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## NEW OPINION POLL CONFIRMS SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA

The result of a recent opinion poll shows that a large majority of the population favour the right of incurable patients to end their own life, and to be helped to do this by their doctor. The Voluntary Euthanasia Society commissioned a survey carried out by National Opinion Polls and it confirmed the results of a previous survey that the vast majority of the population favour euthanasia in one form or another.

The question in the most recent poll related to assisted suicide, because this is often mentioned as a compromise solution for people who do not support direct voluntary euthanasia. 62 per cent of the public agreed with the statement: "If a patient is suffering a distressing and incurable illness, a doctor should be allowed to supply that patient with a means to ending his own life if the patient wishes to". Only 22 per cent disagreed with the statement, the remainder belonging to a "don't know" or "neither agree nor disagree" category.

When the results were announced the Voluntary Euthanasia Society commented that "assisted suicide", or "self-deliverance" as a preferable term, was particularly important since those who had decided to end their suffering might not have the physical ability to do this without assistance. It might seem a less comforting concept than euthanasia since it placed some of the responsibility in the hands of the patient. It would be interesting to speculate whether, for this reason, doctors might prefer it to euthanasia.

The previous NOP survey of 1976 showed 69 per cent of the population wanting euthanasia itself made legal. The apparent small reduction in comparative support for the two concepts might be due to the fact that "assisted suicide" is a more daunting idea than euthanasia performed by a doctor and to the fact that the statement in the most recent poll

did not contain any reference to safeguards.

The division of respondents into religious groupings showed that 68 per cent of Anglicans were in favour of assisted suicide and a majority of other religious denominations were also in favour. Roman Catholics showed themselves evenly divided on the issue, which does not tally with the unanimous, official, fierce opposition to all forms of euthanasia. Mary-Rose Barrington, acting Chairperson of the VES, said when the poll results were released that the Society was now confident it had public opinion behind its aims. They hoped that there would be a possibility of legislation in the future.

### Suppressed Survey

A Gallup poll commissioned by the Human Rights Society, an organisation which strongly opposes euthanasia, has not been released. The Human Rights Society said the survey was for internal purposes only, but since they refuse to comment on the results it seems reasonable to deduce that they showed a large majority in favour of voluntary euthanasia.

Freethinkers will support the VES in their efforts to change the law. It is astonishing that we do not allow the concept of easeful release for our friends, when it is regularly offered to our pets. Public opinion no longer shows outrage when suicide pacts are reported or doctors admit that life-support systems are not indefinitely sustained. Doctors themselves, who are officially opposed to euthanasia, indicate a different view by using their specialist knowledge to create the highest rate of suicide of any group.

Technically a doctor or any individual can be prosecuted for euthanasia. But there have been very few cases of this in recent years. When the journa-

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list, Derek Humphries, described how he helped his wife to death when she was dying of cancer in his book *Jean's Way*, a case against him was subsequently dropped. In an article in *World Medicine* (January 13, 1979) Dr Colin Brewer describes how his own experience suggests that any further prosecutions of this kind are unlikely.

Dr Brewer is a medical journalist and doctor well-known for his support of abortion. In October 1977, he wrote an article for *World Medicine* called "Murder most inefficient" in which he argued that euthanasia—mostly involuntary—was being practised on a large scale by many doctors, but in a rather inept fashion. He argued that there was no moral difference between withholding treatment necessary for survival and deliberately poisoning someone. He mentioned a patient suffering from terminal cancer, whose suffering could not be relieved by drugs and who wanted to die: he had in that case given a lethal dose. This was unsuccessful and the patient died from the cancer within a couple of days "before I could pluck up the courage to try again". His main point was that doctors who are prepared to take this active line ought to have sufficient training not to botch the job.

#### Police Inquiries

Some hostile readers seized on his association with abortion to attack him on the grounds that gas chambers and genocide were the next step. As a result of a complaint from the anti-abortion group Women for Life, Dr Brewer was contacted by the police making inquiries about his statement. He later learned that the Director of Public Prosecutions had decided that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute. In his view, although the event was some time ago it would not have been impossible to obtain evidence relating to his published admission. This suggests to him that the DPP have no intention of prosecuting in cases of this kind. He comments that the efforts to have him prosecuted have rebounded against the group Women for Life who started the process—since they clearly indicate how unlikely such prosecutions are.

In conclusion, he wrote: "Nevertheless, the decision not to prosecute me and Derek Humphries has brought a little nearer the day when we shall have a national voluntary euthanasia service to add to the national contraception service which we already possess and the national abortion service which I expect to see within the next ten or twenty years."

The case for reducing uncertainty by legislation now seems unanswerable: why should uncertainty, doubt and fear hang over the heads of those whose actions require sensitivity, courage and integrity? Some European countries have minimised the potential offence of euthanasia by allowing a separate defence of mercy-killing. Is there a case for such an interim measure in this country?

As was evident in the discussion at the Annual General Meeting of the National Secular Society, the case for infant euthanasia (of its nature involuntary) is more complex and controversial. A report by the Anglican Church of Canada has argued that in extreme cases infant euthanasia should be admissible. The report covered many aspects of dying and death, but public controversy centred around the section advocating mercy-killing for infants born with severe neurological defects. So heated was the argument aroused, when the report was first issued two years ago, that the working party were asked to look at the problem again.

#### Controversial Report

They have, after detailed reconsideration, still produced similar proposals. The authors have outlined some of the physical and mental disabilities present at birth and stated their position on each. In the most severe cases the brain has not developed and "these infants have no potential whatever to enter the world of mankind . . . they will never gain the slightest capacity for social interaction". In these cases efforts to initiate breathing and preserve life are not valid. They comment on the known practice of allowing infants to die of starvation, only providing sugar and water when suffering is obvious; "it must occur to us that active euthanasia (a positive act to end life) would be more compassionate."

The report admits that there are grey areas where surgical judgement and parental feelings will be relevant to any decision. The authors also emphasise that if there is any doubt about the course to be followed the decision should always be for life.

Man by his medical skill in preserving life has created new ethical problems. The Voluntary Euthanasia Society's survey, the case of Dr Colin Brewer, and the Canadian report on death all indicate that mankind is moving in the direction of accepting humane euthanasia. We must do all we can to make the quality of life for all as good as possible. But we cannot baulk the fact that euthanasia, given appropriate legal safeguards, would prevent much suffering. Although some people develop patience and strength throughout periods of great hardship, we cannot endorse the Christian concept of suffering as an ennobling experience. Life can be harsh, embittering and almost unendurable. Let us face up to this.

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As was reported last month, the mass suicide of followers of the People's Temple has been deplored throughout the world. Like the National Secular Society, the French "Union Rationaliste" has pointed out that there is no essential difference between sects and orthodox religion: "There are only differences of method and action, and not of kind, between these sects and all churches, whatever they be".

# Cannabis: the Case for Legal Change

World medical and legal opinion is moving towards the view that cannabis is not harmful and that making its use a criminal offence creates more problems than it solves. The Legalise Cannabis Campaign was set up in April 1978 with the support of doctors, lawyers, journalists and other concerned individuals as a new national organisation aiming to legalise cannabis in the UK. The Campaign believes that use of cannabis should be a matter of personal choice, and in this article gives the background and arguments for such a view.

Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in the UK today. It is estimated that five million people have committed a criminal offence trying it. Millions of pounds worth of research has failed to prove that cannabis is a major source of harm either to the consumer or to the rest of society. Yet in Britain today anyone found in possession of cannabis faces a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment.

The Legalise Cannabis Campaign believes the use of cannabis to be a matter of personal choice in which the law should play no part. As President Carter said to the US Congress (August 1977): "Penalties against the possession of a drug should not be more damaging to the individual than the use of the drug itself; and where they are, they should be changed. Nowhere is this more clear than in the possession of marijuana in private for personal use".

In 1925, Britain signed the International Opium Convention binding its signatories to impose internal controls on the use and distribution of various drugs. Cannabis was included in the Convention as a result of pressure from the Egyptian government who claimed regular use led to "chronic hashism". Evidence of this syndrome remains non-existent to this day. However, Britain introduced controls on cannabis in the 1925 Dangerous Drugs Act and has continued to control cannabis in subsequent amending legislation.

In 1958 a Government Committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Russell Brain, reported that "in our opinion, cannabis is not a drug of addiction; it is an intoxicant". Yet in 1961 Britain signed a further international agreement, the Single Convention, which listed cannabis as a drug to be controlled "having strong addictive properties" and constituting a "risk to public health". New controls on the drugs listed in the Single Convention were introduced in the 1965 Dangerous Drugs Act. A further Act in 1967 gave the police new powers to stop and search people and their vehicles for prohibited drugs.

In 1966 the Government appointed a Standing

Advisory Committee on the Misuse of Drugs, which led to the publication of the Wootton Report in 1968. Despite a generally cautious approach, the Committee recommended a reduction in penalties for cannabis offences and a clear legal distinction to be made between cannabis and other drugs such as heroin.

These distinctions were enacted in the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act which groups controlled drugs into Classes A, B and C; Class A carrying the heaviest penalties and including the opiates, LSD and cocaine. Cannabis is a Class B drug, along with amphetamines. The maximum penalty for possession of cannabis is five years imprisonment and/or unlimited fine. Cultivation, supply and import and export of cannabis all carry maximum penalties of 14 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

The Government has appointed the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to help formulate policy and legislation on drugs. They meet in private and their reports are rarely published. Any proposed changes in the legal status of cannabis will inevitably be referred to the Advisory Council for their views.

## Wootton Committee's Conclusions

All available evidence supports the Wootton Committee's conclusion that the moderate use of cannabis is not deleterious to health. The latest annual report of US Government sponsored research into marijuana and health concludes:

- (a) cannabis use does not lead to physical dependency.
- (b) there is no reliable evidence of brain damage, inherited abnormalities or increased susceptibility to disease;
- (c) aggression is reduced; there is no relationship between cannabis use and criminality;
- (d) there are no permanent effects on intellectual performance or attainment, or loss of motivation unequivocally attributed to cannabis use;
- (e) studies in cultures where long-term use is common have shown no significant or lasting psychological or physiological effects.

The US report is based on studies of normal human use. Criticisms from the anti-cannabis lobby are based almost entirely on animal experiments using huge dosages.

During the past 80 years there have been 13 major national and international reports and commissions of inquiry on cannabis. Each report has reached broadly the same conclusions: that the dangers of cannabis have been greatly exaggerated, that moderate use is not harmful, that excessive use is rare and even then does not lead to any disability.

The most recent British appraisal of cannabis has

been published by Professor J. D. P. Graham, Professor of Pharmacology in Cardiff and a member of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, in his book *Cannabis Now* (1977). He comments: "It is fortunate for those who advocate the more ready dissemination of cannabis that it is singularly harmless". After reviewing all available evidence he concludes that people should not be prosecuted for possession of less than 30 grams of cannabis and that after a due period more widespread changes might well be appropriate. "It may be found that all the argument has been devoted to the non-drug of the century."

There is very little evidence that cannabis use leads to the use of any other illegal drug. Only a tiny proportion of those who use cannabis use any other controlled drug, and where a pattern of multi-drug use occurs, no causal relationship between the use of cannabis and other controlled drugs has ever been established. The connection between cannabis and other controlled drugs is simply a result of their common illegality. "The fact should be emphasised that the overwhelming majority of users do not progress to other drugs" (Shafer Commission, USA, 1972).

Cannabis has been used for the relief of a variety of ailments for thousands of years. Recent research has shown cannabis to be effective in the treatment of asthma, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis and the side-effects of chemotherapy treatment for cancer patients. In New Mexico, USA, it is now legal to prescribe cannabis for medical purposes, and the US Food and Drug Administration is expected to recommend Federal legalisation of cannabis for medical use. Doctors are not allowed to prescribe cannabis in this country for medical purposes.

### Police Practice

It is commonly believed that police in this country are not interested in prosecuting people for personal use of cannabis. This is not true. In 1975, 7,995 people were convicted for simple possession of cannabis, 76 per cent of all drug-related offences. A further 558 people were convicted of cultivating cannabis plants. The quantities involved in most of these cases are very small—about 90 per cent of convictions for simple possession involve less than one ounce. The police even go to the lengths of scraping out the insides of pipes or pockets to obtain evidence.

It is also believed that the effects of a cannabis conviction are rarely serious. In 1975, 599 of those convicted of simple possession were sent to prison, and a further 445 received suspended prison sentences. 5,553 people were fined and 1,385 were dealt with in other ways for simple possession. Even those who do not lose their freedom face serious consequences.

An offender will have a criminal record for the

rest of his life, which is, in practice accessible to the police, government employers and foreign police forces. Although the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 prevents the offence becoming publicly known under certain circumstances, there are many exceptions to the Act's provisions. Those working in "sensitive" professions such as teaching, medicine, law and youth work, must always declare their previous convictions, no matter how trivial or irrelevant. Foreign travel becomes restricted to those with a cannabis conviction, as certain countries regard this offence as a valid reason to refuse entry.

### Consequences of Conviction

The conviction can also directly or indirectly lead to the loss of employment, and certain professions can become permanently closed to those with a criminal record including teaching, medicine, nursing, social work, government employees, post office and transport workers. Students studying for these professions can be prevented from ever qualifying, or can be expelled from their institutions. In many fields victimisation is common, taking the form of 'backroom isolation' or loss of promotion prospects.

An arrest and conviction can also lead to the loss of a tenancy, for those in rented accommodation. Besides the extreme unpleasantness of the immediate experience of being searched, arrested, held in custody by the police, and going to court, in the long term a cannabis conviction very frequently has serious deleterious effects.

The number of people affected by cannabis prohibition is much larger than conviction statistics indicate. In 1975, there were 14,099 reported personal searches for drugs outside London (no figures are available for drug searches in the Metropolitan Police District). Only 24 per cent of these searches resulted in drugs being found and a large number of unsuccessful searches are never recorded. These police powers are widely abused to harass certain sections of the community.

There are now several precedents for ending or reducing criminal penalties for possession of cannabis. Eleven states in the US have decriminalised possession of cannabis and thirty other states have some decriminalisation bills pending. Following the recommendations of the 1972 National Commission (The Shafer Committee), a Federal decriminalisation bill is currently going through Congress.

A Drug Abuse Council survey conducted in Oregon one year after decriminalisation indicated no significant increase in use and a majority in favour of the change. In California it was estimated that in the first year of decriminalisation there, \$25 million had been saved in law enforcement resources.

Holland, Italy, Columbia and Denmark have all

(Continued on back page)

# Unread Sea Scrolls

Discoveries in 1947 in some caves near the Dead Sea started a series of some of the most important archaeological discoveries of recent times. The scrolls have given background information about the New Testament period of great importance to research into the origins of Christianity. Details of the Essene sect show ideas which are thought to depict doctrines similar to those put forward by the New Testament Christ. The reaction of scholars to the evidence has been varied, but those free from ecclesiastical commitment have been unanimous in declaring the Essenes to be the fountainhead of the gospel as supposed to have been taught by Jesus.

## Unpublished Scrolls

A lecture given by Dr Larson to the Arizona State University (reprinted in *The American Rationalist*, March-April 1978) describes how many scrolls have still not been published, and suggests that much undisclosed material contains "explosive information concerning Christian origins". After 1947 an intense search for additional documents took place in the Judean desert. In 1952, what is known as Cave 4 alone yielded enough material to fill three large volumes. And much more was found in other caves. Despite the 30 years which have elapsed since this material was discovered, virtually none of it has been released.

Dr Martin Larson says he wrote to Mr Saad, Curator of the Jordanian Museum in Jerusalem where the scrolls were kept, asking permission to obtain a picture of two small fragments from *The Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*. He was told he could not even look at these fragments until after publication. "The fact is," writes Dr Larson, "of all the scroll-material, probably not more than 2 per cent has been published; the remainder is shrouded in the darkest secrecy and mystery."

"Of the eight scholars commissioned to collect, collate, edit, translate, and prepare for publication this mass of Essene scripture, all but one had heavy ecclesiastical commitments. And when this one, Professor John M. Allegro of Manchester University in England, published the Copper Treasure Scroll and declared in a series of British broadcasts that the Teacher of Righteousness may have been crucified by the Jewish authorities about 65 or 70 BC, he was ostracised by the remaining scholars and denied all further access to the scrolls.

Interest in the Essenes long pre-dates the discovery of the scrolls. Thomas de Quincey suggested in about 1825 that Essenes were Christians who went underground because of persecution. They were described by Josephus, who had been initiated into the cult, by Philo Judaeus, and by Pliny in *The Natural History*.

The history of the group is now more fully known. They were a dissident Jewish sect, with claims to new revelation. It was declared that only their divine seer—the Teacher of Righteousness—could truly interpret revelation. They developed into a secret cult with headquarters near the Dead Sea; they were all male celibates who practised a rigid form of communism and developed a fanatical hatred of material wealth; they lived in expectation of a Great Judgement in the near future.

A crucial event in their development seems to have taken place about the year 70 BC. One of their Teachers denounced the Jewish High Priest and confrontation took place between the Teacher and the Jewish authorities. The Teacher was assaulted and probably slain—perhaps even crucified. It is a pattern with sufficient similarities to the supposed life of Jesus as to suggest it might have influenced the account of events in the Gospels. Dr Larson even suggests that John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth could have been Essenes who broke out of the rigid, secret discipline of the sect and began preaching it to the people.

## Why Secrecy?

With such important speculations demanding more research into the scrolls, it is vitally important that objective and open information become available. Why is it therefore taking so long for additional material to be made public?

Dr Larson writes: "There are those who wonder whether they are being withheld in the hope of obtaining a huge price for them—but this is vehemently denied. Others suspect that they are hidden because of their contents. This too is vociferously denied, with the explanation that scholars have not had time to complete their work. But why, then, is an independent scholar barred from even looking at a small piece of leather, inscribed with Aramaic characters? Are we to wait a hundred or a thousand years? Will the most important scrolls be lost or destroyed? What power can force their release? Why are they guarded as if they contained political secrets that might destroy a nation?"

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# An Author Replies

AUDREY WILLIAMSON

Audrey Williamson here replies to a review of her recent book "The Mystery of the Princes" and a book by Elizabeth Jenkins, "The Princes in the Tower", in the January issue of "The Freethinker".

Setting aside the fact that Sarah Lawson has not reviewed as many books as myself in which all the reference notes are at the end of the book (far more difficult to consult than at the end of the relevant chapter) and that Elizabeth Jenkins' more wealthy publisher could afford the most costly printing method of footnotes at the bottom of the page, I must challenge her review of our respective books on grounds of her lack of knowledge of the subject.

Because she apparently comes new to it and has not seriously compared references, Ms Lawson has not noticed Ms Jenkins' glaring errors even in reference. In fact Ms Jenkins' footnote references are few (I give up to 30 per chapter, *with page numbers*, mainly to satisfy historians) and incomplete; and this means she has not in fact read many of her supposed sources at all, but quotes isolated sentences from hearsay or other works. For instance the contemporary *Memoirs* of Philip de Commines are said by her to give the first reference to Edward IV's vital pre-contract to Eleanor Butler, which was considered by Parliament to have made his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville bigamous and the Princes illegitimate. In fact Commines never mentions Eleanor Butler at all, and gives only a muddled report of the pre-contract. Croyland is the only chronicle which does, and it was written some years before Commines. She claims it is now accepted that the Second Continuator [*sic*] of the Croyland Chronicle was Richard III's Chancellor, John Russell, Bishop of Lincoln; this is claimed *only* by Dr Charles Ross, who has never produced his evidence, and I challenge the identification constantly. (The translation Ms Jenkins gives of Croyland in her Bibliography is Riley's, in which the *Third* Continuator is the relevant one. Moreover her Bibliography is very short, as compared with mine which gives an immense amount of material she has never consulted, including both published and unpublished articles, all referred to in my text. I also have a long Index.)

Ms Jenkins dismisses the theory that the Duke of Buckingham (who had a slightly stronger claim to the throne than Henry Tudor) murdered the Princes on the grounds that it is only a modern theory and there was no contemporary suspicion: in fact this is mentioned by Commines (thus proving again she has not read him) as well as the Dutch *Divisie Chronicle* written c.1500, and I quote both passages. She also claims (from More) that John Dighton was

in the Tower with Tyrell before Tyrell's execution, and both men there confessed to murdering the Princes (a confession never proved). As a study of my full record of the trial of Tyrell and others (on a different charge) shows, there was no John Dighton arraigned or in the Tower at this time. She also claims the 1933 examination of the bones in Westminster Abbey proves conclusively these were of the Princes, and the exact age they had reached in 1483. Subsequent anatomical research which I discuss in full shows that in fact the age of children cannot possibly be assessed from their skeletons or bone development within a matter of at least two years and possibly three, in either direction.

In general, Elizabeth Jenkins' evidence is now 40 years out of date and Ms Lawson should have noticed she does not touch on a vast amount of more recent evidence (not to count my own personal discoveries, including James Tyrell's Will) unearthed by historians and other researchers and fully documented by me.

With its many copyings from More's dramatised "history", without quotation marks and including long passages of dialogue, all presented as fact, Ms Jenkins has produced something closely akin to a novel, in which the descriptions of clothes, jewels and banquets are as skilful as we have come to expect from her work, but concerning a period of history into which she has not previously delved. As her book is recommended to readers they should read it with these reservations. My own, incidentally, deals more extensively with the political issues and propaganda involved, and it gives the preliminary dynastic struggles but far more concisely.

I will add that although Ms Lawson is rather insulting on my prose style, my use of italics is not in connection with this style but deliberately to highlight certain quoted passages of vital importance to this mystery, and normally overlooked. I add "italics mine" in these cases. "A tough customer" seems to me a valid brief description of a character, but it is not indicative of my style generally.

Let us leave it that I myself, a writer for fifty years, find it hard to appreciate the standards of a generation that has misused the word "disinterest" out of existence, and now it seems thinks "quite" and "thoroughly" interchangeable with "totally" (irrespective of rhythm, let alone exact meaning) and raises a quibble as to whether a "pretender" in the historic and dictionary sense of "claimant" to a throne can be queried to have been the person he claimed to be, which in this case was King Richard IV of England.

*Sarah Lawson comments:*

Anyone who can defend Richard III so vigorously

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# JOTTINGS

WILLIAM McILROY

Last month saw the tenth anniversary of the outbreak of religious warfare in Northern Ireland. When the balloon went up in 1969 few people in Britain believed that fatal casualties would go well into four figures and that the violence would be virtually unabated a decade later. This confrontation of Protestants and Catholics, like all conflicts in which religion is a major factor, has been characterised by appalling savagery. And of course Christian apologists have always been at the ready with a plentiful supply of whitewash to cover up the responsibility of their creed for the hatred and sectarianism that has plagued the Irish nation, north and south of the Border.

Events of the last ten years have shaken Northern Ireland's institutions and toppled many of her politicians. The Unionists, once a powerful and monolithic force, are now fragmented and disillusioned. Their two-penny-ha'-penny Stormont parliament has been suspended and their strong-arm thugs, the B Specials, disbanded. They are no longer able to exercise blatant discrimination in the allocation of houses and jobs. Belfast now has its first non-Unionist Lord Mayor, an innovation which in British terms could be likened to crowning Willie Hamilton, MP, King William V.

Despite these setbacks, the Unionists have had much success in promoting the fallacy that Britain needs Northern Ireland. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the words of a correspondent in the *Guardian* newspaper: "We need Northern Ireland like a seaside resort needs an oil slick".

Northern Ireland is both a political embarrassment and an intolerable financial burden to Britain. The Province has never been solvent, even when its good Christian citizens were not indulging in orgies of violence and murder. The estimated subsidy for the period 1975-79 is a cool £4,723 million. It is difficult to obtain figures for military costs in Northern Ireland, but the total for the period 1969-75 was £129 million. Compensation for damage to property and personal injuries for the same period was £107 million.

This is the price we are paying in financial terms alone to maintain the myth that Northern Ireland is an "integral part" of Britain.

It is often argued that Britain is responsible for Northern Ireland. This is true to the extent generations of British politicians, brasshats, landowners and industrialists encouraged a "master race" mentality among the Irish Protestants, particularly in

the North where there is a large Scottish element. This reactionary and tyrannical minority of the Irish population was able to force Britain to create the artificial mini-State consisting of the six north-eastern counties.

The problems created by jingoists and imperialists of the past have been exploited by the clergy, anxious as always to impose their particular variety of religious superstition. Children were relentlessly indoctrinated from their earliest years and the churches still fiercely oppose the desegregation of schools.

No one needs Northern Ireland. And certainly Northern Ireland does not need Christianity which has poisoned the political life of the country.

\* \* \*

Were they not such rabid Right-wingers, organisers of the Ross McWhirter Memorial Essay competition would have had red faces over the resulting debacle. The competition was sponsored by such ultra-Conservatives as Dr Rhodes Boyson, MP, Norris McWhirter and George Ward, the Grunwig boss. After considering the entries the judges awarded first prize to a South Londoner named Simon Emden for his piece on nationalisation.

Nationalisation is regarded as the work of the devil in such circles, so there must have been considerable consternation and recrimination when Mr Emden blew the gaff and revealed that he is a Left-wing activist who believes in more nationalisation, not less. The winner of the Ross McWhirter Memorial Essay competition commented: "I don't think they could have read my essay very carefully".

Mr Emden then proceeded to rub the judges' noses in it by donating half of his £500 prize money to Wimbledon Labour Party. He described his prize-winning essay as "a lot of banalities strung together with abstract phrases about democracy".

Simon Emden would be a wow as Margaret Thatcher's speech-writer.

(An Author Replies)

is bound to rise to her own defense with a good deal of gusto, but Audrey Williamson is defending herself against what was, after all, a favourable review.

Ms Williamson has a point in that I might have discussed the relative merits of her and Elizabeth Jenkins' documentation, but in general a condensation of the very complex arguments surrounding the mystery of the princes in the Tower would have made for an unreadable review. I wanted to encourage readers to read *The Mystery of the Princes*, not make it unnecessary for them to do so.

I must point out that I am not a generation, have never misused the word "disinterest", and do not think "quite" and "thoroughly" are interchangeable with "totally". On the contrary, I remarked that Ms Williamson uses the latter word when one of the others would be better.

## SATANIC SCISSORS

The scissors of the censor have no intelligence behind them. They snip at the first sight of anything alarming and give no thought to the matter. The 1936 film "Follow the Fleet" is a classic Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movie. When it was reshown on television, the skilful Irving Berlin song "Get Thee Behind Me Satan" had the word Satan snipped out each time it came along. Four jumps in the sound track meant four disappearing devils.

Benny Green, who pointed out this grave omission in his column "Saturday Spot" in the *Daily Mirror*, asked "What kind of person must it be who takes it upon himself to wreck the subtle rhythm and rhyme-scheme of a song, making it impossible to follow?"

He continued: "But even more amazing is the religious motive which must lie behind such an act. Who decided that the phrase 'Get Thee Behind Me Satan' was too inflammable a remark for grown people to hear?"

"Did the criminal, having defaced 'Follow the Fleet' then start snipping the offending phrase out of the Holy Bible?"

Equally amazing, but more predictable, was Mrs Whitehouse's condemnation of a series of adult films to be shown on BBC television on Friday nights. The first of these was "Belle de Jour" by Luis Buñuel, one of the most highly regarded film makers in the world. He is respected as a film maker of great imagination and intellect; but maybe these are not adult qualities which Mrs Whitehouse recognises.

## CHURCH AND PEACE

The World Council of Churches is bitterly divided about its policy of giving cash grants to guerilla movements in Africa. This is the kind of political activity which Dr Norman so roundly condemned in his Reith Lectures. The Programme to Combat Racism is the main target of attack. Dr Potter, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, has pointed out that the fiercest opposition comes from Switzerland, Holland, Germany, Britain—"those countries most involved in creating the racist system in southern Africa".

Money is sent for specifically humanitarian work, such as medical aid; but opponents argue that money is thereby released for fighting. The ethical problems of killing for a just cause are complex. But Christianity has no record of pacifism and has conducted bloody wars for the glory of the Lord.

Paul Johnson, former editor of the *New Statesman* and now following in the footsteps of Malcolm Muggeridge as an eccentric and ego-centric Christian publicity-monger, stated categorically in the *Evening*

# NEWS

*Standard* that it was wrong for Christians to support killers. A member of the National Secular Society, C. Findlay, commented in a letter published in the *Evening Standard*: "Paul Johnson says that Christianity is incompatible with murder."

"This is an absurd over-simplification. Does he know when a killing is a murder or a 'righteous act of war'? The British churches have always given full support to the killers of the British army in their fights against 'oppressors' and are only too happy to bless the killers on their way."

## CATHOLIC REPRESSION

The abortion law passed in Italy last year has been attacked as "that sorrowful law" by the Pope. The Pope has also deplored the fact that doctors who are conscientious objectors are being persecuted and threatened with violence. But commentators are puzzled by the total lack of evidence for this. The abortion law is operating very unevenly, since doctors are exercising their right of conscience and refusing to co-operate with any aspect of abortion in some areas.

Not surprisingly the Catholic Church is doing its best to obstruct the reform. The Communist paper *L'Unita* has pointed out that the aim of the law is "not to exalt abortions but to regulate them". Another purpose of the law was to curtail the thriving back street trade in illegal abortions. A woman lay theologian, Adrinana Zarri, has pointed out that although the Church talks a lot about motherhood "it is the woman who is responsible for her own maternity". She also commented that until Britain passed the first anti-abortion law in 1803, and other countries followed suit, the Italian hierarchy had never opposed abortion as an evil act.

Despite such arguments the Church is wielding its power and influence to try to destroy the effective operation of the abortion act. Italian bishops have threatened to excommunicate anyone involved in an abortion, and this is expected to encourage more doctors to be conscientious objectors and to refuse to work in state hospitals or clinics where abortions are performed. Pressure from nuns who staff many of the hospitals is also making doctors reluctant to operate the law. Despite this in many areas the law is effective and about 40,000 women obtained legal abortions during the first five months after the law was passed.

Doctors may have other than religious objections



# AND NOTES

for availing themselves of conscientious objection rights. At State hospitals, where medical treatment is generally free, 72 per cent of doctors have put their names on the list. A case in Bari indicates that all may not be pure conscience. Two gynaecologists, who put their names down as unwilling to perform abortions, have been gaoled for performing an abortion on a young woman while she was under an anaesthetic and then telling her to pay them around £1,000, threatening to tell her parents all if the money was not forthcoming.

Women may suffer because of extreme difficulty in obtaining an abortion in troubling circumstances. Doctors may be anxious to line their purses as well as save their souls.

## ANGLICAN SUPPRESSION

A report on the Church's attitude towards homosexuality is being very slow in being published. The General Synod's Board for Social Responsibility has been studying the subject for four years and their report has been rumoured to have been ready for some months. There is obviously grave doubt about publishing the report at all. Is it too enlightened for the conservative Anglicans in the shires, or too unsympathetic for the modern liberal clergy, or too muddled for anyone to understand?

There have been suggestions that the report proposes different standards for the clergy and the laity. What's sauce for the goose may not be sauce for the gander?

Dr Graham Leonard, Bishop of Truro and chairman of the Board has said in comment on the delay in publishing the report that the Board had been "quite remarkably responsible" and pastoral in the way in which it has handled the matter. Responsibility evidently includes keeping quiet as long as possible about your conclusions.

## OBITUARY

Major Christopher Draper, a former member of the National Secular Society and contributor to *The Freethinker*, has died aged 86. He was best known to the public as "the mad major", who twice flew under Thames bridges. A secular funeral was conducted by Jim Herrick at Golders Green Crematorium.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

## ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday, 24 March 1979

The City Volunteer  
(by the Tower, map sent with ticket)

6.30 for 7.00 p.m.

RENEE SHORT will be Guest of Honour. Renée Short has been very active in Parliament in achieving and maintaining the right of women to obtain an abortion. She has also championed all aspects of women's rights, including the importance of day care nurseries. In Parliament she has been the convenor of the Parliamentary Humanist Group.

DIANE MUNDAY will propose a toast to Renée Short. Diane Munday, who is well-known to many of our members, has also been immensely energetic as a campaigner for the right of women to choose an abortion. She has appeared on television and radio to debate this subject. Her vigorous opposition to the book *Babies for Burning* played a crucial part in discrediting it in this country.

LORD RAGLAN will propose a toast to the Society. He is one of the Society's distinguished members panel and has spoken on matters of secularist concern in the House of Lords.

BARRY DUKE will reply for the Society. He is a journalist from South Africa, who is a member of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society.

BARBARA SMOKER, President of the NSS, will introduce the evening.

Price: £6.00 per person.

(Menu: Minestrone Milanese; Roast Beef, Horseradish, Roast Potatoes, Sprouts; Sorbet; Coffee. Alternative for vegetarians: Quiche Spinach)

Cheques with reservations to:  
The National Secular Society

702 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
(founded 1866)

Membership details from  
NSS, 702 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL

# BOOKS

C. K. OGDEN: A COLLECTIVE MEMOIR edited by P. Sargant Florence and J. R. L. Anderson. Elek/ Pemberton, £8, paperback £4.

If posthumous fame were any guide to a person's true greatness and the influence of his or her life, the name of C. K. (never Charles Kay) Ogden would be better known than, say, Teilhard de Chardin, Chesterton, Tolkien, T. S. Eliot, Hemingway, Stanley Baldwin, or Montgomery (to cite a random few of his more celebrated male contemporaries), instead of being all but forgotten by the elderly and unknown to the young.

Considering all the variety of his life and importance of much of his work, not to mention his quirks of character (his often wearing masks, for instance), it is amazing that Ogden has so far—more than twenty years after his death—attracted no biographer. Apart from the radio "Portrait" of him put out by the BBC in 1962, there has been nothing. All the more welcome, then, to this symposium; all the more praise to its editors and publishers for enabling some of his surviving friends (including Dora Russell and Lord Zuckerman) to record their memories of him and pay tribute to his life and achievements.

Readers who know nothing about Ogden, or nothing except that he was the inventor of Basic English, will find the book an eye-opener; and even his most knowledgeable admirers must discover in it new facets of this many-sided man. Besides, any light thrown on Ogden helps to illuminate half of the present century and many of its most important thinkers.

One of the reasons for his posthumous neglect is doubtless his tendency to hide behind the names of the many scientists, psychologists, philosophers, mathematicians, historians, and others, whose writings he encouraged and published. For instance, Wittgenstein, whose *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Ogden co-translated: without Ogden, Cambridge would never have given Wittgenstein the recognition and the Chair of Philosophy that enabled him to influence the whole of modern philosophical thinking.

The chief reason, however, for Ogden's underrating is that he was a polymath in an age of specialisation. J. R. L. Anderson puts it well:

"What was Ogden—philosopher, psychologist, linguist, editor, art critic, antiquarian bookseller, antique dealer, expert on musical boxes? Look at a list of his publications, and one's instinct is to say (in bewilderment, or exasperation, depending on one's cast of mind), "I don't believe it". It seems inconceivable that a single lifetime can have produced not merely so much, but so much of real importance in so many fields. For Ogden was

# FREETHINKER

no dilettante—his multifarious knowledge had depth as well as breadth, and he had only to touch a subject to illuminate it. This is naturally unpopular. We like our chess players to play chess, not to be goalkeepers of international standard as well." In addition to all his intellectual pursuits, Ogden was an espouser of many social causes in advance of his time, such as women's rights, family planning, workers' control, world peace, and secular humanism. He was founder of the Cambridge Heretics and the *Cambridge Magazine*. And he was a serious athlete until a rheumatic illness forced him to give up the running track. He also had a great sense of fun, which comes through in his writing. Even his female *nom de plume* was a pun: Adelyne More.

Above all, however, he invented and developed Basic English—a great invention, as undeservedly neglected today as Ogden himself.

As Ogden explained to the War Cabinet in 1943, "Basic English is a selection of 850 English words, used in simple structural patterns, which is both an international auxiliary language and a self-contained first stage for the teaching of any form of wider or Standard English."

It was as a by-product of writing the philosophical work *The Meaning of Meaning* (jointly with I. A. Richards, who is one of the contributors to this "collective memoir") that Ogden hit on the astonishing discovery that there are in English these keywords, to which the whole language can be reduced.

That a list of 850 words (plus short supplementary word-lists for the various sciences) could prove so versatile is almost incredible. Only 18 of the 850 words are verbs—yet these, through combination with non-verbs (e.g. "put together" for *assemble*, *compile*, *combine*, *juxtapose*, etc.) replace some four thousand Standard English verbs.

In the book under review, two of the contributors write entirely in Basic English—but I do not think anyone could guess the fact from the writing style, except perhaps for its extra-lucid readability.

In addition to its two main uses, mentioned by Ogden above, Basic English is an invaluable educational tool, since students attempting to translate any passage (whether factual or literary) into Basic will immediately reveal any lack of comprehension.

Why, then, is it now in the doldrums? Until 1943, it was promulgated by the Orthological Institute, which was funded by several foundations (mostly American) and to which Bernard Shaw, among others, was planning to leave his money. President Roosevelt wrote that "Basic English has tremendous merit in it," and Winston Churchill, in his 1943 Harvard speech, said ". . . here you have a very

# REVIEWS

carefully wrought plan for an international language capable of very wide transactions of practical business and of interchange of ideas . . ."

Then Churchill persuaded the British Government to take over the promotion of Basic—and it was the kiss of death. The American foundations withdrew their aid, support in other countries fell away, and Shaw changed his will. The agencies charged with the job proved unbelievably incompetent, and all activity dwindled, coming to a complete halt with Ogden's death in 1957.

It may, however, be no more than a temporary halt. Today we need Basic English even more than in Ogden's lifetime, for not only is the demand for English as an international language stronger than ever, but computers also need a limited vocabulary and simplified grammar and syntax.

Let us hope that this book may inspire long-overdue biographies and critical studies of C. K. Ogden in the near future, to revive interest in the man and his work and particularly in Basic English.

BARBARA SMOKER

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**IN THE OFFICE OF CONSTABLE** by Sir Robert Mark. Collins, £6.95.

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Sir Robert Mark's autobiography is like the man himself—blunt, courageous and more than a trifle self-righteous. It is spiced with sardonic humour, mostly at others' expense. It is not only an important book because of its author and the topics he deals with; it is also (unlike the memoirs of many public figures) a jolly good read.

Careerwise, Mark's is a success story which will hearten those who believe that positive personal qualities and determination still count, even in a bureaucracy such as the police. Early days in his native Manchester and ten years as Chief Constable of Leicester are briskly disposed of in less than 80 pages, and he is made an Assistant Commissioner in the Metropolitan Police by Roy Jenkins—only the second provincial policeman to achieve such high rank and an appointment as welcome (he thinks) to his new colleagues as "the representative of a leper colony attending the annual garden party of a colonial governor".

Much of the rest of the book is taken up with an account of how Mark—as Assistant, Deputy and finally Commissioner—set the Met to rights. It could be subtitled "How Bob the Giant-Killer Slew the Dragon Corruption and Mucked Out the Yard". The story is all too familiar to students of police affairs; Sir Robert's version of it is interesting not only for what he reveals but for what he doesn't. And the

nagging questions remain: however had matters been allowed to get so insufferably bad before he appeared on the scene? And are they sliding again now that he has gone? Is there something in the very nature of policing (at any rate in London) which makes widespread corruption amongst those in more or less petty authority virtually inevitable?

Sir Robert departed because he refused to administer the new complaints system which, rightly or wrongly, he sees as undermining police discipline and constitutional independence. While denying that he wishes the police to be judge and jury in their own cause, or not to be accountable for their internal housekeeping, he nonetheless appears to resent the widely held opinion that the introduction of a non-police element into the investigation procedure was overdue. And it is perhaps characteristic that he should take this view even after his own dismaying experiences at Scotland Yard.

For the least attractive feature of Sir Robert Mark is his proneness to castigate the motes in others' eyes without pausing to wonder if there may not occasionally be a beam in his own. While suspect civil libertarians, crooked policemen, bent lawyers and pitiful politicians through his pages, he staunchly maintains that all would be well with democracy if only Parliament and public swallowed his strangely naive nostrums for reforming the machinery of justice.

While not all his remedies are hopelessly wrong, and one or two of them seem about right, the Mark formula for Britain's future—"Take my advice" and "Trust the men in blue"—is a bit hard to stomach, especially after his horrendous revelations.

I admire what Sir Robert did at the Yard; I wish him well (especially as I am a fellow-Mancunian); but I do hope he will reflect somewhat less facetiously upon some of the matters he has pontificated about here before writing his next book.

ANTONY GREY

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**HUMANIST DIPPER** published by British Humanist Association, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Price 60p

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The "Dipper" is a folder containing leaflets giving information about Humanism for use in schools by children of all abilities aged between 12 and 16. It is similar to the famous Jackdaw folders.

It provides an admirable method of introducing the principles of Humanism to schoolchildren and if used properly can enable pupils to explore the subject at their own speed and allows the teacher to give as much depth to the subject as time and the pupils' interest allow.

The present version is a trial issue and reactions are solicited from teachers. If used as recommended in the section on Humanism in *World Religions: A handbook for teachers* edited by W. Owen Cole, an upsurge of interest in Humanism among young

people may well follow.

The price has perhaps had to be kept down to a level which has precluded a more stylish presentation, but in its final version I would hope attractive illustrations will be added.

Attempts have been made to relate Humanism to everyday issues and this should interest pupils. Some issues: racialism, unemployment, crime and punishment and animal welfare have however been given little or no mention. This seems a pity as these are likely to be issues of particular interest to young people nowadays.

It was particularly pleasing to see homosexuality included. Gay people will object however to pupils being given one mark for thinking gays mentally ill; it is to be hoped this old-fashioned suggestion will be removed from the final version.

ROY SAICH

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**YOUTH, BRAINWASHING AND THE EXTREMIST CULTS** by Ronald Enroth. Paternoster Press £2.40

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Ronald Enroth's book, *Youth, Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults*, arrives on the market at a time when cults are big news. This could hardly be a more appropriate point at which to ask, once again, such questions as why do youngsters join the cults with such fervour and what is the hold over them once they become fully integrated members?

*Youth, Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults* is not only easy to read and understand but happens to be published in the relatively new large-format size paperback which, together with an eye-catching cover, makes it a highly attractive purchase. A deep and thought-provoking insight into the cult phenomenon is effectively achieved by the author's use of endless taped interviews with ex-cult members and their families, and because of this, the reader gets the real "feel" of this often highly emotive social phenomenon. This is quite an achievement for a writer attempting an objective understanding of something as esoteric as an extremist "religious" cult.

The chapters forming Part 1 of the book are actual case histories from the Unification Church, the Children of God, the Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna and the little-known "Love Family." The chapter on the Krishna Movement is expressive but perhaps a little unkind to Hare Krishna. Here we read that sex is strictly for the purposes of procreation in the Krishna Temple, with men and women eating separately; lots of study, hard, devotional work and a maximum of six hours sleep. Stripping away the rhetoric of all this, one is left with a set of religious rules which often bear a remarkable similarity to many of the world's established religions.

Is this book simply engaged in 'minority-bashing' or is it an attempt to really understand what is

going on in the minds of these young people both before, during and after the cult experience? The reader will, no doubt, reach his or her conclusions on this. This is one of the few available books which says quite a lot about the Divine Light Mission and the Alamo Christian Foundation, and the book is worth reading for these two chapters alone. Also, readers should not be put off by the fact that the contents of this book are describing situations in America only. The international nature of today's cults makes it equally applicable to Britain.

Part 2 of the book is a commentary on cultic seduction, commitment and, of course, the now familiar "anticult" parent groups which have sprung up. Ronald Enroth refers to these as "grass-roots" parents' organisations, despite the fact that the motives of some of these American groups suggest an organisational structure often as sophisticated as some of the cults themselves! One also has to question the motives and qualifications of certain so-called "deprogrammers". It follows from this and from reading the book that one might even ask the largest and most leading question of all—as one San Francisco High Court Judge put it, in dealing with the "Faithful Five" Moonie case, "what we're talking about here is whether one set of adults can tell another set of adults what they're allowed to think." It is also apparent from the text that youngsters who become fanatical cult addicts turn into equally fanatical anticultists when they leave, and one is prompted to ask if these people are not just plain fanatics anyway.

Are not the parents over-possessive? Is the term 'Brainwashing' really applicable, at least from the physiological and clinical definitions which have emerged from medical research into the subject? Humanists at least are going to ask these and many other questions after reading this provocative book. However, unlike many books today on cults and religious sects, the style is light and easy on the reader. In spite of my, perhaps biased, criticism, this is a good book on the subject and good value at the relatively low purchase price.

ALISTAIR SEGERDAL

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**THE ROCKING OF THE CRADLE: AND THE RULING OF THE WORLD** by Dorothy Dinnerstein. Souvenir Press. £5.00.

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Feminism and the exposure of sexual pigeonholing are hackneyed topics in this last year of the 1970s; unlike the fervent 60s, the time of global guilt-consciousness and trendy social awareness, the 70s have seen a retreat to cynicism, and indulgence in the old spectres of Nationalism, oddball religious cults and sexism, all the cosy mythologies which relieve us of the responsibility of daily life and give free rein to the blind logic and primal demands of the ego. I was a teenager in the 60s, an idealist in blue jeans, and I thought everything was going to

be okay, that the enlightenment of the pop renaissance was going to solve all mankind's problems. But knowledge is a two-edged sword, it can frighten the life out of us; now we realise how impotent and useless our social conscience really is, it seems as if we're determined to have a damn good time before the imminent apocalypse.

It's a pity then that *The Rocking of the Cradle* didn't appear a long time before. It is a refreshing, lively, easy to read book, a change from the slow grinding didacticism of the majority of feminist literature, which even now still issues forth with little acknowledgement to the changed situation of the 70s. It isn't as if we need to be educated anymore; anyone who doesn't know the central propositions of women's lib must have been sealed away for the past twenty years; it's just that we're bored with it all. It was a nice refreshing idea, a step towards real democracy; it seems a sad indication of the crusade's failure to see that women's libbers are still the butt of popular humour; whatever victories they have won—and the fight has not been entirely unsuccessful—they have not achieved the all important status of respect. Personally I believe they took themselves a little too seriously; it was a serious campaign—yes, but people who churn out books along the lines of *The Dialectic of Feminism in Working Class Society* or *The Politics of Sexism in a Socio-Economic Environment* deserve to fail.

Ms Dinnerstein's book is easy to read; even the introduction (usually a tedious superfluity) is enlightening, explaining as it does the author's faults—she says she was so lazy that the book took four years to write! Here is a book that doesn't pretend to have written itself, but which is always a human project, a narrative that has the attractiveness of a witty lecture.

The central theme of the book is that the fight for "women's lib" not only ought to be continued, but has to be if the human race is to survive the millenium with any degree of self-respect. The title of the work is derived from the premise that male domination of society is a direct result of female-dominated child-rearing: how ironic that the only sphere of real female power is probably responsible for their inferior status. In those first few months, during the intimate mother-child relationship, all the crazy webs of the human psyche are constructed, the haunting Oedipus and Electra complexes which stay impressed on the character for ever and influence all dealings with other humans, on such a basic level that they are never acknowledged.

A few of Ms Dinnerstein's observations are a little too obvious to all but a fool; but in any book the author will always be stating the obvious to some of the readers. I liked the book and was fascinated by some of the insights into the human psyche. I'm not a 'chauvinist pig' (I don't think so anyway) and I believe along with Ms Dinnerstein

that women's lib is men's lib too and the liberation of the human race from its biological fatalism. The only danger is that too great a degree of self-consciousness can be a harmful thing and a force that inhibits rather than liberates.

NICHOLAS WHITTAKER

## THEATRE

BETRAYAL by Harold Pinter. Lyttleton, National Theatre

MARY BARNES by David Edgar. Royal Court

The plays of Harold Pinter are anything but conventional. PhD candidates, no less, are tireless in pursuit of their meaning. For twenty years theatre-goers world wide have been struggling with his refusal to provide them with structural or thematic signposts. Bewilderment has become the accepted response to a Pinter play. Now that everyone is more or less comfortable with this uneasy state of affairs, he turns the tables once more with a straightforward play about love and betrayal. Straightforward, that is, except that the story unfolds in reverse chronological order.

This is not, one suspects, a simple device to keep the audience from rumberling what Mr Pinter is on about. As we watch him work backwards step-by-step from the end of an affair to its inception, the reverse narrative makes all the difference between the conventional lovers' triangle and, what he gives us instead, a multi-dimensional view of human relationships.

Lacking the interest in what happens next, we cease to concern ourselves with the affair itself. It merely envelops the central relationship between the husband and his wife's lover. They have been friends from boyhood, and so the affair serves to impair that friendship and to reveal to the wife just how meaningless her marriage has been and how empty is her present illicit relationship. In the last scene the lover tells her she will send him into a state of catatonia if she does not reciprocate his affection. Catatonia describes perfectly the vacuous shell in which the three principals find themselves throughout the course of the play: the wife discovers that she is loved by neither man and is, in fact, non-existent to them; the men discover the capacity in themselves to deceive each other, not through their actions, but through their inability to maintain the trust implicit in their friendship since schooldays. To Robert the important thing is not that his marriage has ended, but that he no longer shares with Jerry the brotherhood of the common room, extended to the board room and the squash court. Jerry is reduced to unspeakable grief because Robert did not confide to him his early awareness of the affair.

This relationship recalls the friendship between Spooner and Hurst in *No Man's Land*, and there is,

in both plays, the increasing concern with the passing of traditional values based on established beliefs and institutions. The threat of desocialisation is powerfully present in Pinter's recent work. What he does not seem to advance is a morality beyond tradition to counteract the concomitant despair.

*Mary Barnes* is also concerned with desocialisation and, like Pinter's play, it reaches beyond the individual to embrace the community as a whole. Freud said that the mentally abnormal sometimes have perceptions beyond the rest of us. The schizophrenic woman whose descent into madness is the subject of David Edgar's play perceives the inadequacies of contemporary life with blinding clarity. Her insights are inappropriate only because her method of communication is too refined.

Based on the real life account of Mary Barnes's rehabilitation at a Laingian community centre in the East End, the play has a great deal to say about authority and the futility of enforced solutions to sociopolitical behaviour. Drugs represent the means through which those in power seek to impose their will on the weak. As with Mary, so with us all, it is only through thinking for ourselves and taking responsibility for our own actions that we are able to live with one another. The psychotherapist who undertakes to guide Mary through her difficult journey insists that he cannot dictate the correct course for her. Equally he refuses to impose a set of rules by which the community as a whole must function. People, he maintains, have a policeman inside their heads who sets out to control what is ultimately beyond intervention. All we can do is maintain possession of ourselves.

Among the authority figures against which Mary rebels is the Catholic Church. Not surprisingly she is the product of a convent education, and her appeal to religion results only in further mental anguish. Her priest's advice concerning masturbation is to avoid sexual fantasies. An important part of her cure involves ridding herself of Christian guilt. She emerges, therefore, as the antithesis of a religious martyr. At one climactic point she succeeds in divesting herself of a universal sense of sin. To the comment that she suffers greatly, she firmly denies any personal suffering: they, her oppressors, are the ones who truly suffer.

This Godless epiphany is the play's turning point. Mary progresses from a state of self-awareness to a perception of herself in relation to others. The creative, non-assertive course is stressed through Mary's artistic ability, seen as more positive than the alternative impulse to dominate.

The play, then, is about individual and social autonomy, and through Mary's victory, it is hopeful in outlook. That in itself makes it an important play, but David Edgar and the company are also successful in uniting the various strands and relating

the particular to the general and in making Mary Barnes's experience so much our own.

JAMES MACDONALD

## LETTERS

### HUMANISM AND NUCLEAR POWER

Of course it's very encouraging to us atheists when someone well-known in some intellectual field makes forthright pronouncements in support of the necessity of atheism—which is presumably why Sir Hermann Bondi's recent speech was given such coverage in the December "Freethinker". However, there seems a certain paradox in both his position and in the "Freethinker's".

You point out that he's formerly worked as a senior scientist at the Ministry of "Defence", but don't stop to consider what is being defended, and whether it's worth defending. It is after all the totally irrational ideals of patriotism and nationalism that cause this country to employ legal murderers and their backroom supporters in the Ministry of War (to give it its real name, which it used prior to switching to its current euphemism not that long ago). And not only that, but in the case of this country it's an officially theistic nation with the head of the armed forces also the head of the official church. What on earth can the man be doing being a part of such a set-up if he takes his atheism and rationalism as seriously as he says he does?

And the "Freethinker" is guilty of double thinking too. What on earth were you doing giving his hypocritical utterances such uncritical coverage? It's bad enough for the Brighton and Hove Humanist Group to forget their principles and fall for some "big name" glamour—but for the NSS's national paper to do the same thing is unpardonable. We're well used to the sight of Christian pacifists and Christian militarists slugging it out, and we rightly deduce that this shows the arbitrariness and illogicality of their position. But I used to imagine that we at least had our thinking clear enough to know full well that the humane rational world we want requires a unity of means and ends. And that in turn implies a commitment to oppose hierarchies and violence. Even if a total commitment to pacifism and anarchism isn't an absolutely essential logical deduction from atheism, then surely at least anti-militarism and anti-nation-statism are?

To turn to one more specific criticism of Sir Hermann Bondi's speech—he seems to suffer from the common scientist's "faith" in everything technological being a good thing. Assuming he doesn't have a lot of shares in certain companies, what else can explain his support for the nuclear power industry? I can understand theists gambling away the safety of future generations, "knowing" that the important part of their future isn't on earth, but surely for us this earthly life (and that of our successors) is the sum total of our concerns. And nuclear power is giving us radio-active wastes to be safeguarded (whether future generations want to bother, or are able to bother, or not) for tens of thousands of years; it's giving us the promise of a virtual police state to safeguard the materials which would otherwise enable (unofficial) terrorists to make atomic bombs; it means the spread of nuclear materials to more and more countries, allowing atomic bombs to get into the hands of increasing numbers of official terrorists (of which club our own Ministry of War was one of the first members); it entails an increasing degree of centralisation of control over energy production—which makes it easier for the increasing centralisation of political power; and there's the continuing present-day risk of a catastrophic acci-

dent. The "need" for nuclear power is one of the greatest confidence tricks of our age—humanists should be in the forefront of the opposition!

Peace, love.

ALBERT BEALE

Sir Hermann Bondi opines that opposition to the development of nuclear power is misguided ("The Freethinker", December 1978). As a member of one of the groups in the anti-nuclear movement (the London Greenpeace Group) I beg to differ. It is a rational judgement of the whole spectrum of the death-dealing nuclear power industry that leads to our radical opposition.

If we are not again to witness the obscene phenomenon of a mushroom cloud, we simply must not take any chance—we must phase out the whole industry. It is the industry, not the current opposition to it, which is misguided.

The sooner the industry stops foisting its nuclear obscenity on the human race the better for all of us. The urgent call now from all concerned and rational people is for the development of safe and adequate energy resources for our civilisation.

Nuclear power has been tried and, inasmuch as it has culminated in the Bomb, found wanting: let us, in the name of whatever may be common to us all, supersede it with an energy policy which will find favour with all rational people.

DESMOND HUNTER

London Greenpeace Group,  
6 Endsleigh Street WC1

## REASON AND THE PARANORMAL

A copy of your magazine contained a brief description of my findings on ESP in the "Jottings" column by William McIlroy ("The Freethinker", December 1978). The bias of the article itself was very clear in the way that my attempts to understand the phenomena at hand in a scientific manner were brushed aside, but it also contained serious errors of fact.

First of all I have never left the fold of rationality and indeed if anyone had read my book "Superminds" they would have seen that I was attempting to use scientific method and also our present understanding of the forces of nature to attempt to give a framework to the phenomena associated with ESP. The "Nature" article contained results which indicated that ESP could not be explained in terms of modern science and hence had to be questioned severely. That itself would have been of interest to your readers if it had been presented in this light. I am sorry to see that your journal seems to contain material that contradicts its title.

A further incorrect statement was that my return to rationality would not make the headlines. Indeed every paper that was then being printed carried an article on the report in "Nature" and I was also inundated by all the radio and television programmes throughout the land. That I did not respond was due to the fact that the "Nature" article said all and I felt it appropriate that those interested should read it. However, I am sorry to see a journal with your title presenting such a biased account of my attempts to understand the phenomena and I felt thereby called upon to try and redress the wrong done both to myself and to your readers.

J. G. TAYLOR

## JUDAISM AND ISRAEL

On browsing through the January issue of "The Freethinker", I came across a couple of items both concerned indirectly with Judaism which need a response.

Firstly the attitude adopted by Gay Fifen in the letter, commenting on what seemed to me a valid review of "Holocaust" by John Sutcliffe, is nothing short of racist. What I see here is the continuation of the Torah tradition of an eye for an eye updated for the twentieth century. Unfortunately this approach is one that ultra-Zionist Jews justify at present in the Middle East—which brings me to my second point.

In George Jaeger's article I see a man trying to break free from Jewish myth and dogma, but ultimately failing. It is true of course that several Jewish people this century have contributed much for the benefit of mankind, but I think it was Marx who said that Jewish people found it hard to give up their Jewish upbringing. As George Jaeger says, many Jews have become liberals and humanists; however, would many of these people renounce Israel, which I would consider Zionist colonisation dating back to the Balfour declaration of 1917, against the wishes of the native Palestinian Arabs?

As someone who is opposed to colonisation in any form, I denounce what Britons have done in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), India, Jamaica or any other part of the world where the British Empire stole land and wealth. I am sorry to say that I see a parallel in the Middle East at present, particularly in the Gaza Strip and West Bank areas.

Finally, I would like to conclude by posing this question to George Jaeger: As to Israel using napalm and atom bombs, he states "Can one blame them?" If he holds this view to be valid, which to me seems a Zionist approach, how can he then claim to be a humanist and liberal?

KEN WRIGHT

## Freethinker Fund

We are grateful to contributors to this month's excellent total. Thanks to the following: L. Ainsbury, 60p; H. A. Alexander, 75p; J. L. Allison, £2.60; Anon, £10.00; E. Barnes, 60p; I. F. Bertin, £2.60; W. J. & I. M. Bickle, £1.60; S. Birkin, £1.60; D. C. Campbell, £7.60; A. C. T. Chambre, 60p; P. R. Chapman, £1.00; A. F. Dawn, 60p; M. Davies, £5.00; A. Foster, £2.60; J. F. Futter, £1.00; D. Fyfe, 50p; J. Galliano, 60p; E. A. C. Goodman, £2.60; L. Hanger, 60p; D. Harper, £7.60; J. R. Haydn-Smith, £2.60; W. Holland £2.60; E. J. Hughes, £3.60; E. H. Kirby, 60p; N. Levenson, £1.00; J. Lippitt £3.00; C. Marcus, £2.00; R. Matthewson, £7.60; R. MacQueen, 60p; P. J. McCormick, 40p; J. Morgan, 60p; J. T. Morrison, £2.60; T. Mullins, 80p; F. Muskett, £4.00; E. A. Napper, £1.60; A. Oldham, £10.00; C. A. Pugh, £2.60; Ms E. Scott, 60p; Ms W. Shinton, £2.60; A. Shore, 25p; C. Simmonds £1.00; N. Sinnott, £2.00; D. C. Taylor, £3.00; J. Vallance, £3.60; C. Wilshaw, £3.60; F. Woolley, 60p; Ms E. B. Woolstone, £1.00; J. S. Wright, £2.60; D. Wright, £3.00; J. Yeowell, 60p. Total for the period 15 December to 18 January £124.00.

**Religion: A daughter of Hope and Fear, explaining to Ignorance the nature of the Unknowable.—Ambrose Bierce.**

## *(Cannabis Case)*

relaxed their legal controls on the possession of cannabis.

However, all signatories to the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, are obliged to enforce adequate penalties against the use and distribution of cannabis. It will not be possible to remove cannabis from the criminal law altogether without amending the Single Convention through the lengthy process of calling a Special Conference. In April 1978, the Dutch delegate declared his country's intention to seek such amendments to the Convention.

*For further information write to 29 Old Bond Street, London W1X 3AB.*

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**Pope John Paul II is thought to want to stem the rate at which priests leave the Catholic Church. The Vatican does not give exact figures, but a survey in 1971 showed that more than 1,000 a year were deserting their posts. The actual total may be higher.**

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## EVENTS

**Belfast Humanist Group.** Meetings on the second Thursday of the month, 8 pm. 8a Grand Parade Castlereagh. Secretary: Wendy Wheeler, 30 Cloyne Crescent, Monkstown, Co. Antrim, telephone White-abbey 66752.

**Brighton and Hove Humanist Group.** Victor Wentworth: "A Humanist's Eye-View of Life". Sunday 4 March, 5.30 pm. Imperial Hotel, First Avenue, Hove.

**Havering and District Humanist Society.** John White (BHA representative on ILEA): "RK-RI-RE-Now What?". Tuesday 20 February. "Why I Am Standing for Parliament"—question time with prospective parliamentary candidates. Tuesday 6 March, 8 pm. Harold Wood Social Centre (Junction of Gubbins Lane and Squirrel Heath Road).

**Leeds and District Humanist Group.** Dr Michael Pye (Dept Theology, Leeds University): "Zen Buddhism". Tuesday 13th February, 8 pm. Swarthmore Education Centre, Woodhouse Square, Leeds.

**Leicester Secular Society.** Ruth Finch: "The Work of Amnesty International", Sunday 11 February. Dr Maurice Millard (MB, ChB): "Voluntary Euthanasia". Sunday 18 February. Mr F. H. Amphlett-Micklewright: "Justice and the Lawyer". Sunday, 25 February. 98th Anniversary: Guest Speaker Mr D. Macenemy "Self Help", Sunday March 4. All meetings commence 6.30 pm. Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester.

**Lewisham Humanist Group.** "Noise Pollution", a talk by Tony Milne. Thursday 22 February, 7.45 pm. 41 Bromley Road, Catford, SE6.

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

**London Young Humanists.** John White: "Humanist Attitudes to Education", Sunday 18 February, 7.30 pm. Sunday 4 March: A speaker from the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, 7.30 pm. At 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8.

**Merseyside Humanist Group.** AGM followed by "How Can Humanists Help to Build a Better Future?", Discussion. Wednesday 21st February, 7.45 pm. 46 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead.

**Nottingham Humanist Group.** Mr D. Harper: "From Baptist to Humanist". Friday February 9, 7.30 pm. Adult Education Centre, 14/22 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham.

**South Place Ethical Society.** Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Sunday Morning Meetings, 11 am. 11 February, Prof. George Rudé: Jacobin Democracy and Dictatorship. 18 February, Canon Peter Challen: Structures, Values and Change. 25 February, Peter Cadogan: Replying to Edward Norman. 4 March, Dr Harry Stopas-Roe: Making Humanism Visible. Sunday Forums, 3 pm, 14 February, When the Silicone Chips are Down. 25 February, Are the Trade Unions Losing Their Way?

**Warwickshire Humanist Group.** "Priorities for Humanist Groups", a discussion, Tuesday 13 February 8 pm, at the Old Royal, Church Street, Birmingham 3. "Living Without a God—a Humanist Alternative", discussion led by Karl Heath. Friday 23 February, 8 pm. Kenilworth Library, Smalley Place, Kenilworth.

**West Glamorgan Humanist Group.** "Equal Rights for Women", a talk by Ms Lindsay Davies LL.B. Friday 23 February, 7.30 pm. Venue to be announced.

**Humanist Holidays.** Easter 1979. April 12 or 13 to 17 or later. Small private hotel fairly near the front at Boscombe, Bournemouth. £7 per day, breakfast and dinner. 11-25 August 1979. Similar accommodation at Lowestoft, Suffolk. About £64 per week. Camping and caravan possibilities. Details Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey.

## THE FREETHINKER

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