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LITERARY AND ARTISTIC FREEDOM IN PERIL

—CONCERN EXPRESSED AT N.S.S. PUBLIC MEETING

The existence of freethought presupposes other freedoms that will make this possible. With these sentiments Barbara Smoker opened a National Secular Society public meeting in London on 24 April. The first speaker was Martin Loney, the General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties. All censorship, he claimed, was political since it sought to exclude ideas those in authority found unpalatable. Since the writings of such as Freud and Reich the connection between sex and social organization had been recognised. The whole censorship debate tended to obscure the real argument. The interaction of cause and effect in the case of the publication of a book or film with regard to sex and violence was uncertain. There was however ample evidence of the effects of bad housing, education and unemployment. Here reforms *would* be effective. In particular, he said, the case of Mary Whitehouse was political. Even in the case of pornography it was so, since she claims it is used for political ends. But her position becomes even more clear when she widens her brief to include other matters. The bias she saw in the reporting of the miners' strike; the protest she made over the "subjectivity" of *Cathy Come Home*; her continual references to the Christian way of life, going so far as to advocate compulsory Christian religious education.

Initiative sapped

Mr. Loney invited the audience to compare the experimental initiative of the B.B.C. in the late 1960s with the state of the media today. Mary Whitehouse and Lord Longford may well be responsible for this artistic stagnation. This situation was particularly serious as in all artistic fields the patronage of the B.B.C. was enormous. In drama and music they were by far the largest patrons, and this gave them enormous cultural power. So the argument about censorship was not so much a phobia about sex, but about whether individuals should be allowed to control their own lives, and be free to accept or reject ideas presented to them.

The second speaker was Marion Boyars, a member of the publishing firm that successfully defended the prosecution of their novel, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. Miss Boyars began by examining the various elements of society and showed that whereas generally the elements interacted one with another, in the case of the state and the arts this was largely not so. Why was it then, she asked, that the state wanted to interfere with something that cannot interfere with it? Perhaps, in fact, the arts do interfere in an underground way. Miss Boyars compared the situation of the arts with that of science; these she maintained were very similar. She pointed out the persistent opposition to certain scientific ideas: it was only five or so years ago that the Roman Catholic Church fully exonerated Galileo; in certain states in America the teaching of Darwinism is still illegal. There was a tendency to think that censorship only happened elsewhere. This was not the case, although it may be happening on a smaller scale. Moreover, one must always examine one's own judgements. Each, she said, has his own threshold as to what must be censored. We must make a conscious effort to keep our minds as open as possible.

Mr. John Trevelyan, the former Secretary to the British Board of Film Censors, began by saying that he believed

that the Minister for the Arts, Mr. Hugh Jenkins, who had been unable to attend the meeting, was on the side the things the present meeting stood for. He thought that, in fact, most intelligent people were on our side, and always viewed with suspicion those who spoke in the name of the "silent majority". In his experience the majority read the *Sun* and went to cinema clubs. We were he said, still incredibly inhibited about sex. He quoted a friend who was also a distinguished psychologist who sometimes thought that every blow violence should be removed from works of art, but who had no qualms about sex, for he had never known anyone be violent after having an orgasm. Mr. Trevelyan agreed with Martin Loney that censorship was essentially political. The *Oz* trial, for instance, was clearly a case of authority trying to stamp out publications, whose views it disapproved of. Despite this, one must nevertheless enter the debate as it stood. He quoted an example of the sort of argument that was put forward. Addressing a meeting of the Publishers' Association Mary Whitehouse had stated that there was "complete evidence that the increase in V.D. was entirely due to books"!

Commercial censorship

When he had been film censor, Mr. Trevelyan said that he had been put under pressure by some people on the Left to ban the film the *Green Berets*: he explained to these people that it was essential that you show views you disagree with. He had also been criticized for banning films with new ideas. In fact there were none. The fact that films were made to be commercial was another form of censorship. On the question of violence Mr. Trevelyan maintained the area where there was too much violence was in society, usually as a result of frustration. The state itself was violent, for instance in its use of prisons. There was a need, he said for a detailed investigation into this. The censorship of material that merely offended was indefensible. There was a good case for censoring material that actually caused harm; the problem was whether this

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could be known. He went on to make an interesting comparison between the reactions of two "violent" films, *Clockwork Orange* and *The Godfather*. There had been outcry at the showing of *Clockwork Orange* which was about violence, a political work of art, but which did not show actual killing. *The Godfather*, on the other hand, which showed a great deal of killing, was regarded almost as family entertainment; it was an uninspiring commercial product. *Clockwork Orange* outraged susceptibilities; Mafia killing did not. Mr. Trevelyan concluded by hoping that in fifty years time such a meeting as this would be unnecessary.

Matter of policy

The final speaker was Geoffrey Robertson, a barrister and, like Marion Boyars, an active member of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society. He began by criticizing the new Home Secretary, Mr. Roy Jenkins, for inaction in the field of censorship. He cited disturbing cases that had occurred in the previous week alone. The increasing number of prosecutions that had been made in recent months, he said, could be changed easily merely through a change of policy at the Home Office and in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Particularly disturbing was an increase in the number of "Section 3" prosecutions which involve seizure of materials without the opportunity of trial by jury. Mary Whitehouse had used the Vagrancy Act 1824 to bring a prosecution against the film, *Blow Out*. They had also found a loophole in the Obscene Publications Act to allow them to prosecute films under it, even though they had been passed by the British Board of Film Censors, whose judgement the statutory censoring bodies, the local authorities, mostly accepted. It was possible for a person with money to choose his magistrate and obtain a conviction.

Sex censorship, said Mr. Robertson, was like a medieval witch-hunt. It was concerned with a purely speculative evil. It cannot be defined; you are supposed "to know it when you see it". Accordingly it all depends on the arbitrary prejudice of jury or magistrate. It has been truly said that obscenity is in the groin of the beholder. The situation totally lacked the certainty normally required in the criminal law, which would enable a publisher to know in advance where he stood. There was no doubting that pornography was popular. It has been estimated that about

twenty million obscene articles and films were smuggled into Britain annually. Opinion polls show that between 70 and 80 per cent of the population are in favour of freedom of adult entertainment. It was necessary therefore that, given safeguards for children and those in receipt of unsolicited materials, all the statutes including the Obscene Publications Act should be replaced. In the last year eight or nine people, some of them merely bookshop assistants, had been sent to prison. It was also difficult to justify all the expense of the censorship activity. There were eighteen officers employed full time on this at Scotland Yard, not to mention the joyless fanatics in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Over the last few years well over one million pounds of public money must have been spent on censorship.

Mr. Robertson also criticized the over-stringent libel laws, which could be used as a gag on the press. Here was a need for a *criminal* offence of libel only, a strong Press Council, and a law of privacy. He also attacked the use of "behind the scenes" pressure, as had been used, in the 1960s, to prevent a film about the Profumo case being shown. Those in public life who did such things should be exposed for what they are—hypocrites.

CANTUAR—ELIZABETHÆ REGINÆ GRATIA

As *The Freethinker* went to press it was announced that the next Archbishop of Canterbury was to be Dr. Donald Coggan, the present Archbishop of York. The appointment in itself is probably of no great significance to freethinkers, although they will probably recall the pro-censorship stand that Dr. Coggan took by joining the Longford "Commission" on Pornography. However the manner in which he was appointed is significant. Already many churchmen are objecting that it is the Church that should choose its leader, and in particular at least one of the members of the chapter of Canterbury who have formally to elect the Queen's appointee has said he will not do so. Again, it is expected that a committee will bring forward proposals to the summer session of the Church's General Synod "to secure for the Church a more effective share" in making ecclesiastical appointments. Dr. Coggan himself was quoted after his appointment had been announced as hoping that the Church would be able to throw off more and more of its secular shackles.

Now it is no concern of secularists how the Church makes its appointments—whether by election, casting lots, or examining the entrails of a goat. But what must stick in freethinkers' throats is that with all the talk of the Church being free to look after its own affairs no mention is made of the need for the Church to surrender, in return, some of the very great privileges it is all too apt to forget it enjoys. Dr. Coggan says that he has no liking for disestablishment, but there is no suggestion that the Queen should cease to be titular Supreme Governor of the Church of England, that he should not be the one to place the crown on the sovereign's head, that the two anachronisms of the monarchy and the established church should stop leaning on one another to the mutual advantage of each. Is it so unreasonable that the Archbishop of Canterbury should be appointed by the Queen on the advice of her

NEWS

S AND NOTES

Prime Minister, when the appointee will rank in precedence second only to certain members of the "inner" royal family, ahead of, for instance, the Lord Chancellor and the Prime Minister, and will have the right of leading the largest *ex officio* pressure group in Parliament? Once again the Church has been caught indulging in its favourite passtime of shaking off its responsibilities, while clinging tenaciously to every privilege that came its way in an earlier misguided age.

NON-EVENT OF THE YEAR

Mr. Oliver Whitley, Director of External Broadcasting B.B.C. 1969-71, has been chosen for his outstanding leadership during that period as the first winner of the "Valiant for Truth" Award, a new "media" award to be presented annually by the inter-denominational Order of Christian Unity.

FREETHINKER FUND

We are grateful to those readers who contributed to the Freethinker Fund during April.

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OBITUARY

Mr. Ivor Brown

The death occurred recently of the author and journalist, Ivor Brown, C.B.E., at the age of 82. During the First World War he was a conscientious objector. Then began his long and distinguished career in journalism. He was drama critic of the *Manchester Guardian* and *Observer*, and in 1942 became editor of the latter paper. He was a prolific writer, publishing novels, books on Shaw, Dickens, Somerset Maugham and Conan Doyle, and on politics. In 1939 he was appointed Professor of Drama to the Royal Society of Literature. He was the first Director of Drama of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (later the Arts Council).

Mr. Brown was an Honorary Associate of the Rationalist Press Association. In 1966 in his message to the National Secular Society on the occasion of its centenary he said:

As one who was driven by the fatuous absurdities of religious instruction at school and persuaded by the mingled common sense of Robert Blatchford's *God and My Neighbour*, I became a teenage Rationalist and have never seen any reason to repent.

ABORTIVE RALLY

On 28 April SPUC organized an anti-abortion rally in London. The aim was for a demonstration of 100,000. Although various religious sources gave the numbers in attendance as being as high as 80,000, the *Guardian* quoted the police figure as 15,000, and this despite large contingents from all over the country, where previously much larger turn-outs had been achieved. Can it be that the

anti-abortionists have overstated their case? Even the more unimaginative anti-abortionist must suspect he is being brainwashed when handed a leaflet describing an eleven weeks' old foetus in these terms:

... is responsive to pain and touch and cold and sound and light. He drinks his amniotic fluid, more if it is artificially sweetened, less if it is given an unpleasant taste. He gets hiccups and sucks his thumb. He wakes and sleeps. He gets bored with repetitive signals but can be taught to be altered by a first signal for a second different one ... This then is the foetus we know ... (SPUC leaflet).

THE DIVISIVENESS OF RELIGION

An attack on the divisive influence of religion was made recently by Professor Sir Hermann Bondi, who was the guest speaker at a public meeting organized by Waltham Forest Humanist Group. Professor Bondi said the "truly frightening" part of modern life was the way the world was divided. He continued:

As Humanists, we should be against anything that increases divisions between people, and religion is extremely divisive. It is exceptionally dangerous to suppose a special knowledge, as the religious do, and divisiveness is one of the awful consequences of the kind of arrogance which religion sometimes engenders. Moreover, some actions resulting from this kind of arrogance have been exceedingly vicious. For example, 'witches' would never have been burnt but for certain passages in the Bible. The public pretensions of some people with private religious beliefs make me very angry

Sir Hermann cited denominational schools as an example of religious divisiveness. He said that religion is one of those things which makes people very quarrelsome, so that the support we gave to denominational schools, through the law, deepened those divisions. It was the "arrogance" displayed by religious people who assumed superior knowledge and morality which caused much of the trouble. Professor Bondi went on to defend the morality of the non-religious:

It is absurd to suggest that there is no social order or morality without religion. It is social behaviour, and the tendency of human beings to think alike, which forms a basis for social morality. Indeed, through their religious beliefs, people can do things that ordinary social morality would condemn.

Sir Hermann ended his address by calling upon Humanists to "stand up and be counted". The largest single sector of the population today was neither religious nor non-religious. They were indifferent, but they certainly did not support religion. "The modern democratic world often belongs to noisy minorities", he said. Sir Hermann concluded by saying that Humanism did not do enough to replace religion in satisfying emotional needs.

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THREATS TO SEXUAL FREEDOM

ANTONY GREY

This article is the text of Antony Grey's contribution to the N.S.S.'s public meeting of the same title, held in London in April. Mr. Grey is Secretary of the Albany Trust.

The most pervasive threats to sexual freedom are still, as they have always been, ignorance and fear. More and better sex education—in the widest sense—is the first essential. Even in this allegedly permissive age, far too many people (young as well as old) remain astonishingly ignorant about such basic facts as how their own bodies work, what happens physiologically when intercourse takes place, and even how babies are born. When it comes to the emotional side of sexuality, ignorance is even more widespread and profound: passion may be acceptable in novels or clinically scrutinized on the analyst's couch, but most of us are afraid of its disruptive effect in real life. Sex rampant, or even sex subterranean, is a dangerous revolutionary and no respecter of persons. Its sets the *status quo* at risk—which is perhaps among the reasons why our neo-puritans seek so strenuously to suppress it or at least to contain it within the conventional confines of marriage and romanticized love.

Physical and emotional drives

It is fashionable today to ascribe many of our sexual ills to a modern divorce between the physical and the emotional drives. To some extent this is true—it is certainly essential for us, in order to be healthy as individuals and as a society, to get the balance right between what we *do* and what we *feel*. But I think the need for all sex to be “loving” can be overdone as a concept, and can sometimes obscure the truth that sex had with mutual enjoyment, though without love, can sometimes be healthier than sex accompanied by over-intense or too-possessive emotional involvement. (As Dr. Charlotte Wolff so tellingly says in *Love Between Women*, “the jealousy which accompanies possessive love is negative aggression with the face of a gargoyle”.) So another threat to sexual freedom is lack of balance between the physical and the emotional—in either direction.

Still another is lack of openness. My own working preoccupations in social welfare, in morals, and in legislation, have been mainly with the generally unaccepted and so-called “deviant” aspects of sex—homosexuality, transvestism, and prostitution, for example. It is here that the fear, ignorance and lack of balance in many people's minds spills over into positively harmful social attitudes which seek to tidy whole segments of human experience out of sight by sweeping them under the carpet. I am convinced that it is fear and ignorance about what is within ourselves, as well as of what exists in others and in human nature at large, which drives our latter-day puritans on in their increasingly frantic efforts to deny, to denigrate and suppress so many “unacceptable” manifestations of sexuality, and to turn sexuality itself into what D. H. Lawrence scornfully termed, half a century ago, “the dirty little secret”. It is in fact they who “do dirt on sex”—and who, deplorably, usually do so in the name of the God of Love.

But how lacking they themselves are any loving kindness, charity or real understanding for those whose desires they reprobate and whose modes of sexual expression they seek to suppress. If cruelty is the greatest evil in sexual

matters, and harmfulness the standard by which social interference should be measured, it is the punitive, the prurient and puritanical who most need suppressing.

Criteria for legislation

I am secretary of a Sexual Law Reform Society working party which has almost completed the task of considering what principles should underlie a sound approach to legislation regulating sexual behaviour (and we included in this category the purveying, publication and use of explicitly erotic material). Although our detailed conclusions are not yet finally formulated, I think it is safe to predict that they will be based upon the premise that the only occasions when society, acting through the criminal law, should be entitled to restrict or to punish sexual activity or its promotion are: (1) where there is not true consent; (2) where there is not full responsibility on the part of one or more of those engaging in it; and (3) where offence is caused to identifiable members of the public who have witnessed or been involved in such activity against their will.

You will realize that many of the existing laws about sex and censorship fall far short of these criteria, and indeed contravene them. There is therefore a major task of further law reform looming ahead. I believe that it is high time for both the law and public attitudes to be brought more into line with the democratic principle that the State exists for the individual, not *vice versa*; and that the citizen's private consenting sexual activities, whatever their nature and however morally reprehensible they may seem to others, should be acknowledged to be his or her own affair unless they involve force, fraud or visible public nuisance.

National nannies

These may seem simple and self-evident principles—almost platitudes, in fact—but they are far from being accepted by some of the currently highly vociferous elements in our society who appear to visualize themselves as self-appointed National Nannies with a mission to put the clock back to a time when nothing could be openly spoken of which might bring a blush to the cheek of a Victorian virgin. Surveying those regions of the world where censorship of morals and of politics go hand-in-hand, it seems necessary for those of us who abhor authoritarianism to turn to another and more robust strand of Victorianism—to the passionate defence of the individual enunciated by John Stuart Mill against the stifling deadweight of conformity and the threat of a “morals police”. Just as much as in 1957, when the Wolfenden Report was first published, it is necessary to reiterate again and again Mill's timeless words from the great essay *On Liberty*:

A man cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinion of others, to do so would be wise or even right . . . over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

Even in today's increasingly violent, alienated and chaotic society, I still believe that the maximum freedom for each of us to go to hell in his or her own way is far preferable to the ultimate contradiction of a compulsory heaven.

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

D. B. MOORE

A hundred years ago the solitary masterpiece of a sad and disappointed man was published in *The National Reformer* during the months of March, April and May. For the first time James Thomson (B.V.) obtained the recognition for which he longed. Above all the *Grande Dame* of English letters, George Eliot herself, wrote Thomson a pontifical letter of praise beginning "Dear Poet". And it was typical of the man that he had to respond with a letter which attempted to be clever and succeeded in being facetious. The most fortunate outcome of the publication of *The City of Dreadful Night* was that he gained the admiring friendship of Bertram Dobell, bookseller, antiquarian, poetaster, and publisher. Dobell became a lifelong admirer and was responsible for publishing the collected edition of Thomson's poems. He also collected and published his critical prose, and lost money on both ventures.

In publishing Thomson's work, Bradlaugh was justifying his claim that the columns of *The National Reformer* were not open only to freethinkers. When Bradlaugh sent a subscription to help defray the costs of Thomson's funeral and memorial, he remarked that he did so to honour a poet and not a freethinker, and he was right. Thomson was, on his own terms an atheist, but a Victorian atheist, a man who had lost God, and who had therefore lost all hope of eternal life. His reactions were two fold: first to make mock of religion and especially the Christian religion in terms more blasphemous than most articles in *The National Reformer*; secondly to be overcome by a total despair at the hopelessness of the human state.

Unfortunate contacts

Thomson's early contacts with religion were unfortunate. His mother was a follower of Edward Irving and a member of the Catholic Apostolic Church. His father took him as a small child to conventicles where glossolalia was practised by untutored members of the congregation. Orphaned, he was sent to the Caledonian Asylum, where religion was conventional. From there he became an army schoolmaster and it was in the army that he met Bradlaugh. It was natural that two such intelligent young men should become interested in each other's ideas, and doubtless it was when the young schoolmaster accompanied the private soldier, quite illegally, on his tour of sentry duty that the process that resulted in Thomson's loss of faith began. The friendship between the two men was deep and when Thomson was discharged from the army Bradlaugh accepted him into his own home. Bradlaugh's daughter has left a pleasant picture of the two men sitting on opposite sides of the fireplace enjoying their pipes and their discussions: only Thomson's intemperate habits led to his dismissal from the Bradlaugh household, for he was both an incurable alcoholic and an opium taker. Thus began the weary round of lodging houses that makes Thomson's career read like the pages of *New Grub Street*.

Thomson was a brilliant man, but denied by the social and educational system of his day the necessary contacts with his intellectual peers. He taught himself French, German and Italian and became a considerable scholar in them all, translating with some felicity the poems of Heine and the *Operetti Morali* of Leopardi. He tended however to read only those authors who agreed with or stimulated his intensely pessimistic and atheistic outlook. He was one of the earlier critics to appreciate the true worth and

range of Blake's work. He had a considerable and scholarly knowledge of Shelley (the "B" in "B.V." stood for Bysshe, Shelley's second name) and he was sufficiently recognized as an admirer of Browning's work to become a Vice President of the Browning Society. He was profoundly influenced by De Quincey, with devastating effects on his prose style.

Lost love

One other episode in his career must be mentioned before we take a brief look at his poetry and above all, at his one great masterpiece. During his army years he fell in love with the very young daughter of a sergeant armourer. When she died, he added the loss of love to the loss of God, and believed all his life that had Matilda Weller lived, he would have been happy. He saw himself suffering the same fate as the German poet who wrote under the pseudonym of "Novalis", and taking the anagram "Vanolis" to himself, became "Bysshe Vanolis" or "B.V."

Most of Thomson's poetry is a failure. Much of it is tedious and second hand. His pictures of London life, "On the River" and "Saturday Night at Hampstead" have moments of felicity and charm, but are spoilt by prolixity and lack of taste. One or two autobiographical poems such as "Vane's Story", have a certain macabre force, and certainly some anthologist should rescue from obscurity the lines written in 1878 and beginning "I had a love". His poem "In the Room", in which the furniture of a bleak bed-sitter comments on the suicide lying on the bed deserves a place in any anthology of nineteenth century poetry. But *The City of Dreadful Night* is a masterpiece of English prosody.

Personal melancholy

It is a long poem of twenty-four sections in over 1,100 lines and it is remarkable for the pessimistic attitude which is sustained from beginning to end. It is in fact a poem of personal melancholy arising from religious agnosticism disguised as atheism. It is not a truly atheist poem. Throughout Thomson is seeking for the God to whom he vehemently denies any possibility of existence. He concluded that for an unbeliever there was no reason for living and no hope for an after life. He was living a "death-in-life". He begins his poem in complete despair but ends by making some kind of virtue of "Necessity" and, strangely, of the "stiff upper lip", or in his own words, "new strength of iron endurance".

Although it is unique, *The City* is a product of its time, reaching once and for all to the poetic limit consequent upon the nineteenth century concept of the "death of God". It is a sustained metaphor for the consequent state of mind. Its twenty-four sections alternate between descriptions of the Waste Land of hopelessness, and allegorical pictures of a "Quest" for a reason for man's existence, foredoomed to failure. *The City of Dreadful Night* is written in strong rhythmical verse with marked stress, showing great versatility in the rhyme scheme and making full use of assonance and alliteration. The descriptive sections are all in a seven-line stanza which Thomson himself claimed to have adapted from Browning. The second



James Thomson "B.V."
(from a crayon drawing by Rowland Holyoake)

stanza of the Proem, or introduction, will not only illustrate this, but is also Thomson's explanation of why he wrote the poem:

Because a cold rage seizes one at whiles
To show the bitter old and wrinkled truth
Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles,
False dreams, false hopes, false masks and modes of youth;
Because it gives some sense of power and passion
In helpless impotence to try to fashion
Our woes in living words howe'er uncouth.

Then in Section I Thomson describes his City. It is like a panorama from the etchings of Dürer which Thomson admired:

Upon an easy slope it lies at large,
And scarcely overlaps the long curved crest
Which swells out two leagues from the river marge.
A trackless wilderness rolls north and west,
Savannahs, savage woods, enormous mountains,
Bleak uplands, black ravines with torrent fountains;
And eastward rolls the shipless sea's unrest.

Then we have the first of the allegorical sections, which are more varied in their prosody. Here in Section II Thomson follows around the City a "foiled circuitous wanderer" (to adopt Arnold's words) who constantly seeks Faith that died "poisoned by this charnel air", Love that died (in a phrase that is subject to many explanations) "stabbed by its own worshipped pair", and Hope that died "starved out in its utmost lair". From now on each of the "quest" sections of the poem deals with the search for Faith, Love and Hope, in that order.

Of the allegorical sections none is to my mind more forceful and effective than Section IV, and I cannot but regret that it is not included in the standard anthologies, even at the expense of some of the sections usually quoted.

The stanza form (after the introductory stanza) is unique. Each stanza opens with the refrain "As I came through the desert thus it was,/As I came through the desert;" and the first six conclude with a refrain "But I strode on austere;/No hope could have no fear."—a refrain varied in the last five stanzas, though the rhyme with "fear" is retained. The desert is Eliot's Waste Land, the wilderness of Childe Roland and the *noia* of Leopardi, and it recalls in its description the etchings both of Blake and Dürer. It includes a vision of the love lost for ever that has elements of Roman Catholic mariolatry, the worship of the Bleeding Heart, and a reminiscence of Spenser's vision of Amoret from Book III of *The Faerie Queen*. The climax is a picture of the Pieta upon Arnold's "Dover Beach". Nor does this exhaust all its implications and it deserves, as a great *tour de force* of prosody and despair, to be better known. Quotation in isolation cannot hope to convey the impact of Section IV of *The City* and the fifth stanza which sets the scene must suffice:

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Meteors ran
And crossed their javelins on the black sky-span;
The zenith opened to a gulf of flame,
The dreadful thunderclouds jarred earth's fixed frame;
The ground all heaved in waves of fire that surged
And weltered round me sole there unsubmerged:
Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

Rejected from hell

The allegorical aspect of Section VI has proved baffling to some readers, but there need be no difficulty since what Thomson is mourning here is the rejection of the inhabitants of the City from the Gates of Hell itself. Here Thomson, again showing his versatility by writing most of it in triplets, paints an unforgettable picture of men casting off all hope to enter Hell:

But these, as if they took some burden, bowed;
The whole frame sank; however strong and proud
Before, they crept in quite infirm and cowed.

The inhabitants of the City, having no hope to leave behind, were denied all entry.

The eighth Section is a debate between two inhabitants of the City whose arguments are distinguished by being written alternately in quatrains and triplets. It bears some resemblance to Tennyson's "Two Voices", with one voice reviling a Creator "malignant and implacable" and the other, more philosophical, countering with:

"Nay, does it treat him harshly as he saith?
It grinds him some slow years of bitter breath,
Then grinds him back into eternal death."

The tenth allegorical section is one of the most interesting. Within a mansion, distinguished from others in the City because "every window of its front shed light", the narrator finds that each room, hung with funeral drapes, held a shrine adorned with the picture of "a woman very young and very fair". This is once again the Matilda/Virgin Mary figure. As in "an open oratory" her corpse is laid upon an altar beneath a crucifix to be worshipped by "a young man wan and worn who seemed to pray". An unusual aspect of the corpse, for which the young man renounces all choice of life or death, is that the face is "uncorrupted", and within the Roman Church this is a sign of sainthood. It is fascinating to speculate on how these images from the Roman religion came into the poetry of one who wrote some of the most blasphemous prose of his day.

In the twelfth section Thomson describes the inhabitants of the City, and there have been attempts to identify them, but I believe that the Poet, the Lord, the Hermit, the King, the Preacher and the others whom Thomson describes, are visions of his own failed self.

Bradlaugh and Darwin

In Section XIV the dwellers in the City have moved into the "mighty fane", the great cathedral that so strangely occupies one side of a square. Here they listen to a preacher whose "steadfast and intolerable eyes" remind us that Bradlaugh's opponents in debate often complained of the intensity of his gaze. In mockery of the Christian message he brings "Good tidings of great joy" that "there is no God". And in a stanza that was a late addition to this section, we have our first and only touch of Darwinism in the poem:

... all our wretched race
Shall finish with its cycle, and give place
To other beings . . .

Finally comes the call to escape through suicide:

... you are free to end it when you will,
Without the fear of waking after death.—

The sixteenth section is one of repining for the consequences that follow on the preacher's announcement that Necessity alone is supreme, and is chiefly remarkable for its deliberate echoes, both in versification and vocabulary, of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard".

A dark and lonely part

Section XVIII is psychologically one of the most remarkable. Here the poet finds in a dark and lonely part of a "suburb of the north" a creature that had been a man, with "grey unreverend locks" and "haggard filthy face", crawling through the mire. The creature curses the poet, then seeks his pity. He is, he says, "in the very way at last/To find the long-lost broken golden thread" to lead him back to "Eden innocence in Eden's clime", where he will become again an "infant cradled on its mother's knee,/ . . . love-cherished and secure". This is a shrewd recognition of the despair that comes to those who suffer from what we now call the Oedipus complex. Thomson leaves us at the end of this section with the impression that here, for the first time, he is describing a state of mind which he does not share, but of which he recognises the utter defeatism.

In the twentieth, the last of the allegorical sections:

Two figures faced each other, large, austere;
A couchant sphinx in shadow to the breast,
An angel standing in the moonlight clear . . .

Before the implacable gaze of the sphinx, the angel loses his wings and becomes a man holding a sword. The sword falls, and the man is left defenceless, to fall himself between the paws of the sphinx. So religion, idealism, rationalism are as nothing before eternity. But I wonder if Thomson realized that in Egyptian mythology the sphinx is a symbol of resurrection? And I cannot read this section without thinking of Yeats's magnificent and frightening poem "The Second Coming".

It must not be thought that the descriptive sections of the poem lack force. One returns to them after each excursion to rediscover the impossibility of escape. Here the

"open spaces yawn with gloom abysmal" and "death-in-life is the eternal king". There is no escape: "who once hath paced that dolent city/Shall pace it often, doomed beyond all pity". It is full of "breathings acrid with dead sea foam". It is the Venice of the Black Sea through which passes a "fate-appointed hearse". It is haunted by men "who have much wisdom yet they are not wise" and "have much goodness yet they do not well", who are "most rational and yet insane". They are the "saddest and weariest men on earth". In the City, Time crawls "like a monstrous snake/Wounded and slow and very venomous". And in a stanza of particular power, Thomson describes how each man in the City affects all others:

That City's atmosphere is dark and dense,
Although not many exiles wander there,
With many a potent evil influence,
Each adding poison to the poisoned air;
Infections of unutterable sadness,
Infections of incalculable madness,
Infections of incurable despair.

Patroness and queen

Thomson looks at the moon and stars and finds "no heart or mind in all their splendour"—if we could but reach them, we should find them to be worlds as sad as this. Through the City runs the river of suicides, and Thomson is hard put to explain why all men do not use it to escape and can only suggest that they linger "to see what shifts are yet in the dull play". Finally he erects, brooding over the City, the giant figure of Melencolia from Dürer's etching of that name. In spite of his flirting with Roman Catholic imagery, the conclusion of the poem echoes the strictest Scottish puritanism—Melencolia is "sustained by her indomitable will" and "all her sorrow shall be turned to labour". She is the City's "sombre Patroness and Queen" and

Her subjects often gaze up to her there:
The strong to drink new strength of iron endurance,
The weak new terrors; all, renewed assurance
And confirmation of the old despair.

Thomson lived for eight years after the first publication of *The City* and most of them were songless. Then the silence was broken by some pathetic and ineffective poems of middle aged love and the great untitled poem of 1878 beginning "I had a love". He sank deeper and deeper into the toils of alcoholism, while sustaining himself by journalism mainly in freethought publications. Although when Annie Besant came on the scene he quarrelled with Bradlaugh, Thomson was never without friends. In spite of his disability, recognised by his friends for the disease it was, he seems in his sober moments to have been a man of great charm and a delightful companion. His friends tried to cure him or to get him into a home, but in 1882 he entered into one final long debauch. The letters and telegrams preserved in the Bodleian attest the devotion with which his friends tried to rescue him, but he resisted all they could do. Finally he staggered into the rooms of the blind poet Marsden, where he had a desperate haemorrhage. He died in hospital three days later and was buried in Highgate Cemetery in the same grave as his friend, the gentle rationalist Austin Holyoak, the brother of the belligerent Jacob.

From the frustration of a brilliant man denied the opportunity to develop intellectually to his full capacity, and dogged by an incurable disease, comes the greatest poem of unwilling disbelief in our language.

CHILDREN OF GOD: THE DUPES OF MOSES DAVID WILLIAM McILROY

Londoners are accustomed to encountering advocates of many and diverse religious beliefs who sell and distribute their literature, speak to bemused audiences in public places, or even—like the doltily innocent Hare Krishna followers—dance along Oxford Street. Such holy high jinks are relatively harmless; indeed they often enliven the scene and relieve the tension caused by the rush and bustle of city life. But members of an American sect known as the Children of God who recently appeared are unpleasantly different to the other religious groups endeavouring to show benighted London the way to salvation and light. The Children of God are aggressive Christian fanatics, usually under twenty-five and characterized by gushing, saccharin sincerity and an expansive, phoney smile that immediately disappears if someone asks questions or does not contribute enough for the execrably produced leaflet that is offered ostensibly free of charge. For one of the sect's main activities is extracting money from the public in order to finance their communes.

Underground missionaries

During the winter months the Children of God did most of their missionary work on the London Underground platforms and in train compartments. With the advent of warmer weather they came, like weeds, to the surface. The analogy is more apposite than most people may think, for the sect's teachings have had a socially and intellectually deadening effect on the lives of many young people who have terminated their education, left their jobs and severed links with their families and friends in order to serve in the private army of Moses David, a middle-aged, wilted blossom of the Flower Power era.

Moses David's real name is David Berg. He claims to be Jewish, but he grew up in an atmosphere of narrow, fundamentalist Protestantism. His parents were full-time preachers and although the future prophet did not inherit their talents it is reported that he made quite an impression on one occasion when he preached in a church—the congregation threw him out of the building. He became the public relations man for an outfit known as the American Soul Clinic where the chief quack was a Pentecostal evangelist named the Rev. Fred Jordan. Berg and the Rev. Fred were involved in a bitter dispute and he left the Soul Clinic to launch his "Revolution for Jesus". This was aimed at those who had "dropped out" and were rather uncertain of their direction. The first official convention took place near Montreal in 1967 and it was then that David Berg became Moses David. The Children of God had started on the road to the "New Nation".

The Mo Letters

In the early days the sect led a rather nomadic existence partly because of its leader's aberrations. On one occasion after Moses David had a vision of California dropping into the ocean he moved his sheep to safer pastures in Tuscon and Palm Springs. They moved from place to place and often attracted a lot of publicity by disrupting church services. The Children of God have seldom attempted to conceal this contempt for other Christians and

potential supporters who were not prepared to drop out of society.

Moses David is not given to false modesty. His writings, a typographical and philosophical dog's dinner known as Mo Letters, have been elevated to the level holy writ, numbered verses and all. He has written over 200 of these letters—not all for public consumption—and they and the King James version of the Bible are the only reading material which is allowed in the communes. The Children have to study and memorize Moses David's pearls of wisdom which are described in the February 1974 issue of their journal, *New Nation News*, as "the living Word of God". Five of the letters which have been published under the title *David* are based on Old Testament prophecies about "a coming David", with the implication that they apply to Moses David. Quotations from the September 1973 issue of *New Nation News* provide further evidence of the seriousness with which Moses David's twaddle is regarded by his followers: "God has given us His prophet David, to guide and lead us"; "David, God's messenger for today"; "Eric Segal, author of the best-selling novel, *Love Story*, received the words of Moses David"; "God's prophet for today, Moses David".

Although the Children of God have never shunned the limelight, it is very difficult for researchers to find out from them anything about the organization. The chief reason for this is that the members themselves know little about it; knowledge of organizational structure is confined to their own colony and its elder. The whereabouts of their prophet is a mystery; there are no photographs of him and it is given out that this secrecy is necessary to prevent his being killed by his enemies. The hierarchy of the sects (Moses David, his family and a few trusted disciples) have fostered fear, secretiveness, fanaticism and a ghetto mentality in their followers. They alone are the true believers in "these last days" and the damned, including all those Christians who do not accept the sect's teachings, will endeavour to destroy them. Only by total submission to God—and to his prophet, Moses David—can they hope to escape the wrath to come. That is all they need to know.

All for Moses

The Children of God live in colonies and a newcomer is subjected to rigorous discipline and supervision. First he has to sell his belongings and hand over all the proceeds to the sect. He is put into the charge of an older member and his spiritual warder accompanies him everywhere day and night. He adopts a biblical name and every effort is made to destroy his former identity. His mail is opened and examined and he must submit totally to the authority of the colony elder. All worldly wisdom is shunned; radio and television programmes are forbidden and the only intellectual activity in which the member may engage is memorizing and discussing passages from the Bible and the Mo Letters. Only after a period of intensive indoctrination and brainwashing is the new member, still accompanied by a supervisor, allowed to make contact with the outside world. He will trudge the streets with a supply of Mo Letters pestering and deceiving the public into contributing money which is handed over to the sect.

Marriages between members are encouraged and as those who saw the B.B.C. television programme, *See You Sunday*, will recall, their very young children are also subjected to brainwashing. Married couples often sleep in the same room and contraception is regarded as unnecessary; God alone decides if and when conception shall take place. Medical attention by outsiders at childbirth is frowned upon.

However, it is the manner in which young people are talked into "forsaking all"—including their own parents—for Christ that has caused so much bitterness and unhappiness. For the Children believe in the literal truth of the Bible, including Luke 16:26—*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* A young person who gets into the clutches of the Children of God is discouraged from visiting his family. He may write to his parents and when he does so always asks for money which, if forthcoming, goes into the funds.

Parents and the F.B.I.

Over 1,000 parents in the United States formed themselves into an organization known as FREECOG (Free the Children of God). They hired detectives to trace their sons and daughters (one of the sect's tactics is to deny any knowledge of a member's whereabouts should parents seek information). The F.B.I. started to investigate following accusations of fraud, forgery and kidnapping. The F.B.I.'s intervention was apparently more fraught with danger than the watery fate of the State of California, for Moses David moved his followers out of the United States to London.

Although one sympathizes with those Americans whose sons and daughters have rejected them it is nevertheless pertinent to say that their own readiness to accept Christian absurdities has greatly contributed to their present unhappiness. They dutifully instilled religious beliefs into their offspring, sacrificed them in wars to make the world safe for Western Christian civilization and undermined their potential ability to resist the virulent strain of irrationalism transmitted by the Children of God. It was only when junior got stoned on Jesus and started to sign away his property and inheritances that Mr. and Mrs. America were stirred into action.

Fools and their money

When the Children of God first arrived in Britain they were welcomed by the conglomeration of staid evangelicals, pop religionists and purity campaigners that constitute the Jesus movement in this country. One wealthy supporter provided them with accommodation in Bromley and their proselytizing activities soon attracted recruits. Eventually the real and unacceptable face of the sect was revealed. Worried parents started to protest and their benefactor, whose two sons had joined the Children, turned them out of their Bromley premises. The Children of God's activities were discussed in the House of Commons and one Conservative M.P. called for the deportation of their American leaders.

It is incredible that a manifestly harmful sect like the Children of God and its absentee prophet, Moses David,

command such support and dedication. It is true that the vast majority of the Children are young and that some have escaped from the cage. But although ex-supporters are sadder and poorer, few of them seem to have been made much wiser by their experience, if we may judge by what they have written since leaving. Their criticisms are largely a stereotyped jumble of exhortations based on biblical fallacies, superstition and awful warnings about "false prophets", strung together by platitudinous testimonies and earnest assurances that Jesus is the answer to every problem from original sin to athlete's foot. It is only a variation of the same nonsense that the Children of God expound.

Industrialists and politicians will sometimes provide funds for a religious movement whose belief and programme they privately regard with derision. But although money spent on fostering servility and other worldliness is often regarded as an investment on behalf of the *status quo* it would be erroneous to think that financial support for religion is always motivated by hypocrisy and opportunism. For there are many who are balanced and rational in business affairs but simpletons in religious matters and at the name of Jesus will reach for a cheque book. For Christianity is a blight that induces credulity and gullibility in people of all ages and social groupings.

Since establishing themselves in London the Children of God have devised their own standards for raising money and there are indications that large sums are being made by hoodwinking the public. If members of a Left-wing organization adopted similar tactics the police would soon crack down on them, but the American emissaries of "God's prophet for today" can operate without hindrance. The police reasonably claim that they cannot keep an eye on every trickster, religious or otherwise, on the streets of London. However, it can be claimed with equal reasonableness that if a substantial number of policemen are employed to look for and read allegedly pornographic material in bookshops and newsagents' premises sufficient personnel may be found to protect the public from Moses David's godly vultures.

Atheists and agnostics have played an historic rôle in the fight for free expression and are strenuously opposing the censorious activities of national nannies like Mary Whitehouse, Lady Birdwood and Lord Longford. We do not seek to deprive religionists of the right to disseminate their views, however silly and pernicious they may be. But it is no restriction on intellectual freedom to prevent the Children of God from fleecing tourists, shoppers and travellers; on the contrary, their fund-raising activities may provoke a hostile public reaction which will encourage repressive and authoritarian elements to demand an end to all street activities.

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CRIME AND THE MORAL ORDER

ANTONY A. MILNE

That the law is not always an ass was demonstrated the other day at Bow Street Magistrates' Court, when Mary Whitehouse lost her case against a cinema manager for showing the film *Blow Out*. Yet many sophisticated and enlightened citizens in this country would doubtless be disillusioned with the high moral tone of the law, as articulated by the magistrate, Mr. Evelyn Russell, when it praises Mrs. Whitehouse's "sincerity and courage" in pursuing her enlightened activities (which the defence described as mischievous).

As an emancipated country we tend to disparage those authoritarian societies that have an oppressive puritanical ethic. Yet our own egalitarian democratic institutions, which enable individuals to bring private court actions and to have TV programmes taken off the air (as in the notorious *McWhirter v. Warhol* affair), paradoxically tend so easily to whittle away many civil liberties that have not been lightly won. Nevertheless, the many obscenity and pornography trials that have been paraded before us by the sensation-seeking press over the past five years display a deep-seated social pathology that manifests itself in an inextricable link between the moral order and the criminal statutes.

Fundamental assumptions

In endeavouring to explain how a law comes into being, A. C. Dicey, the constitutional theorist, wrote that a body of beliefs in any society is traceable to the fundamental assumptions of a society. Whether such assumptions are empirically valid or not seems to make little difference to the beliefs, but nevertheless sufficient currents of opinion can gain force by degrees and change prevailing assumptions, to be later countervailed themselves. Penal measures are one way, albeit the most formal and drastic, of dealing with types of behaviour that people find objectionable. Our actions are regulated by what we believe to be expectations of our fellow citizens, and by our occasional experience of their disapproval when we fail to fulfill them. When it is necessary to have these expectations observed with precision they become systematized rules and legal codes backed up with sanctions against those who break the rules.

Needless to say, in a pre-literate society there is a complete consensus in regard to what is correct behaviour,

and formal rules are invariably non-existent. But in a highly complex, pluralistic society such as ours there is an inevitable amount of conflict about what should be the correct prevailing norms, values and assumptions. All this of course is right and proper in an open society, but unfortunately dissent and controversy are not confined to the forum of public debate. In 1929, Edwin Sutherland, a well-known American criminologist, went so far as to argue that cultural or philosophical conflict can actually mould the shape of the legal code. Conflict, he said, tends to push participants to logical extremes in their positions; and each side, as in the gathering storm clouds that lead to war, becomes sucked into a whirlpool and is incapable of understanding the other. The legal system, too, is drawn into a spiralling tornado of an increasing number of statutes leading to increases in the number of infractions of the legal code. In 1929 few felons in the United States were convicted of crimes of aggression, and "at least three-fourths of the persons handled by the agencies of the law are convicted of crimes against sobriety and good order, sex morality, public health and safety, or public policy. Few of these would be described accurately as . . . remorseless and unspeakably cruel". This manufactured conflict occurs when groups of powerful people feel that their values or property rights are being threatened, and can rally pressure to bear on the legislative process. So whereas the law in theory was created as an agency for reducing and regulating civil conflict in the sense of an infringement or a nuisance, the state continues to exacerbate the conflict by dealing with it under the criminal law.

Balanced relationship

As a result the law often has a finely balanced relationship with ethics and morality, sometimes controverting values and sometimes sustaining them. It is assumed that a wider and universal morality exists and is inalienable because people's definitions of decent and civilized human conduct coincide, as they do in regard to social facts and physical objects. As with the resistance in wartime Nazi Germany or the draft card burner on the College campus, groups of people still appeal to this universal ethical consciousness which exists beyond the law. Further, questions of democracy and public opinion become difficult to integrate into a theory of the law. Are people generally reactionary in regard to the enforcement of legal sanctions, or do legislators in favouring stronger treatment of social miscreants claim they are acting in response to public opinion whilst pampering their own personal moral convictions?

Similarly, as Troy Duster argues (*The Legislation of Morality*, 1971), it might be necessary when trying to ascertain the legitimacy of the criminal code to distinguish between public and private acts (for example, in the matter of sexual acts) and between victim-producing and victimless crimes (for example, the solitary drug addict). The danger in legislating against "immoral" acts is that if the proscribed act is violated by a substantial minority, sanctions begin to weaken for obvious reasons, and state resources will be exhausted at the expense of a more constructive attitude to the problem. Sanctions will also weaken in such a case if it is thought that others will be sympathetic to the offenders, or if there is widespread moral confusion or uncertainty. There is nevertheless a dynamic relationship between legislation and morality. A

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full circle occurs when the community supports the moral order so that the law is like a dam constructed after moral judgements have been made. Once a moral judgement is firm, the law cannot change morality, but can prevent existing morality from changing.

Moral indignation

Such a vista can be depressing indeed for those who think that the law can in some way promote tendencies towards greater moral freedom. On the contrary, a new statute can itself create, almost innocently, moral indignation. Duster documents the influential opinion of medical men in late nineteenth century America who wanted the sale of hard drugs proscribed because of their deleterious physiological effects. Prior to the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914 drug addiction was essentially a middle-aged, middle-class problem. But the enactment succeeded in changing the moral climate so that an hitherto neutral act became a pejorative, degrading act *by virtue of its illegality*.

A bridge between morality and the law had been built because proscription (like the later prohibition) meant that addicts had to resort to the underworld and, through the deviant labelling process, themselves assume the rôle of criminals.

Harrassment

Many British examples of the legal reinforcement of moral indignation can be cited. Jeremy Seabrook investigated the harrassment of the proprietors of socially legitimate "massage parlours" suspected of providing for gain sexual services to their clients. Through rumours, police managed to break up teenage couple-swopping parties because the exchange of money was suspected. In a domestic squabble where a wife was attacked, the police arrested the husband because of a tip-off and hence felt *obliged* to invoke the law, although aware of the legal convention of non-interference in domestic disputes. And so on.

One hopeful ray of light on the matter of the disentanglement of morals from the law lies in the distinction between judicial and parliamentary law. No longer can we expect reactionary and narrowly educated judges to place themselves above the moral conduct of society, in spite of the legal maxim that a court of law is not a court of morals. But we can and must pressure the elected members of Parliament to eliminate public prosecutions involving matters, that are nothing but questions of private morality.

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REVIEWS

BOOKS

DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS AND HIS THEOLOGY
by Horton Harris. Cambridge University Press, £5.20.

This excellent account of Strauss's life and thought is the only biography in English since his death one hundred years ago. It is distinguished by sympathy with its subject, without being in the least partisan. Dr. Harris characterizes Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1835) as "the first open and public assault on the bastions of traditional Christian faith, in an age where atheism was treated with abhorrence, and attacked with the weapons of academic and social ostracism" (p. 41). Both these weapons were used against Strauss. His sympathizers, in fear for their own positions, dared not protest against his dismissal from his theological lectureship which promptly followed publication of his book. And in those days "the Church was so bound up with society that . . . he could not openly visit his friends for fear of bringing them into disrepute" (p. 117).

Dr. Harris's only serious criticism of Strauss is that his denial of the miraculous and supernatural element in the world is never proved but merely presupposed (p. 42); and that it was therefore quite arbitrary of him to treat all the New Testament miracles as myths. But Strauss's point was that natural causation was accepted as applicable everywhere except in the case of the events portrayed in the Bible, and that it was therefore reasonable to see if these could also be explained on a natural basis. Furthermore, if the New Testament miracle stories are to be accepted as genuine, they must—he argued—be both well attested and internally coherent; and he showed that neither of these conditions is fulfilled: for external evidence is insufficient to establish that the gospels were written by eye-witnesses, and their narratives include many contradictions. Of the resurrection, for instance, he wrote, in his last book: "Seldom has an unbelievable fact been worse attested, never has a poorly attested one been intrinsically less credible". His great contribution was (as Dr. Harris shows) to demonstrate—without having, like his predecessors, to impute fraud or gross stupidity to the evangelists—that many gospel stories (not only those involving miracles) could have arisen perfectly naturally from Old Testament expectations. If the evangelists believed (as they did) that Jesus was the Messiah, then they will also have believed that he must have done and suffered all that was expected of the Messiah. He must, for instance, have been a descendant of David, born in David's city of Bethlehem. Hence it was perfectly natural for stories to circulate in Christian communities giving him these qualifications. Since they were not based on fact, they varied a good deal; and so we find that Matthew and Luke, writing independently of each other, give genealogies and infancy stories which agree only in alleging descent from David and birth in Bethlehem. In sum, the "presupposition" with which Strauss approached his material enabled him to make sense of the documents. And no more can be required of any hypothesis. His Christian critics have naturally been anxious to suggest that it was a purely arbitrary standpoint. Those who cannot defend their own position naturally seek to undermine their opponent's; and when everything has been undermined it becomes

merely a matter of taste which we adopt. In this way, the Christian standpoint can be defended as no more arbitrary than any other.

Strauss's argument that New Testament stories are myths based on Old Testament expectations does not account either for the crucifixion or for the resurrection. The former he does not need to explain away, for he accepts it as historical, as sufficiently attested by the evidence of Tacitus. Since, then, he concedes that there was a historical Jesus who was followed by a group of disciples, and since he cannot explain the resurrection appearances from some actual experiences these disciples had after Jesus's death. Dr. Harris shows (pp. 208-11) that Strauss gives as plausible an explanation as is possible from these premises.

Strauss's book has often been dubbed negative. It swept away much of the New Testament myth, leaving a historical Jesus who was crucified under Pilate, but about whom little else can be known. What Dr. Harris brings out so well is that Strauss's critical attitude was a necessary preliminary to more refined analysis which ascertained in which order the New Testament books were written, which of the earlier ones were known to and used by the authors of the later ones, and whether these latter drew on sources outside what is now included in the canon. The whole burden of Dr. Harris's exposition is that Strauss cannot reasonably be required to have done the work of his successors as well as his own. As things were, he was able to note, with a touch of justifiable pride, that during a quarter of a century "not a significant line" has been written about the questions with which his book dealt "in which its influence is not to be perceived" (p. 193).

Strauss's contribution was—in Dr. Harris's words—"the most intellectually reasoned attack which has ever been mounted against Christianity" (pp. 281-2). Although it cost him dear, it brought him the consolation that a whole generation had found intellectual liberation in it. "Many a man", he writes, "who dates the liberation of his mind from the study of this book, has been grateful to me for this throughout his whole life." This was no illusion, as Zeller's testimony (p. 115) shows. The books could still have a similar effect today if it were read to the extent that, say, *Honest to God* has been read. If young people in this country were to turn to George Eliot's fine translation of Strauss's book, they would be confronted with an analysis of the gospel stories of Jesus's birth, infancy, miracles and resurrection which they are unlikely to find in the theological paperbacks of today. George Eliot, by the way, met Strauss in 1858, and found that he spoke as "a man strictly truthful in the use of language" (p. 233). Dr. Harris's biography is a worthy monument to Strauss's uncompromising honesty.

G. A. WELLS

TEENAGE MORALITY by Harold Loukes.

S.C.M. Press, 90p.

In the early 1960s Harold Loukes wrote a book, *Teenage Religion*, based on tape-recorded interviews with secondary school pupils. Loukes came to the conclusion that pupil dissatisfaction with R.I. should be dealt with by adopting a "problem-method" of teaching. In effect this meant interesting a class in a particular social problem—for example, divorce—and teaching them the "Christian Judgement" on this issue.

Loukes' work is well known, and so considerable and respectful attention is likely to be paid to his new book,

Teenage Morality. His basic material, as in his earlier book, is the thoughts of teenagers, gathered from tape-recordings and answers to questionnaires. Loukes believes that a young adolescent "operates on a morality of personal relations, created and sustained largely in face-to-face situations by people he can actually see . . . If he is to have any sort of grasp of a more generalized mode of moral thought, he will have in some way to be taught it."

No doubt many zealous Christians—and some humanists too—will be disappointed that Loukes does not advocate that this teaching should take place in specific periods of "Moral Education". This is a blow to those who have seen "Moral Education" as a convenient label under which they can continue religious indoctrination. This subterfuge was noted in the *Guardian* recently in its report of a survey carried out by a college of education lecturer: "In spite of the trend towards renaming the subject (R.I.) 'moral education', he found that up to the age of 11 it is still dominated by the concern to transmit information about God, Christ, Christianity and the Bible."

Whilst rejecting time-tabled "Moral Education", Loukes believes that: "It is for the school to initiate into the corpus of established moral rules, to demonstrate their point, where they came from, and what they achieve; to engage the pupil in active group relations so that he understands the contemporary mood and speaks to it; to give opportunity for the exploration, and exercise, of conscience; and to provide a base for the interaction of the other three modes in the development of moral insight and decision-making." All this is so vague and rhetorical that it could—and no doubt will—be used to justify almost anything, including R.I. Compulsory religious instruction is still, of course, the officially approved subject for the fostering of the "moral development" of all school pupils.

Unlike some humanists I am cautious—to the point of scepticism—about the value of any programme of moral education. To this extent I agree with Loukes that the way in which boys and girls are treated is of more importance to their "moral development" than any moral education syllabus or programme.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

THE NEXT TEN THOUSAND YEARS by Adrian Berry-Cape, £2.50.

Mr. Berry's diverting title is a bit of a Sunday colour supplement affair, without the colour; you read it lounging in your arm chair after a large lunch with maybe a glass of beer at your elbow. This isn't a sneer at his book, for Mr. Berry writes engagingly well. His knowledge is vast and his lucidity impressive. Yet despite his valiant efforts, I feel that the next ten thousand years can't be compressed into a slim volume of 180 pages and three short appendices; and I finished the book admiring Mr. Berry's journalistic skill in packaging but rather in sorrow at the contents.

The package is certainly glossy. Mr. Berry, as an unabashed "growthman", looks forward to an ever-expanding future in which the wealth of the rich nations increases by up to five per cent a year indefinitely, thus doubling their output every twenty years or so (he is less sure about the poor nations). Finding the earth too small, man will take off into space, colonizing the Moon and Venus and dismantling the giant planet Jupiter for raw materials. The hell-planet Venus, roasted to a surface temperature

of 900 degrees F. by its thick shroud of carbon dioxide, will be made a second Garden of Eden by seeding the atmosphere with algae from earth, thus oxygenating the planet and reducing its temperature to that of a hot summer's day. Yet by the twenty-third century, even Venus will seem a backwater, for by then man will be blowing up Mercury and Jupiter and building new planets from the fragments. The next step, inter-stellar travel, is more speculative, for its involves twisting the accepted laws of physics. No matter: it looks as if there may be "worm-holes" in space, in which time itself ceases to exist, so enabling man to take short cuts to the stars without having to spend millions of years over it. And if there are not worm-holes, one feels tempted to say, then we shall invent them.

And so on: flying city-states, the harnessing of the energy of the sun, self-reproducing robots munching rocks and generating electricity as a by-product, fusion reactors with their vast output of safe nuclear power, an American gross national product 200 times as high in the year 2150 as it was in 1971; and so on. No need to worry about rising world population, just as there is no need to worry about raw-material or energy shortages; for an updated version of Malthus's moral restraint and prudence will stabilize world population at around ten thousand million. Here, at least, growth will not expand exponentially for ever. There is "no limit to growth, and . . . no limit to what the developed nations can accomplish".

All enormously entertaining, highly readable and splendid stuff: and being temperamentally suspicious of the conventional wisdom in most fields, I do find Mr. Berry's unbounded faith in his technological cornucopia of goodies and gadgets rather attractive. Not for him the narrow and negative pessimism of the doomsters, who have been proved wrong in the past about man's capacity to survive and flourish and will be proved wrong again. It is fair to say that we do consistently underestimate technology; and although Mr. Berry's future is fantastic, it is not more so than the world of 1974 would have seemed to the backward peasants of A.D. 974, who incidentally were just as keen as the pessimists of today on forecasting the end of their world, albeit for different reasons. However, Mr. Berry's optimism is not the old-fashioned kind: he makes no easy assumptions about moral or cultural progress in his glittering vision of the future. Indeed, he gives his optimism a strange new twist by asserting that, since it is virtually impossible to wipe out all intelligent life on earth, even a series of full-blooded nuclear wars would not, in the long run, make any difference to man's future. The life remaining to the Sun is estimated at six thousand million years at least, and an awful lot could happen to man's place in the universe in that time even if he does blow himself up occasionally.

And yet one's doubts remain: not just the obvious ones, such as our comparative helplessness in the face of nature, which it should not be forgotten extinguished the dinosaurs almost overnight after a rule over earth many times longer than mankind's. The doubts arise, rather from intrinsic weaknesses in Mr. Berry's argument. The essential difference between modern civilization and what has gone before is that no previous civilization had quite the same in-built expansionist drive on which ours depends. Life in the ancient world and the medieval village could, and did, go on comfortably year after year, with little change. Not so today, when change feeds on itself; an industrial system developed by innovation and growth now relies on innovation and growth to fuel itself, just as we rely on

technological development to remedy the evils caused by past technology. It is this dependence that permits Mr. Berry's vision of a future in which we will be thousands of times richer than today, for since we depend on faster and bigger technology then it will inevitably be forthcoming. Yet precisely what meaning attaches to a future bursting at the seams with thousands of times more gadgets, facilities and conveniences, all as yet uninvented, than we have now, is not clear. There is, after all, a limit to the length of the day and a finite lifetime in which to consume all these gadgets and conveniences.

Even though growth at five per cent a year does not sound exciting, it does over a long period produce the results Mr. Berry's book is about: a great rippling cascade of human beings spilling over on to the planets, there to create exactly the same social and environmental problems that plague the earth today. For concealed beneath Mr. Berry's packaged technology is actually a *sombre* vision of mankind: where wars break out on and between the planets and the beautiful planet of Jupiter is torn apart by human greed. I like Mr. Berry's optimism, but maybe he would have written a better book if, having made us all rich and comfortable, he had gone on to discuss whether we could be persuaded to be a little nicer to each other. Watch this space—A.D. 11,974.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

THE FREETHINKER BY POST

A large proportion of readers obtain *The Freethinker* from a newsagent and it will be our policy to continue to supply the paper to wholesalers. But we have recently received many complaints from readers who have experienced much difficulty in obtaining their copy. A variety of excuses have been given by newsagents; some have even told their customers that *The Freethinker* had ceased publication.

It is important that readers are not lost because of difficulty in obtaining the paper, so we therefore draw attention to the postal subscription scheme. This means that *The Freethinker* will cost an extra 36p a year, but even then it is excellent value by today's standards. It is despatched to postal subscribers on the day of publication, thus eliminating the frustration and delay which has obviously been increasing.

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THEATRE

LIFE CLASS by David Storey. Royal Court Theatre.

David Storey has gained a justified reputation for creating virtually plotless plays, where an atmosphere is skilfully evoked, an action meticulously performed and the tensions and conflicts inherent in the existing working situation are highlighted and given a resonance that makes them relevant as representative of a sector of society. Whether it be in a mental home, changing room of a rugby club, or during the erection of a tent, he has been able to hold an audience by an artful facsimile of an aspect of life: so skilfully constructed that as a "slice of life" these situations give us the impression that we are overlooking a group of people about their daily business.

Life Class as a title, while it specifically refers to the art class taking place in a run-down art college in the North, invites us to consider that this class is also in some way about "life". Indeed desultory remarks about art and life punctuate the play; they come in between visits to the bog and the inevitable innuendoes provoked by the naked model. In charge of an assortment of students, whose attitude to their task ranges through various shades of scepticism and indifference, is Allot the art master. Played by Alan Bate, this art master seems self-deprecating, uncertain, moving from spasmodic sarcasm to meandering comments on "Art" and wistful references to his domestic situation (divorce pending). It is a nicely modulated performance, never dominating by insistently obtruding over the events. Allot's own views on art are not made very explicit, but as they emerge seem to be so opposed to the principles on which the life class is based—ideas of representation and classical beauty as enunciated by Foley, the principal (a forceful performance by Brian Glover)—that one can only see his teaching this class as a self-consciously ironic posture. He would seem to offer allegiance to extreme *avant-garde* ideas of anti-art and "happenings". And as the play progresses one begins to suspect that Allot's own creation is his skilful manipulation of the group of students around him.

The one incident that seems to be something of a climax in the traditional pattern of a plot confirms this view of Allot the puppeteer controlling his students towards the "happening"—an attempted rape of the model by one of the students. Allot stands back and makes no attempt to prevent this "happening". Does he view it as his day's work of art, for which he will willingly sacrifice a job for which he holds no conviction? If this is the case, then there may be some justification for this highly implausible incident; but my own feeling was that it weakened the play—I would have preferred the play to flow evenly onwards, without being shaped by such a climax, and then to stop rather than end.

The questions of life and art that float around the play are never sufficiently crystallized for one to feel anything like the dialectic of an argument, but the use of Bach's music and the front-cloth of William Blake's *Life and Death* drawing suggests that perspective. The strength of the play seemed to be that it convincingly assembled a likely group of students and teachers and enabled us to enjoy their eccentricities and the interaction between them. Warren (Stephen Bent) as the wide boy hovered between likable cheek and edgy contempt; Sammy Saunders (Frank Grimes) impressed as a youth stifling his sexual lust for the model with the apparatus of perspective and calcula-

tion. Such immaculate performances merged into the *verismo* of the place, so that I came away having thoroughly enjoyed a glimpse of a fragment of human activity, without having ideas about life or art stimulated or challenged: the latter we cannot expect from every play; we can only be grateful for the skilful execution of the former.

JIM HERRICK

LETTERS

Free thoughts on the election

From the Director of the Electoral Reform Society

It is disappointing that your comments on the general election give no consideration to encouraging free thought among the electors and securing fair representation for it.

The injustice of a party with one-fifth of the votes getting only one-forti-fifth of the seats, or the party with the most votes getting fewer seats than another, is no less unjust because some other party may be the victim next time. The real injustice is to the sixteen million voters of all parties (51.3 per cent of the total) who voted without contributing to the election of an M.P. whom they wanted, and very many of whom vote in vain in every election—Conservatives living in say Southwark, or Labour people across the river in the City of London, to say nothing of any smaller parties.

The present electoral system imprisons the voter in a situation in which he can never really express his true opinions. Its absurdity was highlighted by the advice given to anti-Common Market Conservatives: to express their opposition on that point to the party which in general they supported, and their only possible course was to vote for the Labour candidate and thus to imply support for the whole of the Labour Party's programme. To encourage the voter to give proper consideration to parties, policies and candidates and to ensure that the conclusions he arrives at are reflected in the election result, we must elect several M.P.s together from larger constituencies, by numbering candidates in the order of the voter's preference.

The great majority of the votes cast would then contribute to the election of an M.P. whom the voter wanted—not merely one of the party he preferred, but also a candidate selected in preference to other candidates of the same party—a Humanist or a Christian, a left-winger or a right-winger, a man or a woman, and so on.

ENID LAKEMAN.

I am grateful to Miss Lakeman for making this point. The need for electoral reform was in my mind as I wrote the piece in question, but I decided to concentrate on those issues which I considered were of peculiar interest to freethinkers, and which had not been highlighted in the press at the time. Ed.

Children in care

I seem to have failed to make my beliefs clear. In reply to Shirley Frost's letter (April) I would say that I believe it is for children who are left in care by their "parents" and who have no contact with them over a long period that permanent substitute homes should be found. For those children who are in care and are visited regularly by one or both parents, then obviously their rightful place will—hopefully—be back with their family in their own homes, where they know their mother and father and have their own sense of belonging and identity.

But for children who are left in "Homes", unvisited, who do not know the people to whom they were born, then I still say it is our duty to see they are found permanent substitute homes where they can grow up in their own family with a sense of belonging and not one of rejection. New legislation, such as the Children's Bill, will enable this to be done.

SYBIL SILVER.

Existence referred

It is remarkable that Mr. Byass, in his letter dealing with my article on the voluntary discontinuance of the human species (March), should mention the idea of holding some kind of planetary "Referendum" (perhaps we could most appropriately call it "Existential Referendum"), since this is an idea I have entertained for many years. Ideally, if there were one language spoken throughout the world, the United Nations (with the cooperation of national governments, of course) could organize the

distribution of a referendum paper, asking populations whether they wished to continue to exist or not. Still, this possibility is, to say the very least, somewhat remote, so let me be more practical. I believe that the most effective way to prevent future suffering is to encourage individual couples not to have children—on compassionate grounds, not because (to anticipate a possible objection from some) it is to their financial advantage.

Also, any person who finds existence insupportable can always have recourse to self-termination—I dislike the word "suicide", because it is an emotive word, judging someone before accepting (or even being prepared to accept) the moral legitimacy of his action, drastic though it appears to us. Perhaps I am semantically naïve, but I always thought that "murder" (remember "suicide" means "self-murder") was something committed with reference entirely to another living being, not ourselves. How strange that Western man, with relatively few exceptions, regards it as acceptable (in extreme situations only, of course, say the moralists) to inflict death on another, but as "neurotic," "indefensible," "cowardly" (and other choice little words to stigmatize and discredit suicide) to end one's own life—which, bear in mind, commenced without our consent anyway.

Thus—to conceive an impossible situation—if we were all born through an act of metaphysical will, descending from some celestial waiting-room to incarnate voluntarily in a womb, then perhaps suicide would be disapproved of, since it would indicate a refusal to shoulder the responsibility of our freely chosen life. Since, however, such is not the case, there can, apart from objections on grounds of social undesirability of self-termination, be no ultimately convincing objection to entering the realm of oblivion (to speak poetically of nullity). Thus, I would say to Mr. Byass that the ideas I have advocated may sound unbalanced, or, to use language a little less extreme, morally impracticable—nevertheless, in the meanwhile, we can, if we are so persuaded, do all in our individual power to eliminate existing suffering, prevent, by anticipation, future suffering, and, generally, try to be compassionately disposed towards other living beings. Let us join Thomas Hardy, who said his religion was loving-kindness.

GEOFFREY WEBSTER.

Hardy perennial

In reply to R. Mullholland's letter in the April issue demanding "less of I. S. Low's perennial on world government"—may I make the following points:

Firstly, R. Mullholland's demand is an attack on freedom of speech. Secondly, I note R. Mullholland says nothing as to whether World Government is right or wrong. Thirdly, if I write a lot about World Government, it is because it is a new idea and has, as yet, not many supporters. Also the idea has not been clearly explained to the people. All new ideas have difficulties of this sort when they are new—witness democracy, socialism and secularism—yet these ideas are the forces that revitalize the world. Is *The Freethinker* to be a paper that helps such ideas or one that stifles them with silence?

Fourthly, I have more than once refrained from writing to *The Freethinker* in order to leave space for other people. For instance I did not reply to Mr. A. Rickard's article "Another Viewpoint on Vietnam" (June 1973) or to Mr. J. Lindsay's review "Building the City of Man" (August 1973). Since April 1973 I have written three letters on World Government: the first took up only three and a half lines, the second about two column inches and in the third there was only one sentence about World Government! Hardly excessive, I think. Has R. Mullholland ever been prevented from getting a letter published by my writings?

Fifthly, it is significant that the people whose freedom of expression R. Mullholland wants curtailed are anti-marxists. Since June 1973 there have been no less than seven articles and reviews about Marxism in *The Freethinker* and lots of letters. There have been no articles on World Government (except J. Lindsay's attack on it in the review above mentioned) and only the letters above mentioned. R. Mullholland doesn't make a word of complaint about the amount of space taken up by items in support of Marx (I don't object to these items on Marxism being published, of course, I only ask for fair play). If the slender stream of pro-world government is to be dammed in the name of saving space it is only fair that the flood of pro-Marxist comment should also be at least reduced.

I. S. Low.

The open and closed mind

What does R. Mullholland (Letters, April) want? A restriction by *The Freethinker* on the discussion of Marxism and world government? Or only the Communist Party versions which appeal to him?

Marx is surely the most widely discussed social philosopher of our time and his influence extends to many spheres of life and thought. I have no connection with any political party or group and I am not concerned to write stock anti-marxist or pro-marxist letters. Readers may, however, be interested to hear about some of the more original and lively recent literature, of a scholarly nature, on various aspects of Marxism. In the last two years or so my local bookshop has sold out, within a matter of days, virtually every issue of *The Freethinker* in which an article, review or letter on Marxism has appeared. Renewed and informed debate is a precondition of the effort to create a better society. Authoritarian thinking is far from being confined to the political Right and prejudice afflicts us all to some extent.

May I, in concluding, express appreciation of Jim Herrick's and Vera Lustig's theatre and cinema reviews—I should be sorry indeed to keep such talented work "off the page". JUDEX.

Bats, rackets or lemon squeezer?

For those who do not file their Judex, may I recapitulate?

Firstly, at the end of last year, he accused me of "parrotting the holy texts" in my *Marx and the Orthodox Economists*. My factual reply, that I had devoted a chapter to "What Marx did not do" was then dismissed as "evasion".

Secondly, he quoted Joan Robinson for a derogatory comment on Marx's theory of value, but omitted her very substantial tribute to Marx. I filled the gap and was answered by a stupid quibble about "adjustment" or "readjustment".

Thirdly, Judex has discovered in my article in the February *Marxism Today* a quotation from Marx used by Sweezy in 1942. So what? In my footnote I expressly commend Baran and Sweezy for their pioneering attempt to bring Marx's Political Economy into line with monopoly capitalism.

Fourthly, Judex repeats all the old dogmatic Marxist attempts to equate price with value. This was appropriate under competitive conditions, and will be possible in developed socialist economies, but under monopoly-dominated capitalism, closely linked with banks and capitalist states, prices go up while real values in the Marxist sense are going down. In holding this view I am a heretic to many Marxists as well as to Judex. And it is "adjustment" or "readjustment" of Marxist theory which is now necessary.

Fifthly, I shall believe in Judex's humanism when he devotes as much of his energy to exposing the atrocities of capitalism under Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, the Greek generals, the Chilean dictators, the British in Northern Ireland and the American Pentagon as he does to Stalin and Marx.

Finally, this round of intellectual ping-pong must stop. To me it not even ping-pong but squash, as I am simply playing solo against a cement wall. I am sure readers must be bored.

PAT SLOAN.

Vox humana

Although I am fascinated by arguments as to whether Jesus and his associates were historical figures, biblical scholarship is far too exacting to entice me into original research. So I am an avid reader of writers like R. J. Condon and G. A. Wells, who have pre-digested the material for me. And when they disagree about, say, John the Baptist, that all adds to the interest of the subject. But when Professor Wells rounds off an article, as he does in the April *Freethinker*, with an implied slur on Mr. Condon's credentials as an expert in this field—for no other purpose, it seems, than to produce a rather neatly phrased final paragraph—genuine argument lapses into an ill-judged sneer; especially as, in comparison with R. J. Condon, G. A. Wells is, of course, quite a newcomer to biblical scholarship.

BARBARA SMOKER.

Diabolical conundrum

Presumably it would delight the Devil to get *The Exorcist* banned!

CHARLES BYASS.

I'm not so certain. Surely the Devil's hand must be seen in the fact that, presumably unintentionally on the part of the filmmakers, he comes out on top, claiming two lives in return for the girl's. Among the comments I heard as I left the cinema were, "At last someone has found a use for a crucifix" and "It's a pity more priests don't follow their example and die in this way."

—Ed.

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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).

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

Falmouth Humanist Group (affiliated to the National Secular Society) welcomes visitors to Cornwall. Particulars of meetings, etc., from the Secretary, 30 Melville Road, Falmouth, Cornwall. Telephone: Falmouth 313863.

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Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday 2 June, 5.30 p.m.: RON COVERSON, "The Humanist Lobby in Parliament".

Humanist Housing Association, Rose Bush Court, 35-41 Parkhill Road, Belsize Park, London NW3. Saturday 8 June, 10.30 a.m.—noon: Coffee Morning and Sale of Work.

Institute for Cultural Research, Mechanical Engineering Lecture Theatre A, Imperial College of Science and Technology, London SW7. Friday 24 May, 7.30 p.m.: Dr. JOHN BELOFF, "Parapsychology—The Way Ahead".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Tuesday 28 May, 7 p.m.: PETER CADOGAN, "Looking Backwards and Forwards" (admission 10p).

Waltham Forest Humanist Group, Branch Library, Forest Road/Wood Street, Walthamstow, London E17. Tuesday 28 May, 7.45 p.m.: BARBARA SMOKER, "Are We Living on Christian Capital?".

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