to perform circumcision knowing it to be quite needless, and conscientious doctors must have wondered on many occasions in the past if they were ethically justified in performing it. For any doctor who is sincere must know that he is not justified in exposing a patient to unnecessary danger if it can possibly be avoided.

Under no circumstances are we justified in giving a baby a general anaesthetic if it is not necessary for medical reasons. The risk may be minimal but it is still there nevertheless.

The ignorance of the general public about circumcision is amazing. Very few mothers, if any, know that it is normal for the infant foreskin to be tight and adherent for the first few years. The truth is that many doctors do not seem to realize it either. And so the myth of circumcision has come to be perpetuated.

For those who doubt the religious significance of circumcision I may mention a fact I did not know myself until a Catholic friend told me recently. There is in the Christian Church a Feast of Circumcision on 1 January. What on earth it all signifies I

have no idea—and care less. I dare say the Jewish babies used to be "done" on that day for some reason.

One could write at considerable length on this topic. But I would mention that many articles about the futility of ritual circumcision have appeared both in British and American medical journals, but this is the first time time I have seen it aired in a lay magazine, and high time too!

CLAUD WATSON.

*Jewish male babies have their cocks snipped on the eighth day, and 1 January would be the anniversary of Jesus' circumcision given a birthday of 25 December. What is even more ludicrous is the number of venerable relics—in this case the term is rather appropriate—purporting to be Christ's foreskin.—Ed.*

## Held to ransom

Events in the Middle East (and in connection with it) have shown that when there is no World Government relatively weak nations with a monopoly of some vital raw material such as oil can hold the world to ransom.

I. S. LOW.

## Marx and the Orthodox Economists

It is not my intention to write to *The Freethinker* every month, but Denis Cobell's review of my *Marx and the Orthodox Economists* simply asks for comment.

He says that I say "the matter still boils down to an opinion, or ethical judgement" and then quotes a few words which do not say this, and ignores what Marx said, which I do quote both in the book and here: "The economists explain the process of production under given conditions; what they do not explain to us, however, is how these conditions are being produced." Is this "ethical"? I would have thought it was a difference in scientific approach.

Again, the *ex cathedra* assertion: "There is small difference between the organization of so-called socialist countries and capitalist countries." This is not me, but the personal view of the reviewer. Again, my "evidence" on incomes in the U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. is in fact a tentative estimate based on several capitalist sources. It is by no means final. "The path beyond the downfall of capitalism has never been successfully put into practice." Again the reviewer, not me. In my view the socialist countries are developing *not* along capitalist lines and I devote a whole chapter to "Convergence" or "Coexistence"? But your reviewer, and R. W. Morrell in a letter, identify Soviet Socialism with capitalism.

In my view, clearly stated in the book despite Denis Cobell, the U.S.S.R. differs from capitalism (including Labour Party nationalization) in that (a) the means of production are publicly owned, (b) their use is planned in order to maximize material and cultural progress for the whole population by (c) the steady rise in productivity and production in every field, (d) the ultimate outcome of this process will be a publicly planned age of plenty in which it will be possible for all to receive according to needs and in which each will contribute according to ability. In short, the "higher stage" of Communism as envisaged by Marx.

PAT SLOAN.

## ... and Soviet Repression

I am not surprised that Pat Sloan makes no apology for altering Marx's words. The essential point is not, as Mr. Sloan dogmatically asserts, "the necessary stages of development", but the actual conditions of life of human beings. Why, asks Professor Mayo, is what Russia claims to be the interim "first phase of communism", so "vastly different from that anticipated by Marx and Lenin"? Or, as Professor Carr, the historian of Soviet Russia, says, "More important than any question of time was Lenin's emphatic assertion in *State and Revolution* that the 'dying away' of the state will begin forthwith."

Mr. Sloan tediously and falsely states that I have not read Lenin or really studied Marx. He seems incapable of comprehending that it is not sufficient to parrot the sacred texts of Marxism. I have made a prolonged study of Marx and Engels but it is when a thorough grounding in their writings has been acquired that the real work begins. For, as I have pointed out (*The Freethinker*, 12 August 1972), there is a multiple ambiguity in Marxism, and startlingly different and contradictory interpretations abound.

It is palpably untrue for Mr. Sloan to say that I pretend that the U.S.S.R. has not changed since Stalin. What I have shown is that Sloan's dead "hero" was a criminal and mass-murderer, and that Dr. Sakharov has compared Stalinism with Fascism and denounced the neo-Stalinists. Professor Nove has currently assessed the situation in "How Repressive is the Soviet Union?" (*New Society*, 15 November 1973). Nove's views were refused



publication elsewhere because they were thought to be too favourable to the U.S.S.R. He considers that present levels of Soviet political arrests are similar to those under Tsar Alexander III or Nicholas II, but that the restrictions under which the non-conformist intelligentsia work are far more constrictive than they were under Nicholas II, or today under Franco or Papadopoulos. Alternatively, there is Roger Silverman's article in the Marxist paper *Militant* (16 November 1973) replying to two letters, one from R. W. Morrell. Morrell talks about Stalin building Russia into a great nation and making it a viable proposition to postulate the establishment of socialism throughout the world. Silverman, however, shows that workers' democracy was suppressed and that "Society in all the Stalinist states is crippled and deformed by bureaucratic totalitarianism."

As for Pat Sloan's recent book, reviewed by Denis Cobell (*The Freethinker*, November) Sloan's "quite misleadingly deficient" image of the Soviet Union (see *New Humanist*, November 1973) is hinted at by Cobell. But there is nothing about Sloan's exposition of Marx's theory of Value, which theory Sloan's "mentor", Professor Joan Robinson, describes (1973) as "metaphysical. Its only logical content is a definition: labour produces value and value is what labour produces." Nor does Mr. Cobell mention the theory of "increasing misery" although Lenin claimed that "the worker is becoming impoverished *absolutely*." (*Works* Vol. 18). And there is no reference to the emergence in the Soviet Union of mathematical models and economics which "recognize the scarcity of non-labour resources and involve marginal analysis. These are in open conflict with the labour theory of value." (J. Wilczynski, 1972). Mr. Sloan makes some eight or nine references to the Marxist economist Oscar Lange but what he does not quote from Lange is: "That Marxian economics fails is due to the labour theory of value. Only the technique provided by the modern method of marginal analysis enables us to solve the problem satisfactorily." JUDEX.

### Materialism or superstition

Using the "principle of falsifiability" Charles Byass (letters, November) demonstrates with remarkable subtlety his accomplished craft of falsification. His delight is almost audible as he purrs: "... surely one of the most honourable of principles ..." having, of course, just proven the opposite.

He reminds me of the woman driver, who, having been told the reason as to why her car wouldn't start, "Your battery's completely flat", remarked rather stupidly, "Well can't you pump it up?" Such was his astounding degree of incomprehension regarding the fundamental epistemological import of Avenarius' statement, "I know nothing of the physical nor the psychical, but only some third." This, says Mr. Byass, "can surely be defended quite honourably." Can it? It certainly left his disciples tongue-tied. After all, we can understand the two basic states of human existence explained by the philosophical terms "thinking and being", but what is this "third"—and what, it may be asked, is the honourable defence? "2+2=4", in all its aspects merely confirms what Richard Avenarius denied "knowing".

"Further", Mr. Byass continues, "there is surely something to be said for the claim that myths can act as a spur to scientific progress." But who made this claim? And who has denied it? This deliberate piece of falsification is quite consistent and typical of this "principle of falsifiability." My objection, was to the Popperian Lie that science is *not* "something distinct from a myth." When Thales of Miletus (c. 624-656 B.C.) commenced his philosophic and scientific studies, for the very first time in the history of humanity (as far as our knowledge goes) the creation and god-themes of mythology were opposed by a theory of natural processes—something quite distinct from myth, and quite distinct from the deceitful presentation of Mr. Byass, too.

It is the Popperians of today, who alone, give credence to such as the recently made claim of Pope Paul that "there is no conflict between science and religion ... scientists are realizing more and more that what they are studying is mystery and only God can give answers to mystery."

So long as some freethinkers deny a consistent materialistic attitude, so long will they, in one way or another, find themselves supporting the superstitious bilge they claim to oppose. And what is perhaps worse, they will adopt increasingly so, the clerical practice of shameless distortion. For the latter detracts not only from they themselves, but the whole movement at large.

TREVOR MORGAN.

### Pedants in Politics

May I point out to those apt to be bemused by the pedantries offered by privileged academics, that socialism is a matter of choice? The only reason why argument enters the arena is that one is subject to the whims of others; one cannot make a personal

choice, one needs a consensus. Hence the propaganda, in which dishonesty features in ratio to one's personal stake. Since the stakes, either in wealth or privilege, are very high to those who have exercised control of indoctrination, the arguments they offer are designed to *end* argument.

The easiest way, they find, is to substitute persons for principles, since persons are capable of anything. By sticking a political label on them, persons like Stalin and Marx can be used to refute Communism and socialism. Thus Stalin was evil, and Marx a false prophet. The point is overlooked that even if they were, they differed in no way from lots of others who were anti-Communist and anti-socialist. Despite such efforts to "prove" that socialism is "wrong" many people will still see socialism as what it is, a matter of choice, preferring nourishment to starvation, health to sickness, and peace to war. Under the benign rule of the anti-socialists millions have experienced plenty of horrors which anti-socialists would have us regard as "acts of God".

So what is socialism? May I offer a new definition? A prospectus for a new society in which the working-class will be eliminated, since that class has been an artificial creation contrary to the interests of humanity in that it is deprived, trained to obedience in return for minimal reward and willing to commit any outrage against fellowmen at the behest of its masters. The lesson of history condemns the use of men in such manner. Those who seek to preserve such a class, do so in their own immediate interests and so betray humanity to perpetual irrationality and suicidal tendencies. To eliminate such a working-class it is necessary to eliminate the master-class which fosters its survival. Only then will men be able to achieve their aspiration and utilize their potential.

I trust that my elimination of class will not be construed as elimination of people. But if I know the propagandists (and I do) it will be.

WALTER CONNOLLY.

### Freakthinking

There appears to be a little "freakthinking" in the Flew-Morrell controversy. The Labour Party is as equally dedicated to the preservation of capitalist society, as are the Tories. Diligent application by the mass media has corruptly equated nationalization with state capitalism. Nationalization means confiscation, and was synonymous with it in the early days of the Labour Party.

HORACE FAIRHURST.

### Quality of Life

The Anglican Bishop of Birmingham claims 460 unborn babies are being destroyed daily in this country. Let his holy eyes scan the world more. How many are being born to face a short life of sheer starvation?

To go back a little. Has he heard of the case of Arthur Francis? His mother had too many children in East London poverty. He should not be here today. It only added to the misery. An abortion for his mother would have been a blessing.

And when the children are born? How many has he helped to attach themselves to the miseries of Jesus? The wars that have been fought in his name. Dear little children doctored with curses for others. Or are we to consider that the present royal children thought out their religion?

Man gives the woman into child. She must be allowed to say 'No'. An unwilling mother is no mother at all. If one can perish by the sword by law in war there is no reason why an unborn child should not be stopped from entering the mad world of the bishop and the named sins.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

### Ethics without God

In his review (November) of *Ethics Without God* by Kai Nielsen, John L. Broom questions both the argument that there are "no absolute moral principles", and the consistency of Professor Nielsen's moral beliefs. Mr. Broom expresses his moral concern in arguing that certain "absolute moral principles" exist in "the nature of things" and (in some eternal sense) independently of individual or "majority" opinion. From that argument (or belief), however, there would seem to follow the somewhat paradoxical situation in which the factual nature of good leaves good without moral value! For if it were a fact that some things are good or bad, then would not our feelings of good or bad be valueless? Surely, those who believe in striving "to maximize the amount of happiness in the world and consequently minimize the amount of suffering" derive their belief from the fact of their experiences of the pleasure of happiness and the pain of suffering, rather than from any "objective factors" of "good and evil".

When Mr. Broom writes of "the unspeakable horrors perpetrated at Dachau or Belsen" is he not making a statement about "the nature" of a feeling towards a fact?

CHARLES BYASS.



# 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 £25 including full board, Yuletide fare, gratuities and V.A.T. For full details contact (as soon as possible) Mrs. Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone: 01-642 8796).

# EVENTS

Anti-Apartheid Movement. 9 to 23 December: Sponsored Walk for Freedom in Southern Africa, from Newcastle through Manchester and Birmingham to South Africa House, London. (01-580 5311).

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 6 January, 5.30 p.m.: Professor G. A. WELLS, "Did Jesus Exist?"

Harrow Humanist Society, The Library, Gayton Road, Harrow. Wednesday, 9 January, 8 p.m.: Professor Sir HERMANN BONDI.

Humanist Holidays, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Thursday, 3 January, 6 p.m.: Annual General Meeting and Informal Reunion.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. *Sunday Lectures*, 6.30 p.m.: 16 December: A. DAVIS, "Brainwashing"; 30 December, Discussion on Censorship; 6 January: F. A. RIDLEY, "Catholicism at the Crossroads".

London Young Humanists. *Annual Unchristmas Dinner*: Friday 14 December, 7.20 p.m., meet at Jimmy's, Frith Street, Soho (approximate cost £1). *Meetings*, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8: Sunday, 16 December, 7.30 p.m.: Professor G. A. WELLS, "The Jesus Who Never Lived"; Sunday, 6 January, 7.30 p.m.: DICK CHAFFE, "The Work of Amnesty International".

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group, University Adult Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham. Friday, 14 December, 7.30 p.m.: Dr. B. BASSEY (Conservation Society), "Where do you stand on *Blue print for Survival?*"; Friday, 11 January, 7.30 p.m.: D. HARPER, "Church Schools".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. *Sunday Morning Meeting*, 11 a.m.: 16 December: PETER CADOGAN, "Cromwell, Our Chief of Men"; *Tuesday Discussion*, 7 p.m.: 18 December, "Buddhism"; *Christmas Party*: Monday, 24 December, 7 p.m.

Worthing Humanist Group, Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Saturday 12 January, 7 for 7.30 p.m.: New Year's Dinner. Further details from Secretary: Miss I. M. Davies, 71 Goldsmith Road, Worthing.

## THE FREETHINKER

### 1972 BOUND VOLUME

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