

# The Freethinker

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## NCCL SECRETARY WARNS: 1984 IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Orwell's general image of 1984 in his famous novel is already not so far from the truth, declared Patricia Hewitt, General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, when she spoke at the Progressive League's Golden Jubilee Conference last month. PL members and friends spent the 10-12 December weekend at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddeston, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the League's foundation. The programme included a series of excellent lectures, but it was Patricia Hewitt's timely warning that 1984 is Just Around the Corner that made the greatest impact. She informed the Conference that 1984 would also be the Golden Jubilee year of the NCCL, and that plans were being made for a year of celebration and warning.

Patricia Hewitt dealt at length with surveillance and privacy. "We have not yet managed to get legislation to guarantee either personal privacy or freedom of information. It is often thought there is a contradiction between these two principles, but in fact they go together.

"Personal privacy seems innocuous enough, but it actually challenges the power of the State. If those in authority have information about us without our having access to it, then they can make decisions about our future. As to our right to general information, this is both a matter of individual liberty and of public policy-making.

"No one is protected against the computerisation of data about themselves. We are not allowed to see the sources of information, such as a social worker's report, on which decisions are based which will affect our future".

Since 1967 there has been a Freedom of Information law in the United States. This has meant that Congress is able to exercise far more control over the Executive and security services than is the case in Britain, because they have access to information

whereas in Britain everything in this area is protected under the Official Secrets Act.

The NCCL secretary said that the computers run by Scotland Yard and MI5 have acquired so sophisticated a fact-finding capacity that surveillance of the entire population is now feasible. She recalled that Merlyn Rees, a former Secretary, defined "subversives" as being "those I think cause problems to the State".

The present Government is committed to a data protection law because of pressure from the Common Market. But they intend to exempt from this law the operation of national security and police computers which are the very ones that most threaten political liberty in this country. The speaker recounted some amazing but true stories of official information based on mistaken identity.

Patricia Hewitt said that policing is today a matter of political debate in a way it has seldom been before.

### Inefficient, Violent and Corrupt

"The reason for this is not, as has been alleged, because pressure groups like the NCCL are stirring up unnecessary public anxiety. It is because there is a growing perception among the general population that despite all the sophisticated technology, the police are becoming increasingly inefficient at curbing crime.

"One inquiry after another has failed to deal with problems of police information, police violence and police corruption. The new police bill is going to give them new powers to 'stop and search', new powers of arrest and new powers to demand fingerprints for the police national computer. It will also give police power to search the premises of people

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# NEWS

## FAITHFUL AND OBEDIENT TO THE PRINCE OF PEACE

We start the New Year with good news from Wales. Only 23 per cent of her once clergy-ridden population now belong to a church. The Salvation Army newspaper, *The War Cry*, describes this figure as "unthinkably low not so long ago".

In England the position is, from a Christian viewpoint, even worse, with 13 per cent of church members in the population. This figure is almost trebled (37 per cent) in Scotland. Statistics on church membership are published in a new edition of the *UK Christian Handbook*.

*The War Cry* comments editorially that "the battle" is much harder now than it was in the Salvation Army's pioneering days. It blames "indifference and affluence" for the decline in religious commitment.

However, in Northern Ireland, an area not noted for either affluence or indifference to religion, there is no lack of commitment to God and his Church. There is considerable disagreement about which of the institutions is "his Church", but an incredible 80 per cent of the population are members.

The depth of religious fervour among Ulster Protestants was indicated following the recent assassination of Hugh Leonard (Lennie) Murphy shortly after his release from prison for arms offences. Police had long been convinced that he was the leader of a killer gang known as the Shankhill Butchers. They were responsible for 19 murders, their Catholic victims being killed and mutilated with butchers' knives. Murphy was nicknamed the Master Butcher.

The day after Murphy's death a list of over 80 tributes, some of them from his friends in prison, appeared in a local newspaper. Many had a religious quotation, the most popular being "The Lord is my shepherd" (nine times). Others included "God has you in his keeping"; "To us you were very special, and God must have thought so too"; "Till we meet again"; "God took him home to heavenly rest" and "Enfold him in thine arms O Lord".

Press reporters and television crews were threatened by mourners at the funeral. The cortege was headed by a piper playing "Abide with me".

"Faithfulness and obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit are still the criteria for every Christian", twitters *The War Cry*. So are murderous fanaticism and intolerance for many of them.



# AND NOTES

## DECLINE AND FALL

Susan Kentish and Michael Litchfield, who wrote the discredited *Babies for Burning*, which became the handbook of anti-abortion campaigners, have lost a libel action in the High Court. It was brought by Mr Thomas Pond, who ran a pregnancy testing service and was accused by the authors of being an abortion tout. He was awarded £22,000 damages. The award included £15,000 exemplary damages in view of the seriousness of the libel. Mr Pond had already been awarded £40,000 against the *News of the World* newspaper which published an article by Kentish and Litchfield.

In 1975 *The Freethinker* received a letter from solicitors acting for Susan Kentish and Michael Litchfield after an unfavourable review of *Babies for Burning* appeared. They asked for payment of compensation and publication of a retraction and an apology. The demand was resisted and no writ was issued.

After investigating the authors and their book, the *Sunday Times* published a report entitled "Abortion Horror Tales Revealed as Fantasies". It showed, among other things, that Michael Litchfield's claim to have won a Pulitzer Prize for journalism was unfounded.

Serpentine Press, which published *Babies for Burning*, was put into the hands of a receiver. Susan Kentish and Michael Litchfield are now said to be bankrupt.

## "MIND READER" CHANGES MIND

Paul Daniels, Britain's leading TV magician, has returned from a world tour a wiser man. In a newspaper interview he recalled talking to an Egyptian lady who told him that all the Pharaohs from about 3,000 BC until 500 AD on the Christian calendar claimed they were the sons of gods.

"I was brought up a Christian and now I think I've been conned", said Mr Daniels.

He has little time for psychics and can bend spoons with the best of them. Mr Daniels said that Uri Geller, who started his career in Britain as a cabaret performer in a London club, had been exposed as a fake several times.

In a recent television show Paul Daniels "read" a woman's mind. She had chosen a card marked with a star from a batch of different samples. He did not reveal how he did it and doubted if there are ten other British magicians who know the trick.

## FAMILY PLANNING PAYS

"It is notable that family planning has repeatedly been shown to be one of the most cost effective and successful forms of preventive medicine", writes Norman Fowler, Secretary of State for the Social Services, in a foreword to the Family Planning Association's 50th annual report. Mr Fowler says that the introduction of free family planning services in the mid-1970s "has been of undoubted significance in helping men and women to plan the size of their families. The success of these services, the benefits to individuals and society are clear. . . Continued efforts are needed to ensure that family planning provision reaches those most in need if the distressing numbers of unwanted pregnancies and abortions which still occur are to be reduced".

The Secretary of State refers to the important role that non-statutory organisations have to play in complementing and encouraging better use of available NHS services, and in promoting preventive health measures. He adds: "This is a role that the FPA, as a voluntary organisation, fulfils both nationally and through its regional offices by meeting information and education needs about contraception and family planning services. . .

"This work is of prime importance in promoting responsible personal and sexual relationships, in dispelling ignorance about contraception and sexuality which can have damaging results for individuals and families, and in enabling those in need to seek appropriate help.

"In working towards these aims, the Government recognises and supports the work that voluntary organisations, such as the FPA, can do to increase the awareness and understanding of family planning issues and the effective use of the free services".

Dr John Dunwoody, Chairman of the FPA, states in a preface to the report that at a conservative estimate, £500 can be saved for every £100 spent on providing family planning services. His figures are derived from an independent study by the Policy Studies Institute on the benefits and costs of family planning which is summarised in the FPA annual report.

"The good health of individuals and society as a whole is probably the most important asset we must strive for", says Dr Dunwoody. "But it is all too easy to set aside and neglect certain aspects of health care.

"Family planning has often been in this category in the past, put to one side and seen as only relevant to women and then only at certain times in their lives. Fortunately, it is now being recognised that family planning—not just contraception as some might mistakenly see it—but family planning in its widest sense, affects us all.

"It affects us at a world level in terms of popula-





tion, at a national level in terms of the size and spacing of our families and the policies and structures that shape our society, and at a highly personal individual level in terms of our physical, sexual and emotional wellbeing”.

Inadequate education can be blamed for many of the sexual, emotional and physical problems that abound. It is to improve this situation that the FPA's Education Unit organises a wide variety of courses in sex and personal relationships.

The Family Planning Information Service, run jointly by the Family Planning Association and the Health Education Council, provides free information and publicity material about family planning methods. It answers 100,000 inquiries a year.

In the course of a "Help Week" project, carried out in conjunction with London's Capital Radio last September, nearly 1,500 calls were received regarding aspects of birth control and personal relationships.

## Into Receivership: a Note on Moral Bankruptcy

MADELEINE SIMMS

In the week in which Malcolm Muggeridge was finally received into the Roman Catholic Church after two decades of highly publicised dithering, *New Society* reported a survey of the beliefs of its educated and socially aware readers. Twenty-seven per cent of them believed "quite a lot" in the existence of God, twenty-two per cent in Christianity, twenty-one per cent in "life after death", nine per cent in "flying saucers", seven per cent in ghosts, three per cent each in tarot cards and horoscopes, and two per cent in "lucky charms or mascots". It is a reasonable assumption that most of these categories overlap. Nonetheless, it has to be conceded that about one in five of the more superior of our solid citizens—social workers, probation officers, teachers, housing managers, and the like—appear to have beliefs that are totally irrational if not downright lunatic.

Having brooded over this on the Thursday on which day *New Society* is published, the news contained in *The Times* of two days later hardly came as a great shock. In this issue, Malcolm Muggeridge explained to the waiting world Why He Was Becoming a Catholic. And all this on the very morning on which he and his wife were being brought into the fold by Lord and Lady Longford, after much agonising along the banks of the Serpentine with Mother Theresa, whose most notable belief is that Indians require neither effective birth control nor legal and safe abortion. What is the Lord there for, after all, if not to provide, and if not in this world, then surely in the next.

Since Mr Muggeridge has waited until his 80th year before entering the Church, its rather quaint

The project revealed that much confusion and unhappiness can be experienced by people of all ages through being ill-informed about their sexuality and how to control their fertility.

The FPA warns against moves to reduce family planning clinics, which are funded locally, in the hope of transferring patients to GPs so that the cost may be met nationally. That this is clearly a false economy is illustrated.

The Oxford Regional Health Authority recently considered a paper which contained such a proposal. An analysis showed that the cost to the nation would be at least £300,000. Alastair Service, FPA General Secretary, declares: "Health Authorities must be stopped from thinking they can save money in such ways. If they were to be implemented they would not only be an appalling waste of public funds, but would also have predictable disastrous effects on the lives of numerous individuals and their families".

views on the subject of birth control need not unduly disturb him. He already has a well spaced family and the means by which it was spaced need not detain us now. It is enough to know his complacent opinion that "Forbidding the use of contraceptive devices seemed absolutely correct". Well, it does now, anyway.

Muggeridge is the archetypal media figure of our time. He regularly appeared on the box for many years and made a fortune out of it while affecting to despise it. He reminds one of the retired Victorian tradesman who became a country gent in later life and hoped everyone would forget that he owed his affluence to Trade. "One of the few benefits of appearing on television", he blandly informs us, is that other Christians now come up to chat with him. Other, more mundane, benefits are discreetly passed over in silence.

If Muggeridge is self-deceived, at least he has had the wit to have his cake and eat it with gusto. Perhaps, after all, there is a lesson in this for the rest of us: gloomy, guilt-ridden and rather less affluent atheists.

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**A 25-year-old man who suffers from a muscular disease, and his fiancee, also 25, have been married in a Protestant church after a Catholic priest in Munich refused to perform the ceremony. He asked for proof that the marriage could be consummated. Church authorities in Munich commented that under Catholic marriage laws, the union must be a physical as well as a spiritual partnership.**



# An Israeli Humanist Approach to the Lebanon War

ISAAC HASSON

The author of this article is chairman of the Israeli Secular Humanist Association.

Humanism is not only a philosophy. Philosophy and morals are not sufficient to determine practical attitudes. Humanists all over the world should be well informed on political affairs.

From a humanist outlook, the main moral question about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon is whether we regard it as a defensive or an aggressive war. For this purpose we can use as a guideline the principles of international law. Paragraph 51 of the UN Charter says that starting a war is justified as defensive on condition that it follows an enemy attack. A war can also be regarded as defensive if it is intended to prevent an immediate military attack. The reaction must be in respect to the danger. The defender has no right to use the pretext of self-defence to extend the war for political purposes.

It was ridiculous to claim that a Palestinian militia in Lebanon endangered the security of Israel which is a well-equipped, technological power. A militia could disturb Israel on the frontier, but less than Israel disturbed the Palestinians with major Haddad Christian (pro-Israel) militia, its non-stop air raids on Lebanon and by arming the Phalangists in their fight against the Left. Is it possible in these circumstances to see the Israeli invasion as a defensive war?

The war in Lebanon was started for mainly political reasons, some of them certainly combined with the United States' anti-Socialist and anti-Soviet interests. But the main reason was, and is, to "solve" the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, because Begin's Government cannot accept any kind of peace with the Palestinians. To understand this attitude we must turn to history.

After the Six Day War in 1967, with annexation of land in the eastern part of Jerusalem and all West Bank territories known in the Bible as Judea and Samaria, a new situation arose. There was an upsurge of Right-wing, fundamentalist Zionism, and a coalition of groups that pledged religious legislation to an unprecedented degree. It aimed to secure the power and influence that would enable it to impose domination over the whole of the historic land of Israel.

Peace with the Palestinians is obviously impossible under such circumstances. Peace would entail abandonment of the idea of returning to the land of the forefathers. It implies a double risk for a

society desiring to be exclusively Jewish. A stable atmosphere may develop and there would be integration as often happens when two nationalities share a common territory. This is opposed by Zionists who wish to preserve the Jewish character of the country, and by Jews in other countries who regard Israel as a unique Jewish centre.

The war in Lebanon, which Begin gave the name of "The Peace of Galilee", at first had almost unanimous approval in Israel because of the PLO attacks on Galilee settlements. It was later that the wider implications of the war came into the open.

According to the Camp David Agreement, Israel agreed to evacuate Sinai. This vast peninsula has strategic significance and economic potential. It is not within the range of "God's promised land", Israel, as is the West Bank.

The other consequence of the Camp David agreement was that full autonomy would be conceded by Israel to the Palestinian region (West Bank and Gaza strip) after five years. There was to be recognition by Israel of the "legitimate rights of the Palestinians", which in the long term means a Palestinian state.

The Israeli Government had to find a way to make these agreements worthless. The Jewish settlements in Sinai were indeed dismantled, but in a way that caused hysterical trauma. The object was to prove that the distress inflicted upon the settlers was so great that a similar evacuation of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza strip is impossible.

After the Camp David agreement, two possible courses of action had to be considered by Begin's Government. They could negotiate with the PLO as the only representatives of the Palestinians—being aware that this would mean compromises like giving up possession of land that has biblical significance. The other option would be to destroy the PLO, subdue the inhabitants of conquered territories and disperse those Palestinians living in Lebanese refugee camps.

Begin's Government decided on the latter course of action. He asserted in the Knesset (Parliament): "There will never be a Palestinian state. We will never give up any piece of our forefathers' land. Never".

Begin was supported by Defence Minister Ariel Sharon who declared that "after destruction of the terrorist bases in Lebanon we shall have time to conduct a peace offensive directed at the Palestinians living in Judea and Samaria".

There is no need to explain Sharon's idea of a "peace offensive".



God may be dead, but he is still propped up with word-spinning "proofs" that were shown to be spurious centuries ago. Here the President of the NSS reconstructs a recent verbal skirmish in which she took part.

My lecturing and debating engagements on behalf of the National Secular Society recently took me north of the border, to address the Edinburgh University Catholic Students Union on secular humanist objections to Roman Catholicism as part of a series of talks on objections to that faith from various opposing viewpoints.

The Catholic chaplaincy at Edinburgh University is run by priests of the Dominican Order (*Ordinis Praedicatorum*, the Order of Preachers), and their purpose in organising this series of talks by devils' advocates was obviously inoculative. One of the priests boasted that it showed how certain they felt of the students' faith, that they were willing to subject it to the attack; but another priest confided in me that the greatest danger today was sheer indifference. They were, I suppose, taking a calculated risk that stimulating the students to rise to the defence of their faith would counteract apathy, and that to pre-empt arguments that might well be met with later would defuse them. I decided it was up to me to give a lethal dose rather than an inoculative dose, even at the cost of common politeness. So I did not pull my punches.

Unlike, for instance, the Protestant contributor to the series, I did not attack the RC Church in isolation, but put it in its Christian framework, which in its turn I put within the wider framework of monotheism and finally of religion in general.

Not only did I put in question the basic belief in a supernatural creator of the universe in which we find ourselves; I pointed out that since our experience shows it to be a suffering universe (our corner of it, at least), then mental contortion is required to regard its hypothetical creator as a god of love, unless he be incompetent. Furthermore, to worship such a creator, who allegedly had full knowledge of how everything would work out, and full power to make it otherwise, is most immoral.

During the ensuing discussion, the somewhat naive participation of the students was underpinned by more sophisticated (or, at least, more plausibly formulated) arguments by the Dominicans.

One of them played the mediaeval scholastic, insistently presenting "proofs" of creation.

"Why", he demanded, "is there something rather than nothing? When something is the case that need not have been—when something is not self-explana-

tory—surely it is natural to ask 'why', and we are entitled to presume that there must be an answer".

"Within the world of cause and effect in which we find ourselves, yes—but not concerning the universe as a whole".

"Why not? The universe need not have been; so I ask, again, why is there anything at all? It is a reasonable question, to which there must be an answer".

"Not at all", I replied. "It is not reasonable. What you are asking for is an explanation for everything, as a whole: but what 'explanation' means is finding a causal relationship between one event and another; so it is obviously nonsensical to try to relate the whole of existence to something else, when, by definition, there is nothing else for it to relate to".

"But that is why we are forced to assume that there is a necessary being—God—distinct from and independent of the universe, and in a causal relationship with the universe".

"Wait a moment!" I objected. "You are making some unjustified assumptions: first you suppose that the matter/energy that makes up the universe is not self-explanatory, and then you posit a convenient self-explanatory being to explain it. Why assume that the elements of the universe were ever non-existent?"

"Because one can sensibly say of the universe 'It exists but it does not *have* to exist'; there must therefore be something else outside it, to explain its existence; and that something else must be such that the possibility of its non-existence is unthinkable as belonging to it".

"Ah! I see—a reformulation of the old discredited ontological argument! Existence does not *belong* to anything or anyone—it is a condition, not a property".

"Except in the case of God: the whole point is that God's existence is part of his essence; that is what makes God self-explanatory".

"But even if we assume that there is a God with this peculiar essence, or necessary attribute, of existence, that does not explain why God has this peculiar attribute: it only explains why, if it is so, he then must exist. So God would still not be self-explanatory, since having a peculiar essence does not explain *why* he has that essence".

"What's *your* explanation, then?"

"The whole idea of looking for an explanation for something depends on the fact that there are all the other things in the universe among which we may find the explanation. But to assume there is an explanation for the whole universe is to assume that something exists beside the universe—that is, to assume beforehand the very thing you are trying to



prove”.

“But you are dodging the question, why there should be something rather than nothing”.

“Just suppose”, I said patiently, “there *were* nothing. What answer would you expect then as to why there was nothing? There are only two possibilities: something or nothing. Well, as we can see, there is something: the universe in which we find ourselves”.

“But why?” my holy inquisitor persisted, for all the world like a three-year-old. “Surely that is a natural and legitimate question that deserves an answer?”

“But the ‘something’ is whatever exists, so it would include your supposed God if he existed. So the answer, if there was one, would have to include an explanation for God’s existence—and the only line of argument you have suggested so far is that God must exist in order to explain the existence of everything else! A circular argument if ever there was one. If, as you insist, it is reasonable to assume that the universe must have been caused by something or someone, then it can be no less reasonable to assume that that something or someone must also have had a cause, and so on, in infinite regression. It comes down to the old question, “Then who made God?””

The argument spread out around the hall. I put forward the usual atheistic hypothesis that our world is part of one of an infinite series of universes, each of which proceeds through the cycle of Big Bang, expansion, disintegration and contraction, its densest form leading to the next Big Bang. No beginning and no end: only continual change. Not so different, perhaps, after all, from the God idea, except that to drag in a conscious being of purpose is an unnecessary complication, and seems to belittle the majesty of reality by seeking to explain it away with a childish myth — not to mention the psychological and social harm wrought by belief in the all-seeing Big Daddy.

On leaving Edinburgh, I took my leave of the persistent Dominican, and fancied that he seemed just a little less cocksure than at the start of my visit, and possibly regretted my inclusion in the series of inoculations.

A few days later, by sheer coincidence, I was given a pamphlet recently published by the Catholic Truth Society, entitled *Does God Exist?* The author was a Dominican priest, and, although the name of the author was not that of my inquisitor, the arguments were almost word-for-word the same. I can only surmise that at least some members of the intellectual Order of Preachers actually learn the latest reformulation of the old Aquinas arguments by rote. But at least the pamphlet has enabled me to recall the debate, with a reasonable degree of accuracy, for this article.

## Roses or Weeds?

TERRY LIDDLE

Travellers at London’s Victoria Station recently had thrust into their hands a most singular piece of literature entitled *Roses*. Carrying the startling headline, “666 Himself Now is Loosed From Hell—Satan”, *Roses* is published in Bayside, New York, which is described as the Lourdes of America. Here, the reader is informed, the Virgin Mary first appeared in 1970 to one Veronica Lueken, described as a wife and mother of five children.

The Virgin Mary’s visitation was apparently preceded by one from St Theresa who instructed Mrs Lueken to write religious poetry and prose. Fortunately we are not provided with examples of Mrs Lueken’s poetic gems.

In *Roses*, Mrs Lueken treats us to a description of one of Mary’s visits, dwelling at great length on the Blessed Virgin’s attire. On this occasion she was wearing a cream-coloured gown and slippers.

Mrs Lueken has Mary issue some dire warnings. Exterminatus, the angel of death, is abroad in America, and unless Americans turn away from sin, death will rule over their country. At this point the Archangel puts in an appearance and adds a few warnings of his own. Satan, he tells Mrs Lueken, is also loose in America, having in 1975 entered the body of a man who practices the occult. His aim, it seems, is to desecrate America’s children. This is the reason for drug abuse and everybody in colleges having become Satan’s agents.

Not surprisingly, there is an exhortation to sexual repression. “Guard your daughters’ purity”, exclaims Mrs Lueken, “allow them no rein to be free in choice”.

But, horror of horrors, there is worse to come than assaults on the virtue of America’s Catholic girls. Covens are being organised and agents of Satan, disguised as beautiful children, are engaged in a campaign of maiming and killing. This is given as the real reason for the recent spate of horrific murders in America. All this is reminiscent of the allegations of ritual murder once made by Christian fanatics against the Jews which led to bloody pogroms. There is, however, some respite from all this horror. The satanists, it seems, only strike by night. Mrs Lueken advises: “You will stay off the streets if you have sinned, for you may receive the gun”. At whom, one wonders, will firearms be pointed and who will be aiming them?

Mrs Lueken suggests several things the faithful can do to counter this satanic offensive. “Do not go out without your sacramentals”, she warns. “All are marked for death who are not in a state of grace”.

(continued on page 9)



# The Origin of Science

DAVID TRIBE

A former Editor of "The Freethinker" examines some of the claims Dr Peter Hodgson makes on behalf of Christianity in an article, "The Christian Origin of Science", which was published in "Atheism and Dialogue", journal of the Secretariat for Non-Believers.

After early noting the formation of the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Believers and urging all humanists to treat it with the utmost circumspection, I have rather lost track of it in recent years. So it was with considerable interest that I perused a recent article on "The Christian Origin of Science" in its quarterly *Atheism and Dialogue*. Of course, an article on such a theme would be likely to induce considerable interest, not to say astonishment, among Christians and atheists alike, wherever it might appear.

The piece begins with remarks that could have come from any freethinker, with the possible exception of "perhaps useful in its time":

In general our science is not yet able to control the weather, but at least we understand the forces at work sufficiently well to make us suspect that it is no longer sensible to pray for good weather. If people are poorly housed or criminally disposed then it is seen as a problem to be solved by social engineering and not by moral exhortation or private charity. This is how so many people today come to regard Christianity as a thing of the past, perhaps useful in its time, but now replaced by more reliable and efficient ways of getting things done.

Nor would many freethinkers fault its conclusion:

Over the years the leaders of the Christian Churches failed to integrate the new science into the Christian world picture, and science and Christianity became estranged. Science, once started, proved astonishingly robust, and has easily spread to and taken vigorous root in communities holding widely varying beliefs.

In between these intimations of reality, Dr Peter Hodgson, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, has assembled a *mélange* of fact and fallacy awe-inspiring in its range.

Confusion begins with the author's attempt to define science. This is seen as "a detailed understanding of the behaviour of matter, expressed in mathematical terms", "comprehensive understanding" of planetary motion "by solving the fundamental equations of dynamics", a "definite idea of the size and structure" of the "ultimate constituents of matter", a "theory of their properties and of the relation between these properties and those of everyday matter", and a "conception of the way all the infinite variety of phenomena, astronomical, electrical, dynamical, chemical and atomic, can be understood as the manifestations of a simple essential unity that can be expressed in a very few differential equations".

These very special definitions are chosen to endorse the thesis that "science" did not begin in the ancient world, particularly with the Greeks—as philosophers have claimed—or with the "empiricism of Bacon"—as scientists have claimed—but with Newton as a good Christian gentleman. Perhaps it is a little surprising in a Catholic publication to find a nominal Anglican given precedence over a nominal Catholic, Descartes, whose "rationalism" is objected to; but Newton adhered to so many mediaeval superstitions that he is a convenient link with the Church militant and triumphant.

As a matter of fact, I am inclined to think the importance to science of Bacon's inductive logic has been exaggerated of late, and that science has made its major breakthroughs by a series of "inspired" hypotheses and deductions. Yet, setting aside any consideration of the extent to which, if mathematics is all-important, Einstein may have supplanted Newton and Planck upset them both, one may question whether we have yet achieved "a detailed understanding of the behaviour of matter" or of its "ultimate constituents". The subatomic particles, to say nothing of the antimatter, black holes and negative time, of today are likely to prove as fabulous as the atoms of Democritus; and how many scientists would really claim to understand fully the nature of light or gravitation?

The essence of science is its attitude to the natural world. Thus, the pioneering mathematics of the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians and the embryonic theories of atomism, holism, evolution, heliocentrism and relativity of the ancient Greeks are as truly scientific in their approach as the concepts that have taken their place. Indeed, Dr Hodgson himself spells out a number of "conditions" necessary for the birth of science which have nothing to do with any particular propositions that may follow.

## The Necessary Conditions

These conditions are: a fairly well-developed society to support thinkers financially, simple technology to produce apparatus, a system of writing to record the results of experiments, mathematical notation to record measurements, and the general population's attitude to the material world. No one would quarrel with these. "Attitude" is further divided into interest in the material world and its "goodness", belief that matter behaves in a "consistent and rational way", belief that the order of nature is open to human discovery, a strong motivation to pursue these discoveries, and a willingness to share knowledge within the scientific community and ultimately with the community at large. Apart from the question of whether or not matter behaves in a



"rational" way, no one would quarrel with these secondary divisions either. When, however, the order of nature is further divided into "necessary" and "contingent" order, one starts to hear the voice of the theologian.

A scientist, *qua* scientist, does not have any views on whether or not the material world could have been "made" in any way other than it has been. Nor would a belief that it could be "made" in no other way automatically justify armchair philosophising about it, while the contrary view led to observation and experimentation. And this contrary view would not imply that the world's order was "contingent, namely that it depends on something else"—other than chance.

This emphasis on contingency is, of course, preparing the reader to be told that the world "is contingent because it depends on the divine fiat". Even more ingenuity is involved in equating the other pre-conditions of science with essential tenets of Christianity. Thus, the world is "good because God made it so", "rational and orderly because it was made and is kept in being by a rational god", and discoverable "because God commanded man to subdue the earth".

This is no place to enter into arguments for or against the existence of God or speculate on the nature of "true" Christianity. I merely wish to compare the glib apologetics of Dr Hodgson with canonical writings, the testimony of history and commonsense.

### The Anti-Scientific Attitude of Christianity

Judaism may have taught that the world was good, but Christianity developed as a mystery cult under strong gnostic influence. Not only was this by its very nature based on esoteric knowledge and opposed to the scientific principle of trial and error, but it was permeated with a belief that matter is evil. Far from being "rational and orderly", the Christian world is dominated by a motley of "principalities and powers in heavenly places" (Ephesians 3, 10). Christians are not encouraged to study it, for the Apostle Paul boasted that he "came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom", but was "determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2, 1-2). And, even in Judaism, it must be noted that the cause of the Fall was mankind's gaining the knowledge of good and evil.

The author claims that "in mediaeval writings, such as those of Buridan, Oresme and others, we find novel approaches to the quantitative analysis of phenomena". He also claims that Greek mathematics and especially the works of Archimedes "were eagerly accepted, studied and developed in the Middle Ages". By whom? By such influential figures as Buridan and Oresme? We are told that "in the early Middle Ages the works of classical antiquity, parti-

cularly those of Aristotle, became known in the Christian west, and soon came to exert a strong influence on Christian thought". Though many of his teachings, which were slavishly followed by his disciples, were wrong, Aristotle certainly had a scientific mind, given to observation and codification. But he became influential only in the late Middle Ages. Early in that period the influential philosophers were Plato and Plotinus, both strongly antiscientific.

But why should one argue about philosophical influences in a handful of monasteries concerned with learning and culture? Every historian knows that from the moment they gained political power Christians systematically dismantled the independent schools, universities and libraries of the ancient world—often butchering their directors—and destroyed most of the manuscripts they laid their hands on. Naturally these actions are attributed to "barbarian hordes", but they began before such invasions and the barbarians themselves were rapidly Christianised.

By the seventeenth century, which Dr Hodgson associates with the "birth of science", Christianity was in intellectual decline. It was not, however, shorn of political power. Little wonder, therefore, that "most of the scientists responsible for the birth of science . . . were themselves convinced Christians". Dr Hodgson mentions the work of Galileo, but not what happened to him, and is completely silent about Bruno. It is nonsense to add, where I have put in dots, "and its development through the following centuries".

I don't know who are likely to read *Atheism and Dialogue* or be influenced by a mish-mash like "The Christian Origin of Science". If they are religious fundamentalists, still fighting rearguard actions against scientific teachings, it may do some good.

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### Roses or Weeds?

Doors must be barred against all except immediate family and "workers against evil"—presumably Mrs Lueken and her cohorts.

Perhaps the clergy are to blame. Many have been found wanting, and unless they mend their ways "will die in the streets". Some, however, have made it to heaven and have appeared to Mrs Lueken in their clerical garb, along with faceless cherubs. Jesus has also appeared to her, wearing a red velvet robe.

Readers of *Roses* are informed that sin is insanity. Certainly its contents seem to be the outpourings of a deranged mind obsessed with devils and demons. Unfortunately, millions of people continue to believe in such superstitious nonsense. Such gullibility is a monument to religious education and indoctrination which fills the impressionable minds of the young with frightening tales of wrathful gods and eternal hell-fire.



# BOOKS

**THE ELDER BROTHER: A BIOGRAPHY OF CHARLES WEBSTER LEADBEATER** by Gregory Tillett. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £12.50

Some day, someone should undertake a study of the more fascinating aberrations of human behaviour dedicated to the theme, "Where have all the eccentrics gone"? The Victorian era seems to have been particularly rich in such oddities, appearing mainly among the middle class. Undoubtedly there were economic, social and political reasons for this phenomenon. The success of industrial capitalism resulted in an increasing element in society with modest incomes, some education and much time on their hands.

Debarred from entry into the ranks of the aristocracy, and contemptuous of the working class from which many of them had originated, they had the time and psychological need to seek and espouse new and often bizarre forms of self-expression. So these later 19th-century characters dabbled in the occult, joined esoteric cults and secret societies, preached Socialism at street corners dressed in top hat and frock coat, practised Spiritualism and founded both the Theosophical and Fabian Societies.

Of these characters, Charles Webster Leadbeater was among the rather more unsavoury manipulators of mysticism with its sexual undertones that appears to have had such a fascination for those not forced by economic necessity to engage in a regular occupation. In his very well written and painstakingly researched biography, Gregory Tillett has successfully attempted the task of separating the man from the myth surrounding him. In doing so he quite understandably met with the usual opposition of those people who, often with ulterior motives, seek to bolster their own irrational acceptance of occultism as factual. Such nonsense as Leadbeater's correspondence from the Masters somewhere in the mountains of Tibet, which, despite the Astral powers, needed to be delivered by the Post Office and bearing a very materialistic British stamp duly postmarked was, and is, accepted by the believers as evidence of his occult powers.

There seems little doubt that Leadbeater, like so many others, was a mixture of charlatan and self-deluded believer who thought he possessed genuine spiritual powers. This was also true of both the founder of Theosophy, Madame H. P. Blavatsky, and her chief disciple, the emotionally unstable Annie Besant. Blavatsky had sexual desires, largely unsatisfied. Annie Besant, following her unsatisfactory marriage, appears to have become sexually frustrated and directed her energies first into atheism and birth control, then Socialism and finally Theosophy.

Similarly, Leadbeater progressed from a Church

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of England curacy through Anglo-Catholicism to ghost-hunting and investigating psychic phenomena. From this he moved to Buddhism and his first contact with the Theosophical Society. Quickly grasping which line would most impress this neurotic band of researchers for what they wished to find, Leadbeater rapidly rose in the hierarchy, assuming on the way the leadership of the Liberal Catholic Church complete with more regalia, ritual and incense than Rome itself. Despite several scandals, both sexual and financial, he managed to survive, duping and conning the faithful to the end.

Few religious adventurers have succeeded in being exposed by both the blackmailing crook Horatio Bottomley in *John Bull* and by the puritanical *New Statesman*. Yet Leadbeater did so, and also acquired a large international police dossier that seems to have been suppressed as often happens when it suits the Establishment to ignore obvious criminal acts.

As the author makes abundantly clear, this great occultist was both a homosexual and a paederast. It is also apparent that he used the various cults as a cover for these activities. This may account for the reluctance of some of those, who in their youth were his disciples, to discuss him with the biographer or have a sudden lapse of memory. An entourage of boys and young men surrounded Leadbeater throughout his career. This commenced at Farnham where he was an Anglican curate and when "... he gathered about him a small group of boys with whom he developed especially close relationships, establishing a pattern that was to continue throughout his life". It was the instruction on sexual matters he gave to boys placed in his care by Theosophical parents that led to the first revelations in 1906. These split the Society and involved the temporary resignation of Leadbeater, despite support from the trustingly naive Annie Besant.

The greatest "discovery" was, of course, the new world Messiah, Krishnamurti. Leadbeater picked up this somewhat retarded son of an employee of the Society on its estate at Adyar, near Madras, in 1909. For the next 20 years or so the young man was trained and indoctrinated to become "the Vehicle for the Coming of Christ". This heavy burden was finally rejected by Krishna who came to regard his mentor as an evil influence. Yet still the deluded followers could see no wrong in Leadbeater; they bought the books and attended lectures by this "nice occultist".

One factor, of which the author does not appear to see the significance, is that none of the leaders of



# REVIEWS

Theosophy seem to have had jobs of work, but spent their whole lives in world travel attending meetings and conferences. On almost every page we read of Blavatsky, Besant, Colonel Olcott, Leadbeater, Krishna *et al*, travelling continuously between India, Australia, Europe, Britain and the United States, often for the purpose of resolving internal squabbles. One wonders who paid for this travelling circus.

*The Elder Brother* is a fine example of investigative writing which can be recommended not only to secularists but to all who are interested in the eccentricities of human behaviour and the activities of humbugging scoundrels. The author states that he spent 12 years on this work. That is a claim this reviewer can well accept.

JAMES M. ALEXANDER

**THE EGO AND ITS OWN** by Max Stirner. Rebel Press, Box R, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, £4.50

This is one of the great books of the modern age. Sidney Parker in his Introduction writes: "*The Ego and Its Own* is not the easiest of books to read". The translator, Steven Byington, aware of the reader's task, writes: "I have simply tried to reproduce the author's own mixture of colloquialisms and technicalities, and his preference for the precise expression of his thought rather than the word conventionally expected".

Translation is an art rather than a science, not only when the author himself is struggling to express difficult concepts such as "the ego", "the spirit", "spiritual" in relation to historical and religious movements, but, more especially when an interval of 120 years lies between its first publication and the translation. More importantly when, in that interval, our imagery has been revolutionised by Darwin and Freud.

The style is difficult not only because the translation adheres too closely for the comfort of a modern reader to the idiom of the original, but also because, in order to escape the scrutiny of the political censor during this counter-revolutionary period in Europe, many of the references are left somewhat obscure.

The theme of the book is: "My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc, but is—*unique*, as I am unique. Nothing is more to me than myself!" So the title of the book could equally well have been *The Ego and Its Uniqueness* or *The Ego and Its Own Territory*. Stirner systematically examines the falsity of religious

and political doctrines that have come to be taken as almost axiomatic—that God is good but that Man is evil: that the good of Society is of more importance than the satisfaction of the individual. . .

He takes each concept in turn—"spirit", "God", "State", "Society"—dissects it and exposes it for what it is: the expression of a new power group masquerading under the guise of a "higher" form. So the old "absolute monarch" is overthrown and is replaced by the "absolute state". The old monarch had to compromise with certain powerful interests — barons, guilds — but the new State more and more takes over all the organs through which men express themselves and gains a position from which it is able to strangle dissent almost at birth. The Totalitarian State — capitalistic or communistic — has assumed a power that has a Kaffkaesque and nightmarish quality suffocating to individuality.

Stirner sees all creeds, whether religious or political, as means to subordinate the individual to some form of ruling power. He anticipates Freud in seeing how fear is used to inculcate belief so that the control of the individual's behaviour becomes "internalised". Those who have been frightened into a belief in God or Devil now have the "internalised parent" or "conscience" to wag the finger whenever they are tempted to follow their real inclinations.

He is indeed a liberated reader who does not have a frisson of anxiety or a glow of approval when he sees "noble sentiments" such as "the public good" or "freedom" or "morality" in print or hears them mouthed by politicians whose personal lives may not exemplify their platitudes. Again, Stirner anticipated Freud's formulation of aggression as in the nature of human beings (Darwin's "drive to survive") and with some conflict, therefore, unavoidable.

The first half of the book traces the development of the forces used to subdue natural man in religion and politics. The second half opens with an analysis of "eigenheit" or "ownness" from the title *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* and is, in effect, a discussion of the differences that distinguish "freedom to" from "freedom from": "If you become free from everything, you would no longer have anything; for freedom is empty of substance. Whoso knows not how to make use of it, for him it has no value . . . but how I make use of it depends on my personality". Now we might define "personality" as a complex of knowledge, skills, energy and imagination. Part of this discussion anticipates Sartre (see p 150) but is refreshingly down to earth.

How one acts only from himself, and asks after nothing further, the Christians have realised in the notion "God". He acts "as it pleases *him!*" (my italics, M.D.)

You long for freedom? You fools! If you took might, freedom would come of itself.

The bulk of the second half of the book minutely considers the nature of the individual, steadily teas-



ing out the elements of "collectivism" that invade our consciousness as a result of unremitting pressures on us to be other than ourselves; to model ourselves on some abstract "ego". Stirner's concern is with the individual man rather than with "Man"; with me as I really am here and now at every moment rather than with the "me" that I have been persuaded, conditioned or bullied into thinking I ought to be:

*Man* is the last evil *spirit* or spook, the most deceptive or most intimate, the craftiest liar with honest mien, the father of lies. . . It would be foolish to assert that there is no power above mine. Only the attitude I take toward it will be quite another than that of the religious age: I shall be the enemy of every higher power, while religion teaches us to make it our friend and be humble toward it.

It is commonly assumed that the purpose of the therapist in psychotherapy or psychoanalysis is to help the "patient" to conform with the demands being made on him by society (in whatever form) more easily. This was certainly no part of Freud's intention nor can it be any part of the purpose of any therapist who respects his client. People develop "neuroses" predominantly because they have been made to feel guilty about their own perfectly natural impulses such as sex and aggression. The therapist has to help the client to accept his impulses as natural and healthy; only then can he begin to understand why he developed a sense of guilt associated with them and to begin to break free of the "internalised controls" which also impede his rational self. Part of the process of therapy is a dialogue through which the client not only accepts himself fully and freely, but learns realistically to understand his own powers and the powers of those who hitherto have controlled him. It is Stirner's great insight that he equates freedom with power. Marx intuitively saw such an insight on the part of all people would render it impossible for the Communist or any other party to exert control over the masses.

Stirner's Ego is nearer to Freud's Id—that harmoniously integrated bundle of impulses, appetites and emotions, constantly fluctuating according to natural internal pulses in the organism or according to changes in the external environment. His Society to Freud's Superego—that pattern of prohibitions, inhibitions and ideals imposed by society and its agents, of whom the first and most influential are the parents, on the helpless child.

In relation to the tension between individual and society not only Liberals and the SDP but especially the Labour Party should read with particular care pages 197 to 200, part of Stirner's exposé of the illusions of "Liberal" politics.

One is tempted simply to go on quoting from the pungent aphorisms that compel the reader to continue even when the style is difficult. The time has come, perhaps, for someone to rewrite the book in a modern idiom, leaving the more obscure contemporary political references to fully annotated but separate ends

of chapters and keeping the central arguments close to the direct and concrete style that is so powerful. There are few books or even essays that so deeply and intimately explore the true nature of anarchism because so few explore the true nature of the individual.

MICHAEL DUANE

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**LET THERE BE A WORLD: a Call for an End to the Arms Race by Felix Greene, Gollancz, £1.95**

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The largest part of *Let There be a World* consists of photographs, many of them of Hiroshima with special emphasis on deformed children born after the bombing. While the text contains little that is new, it brings together in a convenient form some of the facts we often too lightly push to the back of our minds. Our time is unique, in that the achievements of millions of years of evolution could be swept away by one careless finger on the button; and in that there are more hungry people than ever before, just when technically all the means to abolish hunger are easily available.

We are shown how the arms race, which governments assure is the means to security, with every step makes us all the more insecure; the perversity of the neutron bomb, designed to increase radiation damage to people and to future generations (should there be any) while causing less damage to buildings; the horrors of nerve gas now being stock-piled; and the cynicism of our own Government whose plans for our cities in the event of war seems simply to be forcing people to stay and die where they are. It is very clear that should nuclear war come, the best place to be is directly under the first bomb to fall.

In this crisis conventional statesmen have nothing to offer. The childish behaviour of the British and Argentine governments over the Falkland Islands, and the irresponsible attitude of much of the Press, spokesmen of organised religion and public opinion, shows only too clearly how easily someone could destroy the world in a fit of carelessness. Politicians with the means of annihilation at their disposal are like children playing with matches.

Felix Greene's conclusion is that we need above all to get away from "they" and "we" modes of thought. As long as human sympathies are limited to those of our nation, race, class or religion, each of us has the seeds of world destruction within himself.

Will we wake up in time to the realities of our situation?

MARGARET McILROY

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The Consumers' Association has published an updated edition of "What to do When Someone Dies". A section on non-religious funeral ceremonies is included. The price of the book is £3.95 and it is obtainable from the Consumers' Association, Caxton Hill, Hertford, SG13 7LZ.



# The Humanist Chance in Ulster

FRANCIS BENNION

The *Sun* is an accurate newspaper—sometimes. Its headline writer was, for instance, accurate on 10 last November when composing a caption for that story about how the Pope ordered three Catholic judges to rush through the dissolution of the two-year marriage of Princess Caroline Monaco. The caption read: "Pope orders a Quickie Divorce for Caroline".

Underneath, the story wrung our hearts by reciting the Pope's reason for this unseemly haste: compassion for Caroline's dead mother Princess Grace. "It is believed" said the report "to be the first time John Paul—who strongly condemns divorce—has acted to hurry along an annulment".

The death of truth is always sad—and John Paul seems a nice guy. If you strongly condemn divorce but, as supreme pontiff, wish to facilitate it—easy, call it something else. When the parties are royal, and can pay (or even if they are not royal, and can pay) call divorce, which is forbidden, by another name. It doesn't matter if the other name really means something quite different. That something different may help put the deception across if it arouses sympathy. Genuine annulment is for inadequates who never succeeded in getting themselves married in the first place.

What, it may be asked, has this to do with Ulster? Well, what has anything to do with Ulster? But there is a connection. God, *ex hypothesi*, is perfect. If in any respect He is found to be not perfect then, *ex hypothesi*, He is not God. This business of Princess Caroline's "annulment" illustrates yet again that if God exists at all He is not the God worshipped by Pope John Paul. Nor, he may plausibly suppose, is He the God worshipped by the Rev Ian Paisley.

We see that the Ulster problem is not about true religion. It is about a group of people who elect to don the apparel of one type of pseudo-religion and then declare war on a group who elect to don the apparel of another type. It is a matter of the apparel, one kind green and the other orange. No more concerned with religious truth than if it were openly a quarrel about the clothes people choose to put on.

Now you can climb out of a suit easily enough, and drop into one of another colour. What is the humanist colour? Humanists are too sensible to have a colour, but let's suppose it were *magenta*. Suppose further that, in their thousands, *the people of Ulster started climbing into magenta suits . . .*

## Postscript

The above was written before the appearance of Bob Humphries' article, "Another Voice from Ulster"

(November). It is good to learn from him that the Belfast Humanist Group has re-formed. The final words of his article surely state a profound truth. The only end to sectarian bigotry and strife in Ulster is for both sides to drop the demonstrably false beliefs they are warring over and remember their common humanity.

## LETTERS

### ISRAEL THE AGGRESSOR

Mr B. Goshen writes gleefully in the December 1982 "Freethinker" that the "Arab terrorists . . . were butchered (his word) by . . . Hussein in 1970 and now again in Lebanon by a long-suffering . . . Israel". No wonder he finds my assessment of Israel, based on my reading of Christopher Sykes, Maxim Rodinson and Rabbi Kahane, distasteful.

Whatever the date of the Jewish dispersal, 85 or 135 AD, and whatever struggles took place later, the fact remains that the Palestinian Arabs have been living there for centuries. I cannot see how non-religious Jews can deny that re-possession of the land by Jewish settlers could only be accomplished by aggressive settlerism, thus inflicting injustice on the Arabs.

Incidentally, Arafat did not go straight to the Vatican as Mr Goshen asserts. He went to Socialist-led Greece first.

To Mr Gabriel Glazer, writing from Tel Aviv, it seems to be a fact that "the primary cause of the war in Lebanon was the PLO programme to destroy Israel". To many of us outside Israel, this is not a fact. The primary cause of the war in Lebanon, in our view, is the injustice that Israel has committed against the Palestinians, followed by retaliation on their part, however ineffective, giving Israel an excuse for further aggression with a view to expansion. We see it as an attempt to so demoralise the Palestinian Arabs that Israel can absorb the West Bank. We see it as an attempt also to absorb southern Lebanon up to the Litani into Israel.

We see the inspiration behind this as religious because the Israeli Government holds its position with the support of Religious Parties wedded to the idea of an Israel as promised by Jehovah. When making this promise to Abraham, Jehovah was unconcerned by the fact that it was the territory of ten other tribes whom he himself enumerates (Genesis 15, 18-21). There is no reason to believe that his zealous followers will not be ruthless in absorbing territory and trampling upon the rights of others. It is to be hoped that the more humane elements in Israel, and the pressure of international opinion, will curb these religious zealots.

AN INDIAN RATIONALIST

### CRITICISM OF IHEU STATEMENT

The statement issued by the office of the International Humanist and Ethical Union on the West Beirut massacres (reported in "The Freethinker", November 1982), leaves me confused.

After expressing, very rightly, horror at the massacres and condemnation of fanaticism it goes on to say that "they (i.e. the Humanists) object to the over-simplified attitude to set down the blame . . . to one party or another". It then goes on to say that "all who tolerate such degradation of humanity . . . or who look on passively, should be held responsible".

This would mean that the guilt of Israel and her



Christian allies should be shared by the British Army sitting passively at its base in Cyprus, or by the Egyptian Army. This presumably is not what the IHEU intend to say.

The whole point is that responsibility must be pinpointed and apportioned to the various guilty parties. We must hope that the inquiry in Israel, forced on the Government by Israeli public opinion and even by threats of resignation from within the Government, will establish the full truth. The glare of publicity before a watchful world opinion may then force those who possess military prowess, as Israel, Haddad and the Phalangists do, to observe restraint when dealing with unarmed civilians.

DERMOT KERR

#### SNEER AND SMEAR

B. Goshen claims that a "Freethinker" editorial was obscene because of its heading, "The Zionazis", but his own comments in the December 1982 issue about "Arab money buying influence in your pages" indicate how close to the truth you are. Accusations of accepting "foreign money" have long been the stock in trade of neo-Nazis who are seeking a scapegoat. There is little difference between reader Goshen's contemptuous sneers at Arabs, his smearing of "The Freethinker" and the tactics of pre-war German Nazis.

VERNON E. LEWIS

#### ABSENT FRIENDS

Your correspondent B. Goshen is upset by an item entitled "The Zionazis" which, he claims in the December 1982 "Freethinker", "could only have come from Arab sources". But he chooses to ignore a significant news item in the same issue as "The Zionazis" which must have come from Israeli sources. I refer to the report that for the first time since the State of Israel was founded, more people emigrated than came to live there.

It is rather strange that so many of Israel's most devoted friends ignore Zionist appeals to return to what Mr Goshen refers to as "their ancient land of Israel". But perhaps it is not surprising that liberal Jews prefer to keep their ancient land at arm's length. Who wants to live in a country that is dominated by religious fanatics and led by Begin, one of the most notorious terrorists of the present century?

H. C. COMPTON

#### NO ARAB GOLD

With somewhat wild rhetoric, Mr Goshen suggests that "Arab money is buying influence" in "The Freethinker". This is very wide of the mark. "The Freethinker" has always survived as a result of the labour and generosity of dedicated freethinkers. "The Freethinker" always welcomes donations, but would never accept money which attempted to buy editorial influence.

Incidentally, there is nothing new in criticism of the religious aspects of Zionism and the state of Israel. Chapman Cohen, for many years Editor of "The Freethinker", and himself from a Jewish family, wrote in 1931: ". . . it is quite certain that Jews, so long as they remain true to their religion will be as ready to persecute as ever Christians were. From the Jewish Chronicle we learn that there was some rioting in Palestine owing to one lot of Jews trying to prevent another lot from playing football on the Sabbath. Really religious people never learn toleration from experiencing persecution, they are only more anxious to prove that they can be as intolerant as their persecutors".

JIM HERRICK  
Acting Chairman, G. W. Foote & Co

#### CHRIST THE PACIFIST?

"Christ preached pacifism", according to Dora Russell ("An Establishment Court Fool", November 1982).

What "Christ preached" no one knows since there is no cogent proof that "he" existed. However, the views attributed to him in the New Testament depict a pacifist who did not hesitate to condemn people to the eternal torment of hell if they rejected his gospel. No military man, unless he is of the pious type, ever wishes that fate upon his enemies.

Dora Russell also accuses soldiers of killing, among others, "terrorists" and "guerrillas". Now I do not deny that soldiers have often killed people I would not want them to kill, but since terrorists and guerrillas have a habit of killing people it is not surprising that they in turn get killed. If I were threatened by someone with death, I would be quite happy to be defended by a soldier, Christian or otherwise, unless I had the means to defend myself.

Whether that rarely defined condition called "peace" is possible or not, it will certainly not be achieved by invoking mythical saviours or glossing over the nature and activities of guerrillas and terrorists.

S. E. PARKER

#### SURPRISE! SURPRISE! SURPRISE!

I was surprised at the comments on the Conservative Party conference in News and Notes (November 1982).

I was surprised at the reference to the "grocer's daughter" used as a term of derision. Are grocers' daughters more to be derided than other women?

I was surprised at such cheap prejudice coming from a freethinker who I had assumed would also be concerned to be fair-minded. It was reminiscent of Labour demagoguery at its most abusive.

J. L. HUTCHINSON

#### OPEN MIND ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

I was surprised to see the term "capital punishment freaks" used in News and Notes of your November 1982 issue.

Surely it is only the Christian who can be so dogmatically opposed to capital punishment as to see any other view on the subject as freakish. The rationalist will keep an open mind, prepared to accept that if it could be shown that capital punishment did deter to such an extent as to increase the sum of human happiness then it should be introduced. Some may, in fact, believe that the present evidence is sufficient to support its re-introduction.

It ill behoves "The Freethinker" to use the term "freaks". After all, probably the majority of people in this country regard "Freethinker" readers as somewhat freakish.

R. G. TEE

#### SURVIVAL TRAITS

The debate at the British Association on Darwinism and the various statements regarding its reinforcement of the capitalist view of the world does not invalidate its truth as a gestalt of ideas.

Consider the fact that human beings can and do have ideas and beliefs that at first sight do not contribute to the survival of the individual; however, as the most "successful" animal on this planet could these ideas be considered as non-survival traits? Has evolution not then produced us, as a species, able to stand outside the rigours of the "survival of the fittest" by making us the best for this situation?

In other words, I would argue that morals, ethics, humanistic ideals and social behaviour are survival



traits, not just for human beings but, providing we learn the lessons fast enough, for the whole of life on earth.

RICHARD PHILPOT

### CUTTING COMMENT

The details of religious relics in "Collector's Corner", November 1982, omitted one of the most interesting—the purported prepuce removed from the infant Jesus when he was circumcised. It is housed in a monastery in Sicily.

TED GOODMAN

We regret that it is not possible to reproduce in "The Freethinker" the winning cartoons in the centenary competition. Copies are now available from 702 Holloway Road, London N19. Please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope.

## EVENTS

**Brighton and Hove Humanist Group.** Queen's Head, Queen's Road (entrance in Junction Road, opposite Brighton Station). Sunday, 6 February, 5 pm for 5.30 pm. Professor Christopher Freeman: Can the Third World Catch up?

**Gay Humanist Group.** Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. Meetings on the second Friday of the month at 7.30 pm.

**Glasgow Humanist Society.** Information regarding meetings and other activities is obtainable from Norman Macdonald, 339 Kilmarnock Road, Glasgow, G43, telephone 041 632 9511.

**Humanist Holidays.** Easter, 31 March until 7 April, at a Clifton Downs (Bristol area) hotel. Details of this and other holidays from Mrs Betty Beer, 58 Weir Road, London SW12, telephone 01-673 6234.

**Havering and District Humanist Society.** Harold Wood Social Centre, junction of Gubbins Lane and Squirrels Heath Road, Harold Wood. Tuesday, 1 February, 8 pm. Talk and film by Mr Leversedge, Secretary, Havering and Barking Community Health Council.

**Leeds and District Humanist Group.** Swarthmore Institute, 4 Woodhouse Square, Leeds. Tuesday, 8 February, 7.45 pm. Rowland Dale: Nuclear Disarmament—the Issues.

**Lewisham Humanist Group.** Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Thursday, 27 January, 7.45 pm. Bill Hughes: Can we Tolerate Toleration?

**Warwickshire Humanist Group.** Details of activities obtainable from Roy Saich, 34 Spring Lane, Kenilworth, telephone Kenilworth 58450.

**Worthing Humanist Group.** Trades Club, Broadwater Road, Worthing. Sunday, 30 January, 5.30 pm. Fanny Cockerell: The First 50 Years of the Progressive League.

**Harrow Humanist Society.** The Library, Gayton Road, Harrow-on-the-Hill. Wednesday, 9 February, 8 pm. Sir Hermann Bondi: The Challenge of the Environment.

## PUBLICATIONS

**ALLEGRO** John, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, £1.75 (19p).  
**AYER** A. J. (Editor) *The Humanist Outlook*, 95p (40p).  
**BLACKHAM** H. J., *Religion in a Modern Society*, £2 (45p).

**BLANCHARD** Paul (Editor) *Classics of Freethought* 2.60 (40p).

**BUDD** Susan, *Varieties of Unbelief*, £12.50 (95p).  
**COHEN** Chapman, *Thomas Paine*, 25p (12½p); *God and me*, 50p (18p); *Did Jesus Christ Exist?* 15p (12½p); *Must we Have a Religion?* 15p (12½p); *Morality Without God*, 15p (12½p); *Deity and Design*, 15p (12½p); *What is the Use of Prayer?* 15p (12½p); *Christianity and Slavery*, 15p (12½p); *Woman and Christianity*, 15p (12½p); *Christianity and Ethics*, 15p (12½p); *Materialism Restated*, £1 (28p).

**DARWIN** Charles, *Origin of Species*, £2.25 (30p).  
**FOOTE** G. W. and **BALL** W. P., *The Bible Handbook*, £2.50 (30p).

**HAWTON** Hector, *The Humanist Revolution*, 95p (30p); *Controversy*, 95p (30p).

**HERRICK** Jim, *Vision and Realism: a Hundred Years of The Freethinker*, £2 (25p).

**KNIGHT** Margaret, *Honest to Man*, £3.75 (40p); *Humanist Anthology*, 95p (25p).

**LUCRETIUS**, *On the Nature of the Universe*, £1.25 (15p).

**MANVELL** Roger, *The Trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh*, £5.95 (40p).

**PAINE** Thomas, *Common Sense*, £1 (16p); *Rights of Man*, £1.95 (28p).

**PIKE** Royston, *Pioneers of Social Change*, 95p (28p).

**ROYLE** Edward, *Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief*, £1.45 (22p); *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans*, £19.50 (75p).

**RUSSELL** Bertrand, *In Praise of Idleness*, £1.75 (22p); *Authority and the Individual*, £1.50 (22p); *Why I am Not a Christian*, £2.50 (22p); *Unpopular Essays*, £1.75 (26p); *Marriage and Morals*, £1.75 (26p); *Education and Social Order*, £1.75 (26p); *Roads to Freedom*, £1.50 (26p); *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, £1.25 (22p); *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, £1.75 (20p); *Conquest of Happiness*, £1.75 (22p); *Impact of Science on Society*, £1 (22p); *Political Ideals*, £1.50 (22p); *A Free Man's Worship*, £1.75 (22p); *Sceptical Essays*, £1.50 (20p); *Legitimacy v Industrialism*, £1 (22p); *ABC of Relativity*, £1.75 (25p); *My Philosophical Development*, £1 (25p); *On Education*, £1 (25p); *Bertrand Russell's Best*, £1.95 (22p).

**SMOKER** Barbara, *Humanism*, 90p (22p); *Good God (Satirical Verse)*, 95p (18p).

**TRIBE** David, *100 Years of Freethought*, £2 (£1); *President Charles Bradlaugh, MP*, £4 (£1.20); *The Cost of Church Schools*, 25p (12½p); *Broadcasting, Brainwashing, Conditioning*, 15p (12½p).

**WELLS** G. A., *Did Jesus Exist?* £6.95 (£1).  
*The Freethinker, Centenary Issue (May 1981)*, 40p (12½p).

*The Freethinker, Bound Volumes 1978 and 1979*, £6.50 each (75p).

*The Freethinker, Bound Volumes 1980 and 1981*, £7.50 each (75p).

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# "Popular" Press Fosters Triviality and Conformity

We read more daily newspapers in the United Kingdom per head of the population than any other European country, yet the standard of our newspaper journalism is arguably amongst the lowest. This was the theme of a talk given to the Brighton and Hove Humanist Group on 2 January by Ted McFadyen, a magazine editor and freelance journalist.

He attacked the popular Press on several fronts. It distorted the truth, especially in its presentation of political issues. There was a disproportionate emphasis on triviality, with unremitting sexism and an inability to treat women other than as sex objects or inferior beings. It eagerly promoted mindless, patriotic jingoism, as in the Falklands war, and there was a sycophantic preoccupation with the Royal Family.

## 1984 is Just Around the Corner

or organisations in the hope of finding evidence of a 'serious, arrestable offence', even if there are no grounds for suspicion.

"It is one of the most cynical manoeuvres that even this 'law and order' Government has come up with. While pretending to curb the power of the police, it will, if passed, do the reverse".

Dealing specifically with the Metropolitan Police, Patricia Hewitt said they had become increasingly dependent on "stop and search". But at the same time they have become far less successful in reducing crime than other police forces which use different preventive methods.

"We are not seeking to hamper the police in their fight against crime", she added. "What we are saying is that their own records indicate that there are far more effective methods than those at present in use.

"We also need a more independent system for dealing with complaints against the police. Even the police themselves admit this for they say they wish to show they have nothing to hide.

"The structure of police committees needs to be more clearly and more radically defined. We want to reclaim policing for the public".

Patricia Hewitt said there is still a myth that Britain is the home of civil liberty. The gap between the myth and the reality is wider than ever before.

"Our civil liberties were never given to us by a benevolent State", she declared, "but were won after centuries of hard struggle. Unless we can win back what we are in the process of losing, those centuries of struggle will have been in vain".

There were honourable exceptions among our national newspapers. But the "serious" dailies have a circulation of under a million, compared with the massive circulation of over 12 million enjoyed by the *Express, Mail, Mirror, Star* and *Sun*.

Mr McFadyen said: "The implications of this for freethinkers are serious. The great mass of the population is being deprived, through its newspapers at least, of information essential to it in forming any coherent view of world affairs.

"More importantly, the skilful deployment on such a massive scale of questionable values and assumptions through the popular Press makes it difficult for the majority of people to formulate alternative moral standards and beliefs. Ultimately this can only lead to a society at best apathetic and at worse mindlessly conformist".

## Freethinker Fund

Readers have responded yet again to the appeal on behalf of the Fund. We are very grateful to everyone who sent donations during the last year and the 1982 total will be announced in February. The latest list of contributors is given below.

Anonymous, £50; J. Arkell, £3; J. Bennett, £1; D. Berman, £2; D. J. Brittain, £7; P. Chapman, £2.75; D. Coupland, £2; R. Douglas, £1; G. Fleddermann, £1.50; J. G. Gerrard, 75p; R. Gilliland, £5.50; B. M. Goodale, £2; H. Goodall, £2; S. Bailey, £3.50; D. T. Harris, £1; E. Henry, £2; G. Honeywell, £2; C. J. Houston, £2; J. J. Leenders, £1; N. Levenson, £2; M. McIver, £2; M. Morf, £4; L. G. Jackham, £5; R. G. Peterson, \$4.50; G. Robichez, £7; J. Riding, £5; E. P. Roberts, £6; D. Sargant, £1; R. T. Savage, £1; F. E. Seward, £2; I. Shellat, £2; C. J. Simmonds, £2; G. A. Vale, £7; D. Walton, £2; B. Whiting, £1; A. Woodford, £7.

Total for the period 6 November until 6 December 1982: £156 and \$4.50.

JIM HERRICK

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