

# The FREETHINKER

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## JANE MUST HELP MUMMY

### —INADEQUATE PROPOSALS FOR SEX ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW

The Government's consultative document, *Equal Opportunities for Men and Women*, reserves its main proposals for the limited field of employment, and barely touches, if at all, the main sources of women's unequal position in society. Even in employment so many exceptions are provided, and in terms of such vagueness, that many employers will be able to continue discriminatory practices with impunity. Far from being challenged, woman's stereotyped rôle in society will be reinforced and institutionalized. The Government proposes to set up an Equal Opportunities Commission, but enforcement of the law will be left to existing industrial tribunals (on which women are barely represented) and the—to many—odious National Industrial Relations Court. Existing protective provisions for women under the Factories Act will be abolished.

#### Loopholes

In the field of employment the new law will cover discrimination in recruitment, training, promotion, advertisements, and by employment agencies. However admirable these provisions, it is the long list of exceptions that call for comment. The Government itself acknowledges that all exceptions weaken the principle of non-discrimination, but then go on to provide numerous exceptions. In fact, their number and their open-ended nature must call into question their *bona fides*. Discrimination will be allowed where sex is considered to be "a genuine occupational qualification". It will not be allowed where employment of both sexes will be more expensive, where one sex is statistically likely to be a better employee, or where employment involves adverse working conditions. However, discrimination will be allowed, where the nature of the job requires it, where one sex is required for authenticity, where a team of mixed sex is required, where employment is in a single-sex institution, where communal accommodation is essential, where employment of one sex would be offensive to public taste and decency, or where customers' preferences make it necessary. Certain occupations are also excluded: midwifery, mining, the armed forces, the police and the Church. If this dreary catalogue were not enough, the law will also ignore pensions and retirement ages.

Of these exclusions, only the need for authenticity (for example, in acting) or for a mixed team in social work seem at all justified. The qualification "where the nature of the job requires it" is typical of the lack of explicitness in the wording of much of this measure. The only example given is of a foster-mother, but this goes nowhere towards delimiting the scope of this clause, and is problematical in itself, since what is wrong with having a foster-parent rather than specifically a foster-mother. The exclusion on the grounds of offence to public taste and decency is particularly puzzling as no example is given in the document. But as a test it will be known to *Freethinker* readers as being thoroughly unsatisfactory. The concession to customers' preferences is reminiscent of the racist's rejoinder: "It's not me; it's the neighbours/tenants/customers."

Further, it will reinforce the existing situation where certain jobs are thought to be the preserve of one or the other sex. The exception where communal accommodation is the rule is equally unnecessary; separate accommodation should be available for those who want it. The Government seem to have merchant ships particularly in mind, but why should they always be made an exception, as they were, for instance, from the legalization of homosexual acts in private.

Again, it is not clear why the armed forces and the police should be excluded. It is undesirable for the State to make exceptions in law for certain of its own employees when putting forward a measure affecting conditions of work. The exception of midwives is particularly interesting. This can only be a matter of class. No one objects to a male gynaecologist because he is upper middle class, but a male midwife would be of an altogether different class, and propriety demands . . . In short, as the National Council for Civil Liberties say in their comments on the proposals: "You might think that the point of an anti-discrimination law is to stop people being refused jobs because of their sex. But the Government is proposing that if sex is a 'genuine qualification' for the job, then employers can discriminate." They go on to point out that in the United States there is a similar *bona fide* occupational qualification, but this has been taken so strictly that "practically only models, actors and wet-nurses are allowed to be chosen for their sex."

#### Educationally second class

In the spring of 1973 a parliamentary select committee produced a draft anti-discrimination Bill which included a provision to ban new single-sex schools. The Government's proposals contain no such provision; they say that single-sex schools are necessary to maintain parental choice. Discussing this point in the House of Lords the Bishop of London said, "I think that educationists would agree that it is important at that level for some segregation [by sex], at any rate for part of the time, because, so I am told, the academic development of boys and girls in their teens is apt not to be at the same level." Neither

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of these points, especially the second—surely pupils of the same age differ more academically than do the “average” boy and girl at a given age—can stand up in face of the arguments against sexually segregated education: that it is psychologically and socially undesirable for the pupils, and symbolically undesirable for society, since it gives the impression that boys and girls have drastically different educational needs. Furthermore, it enables educational resources inequitably divided between the sexes. The Government’s present proposals against discrimination in education are purely consultative, and effectively nugatory.

There is also to be no provision to prevent discrimination in the provision of services. How many women have had the indignity of, say, going to hire a television and being told that she will have to obtain a male guarantor before she may do so. In this field, and in accommodation, mortgages, hire purchase and all other services protection from discrimination is as much needed as it was in the case of the Race Relations Act. The exclusion is surely inexplicable in a measure that seeks to eliminate discrimination by sex.

The desirability or otherwise of abolishing the protective provisions of the Factories Act for women is problematical. Clearly, a case can be made out for doing away with them on the grounds that in the new non-discriminatory world there is no place for protective legislation for one sex only. But, as the N.C.C.L. point out, if they are abolished, women may well end up worse off than they are now. This arises from the fact that women are very much under-unionized and that most of them are housewives as well. Do they need to be protected from the temptation of choosing to be exploited? The N.C.C.L. observes: “Abolishing the protective laws is apparently going to be the price for an anti-discrimination law. It is a price that will be paid by working-class women for a law that, at least initially, benefits the middle classes.”

It will probably have been noticed that one category of employee excluded from the new law has not yet been discussed. This is the clergy. The Government would probably say that it is inappropriate for them to interfere in the internal affairs of the Church. Doubtless similar arguments were used by industrialists during the nineteenth century when faced with socially progressive legislation that affected them. If Sweden is anything to go by,

it will be at least thirty years before the Church catches up with the rest of society on this point. Although the Methodist Church recently decided to admit women to the ministry and many of the other Free Churches, the others are still struggling to shake off a two-thousand-year-old habit of sexual discrimination, as embedded in the two famous Pauline injunctions: “The women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” (1 Cor. 14 : 34-6); “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach, nor to have authority over men; she is to keep silent.” (1 Tim. 2 : 11-12).

Recently, the Church of England proudly announced: “Holy Cross, Basildon, Essex, has a woman vicar.” It was stated that after seventeen years of full-time licensed church work Deaconess Pat Cotton has been appointed an “acting team vicar”. As such she will presumably still be debarred from administering the sacraments and even from giving a benediction using the second person. The Anglican dioceses are presently considering the question of the ordination of women. To assist them they have—what else?—a consultative document, entitled *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*. Although it questions the argument of the following quotation in certain respects, that such views can be offered at all in a document for discussion in 1974 must be indicative of the extent to which thinking in the Church of England is out of touch with the rest of society, and raises the question of whether that body’s views should be given privileged airing in the House of Lords that they presently receive, or that the propagation of such views should be subsidized by the rest of us.

Some believe that though there is equality between the sexes, the initiative always rests with the male. A woman seeking to perform masculine rôles is seen as betraying her sex: it reduces her to being a mere substitute for a man, unaware of her own different and parallel dignity. Some women see themselves as made to help and advise men in their work, rather than to govern, for physically and psychologically (though not spiritually and intellectually) they feel women are subsidiary to men. It has been suggested that the nature of priesthood is connected with the psychological nature of men as distinct from women, for the subordination of women to men makes it appropriate for the conduct of public worship to be entrusted to men. Sex, it is said, occupies a more central place in feminine than masculine human nature and thus for women to lead worship and administer sacraments, would destroy the sexless and impartial tone that marks Christian worship: the sacramental priesthood belongs to the dominant sex.

If there is any lingering doubt of the Churches’ generally reactionary view on the question of sex discrimination, the reaction of the Roman Catholic colleagues of the editor to one of the Heretic Greeting Cards is illuminating. They were all three disturbed by the one showing the three kings arriving at the stable to be told by Joseph “it’s a girl”. On following this up, it turned out that they were hardly more capable of contemplating a female priest than of being redeemed by a lady Saviour. Needless to say, they are less than enthusiastic about the Women’s Liberation Movement. It seems that Lord Soper was right when he said in the House of Lord debate: “It has often been the fact that the veneration of one woman has been the conscience money for the denigration of most of her sisters.”

*Equal Opportunities for Men and Women*, free from local employment offices. *Women’s Rights*, 15p from N.C.C.L., 186 King’s Cross Road, London WC1.

# NEWS AND NOTES

## PRAYER FOR POWER

BARBARA SMOKER writes:

A week earlier this month was designated by the Evangelical Alliance the Worldwide Week of Prayer—its theme being "Thine is the Power" which seems to have been intended rather literally by the sponsors, for their publicity is mainly concerned with electrical, rather than divine, power. The general secretary of the British E.A. has stated: "The Week of Prayer has a special significance in Britain this year, as the country faces its worst economic and political crisis since World War Two . . ." His organization therefore dedicated Saturday, 12 January, at the end of the Worldwide Week of Prayer, as a special Day of Prayer for the Nation.

If the Evangelical Alliance really believe in a God who takes note of their prayers, it seems somewhat self-centred for them to draw his attention to the economic plight of a nation whose standard of living is still in the top twenty rather than to countries where the only motive power is that of human and animal muscle. Moreover, the whole exercise raises some rather basic questions: are their prayers aimed at persuading the God of "infinite wisdom" to alter his plans for the world, or merely giving his omniscience a gentle reminder? Or what?

Those who support the Day of Prayer as a response to the national crisis are some of the same people who are also calling for a revival of the Churchillian spirit: an ironic situation, since Churchill (a lifelong agnostic) wrote a devastating letter ridiculing the national day of prayer for rain in June 1919.

The National Secular Society might be less impatient of this superstitious nonsense were it not given free advertisement and official endorsement by the B.B.C.'s allocating five minutes of peak listening time (*Thought for the Day*) each morning to the president of the Evangelical Alliance. Religious broadcasts, unlike political ones, are not subject to the principle of equity whereby equal air time is allotted to opposing views.

## PURDAH AT SCHOOL

Readers of this journal will be aware of the growing pressure from Muslim groups pressing for state schools to make concessions to their anti-social superstitions. Recently an Indian Muslim in Bradford demanded that the local authority provide his daughter a place at a single-sex school, so that she would not have to mix with boys to the offence of his religion. Despite support from such bodies as Muslim Parents' Association and the National Council for the Preservation of Islamic Rights, Mr. Patel failed in his appeal to Education Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, who held that she was satisfied that the local education authority had not acted unreasonably, as all the places in the three local girls-only schools were full. A school attendance order has been issued, but Mr. Patel is reported as saying: "My daughter will not go to a mixed school and I will go to jail first. A Muslim can take any number of insults but when his religion is challenged he will rise up and sacrifice himself. We cannot be forced to change our religion by any law." Apparently, another Bradford Muslim has returned to Pakistan rather than send his daughter to a mixed school.

Bradford Educational Services Committee has made certain concessions for Muslim children. They will not be

required to wear "revealing" clothing for physical education, nor to take part in mixed swimming. However, the Committee is adamant over the decision on single-sex education. This incident may be thought to raise issues of freedom of religion and race relations, but the host community cannot be expected to pander to views it reasonably regards as irrational and anti-social. If it is thought inconsistent that it subsidizes the superstitions of its own community with regard to religious instruction and Church schools, we would agree. But the solution is to stop that subsidy, not to undertake more.

## SUNDAY SOCCER SUCCESS

Despite the Government's refusal to relax the obsolete Sunday observance laws to allow Sunday football, especially in areas where one of the three working days is a Saturday, given the chance to express their own opinion the football public showed that they had no compunction against enjoying their day of leisure as they please. At Bolton on 6 January the crowd of over 39,000 was three times their normal gate and was higher than any at the other matches played on the Saturday. This and three other F.A. Cup ties were able to be played by charging a larger fee for the programme and technically admitting the spectators free. The public accepted the situation so fully that no one at the Bolton match demanded free admission without programme.

It is to be hoped that hitherto pusillanimous Football League will fully face up to the potential of Sunday football and press for the removal of the anachronistic laws which prevent it. Four years ago, they refused a club's request for experiments in Sunday football. Now it has happened and this could make all the difference in their deliberations. If there emerged a powerful Sunday soccer lobby, this would perhaps persuade Governments finally to resist the whining of the Lord's Day Observance Society and wipe the Statue Book clean, either by permitting the passage of a private member's Bill or through legislation promoted by its own Law Commission.

It is heartening that the planned demonstration by the Lord's Day Observance Society at Bolton failed to take place. This is surely indicative of the strength of feeling in favour of Sunday soccer, since Lancashire is not noted as being an undevout county in other matters. As a National Secular Society press release stated: "It is time the Lord's Day Observance Society restricted itself to the rights of its own members, instead of trying to restrict everyone else."

## MINORITY PERVERSION

Readers will be pleased to learn that a Bill to abolish live hare coursing has been introduced into Parliament. It is due to have its second reading on Friday, 1st February. It is important that M.P.s be urged to take the trouble to attend that Friday and lend their support to the abolition of this abomination and to defeat the disproportionately large bloodsport lobby in Parliament. An independent opinion poll has shown that 77 per cent of the population are against this cruelty, and its continuing legality is an affront to us all. A letter to your M.P. would be most helpful, and one to the Prime Minister as well even better. Further details are obtainable from the League Against Cruel Sports, 1 Reform Row, London N17 9TW.

# POET AGAINST THE KIRK

MARGARET McILROY

Everyone knows something about Robert Burns, if only that he wrote *O, My Luve's Like a Red, Red Rose* and *Auld Lang Syne* and that his birthday on 25 January is celebrated in Scotland by gatherings at which a dubious sort of sausage—the haggis—is helped down with whisky and music. Few English are aware that this provincial Scot, whose short life was beset with ill-health, grinding poverty and scandal, was one of the world's greatest artists, the variety of whose achievement, and the breadth and warmth of whose vision of humanity entitle him to be ranked with Shakespeare.

## Repulsive Calvinism

Freethinkers should have a special feeling for him. The repulsive Calvinist doctrine of the predestined salvation of an elect few while the rest of mankind was justly damned, never had a more brilliant or a more blistering critic. One of his most witty and enjoyable poems is *Holy Willie's Prayer*. In this we overhear a particularly repulsive specimen of old-fashioned, orthodox Calvinism at his devotions—congratulating himself on his 'election', confessing to sordid, drunken fornications, praying for vengeance on his enemies and for wealth for himself—with every word condemning simultaneously himself and his creed:

O Thou that in the Heavens does dwell,  
Wha as it pleases best Thysel,  
Sends aye to Heaven an' ten to Hell  
A' for Thy glory,  
And no for onie guid or ill  
They've done before Thee!

I bless and praise Thy matchless might,  
When thousand Thou hast left in night,  
That I am here before Thy sight,  
For gifts and grace  
A burning and a shining light  
To a' this place . . .

I wha deserved most just damnation  
For broken laws  
Sax thousand years ere my creation,  
Thro' Adam's cause.

Happily Holy Willie's brand of Christianity was intellectually already in retreat, though it still held sway in the countryside. Some of the "new light" ministers were well pleased with Burns's attacks on their opponents. Burns himself was no atheist and in sending a copy of *Holy Willie* to a progressive minister he wrote a covering poem:

All hail Religion! Maid divine . . .  
To stigmatize false friends of thine  
Can ne'er defame thee . . .  
A candid lib'ral band is found  
Of public teachers,  
As men, as Christians too, renown'd,  
An' manly preachers . . .  
Sir, in that circle you are fam'd.

Such friendly references to religion are numerous. Thus in *Epistle To A Young Friend* he writes:

The great Creator to revere  
Must still become the creature;  
But still the preaching cant forbear,  
And ev'n the rigid feature

and he does not forget to add:

The fear of Hell's a hangman's whip  
To haud (hold) the wretch in order.

It is his sense of honour that should be the young man's guide to decent conduct.

The "preaching cant" and the "rigid feature" affected by the pious killjoys of the Kirk he held in particular detestation, and he takes many gleeful swipes at them. Typical of his *Address to the Unco Guid*, or *The Rigidly Righteous*:

O ye, who are sae guid yuorsel,  
Sae pious and sae holy,  
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell  
Your neebours' fauts and folly . . .  
Ye high, exalted virtuous dames,  
Tied up in godly laces,  
Before ye gie poor Frailty names,  
Suppose a change o' cases:  
A dear-lov'd lad, convenience snug,  
A treacherous inclination—  
But let me whisper i' your lug (ear)  
Ye're aiblins (maybe) nae temptation.

Looking around, we can see that some of the "unco guid" are still with us!

It is noteworthy that in none of his expressions of religious sentiment does Burns make any reference to Jesus. In the course of *Look Up and See*—a scathing attack on the career of the biblical David—Burns remarks:

Ay, though that Jesus styled divine  
Is shown to be o' David's line  
Thro' mair than ae poor concubine,  
The pedigree  
Has plaguit (plagued) ither heids than mine—  
Look up and see!

and his conclusion is:

King David mair o' dirt should smell  
Than Diety,  
And gin (if) there's sic a place as Hell—  
Look up and see!

Burns here is clearly denying the divinity of Jesus, as well as doubting the existence of Hell.

## Master of Satire

What has been said about Burns's religious poetry is enough to show him as a master of satire and of comedy, and to indicate how some of his most interesting poems were written as casual letters to friends. Alas! he wrote only one narrative poem—*Tam O' Shanter*—but no one has ever written a better. It has everything—drama, character, comedy, description and variety of mood—as the cheerfully tipsy farmer, riding home from the alehouse, stumbles upon a witches' sabbath, described in its full horror in Burns's best mock solemnity, in rhymed couplet with an easy, flowing rhythm.

His love poetry, probably because most of it has been set to—or written for—the lovely Scots traditional airs, is the most widely known. The poems are notable both for the poet's frank enjoyment of sex and the tenderness he expresses towards the loved one—and always showed in his actions, for though he had a number of women in his life, he was never a heartless seducer.

(Continued on next page)

# A UNIQUE MUSEUM

GEORGE MILLER

Recently, on a holiday visit to Leningrad, I decided to visit the anti-religious museum, at present the only one in the world. This museum is not in any of the usual Museums and Palaces tours, but a visit was easily arranged by Intourist, free of charge. As the first member of the National Secular Society ever to visit this unique collection, I was given a personally conducted tour by Mr. Yura, who spoke excellent English. He told me he was a graduate in Sociology and Theology, with a degree in Atheism from Leningrad University.

The museum is in the Nevsky Prospect, the main shopping Street in Leningrad, and was originally the Kazan Cathedral. It is a fine classical building something between St. Paul's Cathedral and the British Museum in appearance. The exhibits fill the whole of the Nave and the ground floor, a large crypt, and some rooms upstairs. I was shown round and the tour took a full two hours. My guide explained all the exhibits, which were well displayed and easy to understand. The place was crowded with visitors including several conducted parties. My tour started upstairs in the Oriental Religions Section and was about the multiple religions of China, Japan, India, Tibet and Burma. Over half the population of mankind is represented in this section, and none believe in the same conception of life as Christianity. I saw dozens of Gods which gave me the impression that some people can believe in anything, that only a minority of people think for themselves, and that the rest believe in what they are told.

On the ground floor of the original cathedral, which was magnificently decorated and gilt, we started with tableaux of aboriginal man, both pre-historic and Australasian, then Esquimaux and American Indians as primitive civilizations. We continued with the ancient world Assyria, Egypt, Greece and Rome, showing and explaining the origins of later religious beliefs. After this was a very large section relating to the Greek Orthodox Church, which was for centuries the State religion of Russia. There was a specially large number of Ikons, many of which were supposed

to have miraculous powers. There was also one case each for the Mohammedan and Jewish religions, rather less than one would have expected.

We followed this with a visit to the crypt which was mostly devoted to the Protestant and Roman Catholic cults all over the world, but also contained some exhibits about the French revolution and the murranos of Spain. This crypt is probably the most popular part of the museum and includes several instruments of torture used in the Inquisition and a full size reconstruction of a torture chamber with good Catholics at work. Here are more so-called holy relics including one of the original nails of the crucifixion. There are hundreds of these genuine nails all over Europe, the demand created the supply. I was unable to find any of the foreskins of Christ, of which there are several in existence. In fact, the whole place is full of very interesting and historical relics and is well worth seeing.

One suggestion: there is a total lack of information about the anti-religious writers of England. Gifts of books by Thomas Paine, Chapman Cohen, Charles Bradlaugh, and even Bertrand Russell would be appreciated.

## POET AGAINST THE KIRK

(Continued from previous page)

One of his most attractive poems is *Welcome to a Bastart Wean*, his first child, who was given to his mother to bring up, and for whose begetting he had to do public penance in the Kirk:

Welcome, my bonie, sweet, wee dochter!  
 Tho' ye come here a wee unsought for.  
 Sweet fruit o' monie a merry dint,  
 My funny toil is no a' tint (not all lost)  
 Tho' thou cam to the warl' askint (askew)  
 Which fools may scuff at,  
 In my last plack (coin) thy part's be in't  
 The better half o't . . .  
 As fatherly I kiss and daut (pet) thee,  
 Wi' as guid will,  
 As a' the priests had seen me get thee  
 That's out o' Hell.

Besides writing so many songs himself, he collected many folk songs, which without him might easily have been lost.

## Your Poet ?

Many English people feel that Burn's dialect makes more than a superficial enjoyment of his songs impossible for them, or not worth the effort. This robs them of a great deal of pleasure. Collins Classics publishes an excellent edition, *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, with the unfamiliar words printed in the margin, so that the poems can be read continuously without searching for footnotes and through glossaries. For anyone who likes to read about poetry, *Robert Burns* by David Diaches (Bell & Son) provides a combination of biography and analysis of the poems, which can be heartily recommended. Unless you are one of those people who just hate poetry, do extend your appreciation to Burns—and even if you reckon poetry is not for you, have a try. You may find Burns is just the poet you've been looking for.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

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# THE SHADOW OF THE CRESCENT

CAVAN McCARTHY

Once upon a time, and not so very long ago, all Arabs were "Wogs" who touted "dirty postcards" in the alleys of Port Said, and openly solicited for their belly-dancing "sisters" to the lecherous British soldiery. All Sheiks were "Red Shadows" carrying unprotesting white maidens of noble birth on the pommels of their horses across the burning sands of the desert to some luxurious harem, where all Arab women lived, along with Circassian dancing-hussies, and guarded by enormous Nubian eunuchs. Now the Arabs have given Fort 69 the *beau geste*, the legionaries are in disarray, and the picture is altered.

Perhaps not since the Arab hordes were defeated at Poitiers by Charles Martel in A.D. 732, and the Turks repulsed at the gates of Vienna by the Polish and allied forces under Jan Sobrienski in 1683 and not since Boabdil was driven from Granada to make way for the Inquisition and the *auto da fe*, have the Arabs been so important or Islam loomed so large. Now that a few despotic, feudal desert sheiks can threaten to paralyse oil-dependent Western industry and technology, we must revise our ideas. The Arab states have quite logically and understandably refused to supply their oil to countries helping Israel with arms and money for their expansionist policy in the Middle East. Added to which, despite their military inferiority, they rely upon the fact that the Western powers dare not just go in and grab the oil for fear of Russia.

## Menace of Islam

Now, I write this as a pro-Arab without being pro-Moslem, and as an anti-Zionist without being anti-Semitic. What I am concerned with is the menace of Islam. As freethinkers we have always concentrated on exposing the bigotry, falsehoods, myths, and life-denying repressions of Christianity, without looking over our shoulders at the other (third) branch of primitive Old Testament Judaism.

The world owes a tremendous debt to the civilization of the Arabs, particularly in the field of mathematics, philosophy, medicine, irrigation, chemistry, architecture, and astronomy. And although the "Sons of the Prophet" spread their culture with fire and the sword there was no forcible conversion, little proselytizing of the "Infidel", and no Inquisition. Jews and Christians were tolerated in Moorish Spain and through the Caliphate.

But it is not so much with the Arabs we are concerned as with the menace of the cruel and vindictive Moslem religion, and its retrogressive threat to our hard-won so-called permissive society, our secular libertarian way of life and to the personal freedom and natural rights of the individual. A religion which claims adherents from the Pillars of Hercules to the Philippines, and which under the Ottoman Empire claimed all of south east Europe as far north as the Carpathians and eastward to the Ukraine.

Already the unspeakable Col. Gadafy has called for the "conversion of Europe" just as Catholics pray for the "conversion of England", and having re-introduced total prohibition, even for Europeans, also revived the savage penalty of flogging for adultery and fornication.

"Adultery" and "fornication" in Islamic Law are interchangeable, except that in the case of adultery the ultimate punishment is lapidation, or stoning to death, as among the Ancient Jews, and the Mosaic penalty applied as well

to the betrothed. (Deut. 23 : 22; Lev. 19 : 20.) The accused must appear before a *Qazi*, or magistrate, but there must be four witnesses to the act, or a confession (very unlikely) made at four different times and places. This latter can be retracted, in which case the prisoner is released. The original punishment (under Mohammed) for an adulterous wife was to have her immured. "Shut them up within their houses till Death release them or God make some way for them" (Koran 4 : 19). In the case of lapidation the victim was to be executed first in a lonely place by the witnesses, then the *Qazi*, then the bystanders (rest of the lynch-mob). If a woman, "A hole should be dug to receive her as deep as her waist, because Mohammed ordered such a hole to be dug for Ghandia." (T. P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*).

## Oriental resignation

Presumably the kites and vultures of the desert would do the rest. Quite a charming little picture. The punishment for fornication is a hundred stripes "with a strap or whip (with no knots) and not all on the same part of the body". But according to the recent leader of the Pakistani community in Bradford, it can be painful, and he cheerfully admitted with bland Oriental resignation, that "most of them died under the punishment." This gentleman has since repatriated himself without any help from Mr. Powell, because he considers co-education to be a grave moral danger.

In Islam the *Khalifas* or supreme rulers, of which there are, or were no less than six, are, owing to their exalted rank, exempt from punishment for adultery. Among the more lowly the state of marriage which subjects an adulterer to a horrible method of execution simply requires that he be "free" (not a slave) a Moslem, and lawfully married. The charge of fornication again requires four witnesses or four confessions which may be retracted before or during punishment, which also includes for those who survive the flogging, one year's banishment.

## Sometimes liberal

So although Islam is a vengeful, spiteful, and puritanical creed, in some other respects it appears to be very liberal. The Koran allows polygamy with a stipulated four wives at a time, an arrangement which is far beyond the reach of most poor *fellahin*. Divorce (for men) is ridiculously easy by Christian, Jewish, or Irish Republican standards—the husband taking the wife who incurs his wrath or displeasure to the threshold and repeating the words, "I divorce you" three times. Even then a proportionate amount of girl's dowry must be repaid to her family. A Moslem is allowed an almost unlimited number of concubines in addition to his four wives, provided that: (a) they are captured in war (even married women); (b) purchased as slaves; or (c) descendents of slaves. "But if a concubine shall bear a child to her master she becomes a free woman." Homosexuality and prostitution has always been rampant in Arab countries, and there is a very ambivalent attitude to sodomy. Sir Richard Burton, the Victorian explorer and translator of the *Arabian Nights*, compiled a sodatic atlas for the delectation of backward Orientalists.

But in other things Islam is very strict and puritanical. It is a punishable offence to break the Feast of Ramadan, to eat pork, or to drink or even smell of wine or other

intoxicating liquor (penalty, eighty stripes). But the abstention from all alcohol is by no means universal among the unorthodox, enlightened, and cosmopolitan Arabs, particularly in European communities, where they tend to take the broad view that the Koranic prohibition applies only to wine. This particular ban, incidentally, originated when a drunken camel-driver cut the saddle-girth of Mohammed's steed when the Prophet was reviewing his troops at Mecca.

### Social contrasts

There is tremendous diversity in the spectrum of modern Islamic states, with the contrasting rules of Turkey (where polygamy and the veil were abolished at a stroke by Kemal Pasha), "Socialist" South Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, to darkest Libya, the feudal Gulf States, and Saudi Arabia.

Some Moslem tribes, notably the *Kabyles* of the High Atlas, do not wear the veil (*yasmak*) at all, while among the monogamous and warlike Berbers it is the men who wear the veil. In yet another tribe, the wandering *Ouled Nails* of North Africa, the girls earn their golden dowry by performing the *danse de ventre* and by prostitution, later retiring upon their earnings into respectable matrimony.

When the Turkish Ottoman tide receded to the Bosphorus it left behind a number of Moslem communities in the Balkans and south east Europe. There are also Moslem nomads in the Soviet Union, who gave the early Bolshie Women's Libbers a terrible time until they were finally brought to heel. On top of all this, there is the

influx of Pakistani immigrants and Ugandan Asians in Britain, and Algerians and Moroccans in France and West Germany. Even in America there are the fanatical, racist, and mirror-image apartheid Black Muslims, some of whom would punish miscegenation with death, and the bigoted and puritanical outbursts of the pugilist Cassius Clay—alias "Mohammed Ali".

We have always been aware of the danger that the immigrant Irish proletariat would increase the power of the Roman Catholic Church by sheer weight of number and heedless multiplicity. Is it not also a danger that uncontrolled Moslem immigration could menace the freedom of the individual in the hard-won "Permissive Society"? If people like the Pakistani community leader in Bradford become councillors, magistrates, or educationalists, what is going to happen to sex-education, the issue of contraceptives to single persons, censorship of the press, films and books?

Clearly for their own safety, there must be safeguards for Moslem immigrants particularly the young. There must be no unlawful detention, physical assault, actual or grievous bodily harm. The law already protects the indigenous population against physical outrage. It must also extend to all races within these shores.

As freethinkers we have always concentrated our attention upon the cruelties, absurdities, myths and delusions of the Christian religion. Perhaps it is time to look over our shoulder at the crescentic shadow which begins to eclipse the disc of the libertarian sun.

## THE HUMANIST CONSCIENCE

PETER CROMMELIN

Humanism, if it means anything, means living according to a humanist conscience. The one thing we can say for certain is that this conscience is not derived from any orthodox or conventional religion. There is nothing mystical or supernatural in the conscience of a humanist; he does not claim to have heard the "Voice of God". The humanist conscience has its origin in human nature as this is made known by the actual living of a human life, with its infinite variety of needs and wants, hopes and fears.

For more than fifty years I lived without a conscience. I was no more qualified to make a rational distinction between right and wrong than a blind person is qualified to say whether a physical object is visible or invisible. My lack of conscience was not due to any abnormality of birth; it was due simply and solely to the fact that all through my childhood and youth, I was induced to subject myself to a theological indoctrination from which I found it quite impossible to extricate myself until quite late in life.

### Unreasonable claims

I would still be a priest of the Roman Catholic Church if I had not been able to convince myself, beyond the shadow of any reasonable doubt, that the claims made by that organization were false, and derived from an unsubstantiated authority that could never really be possessed by any man or any body of men or women. Whether God is fact or fiction, it is beyond reasonable doubt that no man has received a divine commission to regulate the conduct of all mankind. But I would never have found the courage to abandon my chosen profession and career

if I had not been animated by a passionate desire for a human love, a human marriage, and above all for the freedom to think freely in all those matters of conscience where one must either think freely or stop thinking finally and for ever.

For me, the price of freedom was unemployment. At the same time that I became a married man, I also became unemployed, a sad thing to be in this highly competitive world created by big-business capitalism. None the less, with the help of my wife, I have been able to survive and even to maintain for seventeen years a very good standard of health in mind and body. My wife and I have been able to demonstrate that it is possible for a married couple with extremely meagre resources to maintain a highly civilized mode of life through a long period of time. The circumstances of my married life convince me that the worst evil in our contemporary society is not poverty but waste. With rigid and prudent economy it is possible for very poor people to live a very rich life. In seventeen years of married life there have been for both of us some moments of deep depression and despair. Yet there have been many more moments when I have felt tempted to exaggerate my own happiness to the point of feeling that in the whole history of marriage there can have been no better or happier marriage than my own. Yet this is a union that has been castigated by the Catholic Church as a "mortal sin".

Being unemployed by circumstances of my own choosing, I have gained plenty of time to devote to the study of moral and ethical philosophy. I do not feel that the

time has been wasted. By not being a member of any religious sect, political party or trade union, I have been in a position very favourable for freedom of thought and conscience. The study of philosophy, mainly through the work of the late Bertrand Russell, has brought me more and more into line with the best forms of a purely secular humanism. Russell certainly moved as close to the mystical as it is safe for a rationalist to do.

The first duty of a humanist is to attempt the eradication of every irrational prejudice. In this spirit I have done my best to overcome what had been a life-long prejudice against atheistic Communism. It is quite certain that no form of communism could possibly be any worse than the kind of Christianity that has produced the apartheid laws of South Africa. In so far as Communism has greatly improved the material lot of a large portion of mankind, it obviously is what secular humanism ought to be. In so far as Communists have been guilty of crimes against humanity, they have clearly acted in a manner opposed to humanism. Humanists have a much stronger objection to crimes against humanity than Christians have to what they call sin. Normal human beings do not want to be condemned as criminals, while Christians make it part of

their ritual worship to call themselves miserable sinners. That great religious teacher Martin Luther urged all Christian people to sin as much as possible—*pecca fortiter*—in order that God might be able to enjoy the pleasure of forgiving them.

During the past few years several small victories have been achieved through the moral influence of secularism. The growing sensitivity to the necessity of birth control and family planning is not due to Christianity or to any other religion, but simply and solely to science and humanism. The abolition of capital punishment was a positive contribution to better penal laws—another victory achieved by humanists. There is less antagonism now than there has been in the past to the idea of euthanasia, the idea that the right to die in certain circumstances is just as much a human right as the right to live. The universal fear of death makes it impossible for euthanasia to be the merciful thing it could be, and ought to be, in a well-ordered community. Here is work waiting for humanists. And of course, religion, superstition and idolatry still are strong. The main task for humanism and for *The Freethinker* still remains the liberation of mankind from the worship of false gods.

## REVIEWS

### BOOKS

**THE HUMANIST ALTERNATIVE**, edited by P. Kurtz. Pemberton Books. hardback £2.50, paper 60p.

*The Humanist Alternative*, edited by Paul Kurtz, is subtitled "Some Definitions of Humanism", and indeed in dealing with Humanism a primary problem is to get a precise and agreed definition as to what one is talking about. The term has had varying historical usages, and today is often employed in a very generalized way to denote any positive creed about man which does not look for supernatural or otherworldly sanctions. It can thus be attached to any outlook which has got rid of religion without falling into nihilism and despair. That is all very well in its way; and indeed in our world where religion is largely dead as an active force (outside the spheres of Israel and the Arab Mohammedan states) we do badly need some term under which to gather the individuals and groups who are working for human betterment without dogmatism and religion as their basis. Yet, if the term is to be too vague and thinly stretched, it loses force and can hardly be expected to serve as a rallying-cry.

The realization of this problem lies behind the book in question, which valiantly sets out to lessen the confusions and vagueness attending the term. There are thirty-five contributions, apart from the preface and epilogue by the editor, and the range covered is reasonably broad. The various arguments are useful and help to clear the road of many unnecessary obstructions; but they cannot be said to arrive at any effective conclusions which dispel the above-mentioned fogs or mists. Sidney Hook, for one, does his best to avoid over-generalization. Roughly, he refuses to call humanist those individuals or groups who support the imposition of any single pattern of culture on a community, those who believe in established churches or special revelations, those who support "dictatorships of minority political parties," those who deny community responsibility for

ending hunger and realizing civilized standards in housing, health, welfare, education, and those who denigrate the use of intelligence and turn to violence. These are negative definitions, though we could derive from them a positive set; but even so there is not so much more said than that the humanist is a man of goodwill without religion. H. J. Blackham states that "abstractly Humanism is a concept of man focused upon a programme for humanity;" and the main features of his programme are international security, aid, conservation, population control, development and direction of technology, education for autonomy and an open society.

All such definitions however ignore the question of the ways and means by which the objectives can be reached. If humanists talk in a void and turn a blind eye to the deeply entrenched forces of reaction which gain profit and power-status which are not in the least interested in fine words—if they do not concern themselves with the forms of struggle which can alone bring the objectives down to earth, their pleas are certainly going to have no effect on history. Many of the phrases used to define worthy objectives do not stand up once we loom at them closely. How can we simply talk about conservation and technological growth in the same breath, as if it were merely a matter of some abstract goodwill for the directing of science and its applications, in order to make us all happy and safe. I for one hold that "science" is no more a neutral term than art or politics. What we see as pollution and the destruction of the environment is not the result of a misguided application of science and technology; it is in fact the inevitable working-out of the positions and methods built up, mechanistic science from Galileo and Newton onwards. In this system what *can* be done *must* be done, and the aspect of human choice dwindles as the possibilities increase. What we need is a radically new position that enables us to get the science and technology of this system in a human perspective. And this is an infinitely complex problem, involving transformations at every level of the individual and of society of our culture.

In short, many of the humanist statements suffer from the same sort of blank lack of realization of reality as we would expect from a symposium of curates on the main



issues of our world. Most contributors get rid of the problem of Marxism by looking at it through the wrong end of a telescope and labelling it simply a dogmatism. The one exception is the essay by Raya Dunayevskaya, who, in her short space, makes a good statement of Marx's undogmatic and yet clearcut humanism. Here, in Marx, is the sole instance in which the definitions are precise and fully-extended, face up to the key-problems, and do not fade out into the ineffectual inane. (For those who would like to read excellent expositions of this point I should like to recommend Erich Fromm's *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, now available as a Pelican, with the essays, *Socialist Humanism*, which he edited.)

I am not suggesting that humanists should simply swallow Marx in one big gulp, but that, since his statement embodies the only fully worked-out philosophy of the theme adequate to the contemporary world, they should examine it for points of agreement or disagreement and go on from there. Then perhaps we should have a solid basis for the development of the concept, a stable point of reference, instead of drifting about in laudable but harmless moralizations. Perhaps I may also draw attention to a new periodical, *Self and Society* (62 Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1, 25p), in which John Rowan discusses (issue No. 6) the attempts of the apologists for capitalism to capture the term humanism. Dealing with the Esalen Institute, he asks how it is that "the most important world-wide centre propagating the humanistic ideas is a training-ground for industrial psychologists and T-group trainers, committed to helping the ruling-class make more profits through greater efficiency?"

I cite these comments to stress the point that humanists in general are at best committing themselves to failure and impotence, at the worst to a guilty moralization of the *status quo*, unless they realize that all true humanist ideals involve struggle, that struggle is futile and blind without a continuous attempt to understand the nature and structure of our society, and that the ideals cannot be left as high-sounding abstract slogans.

JACK LINDSAY

### THREE POPES AND A CARDINAL by Malachi Martin. Hart-Davis MacGibbon, £2.75.

In his remarkable monastic autobiography, *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, written at the turn of the century, Joseph McCabe made a percipient prophecy regarding the future of the Roman Catholic Church that he had so recently quitted. By the end of the coming twentieth century, he predicted, the future president of the then Catholic Church would bear much the same relationship with his reigning Pope Leo XIII in his splendid court at the Vatican, as the future president of the German social democratic republic in the year 2000 will then bear to Kaiser William II with his imperial court and mystique of divine right. One can nowadays, appropriately comment that, though not yet completely fulfilled, this striking prediction of the distinguished rationalist author, is well on the way to eventual fulfilment.

This farsighted prediction receives powerful support from a recently published book, *Three Popes and a Cardinal*, written by an American ex-Jesuit, who has held high office in the Roman Catholic Universities of Louvain and Rome, Dr. Malachi Martin, an intimate associate of leading Vatican personnel including his Cardinal Bea; and a close eye witness of many of the events and persons

whom he describes. Dr. Martin opens his book with another prediction, one even more challenging than that already cited by the earlier refugee from Rome cited above. His contemporary prediction is totally unambiguous: "Well before the year 2000, there will no longer be a religious institution recognizable as the Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church of today. In the religious history of man, this is the age of human pathology; it is the passion, not of Jesus, but of man. It took about 400 years in the making. It has taken just 40 years to become an active reality." (This book was written in 1973.) Our prophet of doom devotes the rest of his book to the support of this Cassandra-like prediction. It must be added that, despite its obvious importance and many-sided erudition, this is not an easy book to read. The author's style is tortuous, and often enigmatic, and there is a good deal of sometimes rather repetitive rhetoric which appears to call for the blue pencil of an iconoclastic editor. But the importance of his special theme is undeniable, and his incisive criticism derives a unique value from the fact that it comes so to speak from inside the Vatican, from a former intimate of that exclusive inner circle with the motivation of which, the average Catholic layman is no better acquainted than with the interior of a Tibetan monastery.

The four main characters in Malachi Martin's book, the consecutive tragedy of whom is poignantly unfolded in these pages with the inevitability of a Shakespearean tragedy, were the three popes, Pius XII (1939-58), John XXIII (1958-63), and Paul VI (1963-)-or to call them by their personal names, Pacelli Roncalli, and Montini—and a fourth enigmatic figure who moves (perhaps "flits" would be the more appropriate expression) through these pages. This is the Jesuit Cardinal Bea, confessor to one Pope (Pacelli), confidant and adviser of all three Popes. It is these four men, "Three Popes and a Cardinal", who symbolize the cast of the stupendous drama, a drama that (at least according to our author) the world is now witnessing: the twentieth century "decline and fall of the ecclesiastical second Roman empire; the inexorable decline of," to quote the classic dictum of the seventeenth century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, "the ghost of the Roman empire sitting crowned upon the grave thereof."

Put briefly, and omitting altogether the author's often superfluous rhetoric, our ex-clerical author's thesis may, I think, be summarized in these terms: Ever since the Protestant Reformation, when the Council of Trent (mid-sixteenth century) launched the Jesuit-inspired Counter-Reformation, the Church of Rome has represented, what I elsewhere termed as, "the catholicism at a state of siege". A regime of iron ecclesiastical discipline, marked by exclusive dogma, rigid priestly control, and an ever increasing centralization. A process that culminated in the first Vatican Council (1869-70), and its "decree of papal infallibility" on July 18, 1870: the final apotheosis of the ecclesiastical ascendancy of the papacy; rather ironically, in the same year that witnessed the end of the temporal power of the papacy by the reunification of Italy, previously a mere "geographical expression", as one of Italy's foreign oppressors, Prince Metternich, had contemptuously described the Italian peninsula! But within the cosmopolitan Catholic Church itself, the Pope has been an autocrat since 1870. It was this phase in the evolution of the papacy that ended with Eugio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII, the last of the autocratic popes of the Counter-Reformation, and the most autocratic of all in our author's contention; a Pope who would not book the slightest challenge to his

unique pre-eminence. But, again in the author's contention, Pacelli represented the apogee of the papacy, the final swelling of the bubble of authority before it burst! His successor, Pope John XXIII (Angelo Roncalli), a "dark horse", little known outside the Vatican before his unexpected election at his advanced age, in his brief but literally epoch-making reign, ended the era of the exclusive Counter-Reformation by his liberating reforms: "the Johannine revolution" that culminated in the second Vatican Council (1962-5), and in the ecumenical policy for "Christian reunion" launched by both Pope and Council, the ecclesiastical equivalent of the political "united front"! The death of Roncalli in 1963 so to speak "put the cat among the pigeons", by leaving the church with its immemorial unity broken down, divided about almost every issue, and with the laity beginning, at long last, to question the divine right of the priesthood exclusively to govern the church. Hitherto, our third Pope, Montini, Paul VI, has made heavy weather in his apparently futile efforts to control the ever mounting chaos. A chaos that broke the heart of the fourth person in this ecclesiastical trinity, the leader of the ecumenical movement, Cardinal Bea, S.J., as he watched in futile impotence the unfolding of the tragedy from the corridors of the Vatican. Now, it is Catholicism itself at the cross-roads! But is there any road out of the hopeless dilemma? Our author is emphatic that there is not; 2000 is apparently the year of final doom. In this gloomy forecast, though he is apparently not aware of it, Dr. Martin seems to have celestial backing! For an earlier Malachi, a twelfth-century saint, had already composed a celebrated prediction of the then future fortunes of the papacy. According to him, there will be only four more popes after this present one. A prediction that appears to fit in admirably with our present Malachi's pessimistic conclusion? Had heaven and earth combined to decree the doom of Rome around the fateful year 2000?

Be that as it may, the subject matter makes this an important book and despite stylistic difficulties, every free-thinker should certainly read it. After all, ever since Bradlaugh predicted it, Rome has represented the major foe of reason. If it be indeed true, that the Vatican is doomed to fall around A.D. 2000, as this author argues so forcibly, upon any showing this will represent a major event not only in ecclesiastical annals but equally in world history.

F. A. RIDLEY

**THE OCCULT: A Christian View** by Roger C. Palms. Oliphants, 75p.

"The religions of the occult", says Mr. Palms, "are once again attracting unprecedented numbers of Western people." If it happened before it cannot be unprecedented, but slipshod writing is the least irritating feature of *The Occult: A Christian View*. It is now some 2,500 years since Hippocrates announced that "demoniac possession" was due to natural causes, a verdict thoroughly endorsed by modern medicine. One can understand the ancient superstition lingering on among the poorly educated, yet here we have it put forward in all seriousness by a university graduate. Nor is Mr. Palms the only academic with such an outlook. In his native U.S.A. the occult has become sufficiently respectable to have invaded the higher seats of learning. The Universities of South Carolina and Alabama offer courses in witchcraft, and it is possible to qualify as a caster of spells with a B.Magic from the University of California.

When Satan possesses a person, exorcism is necessary, and we are given instruction in the art, with a warning that it is not a job for the spiritually immature or the over-zealous. One young Christian, says the author, commanded Satan to come out of every person he met, "creating a lot of problems" as can well be imagined.

After this we are not in the least surprised to learn that clairaudience, clairvoyance, E.S.P., telepathy and what is here tautologically called "kinetic movement", are all manifestations of satanic power and verified beyond question. "Satan is real—Jesus spoke about him" is Mr. Palms' rebuke to a Christian who was sensible enough to realise the inconclusiveness of occult evidence.

One hardly knows which is the more puerile, occultism or the proffered safeguard: "Hold on to Jesus." This book is a very revealing catalogue of the rubbish people are prepared to believe. "Astral projection" for instance. One young lady practitioner of the art, we are solemnly told, projected her soul on to the ceiling, where it floated around unable to get down, like Pycraft in the H. G. Wells story. A "frightening experience" it must have been, though hardly astral or even interplanetary. Unlike Henry Rucker, Director of the Psychical Research Foundation no less, who draws full houses preaching a kind of extra-terrestrial evolutionary reincarnation. While on Venus (where else?) he learned his love feelings, and his courage on Mars. His brains came while he was on Mercury, evidently subject to a strong lunar influence at the time. Reincarnation, incidentally, explains why John F. Kennedy can no longer be contacted on the "other side". According to one medium he is already back on earth working for peace in the Middle East. Kennedy, whose last incarnation ended in 1963, must be the only pre-pubertal diplomat in the game, a truly inspiring example to us all.

Many forms of occultism, such as astrology, have been more or less active for a very long time, but a recent feature has been the emergence of openly devil-worshipping cults. Churches of Satan have been established in the U.S.A., Britain and other countries, and we can agree with Mr. Palms that the situation is an unhealthy one, though the churches must be at least partly to blame for preaching a personal devil in the first place. On the other hand the production of fundamentalist Christian literature such as the present book is also on the increase, judging by the quantity arriving at the *Freethinker* office. The material is attractively produced and reasonably priced, and in the nature of things is likely to have a wider readership than rationalist publications can hope for. Both occultism and its proposed remedy are reminders to secularists that the old battles have to be fought afresh in every indoctrinated generation. As Mr. Palms says, quoting a fellow-Christian: "The alternative to religion is not rationalism but superstition." Or another kind of superstition.

R. J. CONDON

**THE GOALS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY** by Irving Singer. Wildwood House, £2.75 (£1.10 paper).

Our sexual attitudes are conditioned in part by political presuppositions (sex role stereotyping), in part by moral assumptions (the circumstances in which sexual pleasure is judged to be legitimate), and by various other cultural factors. This means it is difficult to arrive at a concept of 'innate' human sexuality uncontaminated by social conditioning. In trying to achieve this, some of the classical sexologists—Freud, Reich, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson—can be charged with establishing a single rigid model of

human sexuality: if, for example, a woman fails to experience an orgasm of a particular type she is sexually inadequate and may require treatment, even if she was formerly satisfied with her sex-life.

Irving Singer argues against such an interpretation ("There is no single correct, definitive, or supremely normal kind of female orgasm"), and supports a pluralist view of human sexual response. In this attempt he picks his way nicely through the attitudes of past and present sexologists, distinguishes between the "sensuous" and "passionate" approaches to sex, and points the way to areas needing further research.

The varieties of sexual response are discussed in both physical and psychological terms, but with heavy orientation towards analysis of the female orgasm. To a degree this reflects the traditional sexologist preoccupations. There has been endless debate about clitoral *versus* vaginal orgasms and much less attention to the male climax. Singer has a chapter on "Variations in the Male", but this appears as a somewhat secondary consideration.

For me the book has a number of merits, not least a lucid but argumentative profile of the traditional sexologist preoccupations. It is also refreshing to see careful criticism of the 'big-name' researchers: I myself find it tiresome to see Masters and Johnson, for example, quoted endlessly as if their work admitted of only one interpretation and no more research needed doing. A principal contribution of the book must be to reassure women who, though sexually satisfied, have been led by Reich and others to worry about their orgasmic performance.

I regret, however, that Singer's pluralism is 'limited'. While wishing to be tolerant to minority sexual groups, such as homosexuals, his attitudes appear ambivalent—much as do Freud's in this area, which Singer ably points out. There is no in depth analysis of deviant sexuality, discussed briefly as *perversion*, albeit in quotes (except in index). And this appears as one of the book's main limitations: there is much more to human sexuality than heterosexual orgasm. A book on human orgasm (predominantly female) is perfectly legitimate, but then perhaps such a book deserves a less ambitious title than *The Goals of Human Sexuality*.

This book is lucid and thought-provoking, and serves as an effective antidote to sexologist dogma. There is no bibliography but a good reference list running to fifteen pages (with the single bibliographic anomaly that the Kinsey co-workers are not always acknowledged, even by the bare "et al.").

G. L. SIMONS

### ARENA: The Story of the Colosseum

by John Pearson. Thames & Hudson, £3.25.

The emperor Nero lounging on cushions and waving for the lions to be unleashed as the crowd roars for the blood of the Christians; that is the picture most people have of the Colosseum. Not so: Nero never saw the Colosseum, and would have been most offended if he had, for his enormous and extravagant Golden House was demolished several years after his death by Vespasian and its site used for the *Amphitheatrum Flavium*, the most majestic of the Caesars' construction, the Colosseum.

Easily the most impressive of the ruins of ancient Rome, the Colosseum is an eerie sight, particularly when floodlit at night; no wonder Dickens called it the "grandest, most mournful and sombre sight imaginable". Mussolini cleared

away the surrounding buildings and today the Colosseum stands alone, separated from the Roman Forum with only the Arch of Constantine to keep it company. It is a gigantic traffic island around which the Fiats and Alfa Romeos roar day and night, threatening the massive building with the pollution and vibration of modern city traffic. For a time last year, the Colosseum was closed whilst urgent maintenance work was put in hand. What the depredations of the medieval popes failed to do, the modern Italians still may.

Mr. Pearson's totally absorbing account of the Colosseum is short of detail on the actual construction (only one chapter out of ten). This is not his fault, since the ancient sources themselves fail even to mention the architect. Yet, whoever he is, he remains one of the lost geniuses of antiquity. Nothing quite like the Colosseum had ever been seen before in the ancient world, certainly nothing which could match the huge amphitheatre in the sheer scale of construction and intelligence of design. The first task faced by the emperor Vespasian and his engineers when construction began around A.D. 75 was to drain the lake of Nero's Golden House, itself a formidable undertaking which might task the ingenuity of modern engineers. For five years or so an army of workmen toiled to erect the massive foundations and walls. Careful thought had to be given to the problems of crowd control: the building could hold some sixty thousand people in a frenzy of hysteria and an efficient method of dispersing them after the performance had to be found. This was accomplished by a subtle disposition of the banks of seats and dividing walls which channelled the milling crowds to eighty or so vomitoria or large numbered staircases allowing rapid exit from the building. The Colosseum could disgorge a capacity crowd in three minutes flat, which is a lot faster than you can leave the Albert Hall after a Prom.

Admiration for the technical brilliance of this titanic structure cannot blind one of the purposes for which it was used. The Colosseum opened in the year 80 with what Mr. Pearson rightly calls "quite the longest, most disgusting, organised mass binge in history". The emperor Titus, son of Vespasian and one of the more attractive of Roman emperors, nonetheless saw fit to stage a mammoth celebration of the might and power of the empire by a hundred days of delirious laughter of men and exotic animals in the Colosseum. To the roar of the packed crowds, thousands of beasts and several hundred gladiators were butchered. Titus, like his father, was a kindly, good-natured man, yet he spared no effort to slake the appetite of the Roman people for cruelty, vulgarity and human blood. The carnage in the Colosseum had begun. It was to continue for another four hundred years. The provinces followed Rome's example and amphitheatres were opened throughout the empire; their remains often provide, as does the Colosseum itself, some of the most outstanding examples of Roman architecture in existence.

The horrific fascination of the gladiatorial displays was not lost even on such austere figures as St. Augustine, who testifies in his *Confessions* to the excitement brought on by savage killings in the arena. The relationship of the Christians to the Colosseum is interesting; although the ruin is now officially a Christian shrine, with a gaunt wooden cross erected on the spot where the emperors sat, there is no hard evidence that any Christians actually met their deaths in the arena. Nero's persecution of the Christians predated the Colosseum; no record of Christians killed in the building exists for the lavish spectacles of Titus or Trajan; during the "Golden Age" of the Antonine emperors, the saintly Marcus Aurelius made some

effort to curtail the frequency and extravagance of the games in the arena; and from the third century onwards, the growing impoverishment of the empire put an end to the excesses of the Colosseum. Diocletian's persecution of the Christians coincided with a brief revival of the *venationes*, or wild beast hunts in the Colosseum, but again there is no specific record of Christians massacred in the Roman amphitheatre.

The Christians were certainly unpopular at Rome, but the spasmodic outbursts of persecution which occurred until Constantine's conversion took place in the provinces rather than the capital. Yet there is no denying the obsessive fascination of many of the Christian Fathers with the horrors of the arena; it inspired a kind of collective death-wish among the Christians which indeed proved an embarrassment to the state. To their credit, some Christian writers such as Tertullian and Augustine were wholeheartedly opposed to the orgiastic slaughter of the Roman games; yet the ending of the butchery was a very gradual process which seems not to owe much to a wave of Christian moral indignation, for this did not exist.

Imperial Rome was a society of folly, vileness and grandeur. Mr. Pearson's book, splendidly illustrated with a wealth of diagrams and photographs, is a marvellously evocative description of the imperial city in all these aspects.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

**INVITATION TO A SACRAMENT** by Paul Potts.  
Martin Brian & O'Keefe, £1.25.

Today's generation will probably not have heard of Paul Potts and his own generation—with some eminent exceptions—thought too little of him. He has, in fact, written little, far less than many of his inferior contemporaries. It is certainly not that he had less to say; more perhaps that he is a perfectionist. His latest book, a far too slim volume, brings together five of his best pieces of work, each sentence carefully chosen, lovingly fashioned and gratefully offered.

If this book survives and all else that he has written is lost, that will be enough: there is enough of Paul Potts here for the reader to make not an acquaintance but a friendship.

What chance ancestral entwining—English gentry with Irish peasantry and Canadian birth—has produced this basic and searing humanism, this Whitmanesque concern for the whole of life and yet for each individual on his own. The sentiments expressed here will have to battle to find a place in the modern world: his concern puts to shame a clever, slick, fluorescent society; but then, too, his old-fashioned radicalism, the reverence for the ancient virtues of respect, decency and kindness, will contend uneasily with much of today's radicalism.

His book brings to the fore again his obsession with love (long denied and unrequited) and loneliness; not only personal loneliness in human terms, but the loneliness in a society so uncongenial. What else to do, but to do as Paul Potts has done and identify with the dispossessed, be they poor, Irish, black, old or unloved?

In a world that too often sees poverty only in material terms, that takes liberty as being licence, equates freedom with exploitation and regards equality as a nonsense, Paul Potts calls us back to our essential humanity. I hope that we can hear him.

TERRY PHILPOT

## 70 YEARS AGO

The difference in real educational quality between the best and the worst London board school is pretty considerable. . . . Still greater divergencies exist among the 500 voluntary schools, which educate two-sevenths of the children. It would seem as if, speaking generally, the few Jewish schools, nearly all the Wesleyan and British schools, and the best score or so of the Church schools are of good average efficiency. But there is no resisting the inference that nearly all the hundred Roman Catholic schools, and probably 300 of the 331 Church schools—having, in the aggregate, more than 150,000 children—are, so far as secular education is concerned, calamitously behindhand. It is not merely that their buildings are inferior and antiquated, their equipment and furniture insufficient, and their teaching staffs inadequate, and in too many cases inefficient. What is more serious is the extent which these schools have fallen behind in educational ideas and methods; their inability to provide adequate instruction in the upper standards; and their comparative failure in such subjects as elementary science and drawing. No child in these 400 schools has any practical chance of winning a scholarship under any system of open competition, and is thus inevitably debarred, however gifted it may be from access to higher education.

Sidney Webb, *London Education* (Longmans, 1904) pp 15-16.

Despite ever-increasing public subsidies, the debate continues, among supporters as well as among opponents of sectarian education, as to whether the situation has been, or is capable of being, fully rectified.

## PUBLICATIONS IN BRIEF

Quartet Books have brought out two titles in paperback that may be of interest to readers of this journal. **To Take Arms: a Year in the Provisional I.R.A.** by Maria McGuire was reviewed in *The Freethinker* in July 1973, and is now available at 40p. Stuart Hood is well known in humanist circles and is now at the Royal College of Art. His **Pebbles from my Skull** was first published in 1963. It is a fascinating account of what happened to him when he left an Italian prisoner-of-war camp when the Italian Armistice was signed in 1943. He spent an idyllic eleven months with the simple and hospitable peasants, but became increasingly involved with the partisan guerrillas, making lightning strikes against German troops. (Quartet Books, 35p).

Attila Publications (7 Victoria Road, Brighton) have re-issued **Mail Interception and Telephone Tapping in Britain** (10p). This was first published some years ago by Housmans Bookshop for the Hampstead Group of the Committee of 100. Recent events, notably Watergate and earlier the publication of the Younger report on privacy make this pamphlet of particular interest. It was intended to be a contribution to the removal—as the original preface states—of “the protective screen which the State erects between itself and the people on the many occasions when the freedoms of the individual are disregarded.” The report contains a summary of the evidence that mail interception and telephone tapping occur, and it discusses who does it, how they do it, what the law is on these matters, what the public's attitude is, and what the individual can do to minimize the effects of this interference.

Despite its name, Smoothie Publications of 67 Vere Road, Brighton, have some interesting titles of a bibliographical nature on their list: **Directory of Alternative Periodicals** by John Noyce (£1.30 including supplement, new edition in preparation); **Erotic Bibliographies: a Survey** by Peter Jenner (20p); **Irish Sectarian Periodicals** by Paula Howard (10p); **Alternative Press in Britain: a Bibliography** by Mick Hoey (10p). Particularly useful is **Alternative Bookshops** by John Noyce (20p). This is an alphabetical directory with geographical and subject indexes. It ranges from the Peace Centre, Birmingham, to Nationalist Books (National Front), Croydon.

# THEATRE

**TIME AND THE CONWAYS** by J. B. Priestley. The 69 Theatre Company at the Royal Exchange, Manchester.

Cynics may dismiss *Time and the Conways* as a dated piece of stage-craft, overflowing with Dramatic Irony, Moments of Truth, and chunks of Message. The characters can be derided as stereotyped middle-class failures, whom Time treats scurvily in order to suit Mr. Priestley's dramatic purpose. They suffer beautifully, smiling their brave little smiles and fervently mouthing the words of Blake. I cannot take this view. To my mind, this is a profoundly moving, and very believable play, an assertion of Priestley's belief in the human spirit. It is the product of shrewd but compassionate observation. Priestley combines deep affection for his characters with humorous affection: a rare gift.

This is one of those plays that shows the influence of the theory of Serial Time, as expounded by Dunn in his book, *An Experiment with Time*. The Conway family and three "others" are seen first at a happy reunion: one of the four daughters is celebrating her twenty-first birthday, one of the sons has just been demobbed. Acts I and III are continuous, Act II is a flash-forward to a less auspicious, more perfunctory meeting, held exactly nineteen years later. Those nineteen years span the inter-war period. This crucial middle act is the strongest both in the play and in Braham Murray's assured, honest, and beautifully modulated production. It is in Act II that the members of this *ad hoc* acting company come into their own. Dilys Hamlett gives Mrs. Conway the right blend of matriarchal charm and edge, while Belinda Carroll, as her unfortunate daughter-in-law is wan and defeated, drained of her foolish romanticism. Marion Lines as Kay has a tendency to over-project vocally, and to rouse the echo that lurks in this deliciously original theatre. Mrs. Lines is not the sole offender, and her involvement in Kay's strong emotions and maturing character are ample compensation. Susan Penhaligon is ideally cast as the spoilt, pretty Hazel. Her finely nuanced performance reveals the sheer misery, fear and frustration beneath the decorative, brittle surface. Rachel Herbert as Madge richly deserves the acclaim her performance has won. As a young graduate, brimful of hope and reforming zeal, she excitably paces the stage, loose-limbed and eloquent; as a spinster school-marm, she is reduced to waspish tirades and futile rancour. This ruthlessly unsentimental performance invokes our sympathy and understanding.

Another unsentimental, forceful performance is given by Jenny Twigge as Carol. She is a totally convincing sixteen-year-old; no mean feat. This Carol takes life rather seriously, but she is alert and guileless, staunchly eschewing the tricks of the *ingénue* trade. Strong if one-tone support comes from the four men in the cast, but this is an actresses' play—amateurs please note.

The two contrasting sets have been devised with loving attention to detail, the one a lived-in familiar clutter, the other a joylessly fashionable refuge for an aging, disappointed woman.

At the time of writing, the media seem to have taken refuge in a joylessly fashionable vocabulary, limited to "gloomy", "fed up", "disagreement", "blackmail" and, top of the pops, "crisis". Now, more than ever, we need writers with Priestley's broad and humane vision.

VERA LUSTIG

## OBITUARY

### Mrs. Jessie Hawskworth

Mrs. Jessie Hawskworth of New Southgate, London, died recently after a long illness. She was aged 51. A secular committal ceremony was held at Enfield Crematorium on 27 December. Our sympathy is extended to Mrs. Hawskworth's husband, sons, sisters and other relatives.

### Mrs. Maude Ash

Mrs. Maude Ash, believed to be the oldest member of the National Secular Society, died at Glebe Court, Hendon, on 6 January. She was in her 98th year, and was a freethinker for most of her adult life. Her husband, the late Mr. William Ash, rendered valuable service to the N.S.S. and to *The Freethinker* as an honorary adviser on business matters. Mrs. Ash was a sister-in-law of G. W. Foote, founder and first editor of *The Freethinker*, and she remembered him with affection and esteem until the end of her life.

There was a secular committal ceremony at Golders Green Crematorium on 11 January.

### Eustace Chesser

"As long as the forces of unreason obstruct a rational and human approach to social and personal problems", wrote Eustace Chesser in his message to the National Secular Society on the occasion of its centenary in 1966, "there are important tasks for the N.S.S. to do." Chesser himself was associated with a remarkable number of these, with homosexual law reform, abortion law reform, sexual equality, and the more intelligent treatment of addicts.

He started life as a general practitioner, then trained as a psychoanalyst, writing many books on psycho-sexual subjects that attracted a huge lay readership, though his writings did not always endear him to the medical establishment. He was, however, indifferent to conventional opinion, and prepared to bear witness to his radical beliefs long before most doctors plucked up courage to speak out on controversial matters. He was kind and generous to younger people. When, in 1963, I first tentatively started editing a quarterly *Newsletter* for the Abortion Law Reform Association, he immediately wrote to me about it, though we had never met, offering me warm and greatly valued encouragement.

If we have made great strides in several fields of domestic social reform during the past decade, much credit for this is due to a handful of reformers like Eustace Chesser. He was truly a general in the stage army of the good.

MADELEINE SIMMS.

## FREETHINKER FUND

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

Our thanks to: Anonymous (£1), J. L. Allison (£3.90), Susan Bell (40p), J. L. Broom (50p), Eugene Carlson (80p), R. J. Condon (£15), W. Craigie (£2.25), A. Elsmere (£1), R. Gerrard (90p), L. Hanger (23p), Mrs. Harvey (£1), E. M. Hay (£1), D. J. King (£1), P. Knight (90p), R. Rupp (50p), G. Semples (30p), F. & D. Shaw (£1.05), G. Swan (£3), E. Wakefield (55p). Total for December: £35.28

*It is regretted that in the December issue Mrs. Phyllis Bowman of S.P.U.C. was inadvertently referred to as Phyllis Brown.*

# LETTERS

## Humanism, sex and morals

I was glad that Michael Lloyd-Jones (November), reviewing my little book for teenagers (*Humanism*, Ward Lock Educational, 40p), took the opportunity of praising Kit Mouat's booklet on the same subject (*An Introduction to Secular Humanism*, The Author, 45p), which, I agree, deserves wider recognition than it has so far received.

Some of Michael's criticisms of my book are no doubt valid. But I cannot see that my moral denunciation of risking unwanted pregnancies is tantamount to advocating complete chastity. I would denounce, as even more immoral, the taking of risks that might cause serious road accidents—but that is not to say I want everyone to stay indoors.

BARBARA SMOKER.

## Need for vigorous school religion campaign

*From the General Secretary, National Secular Society*

I was pleased to read W. Owen Cole's denunciation of the Order of Christian Unity survey on school religion (*The Freethinker*, December 1973), and trust that he has also been critical of similar exercises by Christian apologists in recent years.

Few would quarrel with Mr. Cole's assertion that some knowledge of religion is essential for an understanding of our own society and of other cultures and civilizations. But when he appeals to *Freethinker* readers "not to be stimulated to a rigorous campaign for the abolition of religious studies", Mr. Cole seems to be unaware that *The Freethinker's* and the National Secular Society's campaign is directed against that part of the 1944 Education Act which legally requires that in every publicly maintained school there must be a daily *act of worship* and period of *religious instruction*. We have also endeavoured to expose the scandalous expenditure of public funds for subsidizing sectarian education in Church schools.

The objectives of the organization to which Mr. Cole referred may be perfectly commendable, but the religious clauses of the 1944 Act are not concerned with a Working Party whose aim is "helping teachers to present a wide variety of religious and non-religious stances with fairness". Where the Act refers to an act of worship it means worshipping the God of the Christians; and doubt on this point has been swept away by numerous Christian statements and manifestos. Knowledge of religion can be imported during lessons on history, geography, social studies and art; those parents who wish to submit their children to religious inculcation or to have them prepared for church membership should make their own arrangements. However this is not sufficient for those who know that most children between the ages of five and eleven years are more susceptible to brainwashing than older pupils. And many religionists, Roman Catholic and Protestant, have no qualms about using any position of authority to impose their beliefs on others—particularly on captive audiences who cannot answer back.

The statutory position of Christianity in the nation's schools is exploited by emotionally and professionally committed Christians who are interested in impartiality or objectivity. It strengthens the position of Roman Catholic priests who pressurize parents to send their children to Church schools rather than to county schools. Mr. Cole obviously reads *The Times Educational Supplement* and will be aware that Muslim leaders are now agitating for their own separate schools—a development which the National Secular Society warned against several years ago.

Mr. Cole's plea for humanists to join with adherents to various religious faiths in the Shap Working Party on World Religions will probably meet with some response. His use of that blessed word "positive" is certain to appeal to those humanists who are always prepared to negotiate an armistice before the first shot has been fired. During the last decade while "positive" humanists, although handicapped by limited personnel and resources, have participated in interminable discussions with Christians, the latter have organized and entrenched themselves within the education system, and the Roman Catholic Church has successfully demanded even more public money for its schools.

Radicals like Mr. Cole should avoid the mistake of thinking that they are more than a minority within the Christian community; he should also recognize that but for the "rigorous campaign" conducted by secular humanists against school religion he would probably not dare to publicly express such liberal views on the subject. I accept Mr. Cole's assurance that his interest is in a harmonious, pluralistic society and not in sectarianism. But sectarianism will persist so long as children are divided on religious grounds in the classroom. There will be continuing resentment because of the educational and other privileges enjoyed by the churches and religious organisations. The major reforms that are

needed to establish a democratic, secular society will have to be worked for and campaigned for. If Mr. Cole and "positive" humanists seriously maintain that the religionists will give up their privileges as a result of cosy, ecumenical discussions, I can only say, with due reverence, "Pull the other leg, it has bells on it".

WILLIAM MCILROY.

## Christian freethinker

I have just finished browsing through the November issue of *The Freethinker*, and must confess that I am really surprised by its attitude towards Christianity. On the front page, William McIlroy writes, "Rather than being a living reality, Christianity is now a dying duck." If this is indeed so, why is a large proportion of the magazine given over to snide and derisive comments on Christianity? You do seem to have some sort of morbid obsession with an apparently "dying duck". Are you afraid of Christianity?

I would probably agree with you in saying that the trappings of Christianity are dying. Church congregations may be decreasing, baptisms may be decreasing, but this largely reflects a breaking away by people from a mindless traditionalism which has been prevalent in this country for several centuries. It does not reflect a decline in the number of Bible-believing Christians, who have always been a minority group. Nowhere in the Bible does it suggest that Christians will ever be a majority group, but nor does it ever say that Christians will be a dying or dead group.

There are quite a few questions which have to be asked about the person of Christ before one can label him as the originator of a "dying duck". For example, why was he so successful after his "death", when so many others who purported to be the Messiah at about the same time were failures.

Finally, the title of your magazine, *The Freethinker*, is surely a contradiction in itself, when all it seems to do is criticize other beliefs and ideologies, whilst putting forward another of its own. In all fairness, why should one take more notice of *The Freethinker* than any other magazine? Pious and glib though it might seem, I have found that I am able to be more of a freethinker on such controversial issues as war, abortion and race hatred because of the peace and freedom that Jesus Christ gives for all those who believe in him as Lord and Saviour.

MICHAEL EDMONDSON.

## Marx and the Orthodox Economists

As usual, Judex piles quotation on quotation without dates, contexts, or references so that it is impossible—without intensive research—to check them. This name-dropping may impress some, but it rings hollow to all who like to be sure that quotations are not distortions or out of context.

Judex professes interest in "human beings" rather than "stages of development". He refuses to recognize that humans themselves differ according to such stages, and their class position at each stage. The "human beings" that gathered in crowds to watch the burning of witches alive were different from the human beings who, by remote control, ordered the mass burning by napalm of the civilians of Vietnam. The Russians inhabiting Russia under Alexander III or Nicholas II were, despite Nove, different from the Soviet citizens of 1973. So, too, the peasants of the English Peasant Revolt were different from our agricultural labourers of today, and the Tolpuddle Martyrs were rather different from today's T.U.C.

Judex quotes Joan Robinson, my "mentor" (his word), for a rather derogatory comment on Marx's Theory of Value in 1973. But in 1973 Joan Robinson and John Eatwell published their *Introduction to Modern Economics* in which they said (p. 33) that with certain "adjustments the Marxian apparatus provides an invaluable instrument for analysing capitalist production, distribution and accumulation and it provides the basis for a powerful critique of neo-classical theory." I agree. But in my view the "adjustments" should consist in applying Marx's approach to the conditions of monopoly capitalism which, except for his uniqueness in foreseeing this tendency, he almost entirely ignored.

In *Marx and the Orthodox Economists* I did not include a study of current discussions on economic analysis in the U.S.S.R. Sorry, Judex. But I did include a chapter on "What Marx did not do", which is evidence that I am not one of those who merely "parrot the sacred texts".

PAT SLOAN.

## The Neue Rheinische Zeitung

I should like to comment on Pat Sloan's review in the December *Freethinker*. As the fully documented work of D. McLellan (*Karl Marx*, 1973), the Marxist H. B. Davis (*Nationalism and Socialism*, 1967), and B. D. Woolfe (*Marxism*, 1967) shows, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was, in fact, a purveyor of hysterical outbursts of nationalism, and repeated calls for war and terror.

and "a fair amount of anti-semitism". The editorial constitution was, in Engel's words, "simply the dictatorship of Marx".

Engels asserted that "a war of extermination of the Germans against the Czechs remains now the only possible solution". He promised a "bloody revenge on the Slavs" and said that, "The general war that will break out will break this Slavic union and annihilate all these small pighheaded nations right down to their very names." "The 'independence' of a few Spanish Californians and Texans may suffer", said Engels, and "occasionally 'Justice' and other moralistic principles may be injured, but what do they count compared to such world historic events— . . . without force and without an iron ruthlessness nothing is accomplished in history." In 1852 he wrote of "the physical and intellectual power of the German nation to subdue and assimilate its ancient neighbours" and said that the "fate of these dying nations was to allow this process of dissolution and absorption by their stronger neighbours to complete itself."

Marx, for his part, stated (*N.R.Z.*, 1848) that "War with Russia is a war of a revolutionary Germany, a war which can wash away the sins of the past, in which Germany can become virile." And in 1849 he declared: "There is only one way . . . and that way is revolutionary terror. . . . We have no compassion and we ask no compassion from you. When our turn comes, we shall not make excuses for the terror." JUDEX.

### Confusion over Marx

Fifty years after the Russian revolution, there still remains much confusion among those claiming to have read Marx. The only organization, in my opinion, that can claim to have foreseen in 1917 that Russia could not establish Socialism owing to the semi-feudalistic state of the country at the time of the revolution was the Socialist Party of Great Britain. First of all, the S.P.G.B. does not attack state-capitalist Russia, but simply explains the state of the system that operates in the Soviet Union.

I have in front of me Lenin's *State and Revolution*, written in August 1917 just before his party came to power, in which he explains how state-capitalist institutions would be operated. Like the British Labour Party he took the Post Office as an example and referred to it both as an "example of the socialist system" and as "State capitalist monopoly". Lenin did confuse the Russians and the millions of the working class all over the world. In fact, the only section of the population that can be the vanguard of the working class must be the intellectuals. Like the British Labour Party and other so-called socialist splinter groups Lenin thought that the ordinary member of the working class is unable to understand the socialist position. For Pat Sloan to state that Russian state capitalism is developing on socialist ideas is complete nonsense. Socialism and Communism have the same meaning. If you read the *Communist Manifesto* Marx stated that he was obliged to call it the *Communist Manifesto* at that time because of the so-called socialist parties; otherwise he would have called it the *Socialist Manifesto*. Perhaps Pat Sloan could explain the difference between the vast majority of the working class in state-capitalist Russia and that in the capitalist world.

In *Value, Price, Profit* Karl Marx wrote that the working class should organize for the abolition of the profit system, or the "wages system". It was Frederick Engels in the *Civil War in France* who declared that the State would wither away, not Lenin. So the army, navy, police and government would not exist in a sane society based upon production for use—from each according to his means; to each according to his needs—which, of course, does not exist in state-capitalist Russia. S. HIGHAMS.

### Mystical havens in philosophy

Could Trevor Morgan inform me which particular male coined the idiotic phrase "a flat battery", when it remains in all its three-dimensional solidity for anyone to see. The lady referred to in his letter (*Freethinker*, December) must have been confused either by the epistemological imprecision of male jargon or merely ignorant of the workings of a mobile combustion engine.

The analogy was inapt. Byass, Popper, Monod and their ilk are not either confused by their terminology or ignorant of the mystical haven to which their theses lead. As Morgan, no doubt, will agree, they are as aware as Plato and the Platonic school of the effect of their metaphysical blasts against the Ionic school of Materialists.

"There is nothing constant but change", is by no means in contradiction to the despised Determinist position; given complete knowledge of all factors any phenomenon could be predicted with certainty. It is equally certain that all factors in sociological and anthropological matters are never known, and it is only by hindsight that one can assess the elements which have contributed to variations in society. EVA EBURY.

### Third way clarified

In reply to Trevor Morgan's letter (December), I acknowledge the distraction of some very red herrings and hope the following points will clear up (and clean up) some relevant pieces.

(1) The "third" I had in mind was, simply, any experience by way of our senses (thoughts included). In *knowing* only our sense-experiences, we *know* nothing of the physical nor the psychical (in that sense of *knowing*). (2) It is the *universal* aspect of "2+2=4" that seems to belong to a "third" reality (one that is neither merely personal nor physical). (3) The "god-themes of mythology" and "a theory of natural processes" have a common derivation in our urge to tell stories. A scientific theory, however, is open to falsification and, if falsified, becomes a "myth" in the contrary-to-fact sense of that word. (4) Indeed, in one sense "there is no conflict between science and religion"—there is just an irreconcilable gulf between them! Scientific "mysteries" (such as the "black holes" in space) are "mysteries" in terms of science and are thus unanswerable in terms of God-religion. CHARLES BYASS.

*This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.*

### Church and community resources

It has been touching to read and see over Christmas, various religious leaders expressing their deep concern at the plight of the homeless.

I wonder if over the coming year we will see their fine words translated into action? Will we see the denominations collaborating with a view to rationalizing their land use? Maybe they will start using one church instead of two or three as at the moment. Some may even decide that it would be better for the community for them to meet in community centres and school buildings, school halls surely are ideal and always available on Sundays and many evenings.

Then, no doubt, caring as they do for the community, they will sell the obsolete churches to the local authority (the community from whence they originally came), for a nominal sum of course, for use by the community for housing or recreational purposes. They would not be sold as at present, to the highest bidder, usually a property developer, and the proceeds used to use up yet more precious land and labour and resources, building more new churches, the rest going to swell the church coffers.

They might even think about giving up the subsidy they currently enjoy, and offer to pay their rates, some of which no doubt could be spent on building houses, for the homeless.

Could this be the New Year's resolution of the Church?

SUSAN LORD.

### Anti-superstitious propaganda

I have been provoked into writing to you by a very pleasant lady who called on me yesterday. She handed me a pamphlet saying it was something she'd like me to read. I thanked her and she went away. On looking at the publication, I found it was entitled *Has Religion Betrayed God and Man?* and was an exposition of the Jehovah's Witnesses' creed. It even had a picture of the "woman . . . upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of the names of blasphemy having seven heads and ten horns" (Revelation 17:3).

It is not the first time "missionaries" from this body have called on me, for some reason they call pretty regularly, although I have more than once told them that I have not the slightest belief in their particular superstitions. I have similarly had visits from Mormon missionaries.

Ought we not, as freethinkers and humanists, be trying to do something to halt the spread of these beliefs? Ought we not be trying to inform the thousands of humblefolk, who get enticed into these absurd delusions, what the truth really is about the Bible?

One at least of the reasons why "Jehovah's Witnesses" are steadily gaining thousands of converts year by year is that nobody opposes them. Everybody ignores them. People receive their propaganda but they *never* receive any criticism or rebuttal of it.

Not much is really needed. Firstly, I suggest that a group of people should get together and write and publish in simple language what modern scholarship has established about the Bible, exposing the nonsense about its so-called prophecies and its "infallibility" and showing beyond all doubt that it was a book written by men for men.

Secondly, we should organise groups of people who will distribute this publication in those areas where the "Witnesses" have established themselves. We should challenge them to open debate and to face upto criticisms of their propaganda.

A few years of sustained and well directed effort of this kind would, in my view, rid this country of these eccentric and dangerous superstitions. I would be interested to hear from any of your readers who would be prepared to join in such an effort. J. STEWART COOK.

# 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.)

The National Council for Civil Liberties is running a Women's Rights Conference for women in paid employment on Saturday, 16 February. Speakers include Pat Turner (G.M.W.U.), Muriel Turner (A.S.T.M.S.), Joan Maynard (Agricultural Workers' Union), Audrey Wise, Tess Gill and Anna Coote. Details from N.C.C.L., 186 King's Cross Road, London WC1.

# EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 3 February, 5.30 p.m.: MAURFEN COLQUHOUN, "Women in Politics".

British Humanist Association. Two public meetings on "Humanism Today": Southampton, Conference Centre, Civic Centre, Friday, 18 January at 8 p.m.; Swindon, Wyvern Theatre, Civic Centre, Saturday, 19 January at 2.30 p.m.

Eastbourne Humanist Group, Town Hall, Eastbourne. Sunday, 27 January, 3 p.m.: WALTER BROUGHTON (Chairman, E.H.G.) and Father JOHN FLANAGAN, "Is there a Population Problem?"

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday, 3 February, 7.30 p.m.: NIGEL SINNOTT, "Garibaldi and the 1849 Roman Republic". Sunday, 27 January, 12 noon: Winter walk led by James Young, meet in the Duke's Head, Lower Richmond Road, Putney.

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group. Friday, 8 February, 8 p.m.: Visit to the University Child Development Research Unit, by kind invitation of Dr. Elizabeth Newson.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. *Sunday Morning Meetings*, 11 a.m.: 20 January: Dr. D. B. HALPERN, "The Origins of European Civilization"; 27 January: RONALD MASON, "The Isolation of the Artist"; 3 February: NIGEL SINNOTT, "The Flower of World—The Roman Republic of 1849". *Humanist Forum*: Sunday, 27 January, 3 p.m.: J. STEWART COOK and PETER CADOGAN, "The British Constitution and the Kilbrandon Report". *Tuesday Discussions*, 7 p.m. (admission 10p): 22 January: JAMES BLISH, "Science Fiction and Conscience"; 29 January: Dr. KIT PEDLAR, "Science Fiction and World Futures".

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group. 55 Orchard Road, Tewin, Saturday, 26 January, 8 p.m.: Informal discussion, "The Generation Gap". Backhouse Room, Handside Lane, Welwyn Garden City, Wednesday, 13 February, 8 p.m.: "The Work of the National Council for Civil Liberties" (speaker to be arranged).

Worthing Humanist Group, Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday, 27 January, 5.30 p.m.: GRAHAM KINGSLEY, "Humanism—What Can It Mean Today?"

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